Hummingbird Project



Impact Report
2025-2026

MedEquip4KIDS


Love of Learning
Perspective
Bravery
Wisdom
Fairness
Teamwork
Social Skills
Kindness
Love
Honesty

A year of growing impact

Helping more children build the skills to thrive

The Hummingbird Project is a free, six-week Positive Psychology programme, backed by university research and delivered by children's charity MedEquip4Kids in the North West of England.

In 2025–2026, we reached more pupils than ever before, bringing preventative, evidence-based mental health support into a record number of classrooms.

Why early support matters

Around one in ten children in England was referred to mental health services in 2024–2025, according to the Children's Commissioner.

Alongside specialist care, children need support that builds wellbeing before difficulties escalate to crisis point. The Hummingbird Project works upstream, bringing practical wellbeing activities into schools and helping whole classes to develop emotional awareness, resilience and hope.

Source: Children's Commissioner for England, Children's and Young People's Mental Health Services: 2024–25, published June 2026.

2,839

children took part in the Hummingbird Project in 2025-2026

33

North-West primary, secondary and SEND schools visited by our team

11,471

pupils reached since 2017



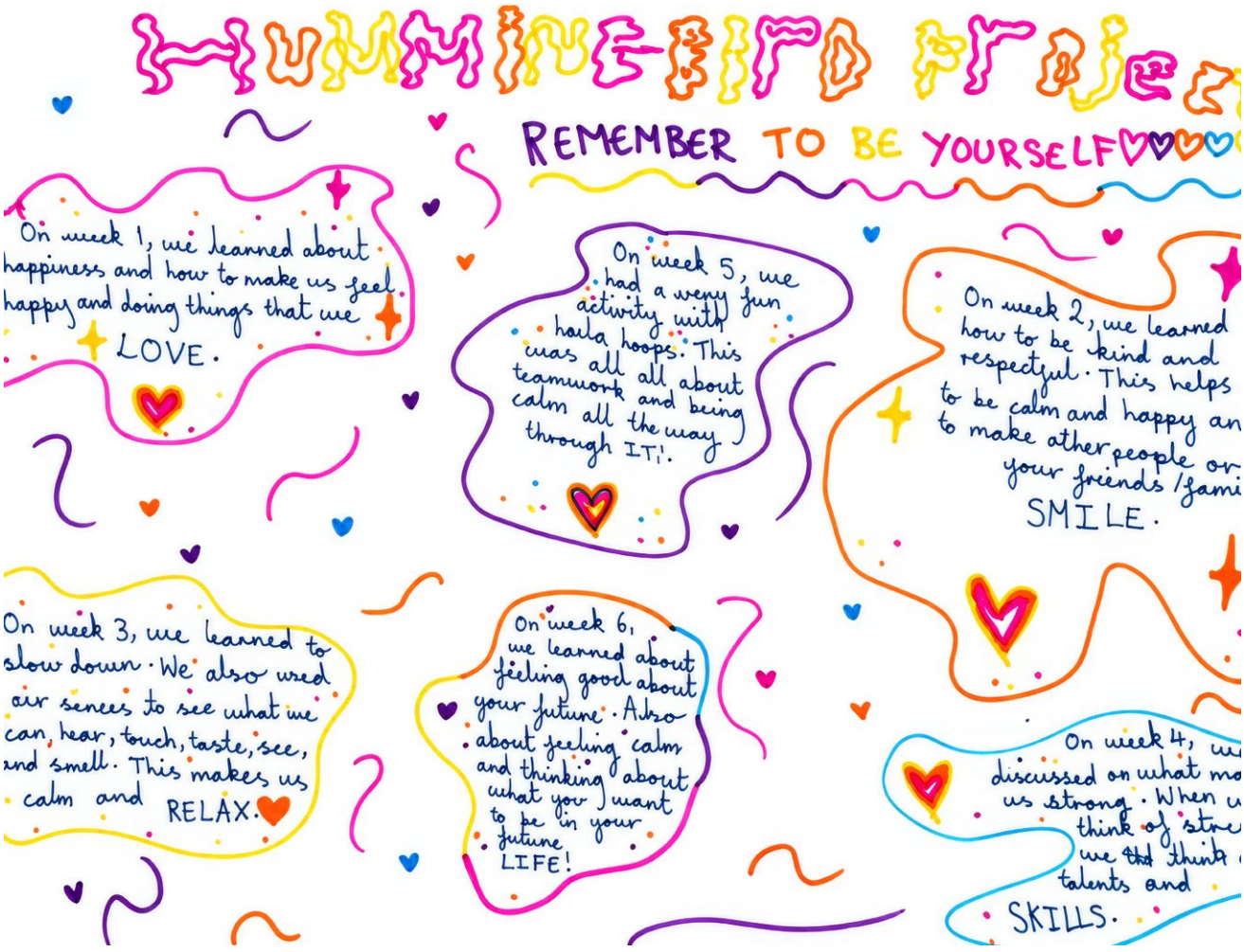
Resilient glow worms with ideas for bouncing back

A strengths-based approach to mental health

Positive Psychology recognises and builds on people's existing strengths. It explores how positive emotions, supportive relationships and a sense of purpose can help us to develop wellbeing and resilience.

Each weekly session of the Hummingbird Project introduces a different concept, helping children to explore what supports their own mental health. Rather than relying on a single strategy, pupils develop a toolkit they can use both in school and beyond.

Happiness
Kindness & Gratitude
Mindfulness
Character Strengths
Resilience
Hope



Clarendon Primary School

Skills for life: the mindful minute



St Peter's CE Primary School, Farnworth
Pupils practising mindfulness

What changed for pupils?

