**Sutton Youth Board Thursday 13th March, “Mental Health in Schools” topic**

*Speech by Sophia, aged 13, Harris Academy Sutton student and Young Commissioner*

Hi,

My name is Sophia and I go to Harris Academy Sutton.

I feel that school is a place where students should feel safe and welcomed. However, there are many elements of school life that can negatively impact young people's mental health.

It could be from stress of an exam to a problem in a relationship with someone.

Some of these issues can lead to a decrease in academic performance and a lack of motivation.

If young people suffer from these issues, how are they supposed to grow in their education with all this stress in their mind?

One aspect where school can be difficult is for people who have neurodiversity or anxiety. The school environment can be challenging for them to learn and make friends. This can make them feel isolated and pressured to be at the same level with their fellow peers.

Social media plays a big impact on students' mental health. Some people may see other people online who have something they don't or you are being bullied online . This could lead to low self esteem and make people start doubting themselves.

Cultural and religious differences play another aspect in mental health because it may be hard to relate or make friends with people . It is especially hard for people who are new in the school  and don't know anyone. Sometimes this leads to depression and loneliness. If they come from a different country, it may be hard for them to adapt to the new environment and could make them feel homesick.

Personally, for me, I feel more stress when it comes to exams. I revise and study as much as possible. Then when it comes to the exam, I feel the heat. I try to make sure that I answer all the questions correctly but then end up getting a low score. It just makes me feel as if all my work has gone to waste. So anytime I prepare for an exam I always have a second thought, thinking, what is the point of going through all this pressure but then none of it was worth it.

These things can make students feel as if school is another burden for them and can even make some people be scared of coming into school.

Nevertheless, schools have ways of helping you with this and making you feel happy about coming to school again.  Like a councillor / safeguarding team. In my school they have something called the 'sharp system'.

It is where people can come and make an anonymous report about something on their mind. You could always talk to a friend or an adult that you are comfortable talking to.

 It's important that students know that they can get support to help them with school and its different responsibilities. Hence, improve their mental health. So that students can be able to fully grow in their academics without worries.

Thank you for listening.