

Phonics visit to Owls Class 8/10/25

I had the pleasure of visiting Owl's class today in order to see what happens during their Phonics lessons.

It was my first time visiting Orrets during the school day and was initially struck by how quiet and calm the environment is! Whilst some children may be moving around the corridors, accompanied by adults, it was always in a calm and purposeful way.

Upon entry I noticed that the classroom had been prepared, with all the resources and photocopying all set out on the tables, prior to the children's arrival.

There are 10 pupils in Owls class and their teacher is Ms O'Brien. 8 of the children arrived initially off their buses and came into class, where Ms O'Brien was playing calming music. They were all greeted by the class staff who reminded them to hang up their coats and bags.

The children all sat down together, greeting each other, and waited quietly. Ms O'Brien, together with the teaching assistants Ms Messenger and Ms Albertsen, all modelled using The Zones of Regulation, and explained what colour/mood they were feeling and why. Each pupil was asked what colour/mood they were feeling and why. Most children were feeling in a green mood, but some felt a bit blue, so discussion took place on why this was the case and what they could do about it. This was all recorded onto the whiteboard together with registration of all pupils onto the new attendance system on Arbor. Lunch choices then took place. It was interesting to note that during this time all the children were quiet and calm and very respectful of each other, waiting for their turn to speak throughout.

The class then split up into 3 groups, Ants, Bees or Caterpillars, for their Phonics lesson. Each group being taught by either the class teacher or one of the teaching assistants.

The children in the Ants group were late, so Ms Messenger began to select individual children to read with her. She constantly praised them throughout and encouraged re-capping on what had happened previously in the story. She wrote messages in their home/school reading log.

Two further children entered the class. The adult accompanying them explained that the bus had been late. They were both greeted by the class teacher, who registered them, completed their Zones of Regulation mood and entered their lunch orders. Both children then joined Ms Messenger in her Phonics group. It was noticeable that none of the children were distracted throughout or fussing due to some pupils arriving late. All of the children coped well with having an adult, such as myself, joining them in class today.

The Caterpillars group were working with Ms O'Brien. The lesson began with Ms O'Brien modelling cursive writing CH and SK using watercolour paint. All the children practised their cursive writing using paint with Ms O'Brien giving additional support as and when necessary. They all then moved on to an SK worksheet. Lots of praise and encouragement throughout. The lesson then moved on to a discussion and modelling of some letters with tall ascenders and others with descenders, together with the rules for spelling. All the children in the group contributed throughout. The children were encouraged to reflect and think of appropriate words throughout. The lesson then moved on to box shapes, with Ms O'Brien modelling how to guess which words, taken from the word bank, could be hidden. This created a lot of interest from the children together with a little bit of competition.

The Bees group were working with Ms Albertsen, starting with tracing the letters C and K in the air and then onto paper. Ms Albertsen modelled the tracing and then the children took it in turns to copy. Lots

of encouragement throughout. Pouches of letters were then handed out and the children began to set out alphabet arcs. One of the later children joined the group and Ms Albertsen recapped on what they had missed and handed out an alphabet pouch. The other children in the group also helped the child who was late. Each pupil was then shown a word from the K letter bank which they had to read and spell using their alphabet arc. Lots of praise and encouragement throughout.

When the children from each group had finished their work, they were allowed to have some sensory time using the resources set up at the window ledge area.

As the lesson ended, I was struck by the number of different activities that all the children had completed during the phonics lesson, all being short, sharp and focussed. All the children remained focussed throughout and clearly tried their best. The classroom atmosphere was very calm throughout, with both the lesson and resources being well organised and at the end, the children even tidied up!!

Thank you to everyone in Owls class for inviting me in and I will look forward to visiting again!!

Julie Merry