

## Matilda's Thank You: Compassion, Courage and Advocacy in Action

This courageous advocacy project grew out of personal experience, deep gratitude and a desire to help others.

Following the sad loss of her father, Matilda and her family were supported by Sobell House Hospice, whose compassionate care extended not only to her dad but to the whole family during an immensely difficult time. Sobell House provides specialist palliative and end-of-life care across Oxfordshire and, in the last year alone, supported 66% of all people who died in the county, alongside their families. This vital work is made possible through the dedication of staff and volunteers, and through fundraising that enables services such as expert nursing care, family and bereavement support, and therapeutic provision at the time it is needed most.

Matilda was profoundly grateful for the care, kindness and dignity shown to her father and her family. She wanted to say thank you - but she also wanted to ensure that other children and families might benefit from the same care and support. From this motivation, a courageous advocacy project was born.

Together with her close friends, Evelyn and Zoe, Matilda planned and led a fundraising initiative entirely driven by the children themselves. With sensitivity, determination and generosity, the girls organised a range of fundraising activities. Matilda donated one of her own new teddies to create a *Name the Bear* competition, while the girls also made handmade jewellery and bookmarks, which they sold each day at the school gate. In addition, they ran a stall at the Christmas Fayre, selling nearly-new gifts and items donated for the cause.

Throughout the project, the children demonstrated resilience, teamwork and moral courage. They spoke with dignity and confidence about why the cause mattered to them and why Sobell House's work is so important. Their actions were rooted in empathy and a strong sense of justice, reflecting our school's values and our commitment to outreach.

Alongside the fundraising itself, this project contributed to wider learning and awareness. Sobell House Hospice provides thoughtful, age-appropriate resources that help children understand illness, palliative and end-of-life care. As a school, we are working to build and strengthen our own resources to better support children who are bereaved, children who face illness themselves or within their families, and those navigating other significant challenges in daily life. This project has helped shape that intent, ensuring that compassion, understanding and care sit at the heart of our provision.

We were honoured to welcome Ariya Nair, Relationships Fundraiser from Sobell House Hospice, to our collective worship. Ariya shared with the children the vital work of the hospice, heard about the extraordinary efforts of Matilda, Evelyn and Zoe, and accepted a cheque for £500 on behalf of Sobell House. Ariya also brought a small thank-you gift for each of the girls, recognising their kindness and commitment and their courage in taking action for something they believed in.

This project is a powerful example of courageous advocacy rooted in lived experience. It shows how pupils are supported to transform personal reflection into meaningful action, and how compassion can become a force for change. Matilda and her friends did not shy away from difficult experiences; instead, they responded with generosity, purpose and hope - modelling to us all what it means to live out our values with courage and authenticity.

