

It feels natural to continue the theme of planets this week as the night sky has been so clear and in the early morning at 0600 when I am walking my dog on the beach I have been able to see the waning crescent moon and Saturn (the bringer of old age), Venus (the bringer of peace) and Jupiter (the bringer of jollity).

Pupils staff and I had fun on Tuesday when I took the German Masterclass and the theme was animals. I found a useful and amusing video that explained how some of the animal names are put together: Hund – dog, Seehund – sea dog = seal; Fisch – fish, Tintenfisch – ink fish = squid. But my favourite was Schnecke – snail and Nacktschnecke – naked snail = slug ☺ All pupils responded very well to my lack of expertise and Mr Gilmour chuckled on his return and explained that he was going to teach domestic animals! It's a perpetual learning curve for me!

I attended part 2 of the Mental Health First Aid training on Wednesday which was equally as interesting and motivating as last week had been. What struck most of us as we entered the room was that we naturally gravitated towards the seat we had been in last week. We remarked on this and it reminded me just how fragile we can be that something as simple as the way things are set up can have a huge impact on how our day goes. Life is so busy with demands from so many influences, that to have routines and rituals can help to keep things in perspective, to normalise events and situations and so prevent us from becoming overwhelmed. This is normal to many of us and we accept it blithely. One of the participants on Wednesday remarked how she had to turn the radio off when concentrating because it was a distraction... and I thought that I was the only one to do that, but nearly everyone was nodding their heads in agreement.

So when we are faced with a young person with autism who is crashing, and in obvious distress we need to carefully unpick what all the influences might have been to get to that state. It is with care and attention that we plan and build our curriculum so that our young people can experience how challenging life can be but that we can self- regulate, we can recover and we can increase our resilience to be able to achieve our goals.

We are sad to say good-bye to Carol today who will be joining the excellent team at Ross ASN Base next week. I can honestly say that our loss is very much Ross' gain and much as we will all miss Carol, I fully respect her decision to develop her role in an area of support and learning that is more suitable for her.

At assembly this morning we also thanked Iain who has embodied our #wecandoit #whatwecando attitude.

We are delighted that Ally has been made full time permanent. Ally has more than earned her stripes with us, offering us time and energy when we have had staff illness squeezing in additional hours, whilst also embarking on a programme of study.

I shared the new Knox Academy poster that will grace many walls across the school and reminded pupils that in order to respect others and our environment we have to respect ourselves too. What struck me at assembly this morning was just how quickly our hall is beginning to fill up as numbers increase and which puts me in mind of transition after the February break for our next intake.

February 7th is Time to Talk day <https://www.seemescotland.org/movement-for-change/campaigns/time-to-talk/time-to-talk-day-2019/>

I would urge all of you to participate in some small way at home, in the community, at school by stopping to talk to a friend, a colleague, a stranger and really listening to what they have to say. In fact, I wonder if we are brave enough to suspend access to emails on that day and just talk.

We will be having a wellbeing afternoon on Thursday 7th February, using sensory, outdoor play, music and image to enhance our feel-good factor and on Friday 8th February pupils can wear home clothes so that we can all go for a decent walk – weather permitting – and return to a warming hot chocolate.

Have a peaceful weekend. C. Prime 01.02.19

p.s. please accept my apologies that the link to last week's Newsletter wasn't activated. It is now resolved