

In spite of the inevitable teething problems that are bound to arise during a period of transition for young people on the autistic spectrum we have had a successful week and I am incredibly proud of all pupils who have either changed classroom, welcomed a new peer group and staff or made the journey to Knox Academy for classes in specific subject classes. For each individual this is a celebration of personal achievement and provides further opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation. It also builds resilience.

At the Portobello Learning Festival last Saturday I was inspired by the range of experience and evidence-based reflection on how we support young people who come under the heading of ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience), and how so often the language of engagement is crucial when we approach a young person who is exhibiting distressed behaviour. It is recognised that all behaviours are a form of communication and especially for young people on the autism spectrum. I will stand by my belief that if we can get it right for any young person with an additional support need, we get it right for all young people with an additional support need, because it is about the inter-personal relationships that are established with the all-important cushion of trust that has the strongest and longest lasting impact on a young person. Of course young people need structure, routine and the right kind of boundaries but without trust, love and the determination of a significant adult who can provide opportunities to participate and integrate, life becomes ever more challenging and difficult to develop resilience.

Young people with an additional support need know that they are different whether we give them a diagnostic label or not and much as curriculum frameworks and pathways to progress allow for experiences that will develop language and life skills, we need to provide opportunities that challenge the status quo and push a young person out of their comfort zone in order to build resilience. It is also very much about a pedagogical approach and as Hywel Roberts (<https://www.independentthinking.co.uk/people/associates-g-z/hywel-roberts/>) put it, having 'Botheredness' and engaging with 'Imagineering'. Hywel appealed to my love of learning and teaching and reinforced the need to be brave enough to take a creative approach to this. Some of the Meadowpark budget will be spent on Hywel's books for teachers and I know will be an investment in the future.

Young people at Meadowpark are challenged every day to try to make sense of the world they live in – let's face it most of us are all trying to do the same– and in order to begin to succeed we engage with a variety of external agencies who are able to guide and lead by example so that we can then develop these skills. Chris Morrison has seized every opportunity to develop outdoor learning and when he sent me a photo today of Meadowpark pupils participating in Bikeability I saw so many happy facial expressions that my approach to the standards and quality report was quite different to when I sat down to try to complete it myself a few weeks ago.

We all have challenges and obstacles to overcome, but the more that we can look up and look around the greater the will to implement change and resilience.