-11%

YP-CORE
psychological distress
14.82 → 13.14

+6%

WHO-5
better wellbeing
13.46 → 14.31

+7%

Children's Hope Scale
increased hope
21.86 → 23.46

A consistent pattern of improvement

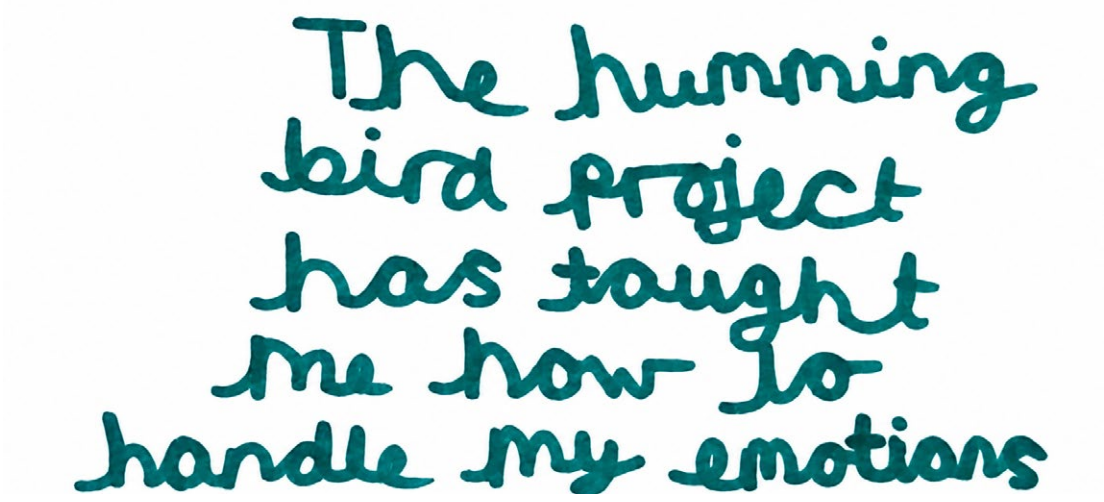
In 2025–2026, 433 pupils from five secondary schools took part in the Hummingbird Project. Pupils were asked to complete three established mental health and wellbeing questionnaires before and after the six-week programme, allowing us to compare how average scores changed over the course.

Across all three measures, average scores moved in the desired direction following the programme.

YP-CORE n=279; WHO-5 n=310; Children's Hope Scale n=305.

Building on established evidence

Last year's controlled trial at Christleton High School found improvements in wellbeing, hope and resilience that were maintained and improved on at a two-month follow-up.



Lostock Primary School

Impact in the classroom

What teachers noticed

Teachers told us that children were using Hummingbird strategies independently in the classroom, helping them to manage pressure, calm themselves, and reflect more positively.

97%

of 38 primary teachers surveyed said the Hummingbird Project improved their pupils' mental health.

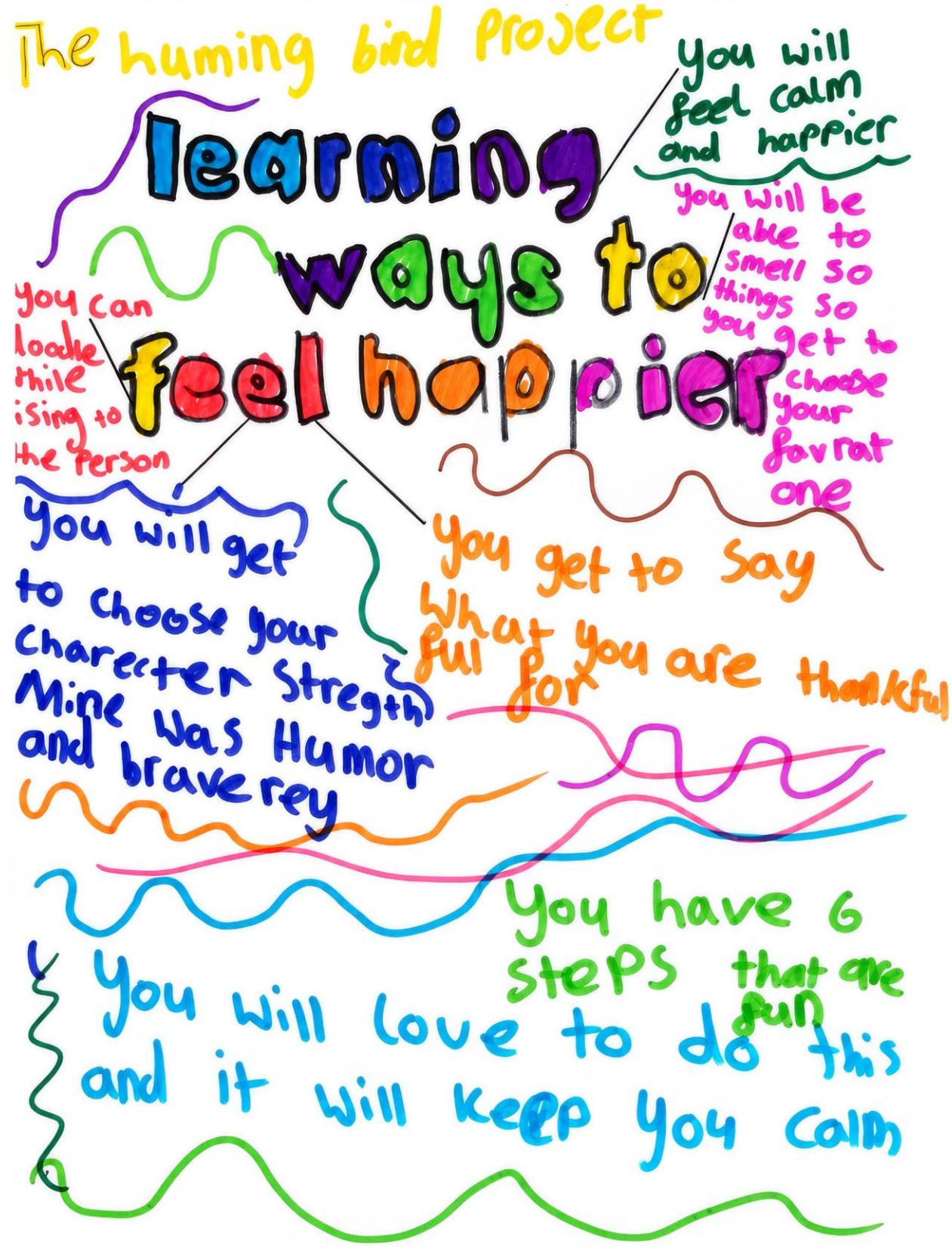
"The pupils now have a tool kit we can refer to throughout this important year for them. Some of the children have been using this to cope with SATs."
- Year 6 teacher, Brandwood Primary School

