

# Cycle Against Suicide

## St. Leo's College 2022/2021

**“Cycle Against Suicide is an awareness charity that makes a valuable contribution to the public education of mental health by changing the narrative surrounding suicide.”**

**The Cycle Against Suicide Committee in St. Leo's College Carlow has been working extremely hard to make this change and remind everyone that “It is okay not to be okay and it's absolutely okay to ask for help”. The pandemic this year has not only led us to continue our work from home and rethink and adapt ideas but has also highlighted the importance of raising awareness for our mental health and remaining socially close but physically distant.**

**The very first thing the committee did, after it was established, was appoint a secretary and chairperson and divide into five different groups, each tackling a different issue. These issues included body image, bullying, stress, anxiety and stigma. This task allowed the committee to strengthen as a team and led us to begin our Cycle Against Suicide journey.**

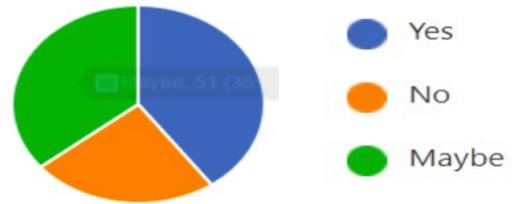


**Each group began to brainstorm ideas and share with the rest of the committee. Over the following months, these plans were put into action and positive changes in our school community were made. Posters containing inspirational quotes, body positivity and helpline numbers were displayed prominently around the school to brighten people's day, remind them of their worth and inform them of where they can go for support.**

**We also conducted an online survey on the school population regarding mental health and the stigma surrounding it here in St. Leo's College. The survey gave us valuable insight into where we as a school community stand regarding mental**

health and what we can do to “Stamp out the Stigma”. The feedback received from this survey was hugely beneficial to us and highlighted the needs and wants of the

4. Do you feel that there is a stigma talking about mental health in our school?



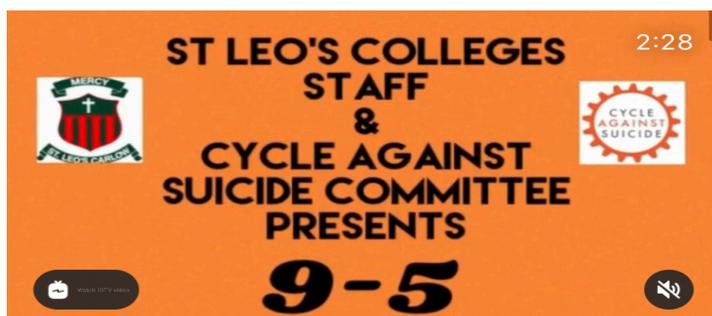
student body. Some of what we learned included that while many believed they did know what mental health was, some were unsure of what it actually means and 76% of students felt there may be a stigma surrounding mental health in the school community.

We involved first years in our activities to kickstart the conversation about mental health early and provide them with an understanding of the work we do. Classes designed baubles for our Positivi-tree that was displayed proudly on the link corridor. The baubles contain positive quotes and lots of colour to brighten up the school. Classes also designed small rocks which can be seen around the small fountain outside the school and created a rock garden, a special place to go if you need some time reflect with a friend. SPHE classes from other years also took part in mindfulness colouring for a break from the stress of everyday life.



The lockdown did not stop us from progressing our work and instead inspired us to work harder, as we recognized that this time can be particularly difficult and lonely for people. Members of our committee used the school closure to further understand all aspects of mental health through the online headstrong programme so that we could use this important information to educate those around us on these topics. This was done through our Instagram page (@stleoscas21) which remained very active over the school closure. This page kept people updated with

our work to date, provided key information and helplines, gave self-care advice and posted daily inspirational quotes. Our own rendition of “9 to 5” by Dolly Parton was launched here also. This video was made to put a smile on people’s faces during these very difficult times. Teachers danced, sang and strummed their way through the lyrics and their creativity was what made the video so enjoyable. Team members each held up a word from our key message, “It is okay not to be okay and it’s absolutely okay to ask for help”, to put a face to the committee members who have been working behind the scenes. Members of the time spoke to KCLR and the Carlow Nationalist about the amazing video also.



However our work was still not done. We were heavily involved in Wellbeing week where we will continue to spread our message across the school community and beyond. This took place in our school during the second week in May. The committee organized a stationary cycle in place of our annual 20km spin to Castledermot for wellbeing week. We invited students and staff to participate in hopes of raising awareness and promoting positive mental and physical health in our school community. We cycled over 520km during the day.



We also held a coffee morning for staff as we understand that staff also need a break from time to time. We showed transition year students the documentary “Odd one out” to raise awareness about body positivity and involved the school counselors in a talk and walk session with the same groups where students could share how they felt.