**Class Visit to Owls 5/3/24**

Today I observed an English lesson in class. On arrival Miss O’Brien provided me with a very useful briefing note explaining the lesson plan and context for the task. Miss O’Brien then delivered a quick recap of what the class had done previously on this topic before showing a National Geographic video of wildlife in Africa. I noted that the video was subtitled which assists with understanding. The children sat quietly to watch the video and listen to/read the facts being discussed. The video followed on from comprehension work the children had done the day before.

After the video the children were asked to spend some time thinking about the video and try and remember three facts. They were invited to give a thumbs up when they had three facts to share with the class. The children were then asked to get up and find a peer or teacher/TA to tell their facts to in pairs. I thought this was a very useful tool to check understanding. The children clearly feel comfortable talking to each other and important skills of communicating information and listening to others were observed. It was also good to see movement incorporated into the lesson in this way. The children moved sensibly around the class sharing their information with three separate people. This also seems a very good way of embedding learning because the children are repeating the facts each time which will help moving the information into the long-term memory vault. I thought this way of fact sharing was most effective. They also develop their social skills and listening technique in this way, and it also helps with the thinking and processing time in preparation for the task which in turn assists with executive function. This is known as Think-Pair-share and is an oracy technique that seems to work very well in class.

When everyone had had an opportunity to share their facts the pupils sat down again. Miss O’Brien then asked the class if they remembered what type of writing they were doing today. Where there was some reticence to speak Miss O’Brien presented the children with examples of different styles of writing so the children could use a process of elimination to recognise the task ahead. Today the children were looking at non chronological reports (not time ordered reports like a newspaper article, but a subject matter report). Miss O’Brien explained to the children the features that usually are included in such a report (for instance, a title, subtitle, introduction). The children then split up into groups to complete a task. Some children worked on more challenging work with a TA outside the classroom, the work being adapted to Level 2 learning. Others worked at different levels in class. It was interesting to see how the same task is adapted to meet the needs and capacity of the individual child so they can be challenged but also feel a sense of accomplishment. Some children were working on a one-to-one basis with a TA, others were in groups depending on the level of support they need. I observed a group of three children reading a text about leopards. The children had a list of features in the text, and they were asked to identify and highlight in different colours the different features in the text so they could start to understand how these reports are usually structured. One of the children wanted to read some of the text out loud and received a high five from Miss O’Brien for their reading skills. The children were asked to identify the introduction and they discussed what would normally be included in an introduction. They were then asked to identify different sections, subheadings, interesting facts and captions on pictures, if any. Miss O’Brien encouraged the children to start thinking about their own report and how this would be structured and what subject this might focus on.

The children glued the preparation work into their books and were then asked to pick a topic for their report and begin to research facts on their tablet or laptop. The group I was observing chose to do reports on Hippos, lions and cheetahs. The children found some interesting facts about their chosen animals, for instance, how fast a cheetah runs and for how long. They also talked about the type of food the animals ate and whether they were omnivores, herbivores or carnivores. One child working separately had wanted to do a report on tigers but once he started researching the topic, he realised tigers are not inhabitants of Africa so changed his topic. I was impressed with this because it showed he was engaged in his research, understood the task and had the resilience to change topic after he had committed to it. This flexibility of thought was good to see.

I learnt a few new things about African animals, and I also saw how the children can use Siri to find facts online. This was helpful for one child who was struggling to type a particular word and as a result their search function was not working well. Instead of getting frustrated because the search was not working, they switched to a different method to achieve their purpose. They also showed understanding of what they had researched so whilst this method of research is not reliant on writing skills, they must be able to use reading skills to understand the search result. Again, it was good to see flexibility of approach being used by the children without prompting and not giving up when things didn’t work out. This is a sign of maturity that will be useful in the transition to secondary school.

Miss O’Brien explained that when the reports are finished the children will produce their reports in little booklets that will be pinned on the wall. I read some booklets that were already on the wall from a different task, and I really liked this different way of producing and displaying information.

I noticed that on the tables there were new stickers A, B and C. Miss O’Brien explained that these were for a class discussion concept of Agree, Build and Challenge. The idea is that instead of every child giving the same answer to a question, they will agree rather than repeat the answer, say something different to build on the information and then challenge each other’s ideas or views in a positive way to understand them. I can see that this would be particularly useful in subjects where children are expressing their personal views on subjects.

I observed the use of wobble cushions and footrests in class. One child also wore a fleece blanket over her school uniform to feel warm and cosy. It is always nice to see adaptations made for the children.

The children demonstrated they are confident and eager to share information with me in class. They like to involve me which I enjoy enormously, and they share things with me that make them proud and happy (like a prefect badge).

After the children had finished the lesson and went out for their break, I spoke to the TA’s who had worked with children outside the classroom about how the lesson had been adapted to meet the needs of the children they were working with, and they showed me the work the children had done with them. It was very helpful to understand how the task was modified in three different ways so each child can have a sense of achievement related to their personal level of development.