"It has helped them to slow down, relax and be happy, especially on the hot Friday afternoons!"
- Year 6 teacher, St John's Kearsley CE Primary School

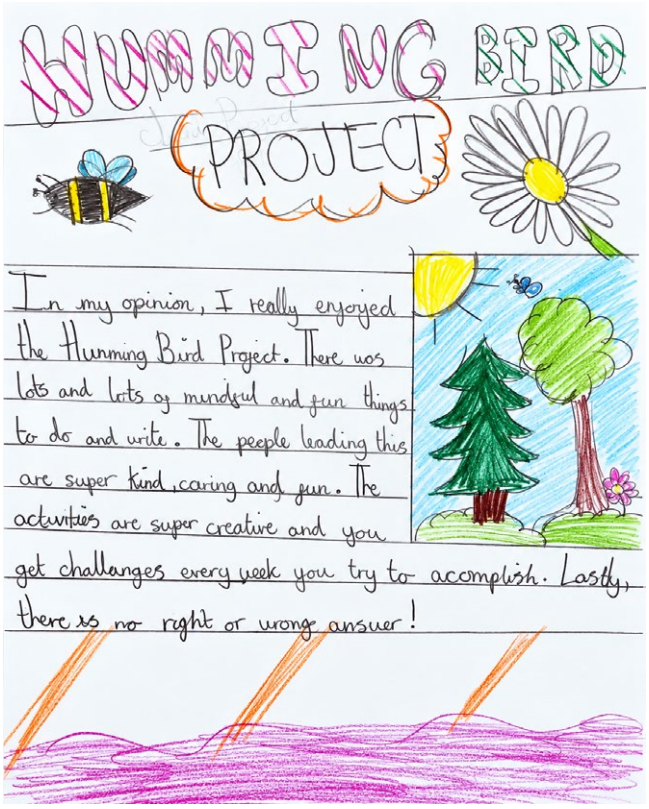
"Children look forward to Hummingbird sessions. It is a mindful experience that the children take into their school day and home life."
- Year 3 teacher, Wardley CE Primary School



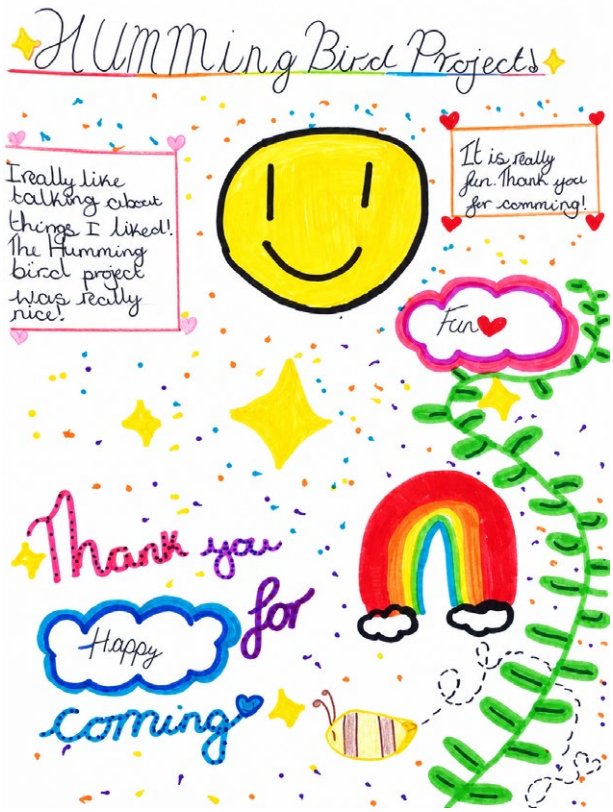
Atherton St George's CE Primary School



Pupil voices



St Columba's RC Primary School



Atherton St George's CE Primary School

The Humming bird Project helPs me to relax and think about the important things

Lostock Primary School

- Ian was very nice, freindly and easy to talk to.
- gave us sweets for mindpulness and helped us to figure out our character strengths.
- very patient with everyone.
- very slow and calming voice
- now we know all of our strengths we are happier and have different challenges every week.

