

Children's Mental Health Week 2023

Theme: *Let's Connect*

In February, our school took part in Children's Mental Health Week 2023, joining thousands of schools across the UK in exploring this year's national theme: "Let's Connect." This theme focused on helping children understand the importance of healthy connections - to friends, family, school, nature and their wider community - and how strong, positive relationships are central to good mental health and wellbeing. Throughout the week, we provided pupils with opportunities to reflect, create, talk, collaborate and celebrate the many ways they are connected to others.

The week began with an assembly introducing the idea that humans are *hard-wired* for connection, and that moments of kindness, listening, teamwork and empathy all help us build a sense of belonging. Pupils discussed the different types of connections in their own lives and why these matter for emotional wellbeing. Across the school, teachers used stories, discussion, circle time and creative tasks to nurture connection, resilience and a sense of community.

Activities Across the School

Hedgehog Class (EYFS) – “Connected Through Kindness”

Our youngest children explored the idea of connection through simple acts of kindness. They read stories about friendship and helping others, created “kindness chains” to celebrate gentle actions in the classroom, and worked together on shared art pieces to represent a “connected classroom.” Pupils practised using language to express feelings and learned who they can talk to when they need help.

Squirrel Class (Year 1/2) – “Who Helps Me Feel Connected?”

Squirrel Class spent time thinking about the important people in their lives. Pupils created **connection webs** showing their relationships with friends, family members and trusted adults in school. They discussed how talking, playing and problem-solving together helps strengthen those bonds. The class also took part in partner challenges requiring teamwork and cooperation, helping them recognise the value of shared experiences.

Fox Class (Year 3/4) – “Connecting Through Creativity and Communication”

Fox Class focused on how communication helps build connection. Pupils learned about different ways to express feelings — words, writing, art, music, movement — and created “connection postcards” to send to someone who supports or inspires them. They also explored the idea that disconnection (feeling left out or misunderstood) can impact mental health, and discussed strategies for rebuilding connection, such as talking to an adult or reaching out to a friend.

Owl Class (Year 5/6) – “Stronger Together: Building Healthy Connections”

Owl Class explored deeper concepts such as empathy, perspective-taking and emotional resilience. They reflected on times when connections have helped them overcome challenges, and looked at what makes a relationship healthy. Pupils worked in groups to create short role-plays about friendship dilemmas, practising supportive language, active listening and managing conflict constructively. These discussions helped pupils think about the role they play in contributing to positive relationships.

Whole-School Wellbeing Focus

Across the week, every class took part in calming and grounding activities such as breathing exercises, outdoor walks, mindfulness prompts and gratitude reflections. These supported children in developing self-awareness and reminded them that feeling connected to themselves is just as important as connecting with others.

We also celebrated connection through a whole-school display, where every child contributed a decorated link representing someone or something that helps them feel connected. When joined together, the chain stretched across the hall - a powerful visual reminder that we are stronger together.

Impact and Reflections

Children's Mental Health Week 2023 helped pupils:

- understand that connection is vital for wellbeing
- recognise trusted adults they can talk to
- build empathy and emotional vocabulary
- develop teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills
- feel part of a supportive, caring school community

Teachers reported that pupils were open, thoughtful and genuinely engaged with the theme. Many children said the week helped them appreciate the people who support them, and gave them the confidence to speak up when something feels difficult.