

Class visit Sharks 24/3/22

I arrived before formal class started while the children were settling in for their day. Some children were in the sensory room and some were drawing quietly at their desks. This pre teach time helps them settle down and be ready for learning. I also had an opportunity to see the sensory room which is set up very well to be a calming environment. I could have stayed all day looking at the bubble fish!

Mr Saul took some time to brief me on the Phonics programme used in school and go through the booklet containing the various levels of progress and targets which can be adapted to meet the specific needs of individual pupils, at whatever stage of development they are.

Class started with the register and the children were asked to say how they were feeling based on a 1-10 scale. The children were eager to share any good news or plans they are looking forward to with the rest of the class. Mr Saul went through the day's timetable and notified the children of a change to their timetable as they were going to receive a presentation on the Water Cycle from a representative of United Utilities. This is part of science week.

The children then split into three groups. Group 1: Three children remained with Mr Saul to work on spellings and prefixes. Group 2: Four children stayed in the room with Mrs Ward to work on spelling and writing sentences using focus words. Group 3: The remaining children left the room with Mrs Maddocks to work on the Nessy program. Mr Saul explained to me that the groups rotate daily so they are not all doing the same thing every day. While I was observing Group 2 one of the children referenced the fact that they had used a particular focus word on Nessy yesterday. This demonstrates the linking of information and learning between different methods of teaching.

Group 1 started their lesson discussing different prefixes (using a whiteboard to write down the spellings). Mr Saul used flashcards to aid visual learning. The group looked at prefixes pre- Re- and dis- initially. They suggested words beginning with the relevant pre fix and would then test themselves to see if they could spell the word. Following this initial activity the group did an interactive session on the screen modelled on the "say what you see" catchphrase game. The words all started with the prefix "ex". The children found this great fun and were clearly engaged with the task and enjoyed the challenge of being the first to work out the answer. This was a very interactive session and the children showed great confidence and interest. The children also finished the session doing a word search using the focus words and then took some time to practice cursive writing

Group 2 started their lesson with flashcards for key focus words. The cards had the vowels and a visual of the word but gaps for the consonants. First the children wrote the words on their whiteboards, and once they had grasped the correct spelling they were asked to write a prescribed sentence with the words in it. Following that task they used a green pen to correct the focus word if had not been spelt correctly. I noticed that even when one of the children seemed a bit downcast as he had struggled with his spellings Mrs Ward found ways to give him positive feedback regardless, "well done you worked really hard" "I noticed your writing was very neat". Mr Saul swapped with Mrs Ward part way through the session and encouraged Group 2 to play a pairs game against each other to earn team points. They each gave the other pupil three of the focus words to spell and they received a point for each they answered correctly. I noticed that they were very comfortable with each other and were able to laugh together if mistakes were made. They didn't appear embarrassed

or cross when they made mistakes. One of the children was struggling and again Mr Saul gave him positive feedback which made him smile. He said "you did well as you got the vowels that make the sound correct, it's just the consonants that weren't correct". Quick as a flash the child said "can I have half a point then?" and laughed. It was lovely to see how relaxed the children were and how confident they were with their peers and teachers. There was also a lot of humour used in all the group activities which seems to increase levels of engagement and shows the positive relationships in the classroom. The fact that the children seem comfortable making mistakes in front of their peers and they don't shy away from participation for fear of making those mistakes shows that they have strong trusting relationships in the classroom and that they have developed good coping skills and resilience.

Mr Saul gave me a demonstration of Nessy while the children were in the Water Cycle presentation so I could get background as to what the children in Group 3 would have been doing. They work independently with headphones on. The programme is games based with five targets to reach before they move on. Mr Saul showed me the "Power of e" game where the "e" uses its magic powers to change the weak first vowel into a different sound but then "e" loses its own strength and falls silent. It was a very clever visual idea to help children understand how sounds change in a word when "e" is added at the end (for instance "cub" becomes "cube"). I can see how that would capture the imagination and reinforce learning of concepts.

As always this was a very informative and positive session and I am very impressed with the confidence of the children and how well they interact and engage with learning.