

MEADOWPARK – NEWSLETTER – WEEK 4 – 07.09.18

It has felt quite autumnal this week and rain definitely stopped everybody participating in outdoor play on two occasions, although a few hardy stalwarts kept going on the swings under the shelter. Fortunately we have a number of spaces that can be used flexibly and so pupils were able to let off steam in the gym or soft play room or 'coorie in' with a book or board game in the common room. We encourage pupils not to use electronic devices at these times but instead to participate in social activities which help to foster resilience, negotiation and fun.

Meadowpark staff and pupils from all classes and I participated in the Volunteering Fayre in Knox Academy this morning and we received a very positive response to requests for volunteering. S6 pupils are activity encouraged to volunteer with an organisation of their choice as part of their senior school contract and we are delighted that there is an opportunity for 2x S6 girls to bring their skills and experience, empathy and joy to Meadowpark pupils by assisting in class. We are hopeful that the number of S5 pupils who signed up will be able to assist at lunchtime. Previous experience with volunteers has been incredibly positive and having myself been a volunteer teaching swimming at two different swimming clubs and then on Saturday mornings at Muirfield Riding Therapy I know what a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment it can bring, so I will contact all those who showed an interest and encourage them to get to know how we do things at Meadowpark.

I volunteered to cover Forth class on Tuesday of this week as Mr Morrison was at a sexual health and relationships training session. I don't mind admitting that I was a little anxious on Monday night – did I still have what it takes to be an effective teacher? Do all those suggestions we make as a team actually make it into the classroom? Desperately hoping that Mr Morrison had over prepared so that we don't run out of learning experiences?! I needn't have worried – the pupils and staff were amazing and I left at the end of the day with a real sense of achievement and satisfaction as well as being utterly exhausted! In particular my attention was drawn to one pupil for whom participating with the whole class let alone with a different teacher would have been too much a year ago, but his contributions were fabulous and his sense of humour had me laughing out loud. Well done to Forth class who all deserve the merits they received. Furthermore the health and well-being focus was on empathy and contrary to many misconceptions about autism I honestly don't think there is a pupil here who hasn't shown empathy at some point either to their peers or staff. I am looking forward to teaching in Esk and Tyne later in the year and gleaning a sense of #what we can do.

Tyne class have moved into one of the newly renovated classes and appear very pleased with their new environment. Not that there is much to criticise about the original classes but as with anything it takes time to know how a space can be effectively used and we have been proactively involved in making a few changes from the original design that allow for a more productive ergonomic flow – not least the reduction in size /removal of the quiet space, positioning of cupboards and sink area and having carpets instead of lino. We have all singing all dancing interactive whiteboards and windows that are easily accessible. Esk class will be moving on Monday and Forth class are considering how best to use the current space they have to encourage smoother transitions into lessons and pupil collaboration.

Time to contact those volunteers...

Have a restful weekend.

C.Prime DHT 07.09.18