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School is where the heart is



Pupils from Merley First School being introduced to the new HeartSmart initiative. Pictured with their headteacher Katharine Anstey.

A scheme that teaches children how to look after theirs and other people's hearts has been launched at a Poole school.

Merley First is the latest Wimborne Academy Trust school to introduce HeartSmart into the classroom – an initiative, which encourages children to be kind and caring to themselves and their friends.

Along with fellow trust schools, St John's CE First in Wimborne and Witchampton CE First, Merley is formally putting emotional wellbeing at the heart of the curriculum.

Headteacher of Merley First School, Katharine Anstey, said: "This initiative puts the mental health of our children at the very heart of our teaching.

"If children learn about looking after their emotional wellbeing from an early age, and just as importantly how to look out for others, they are more likely to enjoy their learning and flourish.

“There has been much in the news about mental health in young people and as schools we play an important part in educating children on how to be healthy – both mentally and physically.”

As part of the HeartSmart initiative teachers have had training on how to use the specially provided resources.

They will then tailor their PHSE (personal, social and health education) lessons to encourage kind and positive words and help build character, emotional health and resilience in the children.

And the children have been given story books and learning tools featuring HeartSmart’s mascot Boris the robot to teach them the importance of being kind and feeling safe.

CEO of Wimborne Academy Trust, Liz West, said: “This is a very creative way of enabling children to adopt a positive attitude and be emotionally healthy.

“I think it is fantastic that three of our first schools are adopting this approach because children are never too young to start looking after their mental health.”

Merley First School is one of 12 schools that make up Wimborne Academy Trust. The others are: Queen Elizabeth’s School, Allenbourn Middle, St Michael’s CE Middle, Emmanuel CE Middle, Lockyer’s Middle, Verwood First, Hillside First, Merley First, Colehill First, St John’s CE First, Witchampton CE First and Hayeswood First.

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