Unsworth Academy

Skills for life: resilience



St William of York RC Primary School
Pupils attempting the Hula Hoop Challenge

Learning through challenge

Hands-on activities give pupils opportunities to practise teamwork, perseverance and resilience together. Reflection and discussion afterwards help them to think about how they responded to the challenge and how those skills can be used in everyday life.



> **"My favourite was when we did the Hula Hoop challenge, best thing I have done in school and made me want to come to school more."** - *Pupil, Atherton St George's CE Primary School*

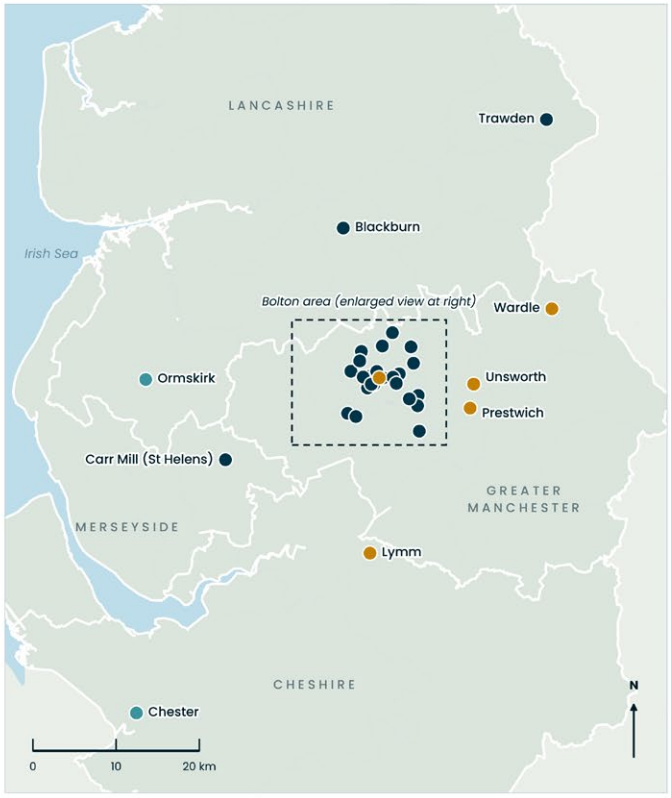
Skills for life: using strengths



St Philip's CE Primary School, Atherton
Using the character strength cards, pupils explore the positive qualities they notice in themselves and others.



Schools and settings



Boundaries: Office for National Statistics and Natural Earth.
School locations geocoded from postcodes © OpenStreetMap contributors.

School type

Primary school	26
Secondary school	5
SEND school	2
Total	**33**

Bolton area – enlarged view



Bolton (21)

- S Bolton Muslim Girls School
- P Brandwood Primary School
- P Church Road Primary School
- P Clarendon Primary School
- P Hardy Mill Primary School
- P Haslam Park Primary School
- P Heathfield Primary School
- P Johnson Fold Primary School
- P Lever Edge Primary School
- P Lostock Primary School
- P Markland Hill Primary School
- P Pikes Lane Primary School
- P Prestolee Primary School
- P St Bedes Primary School
- P St Columba's RC Primary School
- P St John's Bromley Cross RC Primary School
- P St John's Kearsley CE Primary School
- P St Marys Deane CE Primary School
- P St Michael's CE Primary School
- P St Peter's Farnworth CE Primary School
- P St William of York RC Primary

Other Greater Manchester (6)

- P Atherton St George CE Primary School
- P St Philips Atherton CE Primary School
- S The Heys School
- S Unsworth Academy
- S Wardle Academy
- P Wardley Primary School

Lancashire & Blackburn with Darwen (3)

- P Meadowhead Junior School
- P Trawden Forest Primary School
- SN Turning Point Academy

Cheshire & Warrington (2)

- S Lymm High School
- SN Maple Grove School

St Helens (1)

- P Carr Mill Primary School

Access and equity

Reaching communities facing disadvantage

The Hummingbird Project is delivered to whole classes, so that pupils can take part without needing a diagnosis, referral or identified mental health need.

By offering the course free of charge and working extensively in schools serving disadvantaged communities, the programme helps ensure that pupils who may face greater barriers to wellbeing support can access early, preventative provision.

52%

of schools and settings we worked with in 2025-2026 are located in the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

