

Schools mental health project reaches 10,000 pupils across the North West

Thursday 19 March, 2026

A school-based mental health programme has reached more than 10,000 children and young people across the North West, as demand for early support in schools continues to grow.

The Hummingbird Project, delivered free of charge by Manchester children's charity MedEquip4Kids, provides a six-week Positive Psychology course for primary and secondary schools, helping pupils develop self-esteem, resilience and practical strategies to support their mental health and reduce their risk of developing anxiety or depression.

The milestone comes at a time when schools are reporting rising levels of anxiety, low mood and emotional distress among pupils, alongside increasing pressure on pastoral and mental health services.

Since launching in 2017, the programme has worked with over 90 schools across Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside, supporting pupils to better understand their emotions and build positive coping strategies.

Evaluation carried out with academic partners at the University of Greater Manchester, the University of Chester and the Open University shows significant improvements in wellbeing and hope, alongside reductions in signs of anxiety and depression.

The project was originally launched in Manchester at an event attended by Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, who said at the time: *"The Hummingbird Project is so of the moment. It answers the call coming from young people."*

The programme continues to evolve in response to growing need. In July 2025, the project hosted its first conference at the University of Greater Manchester, bringing together teachers, researchers and education professionals to explore the role of preventative mental health support in schools.

Earlier this year, the team also held a consultation workshop with Special Educational Needs (SEN) specialists, as part of plans to develop a version of the programme tailored for children with additional needs.

Each participating school receives a Hummingbird resource box containing books, activities and other wellbeing tools, helping to embed the learning beyond the six-week course.

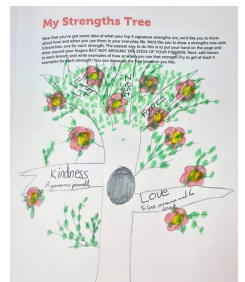
Teachers report clear benefits for pupils, including improved confidence, emotional awareness and the ability to manage difficult feelings. One pupil reflected, *"It made me have more empathy for others and made me think about all the things I'm good at."* Another said, *"I now feel like my better self."*

Catherine North, Development Manager for the Hummingbird Project, said:

"Reaching 10,000 pupils is a significant milestone, but it also reflects the scale of the need we are seeing in schools. We are hearing consistently from teachers that children are struggling with self-esteem, anxiety and emotional wellbeing. Our aim is to give pupils practical tools they can use in everyday life to support their mental health before problems escalate."

The Hummingbird Project is funded through charitable grants and donations, and MedEquip4Kids is now seeking further support to expand its work and ensure more schools can access the programme free of charge.

Media:



Company Contact:

MedEquip4Kids

T. 01617981600

E. info@medequip4kids.org.uk

W. <https://www.medequip4kids.org.uk>

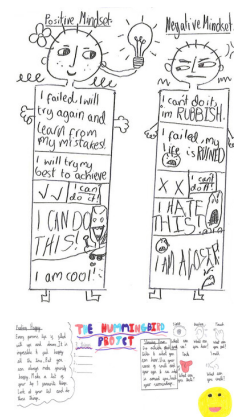
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