**Class Visit to Owls 25/6/24**

I had requested an observation of a PSHE class this term. The topic today related to child labour. To engage the children in the subject the children were first asked a variety of questions about chocolate. They had to think about their favourite chocolate then discuss it in groups. They were then asked to share with the wider class which ones were their favourites. Leading on from this they were invited to do a taste test of some caramel chocolate, white chocolate and cocoa powder. They were then asked to use a wide range of words (with suggested words on screen) to discuss how chocolate made them feel and what the various products tasted like. All the children participated enthusiastically in the task and were happy to share their ideas and use wider vocabulary.

Afterwards the children were shown on a map the areas of Africa where cocoa beans are grown, and the children were able to recognise Nigeria as a country they had studied previously. There followed a discussion about whether the children would like to make or sell chocolate along with their reasons why and a guess as to how much you would be paid to do those jobs. The children had a lively discussion including how it would be hard to make chocolate if you were hungry and how it would need to be an older more responsible adult who did this work, so they didn’t steal the product! I could tell the children were really thinking about the question and answering sensibly.

Before showing a video about a young African boy called Abdul Miss O’Brien prepared the children for the questions she would be asking at the end. This is a good way of ensuring the children are already focused on what they will be asked before they see the video. The children watched intently and expressed how sad they felt for the young boy. They knew he was missing out on education, family, friends, play and sleep. They also pointed out that he had never even tasted chocolate and had no idea why he was collecting cocoa beans.

One child said another child had stolen his answer. Miss O’Brien de-escalated this by explaining we had all watched the same video so it makes sense we would all have similar answers and its just a case of “great minds think alike”. I thought that was a skilful way to diffuse potential conflict.

Miss O’Brien then discussed Fairtrade and how many manufacturers ensure that their chocolate is produced and sourced ethically and that the workers and growers get a fair deal, a fair wage and there is no slave labour. The children seemed to take this in and one child was quite upset at the thought that his favourite chocolate bar might not be Fair trade. This showed how the lesson connected emotionally with some of the children and they were sensitive to the issue.

Miss O’Brien also explained that child labour does not just happen in Africa in relation to cocoa beans and showed some more materials on the screen related to children working. She explained how there is an initiative to raise awareness of child labour called “Red Card to Child Labour”. The symbol of this is a pin wheel with five blades for each continent. The children will next lesson create some posters about child labour on this theme to reinforce and embed their learning.

Miss O’Brien explained how often fairtrade chocolate is more expensive because it is ethically produced. She also showed an unwrapped Tony’s chocolate bar and how it isn’t in equal sections like normal chocolate bars but is in a crazy unequal pattern to represent the fact that not all chocolate is fairly produced. A visual representation like this helps reinforce the message of the lesson that things are not always divided fairly.

After the lesson one child came up to me eager to share some news she had about winning a football medal. She was so proud of herself. Another boy who I have watched grow in confidence over the last three years came up to me to introduce himself which was wonderful. I had also noticed that same child had closed the open toilet door when asked to do so and had volunteered to turn off the lights. It has been a privilege seeing his development over the years.

I stayed on to read through a PHSE workbook and was pleased to see they had covered a lot of very important topics including peer on peer abuse, drugs, relationships, self-worth and the internet. It was interesting to note that 7 out of 8 of the class had said they thought the internet was bad for them. Miss O’Brien explained they use the 3D PSHE LKS2 dimensions programme which is very comprehensive and accessible for the children.

As this was the last time I would see this cohort before they leave for secondary school I took some time to sit with them at lunch and chat about what interests them. They were very excited about the upcoming swimming lessons. One child wanted to show me his train toy and was happy to ask me questions about why I said it was helpful that he had introduced himself to me before. Another child spoke to me about peas and what makes a fruit and what makes a vegetable. Another child pretended his yoghurt was a grenade and acted out sheltering from it. It was lovely to see the imagination, creativity and confidence among them. I wish them all well in their new schools and I will miss them very much.