Sharks class visit 26/5/22

I arrived after lunch as the children were in afternoon registration. As usual Mr Saul checked in with each child to see how they were feeling. As it was the last day of term some of the children were eager to share with the class their excitement about their plans for the holidays.

I was observing a science lesson on animal habitats, endangered animals and how environmental changes impact them. This topic is more theory based than other science topics studied this school year. The lesson started with the children having some thinking time about what “environmental” means and the sorts of changes that can happen, whether those changes are negative or positive and how that can affect the environments of living creatures. Initially the children discussed the subject in pairs, some with the help of teaching assistants, and then Mr Saul opened the question up to the class noting the answers on the whiteboard. Mr Saul said to the children that he expected there might be lots of good ideas and he might not write all of them down which I thought to be a lovely way of managing expectations in case a child gave an answer that wasn’t quite right. The children had their hands up eager to engage with the lesson and to speak up. They showed a good understanding already of what environment means and of changes like pollution and global warming that could impact.

After a lively interactive discussion the children were then asked to take a whiteboard themselves and work on their own to note down the way humans can change the environment for good or bad using a column method to record their thoughts. Mr Saul walked the classroom to check each child was able to input their understanding and teaching assistants worked with individual children to support them translating their thoughts to the board.

Mr Saul then asked the children to share their views on good and bad changes humans can make to the environment. Most of the children were happy to put their hands up and engage. The children talked about bad energy types like oil coal and fossil fuels and clean energy that they had covered previously and the children made connections to that topic. The children had lots of great ideas. They talked about walking rather than driving, electric cars, picking up litter, replanting trees, eating less meat and preventing plastic in the ocean. The children seemed really interested and engaged in the topic and as always there was plenty of humour.

The last topic was about natural events and how they impact environments (drought, flood, hurricane and volcanoes). The children were asked what each picture showed, what the consequences are and what the effect is. The children were very interested in Mr Saul’s personal experience of visiting a volcano and proposing to his wife! They also talked about the red squirrels and how humans introducing the grey squirrel population to the UK had a negative impact on the existing red squirrel population.

The final task was to choose a change to write about, how that impacted the habitat and what effect it had on living things. When completed the children would mark the paper green amber or red to indicate by way of self-evaluation how well they felt they had coped with the task. This seems to be a very useful way for the teacher to monitor a child’s confidence in the subject being taught. Mr Saul praised the good ideas the class had come up with in the lesson and one of the children verbalised the fact he felt he had done very well in the task which was lovely to hear.

As this was a mainly theory based task today, Mr Saul showed me some of the children’s workbooks so I could see the experiments that had been done in the past to bring science to life for the children. This included interacting with models of the human body and carrying out experiments relating to tooth decay. The children would plan an experiment, predict the outcome, agree a method and then write a conclusion.

Another experiment related to electricity circuits and the children had designed their own Christmas switches applying the science they had learned to make it real. They had also toured the school looking for switches and tallied the results.

In their sound topic they had learnt about pitches and made pan pipes and a string telephone. They also designed a sound studio including looking at insulation and how to measure sound in decibels. Mr Saul explained how there was cross over with other subjects including research on famous male and female scientists and creating tables to record results using ICT skills. One task involved the children making their own instruments and playing in a band at the end. I wonder how loud that was measured in decibels!

Finally Mr Saul explained how he had used physical and multi-sensory learning in relation to the solids, liquids and gases topic. The children became the particles themselves in groups in the classroom so they could see how each state of matter was built up and this helped the children visualise and explore the particles for each. They also carried out experiments on the impact of warm and cold on water, chocolate and air.

Mr Saul mentioned that usually at the end of each topic the children do a kahoot quiz to consolidate their learning.

After science I had the opportunity to observe a PE lesson. This was based on rounders. To begin with the children were in pairs throwing a ball to each other practising catching. They then moved on to throwing balls in chains. Mr Saul emphasised how they had problem solved last time when one child couldn’t throw the ball all the way back to the start in one throw and the children had realised the importance of team work as they needed a team mate to catch the ball in between, creating a chain of players. There followed a game where the children were separated into two teams and each took turns in hitting the ball with a racket, being infield with balls caught being thrown into hoops and outfield to catch the balls and throw them back. The children followed the rules of the game well and seemed to really enjoy the game. They were polite and helped tidy up the ground afterwards. Another lovely afternoon spent with the Sharks class!