

World Mental Health Day – Enrichment Activity 2023

As part of our ongoing commitment to pupils' wellbeing and personal development, we marked World Mental Health Day on Tuesday 10th October, joining a global initiative that aims to raise awareness of mental health and the importance of looking after it.

World Mental Health Day provides an opportunity for everyone to talk openly about mental health and to highlight how important it is to seek support when needed. The 2023 theme, set by the World Federation for Mental Health, was "Mental health is a universal human right", a message that aligns closely with our value-driven approach to care, inclusion and dignity.

Mental Health as an Ongoing Conversation

While World Mental Health Day provided a clear focus, mental health is not treated as a one-off event at our school. Instead, it is a conversation woven thoughtfully throughout the year, including through:

- PSHE lessons
- a Growth Mindset approach across the curriculum
- regular opportunities for reflection during Wellbeing Wednesdays
- a whole-school culture that encourages children to talk, reflect and seek support

We also build on this learning during our Children's Mental Health Week in February, reinforcing key messages and strategies in an age-appropriate way.

Strengthening Staff Knowledge and Support

As part of our commitment to supporting children effectively, all teaching staff have recently undertaken Mental Health Training delivered by Oxford Health. This training has strengthened staff awareness of key mental health issues affecting children, enhanced understanding of early signs and provided access to high-quality resources.

Two important areas, while well-known, were highlighted as particularly significant for children's wellbeing.

The Importance of Sleep

Staff explored evidence showing that even five nights of sleep deprivation can contribute to:

- reduced mood and motivation
- difficulties with learning and concentration
- lowered self-esteem

Good sleep hygiene -the routines and habits around bedtime - plays a vital role in helping children settle and stay asleep. Reliable guidance is available through organisations such as the NSPCC and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

As guidance:

- children aged 3–5 years typically need 10–13 hours of sleep (including naps)
- children aged 6–12 years typically need 9–12 hours of sleep

Diet and Mental Wellbeing


Training also explored the impact of diet on brain development and emotional wellbeing, highlighting evidence that an adequate intake of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) is crucial for children's developing brains.

As a reminder, the school policy supports this learning, and only healthy snacks are permitted at breaktime. Crisps and chocolate bars are not allowed, helping us to promote consistent wellbeing messages across school and home.

Supporting Families

We were pleased to share information with parents and carers about Oxfordshire Youth's online Mental Health Awareness Sessions, which are free for Oxfordshire residents.

These sessions aim to support parents and carers in understanding current mental health issues affecting children and young people and provide helpful guidance and reassurance.

 Further information and booking:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/an-online-mental-health-awareness-session-for-parents-and-carers-tickets-296940455897>

Impact

This enrichment activity helped to:

- reinforce the importance of mental health as part of everyday life
- support children in developing language around feelings and wellbeing
- strengthen staff confidence in supporting pupils
- promote positive partnerships between school and home

Most importantly, it reinforced the message that mental health matters, that talking is encouraged, and that help is always available.