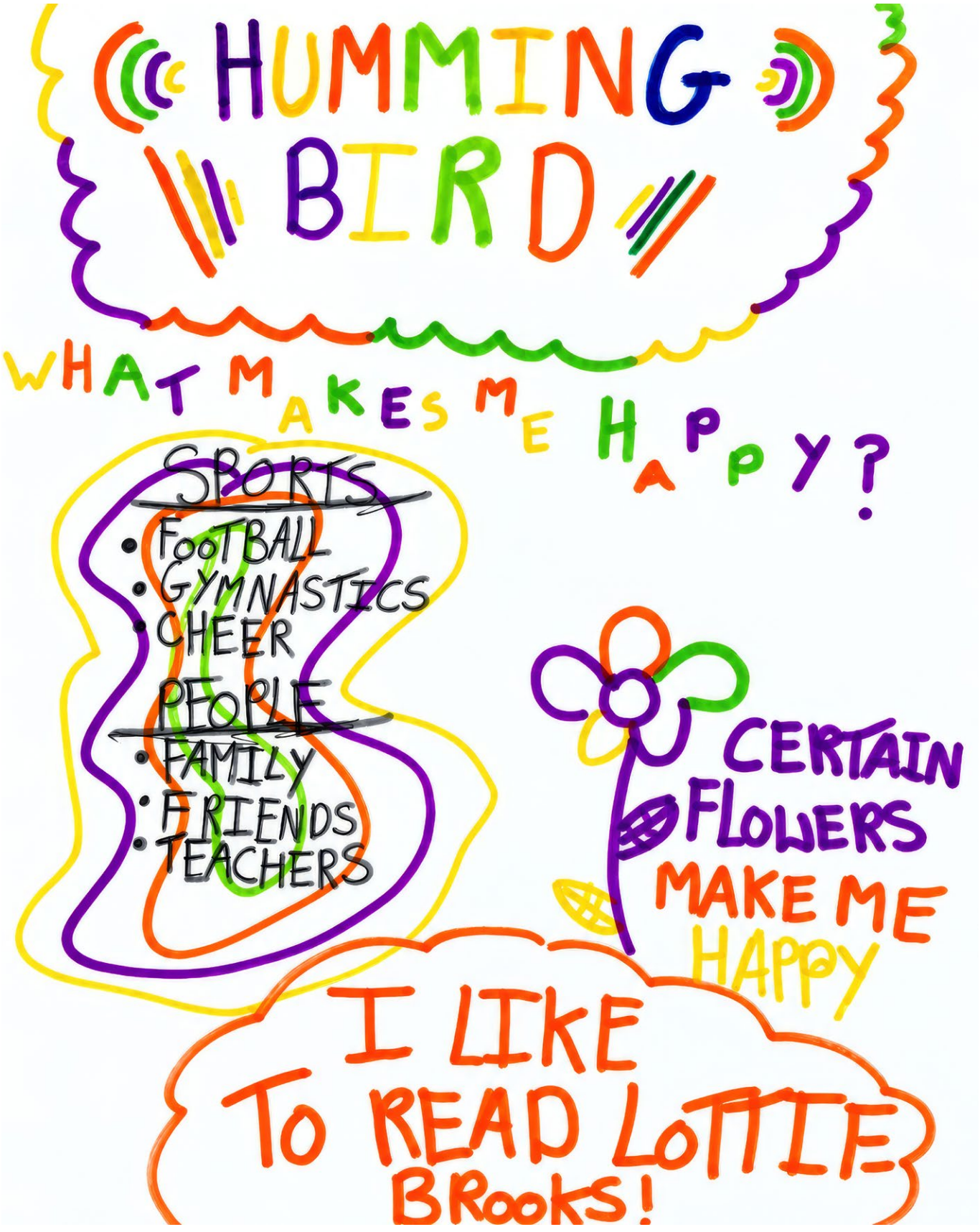
71%

of schools with available data had at least one in four pupils eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM).

Deprivation figures (IMD 2025) relate to the area in which each school is located. FSM data was available for 31 of 33 schools/ settings. FSM figures are school-level eligibility data and do not describe individual Hummingbird pupils.

