Engaging Schools: Connie Gellatly

Bio

Name & Type: Connie Gellatly (PE Lead), Cherry Hinton CofE Primary School
Location: Cambridge
Impact Award Category: Engaging Schools
Term: Autumn

Summary of Activity

As the new PE Lead at Cherry Hinton CofE Primary School, Connie Gellatly wanted to combat the pandemic's impact on physical and mental health by re-emphasising the importance of physical activity and its wider benefits to the school and its children, by revamping its existing 'Act Active' initiative.

Act Active is a daily activity which sees all year groups run laps of the playground ahead of the daily assembly. To increase engagement with the initiative, Connie introduced a competitive element which saw year groups working together to collectively rack up miles on a termly basis.

An 'Act Active Challenge' display board was specifically created with a marker for each year group. Each week, the miles for each year group are tallied up and their marker moved along. Also on the board was a number of sporting venues as the milestones for the year groups to reach.

To keep the initiative fresh, Connie would look at different hooks and themes for the daily run. For example, National Friendship Week the pupils worked in rotating pairs to encourage communication, and a Christmas-themed edition to was run in collaboration with Arthur Rank Hospice Charity to raise sponsorship money.

Impact on Young People

The whole school benefitted from increased opportunity for physical activity, having appositive impact on their health and wellbeing.

The school and wider community felt the wider benefits of physical activity through an increased sense of community as every child and adult was outside running or walking every day. Connie relays that it was great to see a return to this community and to a sense of positive competition following the negative impact of the pandemic.

The activity not only got children moving and benefitting from physical activity, but also taught them about new sports and global venues while providing tangible motivation for them to keep going. Responsibility was also given to year six pupils to lead their teams to collect results, therefore developing their leadership skills.

One team of children even reached Wimbledon, a distance of 55 miles from the school, within one week! Upon arriving at the destination, the children would be able to discover information around it.

Key Learnings

Connie says the biggest challenge was involving children who were not interested in running, or those who had lost passion and motivation during the pandemic.

To combat this, she recommends incentives such as the whole school effort in competition, the house point incentive, and the weekly assembly awards.

The key here was getting SLTs buy in, this is evident in every class taking part across the school – SLT value our young people being physically active and can see the direct benefits on engagement, community and ultimately learning.

Connie's biggest learning would be that while such an activity takes time to create and uphold, it was rewarding to bring the positive experiences of excitement, community, and wellness back to children who need it.

How this could be replicated across the network

Many schools undertake the daily mile, however the added elements Connie has introduced in her school are a great example of how to ensure the children are engaged and inspired to run, not just because it is required.

The competitive element encourages whole-school buy-in, whilst the semi-regular themes (National Friendship Week/Charity) help keep the activity fresh.

There is also the opportunity to link the activity to wider curriculum. For this example, Connie is planning for a future term the miles to be multiplied by 1000 to become 'space miles', with the tallied distance travelling to different planets in the solar system – a great cross curriculum theme.

Connie said: *"It was great to reflect on my impact when completing the application and also reflect on the challenges the children have completed after a tough few years at school for them. It feels great to restore the sense of community, resilience and positive wellbeing back into our school after the pandemic through physical fitness and movement. I look forward to telling the children the wonderful news in assembly".*