Not Fine in School

A very proud mum explained that for GCSE English, her daughter was required to do a speaking and listening test where they give a short speech and then take questions, she explained: as you can imagine her anxiety was through the roof about not being able to answer the questions, I suggested she do her speech on anxiety as she could answer any question on that topic! - I never expected her to be so brutally honest.

Mental Health is a Conversation We Need to Have

4-10% is the percentage of people in England who will experience depression in their lifetime.
13% is the percentage of all absence days that can be blamed on mental health conditions.
85% is the percentage of older people with depression who receive no help at all from the NHS.
70% is the percentage of people under 16 who experience mental health problems and receive no help from the NHS.
8.2 million is the number of anxiety cases in the UK in 2013 alone.
44 million is the number of people worldwide living with dementia.
5,668 is the number of suicides recorded in GB in 2016.
18,220 is the number of people with mental health disorders who took their own lives between 2003 – 2013.
1 in 6 adults have a common mental health disorder.
1 in 15 people have attempted suicide at some point in their lifetime.
Suicide is the most common cause of death for men aged 20 – 49 in the UK and yet when brought up in conversation, mental health is a subject that is often swept under the rug. This needs to stop.

Mental health is a conversation people need to have. So in an act of confidence, I will share my story of my battle with anxiety and depression with you. It's something that I have had for as long as I can remember and stems from bad past school experiences. Every morning for me is a struggle and can reduce me to tears in moments. But it's something that I fight every day and I am incredibly lucky to have the support at home that I do as many people suffering from mental health issues do not. Even stood here before you at this very moment, I feel sick to my stomach but I am not letting that stop me. Because my mental health does not define me. My anxiety is something that, as odd as it may sound, I wouldn't change because it has made me the strong person that I am today. My depression reached the worst it has ever been last year because of a mistake this very school made and resulted in me missing many months of Year 10, which is why in fact, I have not already made my speech. It became so bad that some days I never even left the confines of my bedroom. It is not a time of my life that I am proud of but through the help of medication and CAMHS I am back at school, on a permanently reduced timetable and am stood here before you today. Mental Health is an illness, not a weakness. It's an issue, not an identity.

Now, there are many things that are being done to combat mental health in the past few years to end stigma and educate people. The Heads Together campaign. Mental Health Awareness week. The Mind campaign. But we need to do more locally. As someone who has had a long and gruelling journey throughout my academic years while battling anxiety and depression, I am very experienced in knowing how this school deals with students suffering from mental health disorders and while they have been very helpful for me, have made some critical decisions that have greatly impacted my well-being. It's something everyone should be educated on and the school does not do enough as from the statistics I mentioned earlier, there are a massive part of the population that suffer from metal health issues and it's likely that everyone knows someone who is suffering and so whether it be making people feel less alone or helping others to learn how to support someone who does suffer from a mental health disorder. There are many students at this school who struggle daily and feel alone in their problems with no guidance or advice, that's why I think the school should do more than participate in mental health awareness week to raise awareness and end stigma. Thank you.