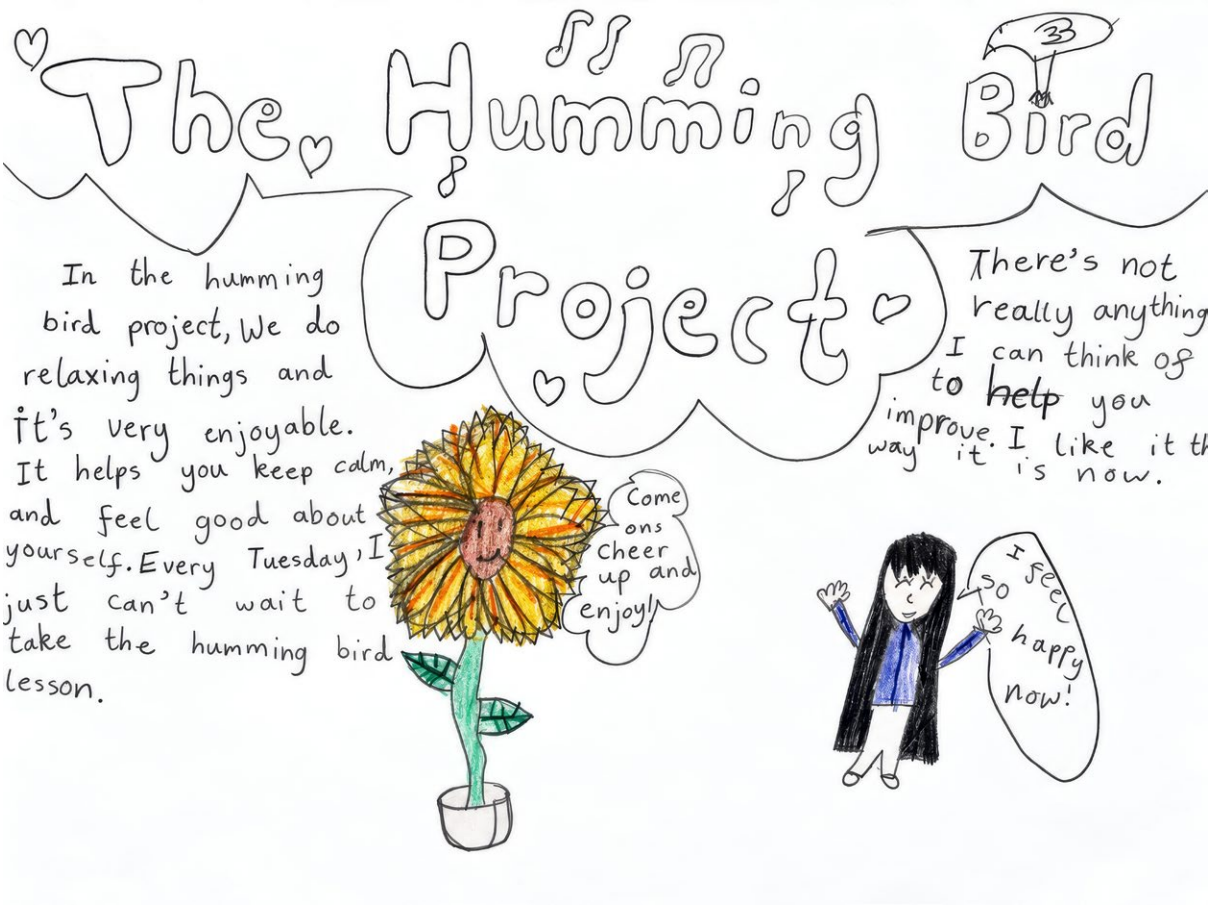


Free resources help schools continue learning beyond the six-week course



St Philip's CE Primary School, Atherton

Pupil voices

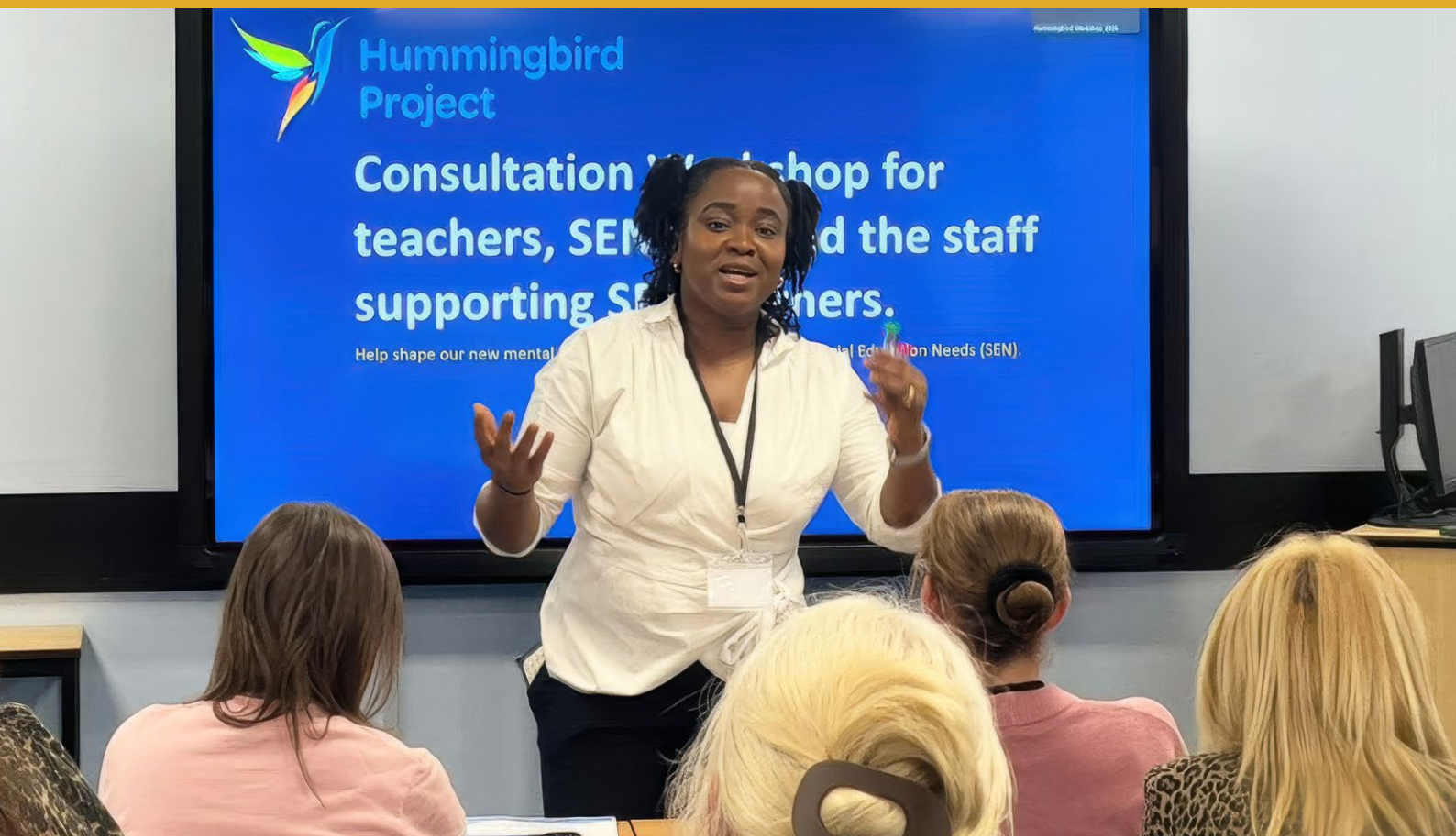


Prestolee Primary School



Unsworth Academy

Making Hummingbird more inclusive



Hummingbird Project Co-ordinator Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan presenting at the SEND workshop

Listening and developing

Every child should have the opportunity to explore what helps them feel happier. For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), this can mean offering different ways to take part.

In January 2026, we brought together SENCOs, teachers and education professionals at the University of Greater Manchester to explore how the programme could be more accessible.

Chaired by Professor Jerome Carson, the event featured talks from Professor Geoff Baker of True Learning Multi Academy Trust, and from Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan, who is leading our SEND research. Afterwards participants reviewed the Hummingbird materials in small groups.

