

Alexandra Park hosts Holocaust Survivor at 'Most Powerful Assembly'

Headteacher Jenny Seabright described a visit by Holocaust survivor Icek Alterman to the Alexandra Park Junior School, a signatory of the Pledge to Peace, as "the most powerful assembly that I have ever had the privilege to be part of".

Icek, a survivor of the Auschwitz – Birkenau death camp, visited the school on Friday 25 January to speak to pupils and staff about his personal experience of the Holocaust, in which tragically he lost the other members of his immediate family. This special event was part of the school's participation in the We Remember Campaign. Holocaust Memorial Day is held annually on 27 January to mark the day of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp by Soviet forces.

Icek was born in Poland in 1928. He was separated from his mother, brother and sister who were sent to Treblinka Concentration Camp. He never heard from them again. Icek lived with his father in the Warsaw Ghetto before they were sent to Blyzin concentration camp to work. Separated from his father, Icek worked in the kitchens before he contracted typhus and became delirious from his illness. He was about to be shot in the head by a German officer, but he was dissuaded from doing so by another inmate who told the officer that Icek was not ill, just mad. Eventually Icek was sent on a death march to Auschwitz-Birkenau and discovered that his father had also been sent to Camp III or the Bunha Works.

Samantha Nicholson-Hickling, PHSE Co-ordinator and Assembly Co-ordinator, said of Icek's visit to the school: "It was a truly inspirational story and one I am so honoured to have heard. It was really important to me to get Icek to come into school to talk to our children. They need to know this horrendous thing happened, but that they can be a part of making sure it never happens again! Our children make me so proud, as they show such great respect and interest; some of them are wiser beyond their years."

After Icek's talk, the children were invited to ask questions. Samantha said that: "One pupil had us all in tears when she asked Icek how he felt being the last one in his family. In response, he explained the importance of family and standing up for each other".

The assembly ended with the children waving their We Remember Flags and singing a powerful rendition of their favourite song, 'Power in Me'. Samantha described this as "a song which reminds us we can make a difference as we all have the power to change the world!"



With thanks to Samantha Nicholson-Hickling for this article and the photographs