What we heard

Clearer communication
Less text, visual clutter and abstract language

More ways to participate
Choices beyond written answers

Sensory and movement needs
Flexible activities and predictable routines

Support each pupil
Involve adults and reduce unnecessary pressure or competition

This project was kindly supported by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust

Making Hummingbird more inclusive



SENCOs and teaching staff review the Hummingbird materials from a SEND perspective

Putting learning into practice

In April 2026 Sonia visited Maple Grove School in Chester, a specialist school for children with autism, where she had the opportunity to try out some of the adaptations.

It was clear that pupils had a diverse range of needs, and that activities needed to be flexible to accommodate these. For example, our sensory activity based on identifying scents in jars would be too stimulating for some children, so Sonia offered alternatives such as listening to seashells and exploring tactile materials.

We are now designing a new workbook for SEND pupils and will be piloting this in SEND settings over the coming year.



Exploring materials at the workshop

> **"The Hummingbird Project has helped our pupils to talk about feelings, and their strengths, with an unfamiliar adult."**
> *- Teacher, Maple Grove School*

Nine years of research



Dr Ian Platt

Our Senior Programme Manager, Dr Ian Platt, has completed his PhD, drawing on his work researching, developing and delivering the Hummingbird Project.

His thesis explored how Positive Psychology interventions could support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Ian's research found that participation in the Hummingbird Project was associated with significant improvements in wellbeing, resilience and hope, and reductions in symptoms of mental distress.

Using a comparative case study, he also found greater improvements among pupils in more deprived areas. This highlights the value of making early mental health support accessible to communities facing disadvantage.

"I thought we might be able to help show what works for young people's mental health and help make sure that they get the best support possible."
- Dr Ian Platt



Blackley Academy
Sensory activity with scent jars

2017-2026

From programme development to PhD completion

Over 3,400

participants in Ian's doctoral research

Listening and influencing

Co-designing with young people

This year, Ian and Sonia held five focus groups with primary and secondary pupils to explore their experiences of the Hummingbird Project. Pupils highlighted the activities they enjoyed, as well as giving their suggestions for what could work better. Ian is now redesigning the secondary school booklet in response to this feedback, using pupils' experiences to shape its development.



What pupils asked for

More active sessions
More games, opportunities to move, and calming activities at the start.

More choice
Easier and harder challenge options, clearer choices to write or draw, and the flexibility to leave some answers blank.

Clearer explanations
Why wellbeing questionnaires are used and how responses are handled.

From the classroom to Parliament

Learning and research from the Hummingbird Project have contributed to the joint House of Commons Education and Health and Social Care Committees' inquiry into children and young people's mental health.

Professor Chathurika Kannangara from the University of Greater Manchester led the submission, working with the University of Chester and the Open University. MedEquip4Kids contributed feedback from teachers whose pupils participated in the Hummingbird Project.

The submission called for greater investment in prevention and early support, stronger mental health training for school staff, and approaches co-designed with young people and adapted for pupils with SEND.

Written evidence CYM0086, UK Parliament

The Humming bird Project

What is it?

It is a project that takes place over a 6-week period. It is supposed to make you happy and understand yourself.

What was good about it?



- It made me more mindful.
- It made me understand myself a bit more.
- It helped my mental health.
- It made me gratful for what I have
- It let me think about what my future will look like.
- It made me look forward to my future
- We ate 1 Starburst.

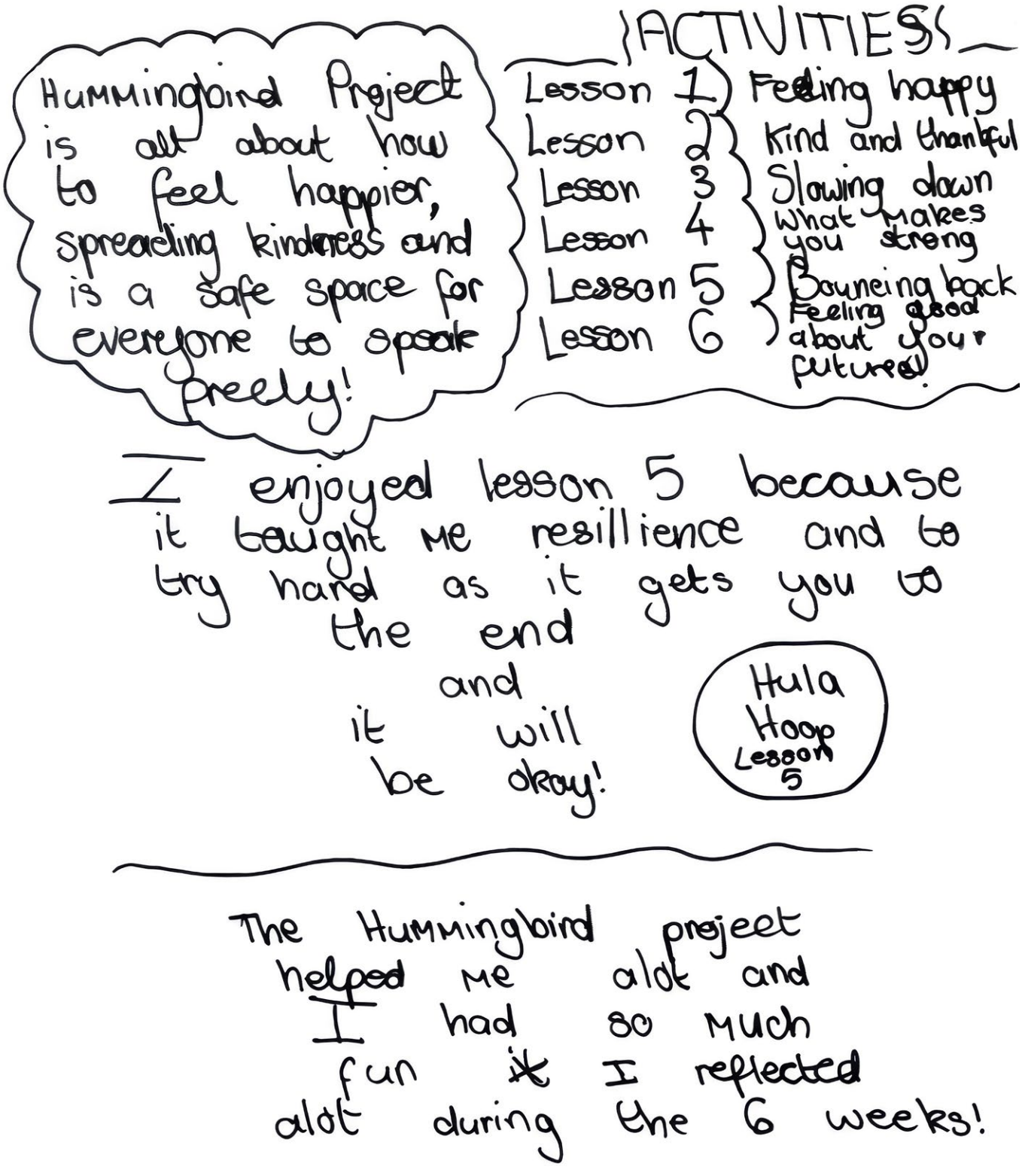
What was bad about it?

not happy about the amount

- It was a bit boring.

Unsworth Academy

Pupil voices



St Mary's Deane CE Primary School

Making it possible



Ed completed the marathon in an impressive time of 03.31.47



Sonia delivers a box of resources to Mark Thornley at Heathfield Primary School

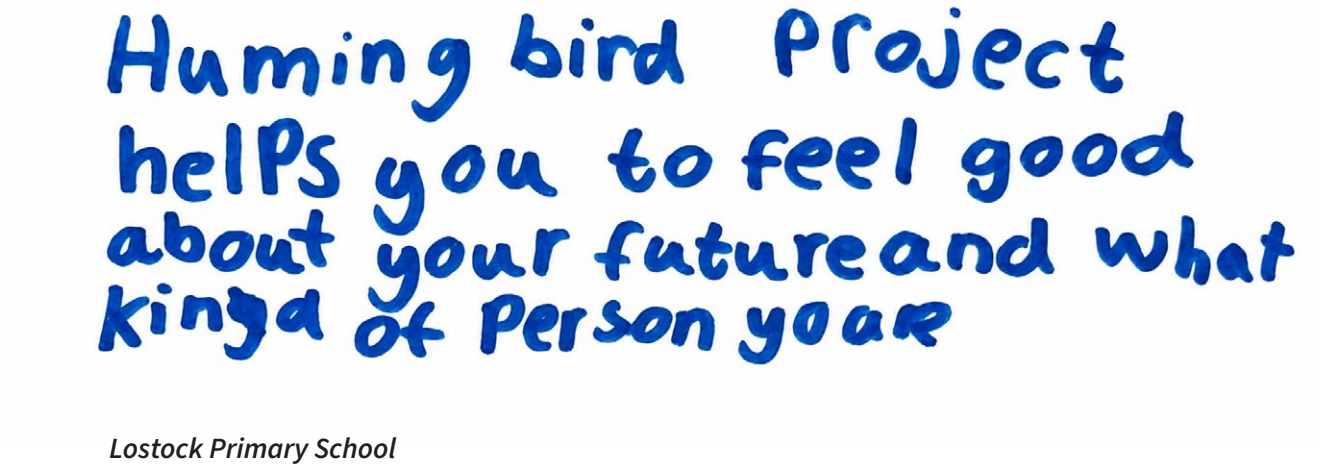
Going the extra mile

Dr Edward Banham-Hall stepped up at short notice to run the London Marathon in April 2026. Ed beat his fundraising target and raised over £2,000 for the Hummingbird Project.

> **"Knowing the funds raised will contribute to supporting children's mental health made the effort feel worthwhile, especially during the more challenging sections."**
> *- Ed Banham-Hall*

Support that lasts beyond six weeks

Funders including the Focus Foundation and the Provincial Walsh Trust for Bolton have donated specifically to provide the free resource boxes we give to schools following the course. These contain books, toys, games, and other Positive Psychology resources that help children and teachers to embed their learning into daily classroom activities.



Lostock Primary School

Thank you

Thank you for supporting the Hummingbird Project
September 2025 - August 2026

Branislav Trajkovski
Casey Trust
Cheshire Community Foundation
Edward Banham-Hall
Elizabeth Rathbone Trust
Eric Wright Charitable Trust
Focus Foundation
Gail Armstrong
Health Lottery Foundation
High Lee House Trust
Leri Charitable Trust
Patricia Routledge Foundation
Provincial Walsh Trust for Bolton
Sir Halley Stewart Trust
Sir James & Lady Scott Trust
UKH Foundation
W O Street Charitable Foundation



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Follow the Hummingbird Project on our social media channels @HummingbirdMH

info@medequip4kids.org.uk
www.medequip4kids.org.uk

Contact the team

Dr Ian Platt
ian.platt@medequip4kids.org.uk

Sonia Ebenezer-Bamigbayan
sonia@medequip4kids.org.uk

Catherine North
catherine@medequip4kids.org.uk

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