

Becoming a sustainable school (April 2010)

Since our last newsletter, much has happened to enhance our 'green' credentials...

Trees

Thanks to Mrs Sladen who organised for us to take part in the BBC Radio Times Breathing Spaces Guinness world record attempt for the most trees planted in one hour in multiple locations – the previous record was 653,143 trees also held by the UK. We planted the two trees during the School Christmas Bazaar but sadly did not manage to break the already impressive target. We did get two lovely apple trees out of it! We look forward to lots of lovely fruit in the autumn.



Astronomy

At the end of January we had our second astronomy evening, looking at conditions needed for life, and the 'Goldilocks' effect of our position in the solar system – just right in distance from the sun to enable life to form on our planet... emphasising the importance of maintaining the conditions for life in order to ensure that it is ongoing. We were delighted to welcome some guests from the Institute of Physics and Greg Smye-Rumsby from the Royal Observatory Greenwich, who did not disappoint us with his lively presentation. Matthew Barber, Andrew Graham and Alex Croxford kindly wrote the following review of the evening...

On Wednesday 27th January 2010 TWGSB held an Astronomy evening with Greg Smye-Rumsby, an astronomer who studies outer space.

The evening gave many more views on what the universe was, who looks at it, and how. Most of the evening focused on Mars because at that very point in time Mars was at the closest points to the planet Earth for the next 30,000 years.



It was also planned that we would get to take our telescopes outside and be able to look at Mars but the weather was quite cloudy so it was replaced with talks about telescopes and how they work. We even saw a telescope made by one of the parents out of recycled materials such as coffee pot lids!

Because of this weather, only about 50 people came to the evening but everyone found it very interesting, including the parents and people who needed help using their telescopes.



Eco Visit - an account by Zac Calvert

Talk by Marcus Brigstocke, Comedian and Campaigner on Climate Change, 20th January, 2010

This was held at Weald of Kent Grammar School and was attended by representatives from the West Kent Schools Eco-Group. As soon as we got to the school, we were eagerly anticipating Marcus Brigstocke's appearance, waiting for what he had to present. He began by showing us various pictures of when he went to the Arctic, and then later he showed how

this connected to the environment. As well as being overwhelmed by the sheer immensity of the Arctic Circle, Marcus also emphasized how fast the ice cap was melting. He also described to us what he did to make an impact on the environment. However, before this Marcus told us about how he felt on the boat. Marcus expressed with humour how violently sea sick he was.

“There are two parts to sea sickness, the first part is where you are worried you might die, and the second where you are worried you might not!” Despite this, Marcus and the science team first measured the temperature and salinity of the sea and found it was even warmer and less salty than predicted. Then a recording device was dropped in to the sea. This went



2km below sea level, then ascended to 500m, recording data such as how many fish there were in the ocean, how much salt to water there is over a period of time, how strong the currents are etc. This particular device is still circulating the sea at the moment. After this work had been done, the return journey was made, but not before he observed a polar bear with cubs on her back swimming in what should have been ice and how this reduction in the ice cap has badly affected the lives of these animals.

When he got home Marcus discussed climate change and how it affected us, first amongst his friends, then on TV programmes. This drove him to go back to the Arctic Circle carrying out further tests to show how climate change is affecting us. The boat docked on the west coast of Greenland where he interacted with the Inuit people, communicating with them about how climate change affected their way of life. They told Marcus that the ice cap was getting smaller at a faster rate than ever before. As a result, the dogs refuse to go on thin ice; a useful safety test for the Inuit because they know they cannot safely walk on it if the dogs won't. Also, the number of polar bears is decreasing significantly because it is too warm for them. The Inuit hunt polar bears, and although they don't want to because they are an endangered species, there isn't much else they can hunt. The best they can do is resort to hunting seals. Marcus was greatly interested by this, and as soon as he could he started publishing about it in the UK. A film is currently being made and will shortly be released about climate change, made in story form I suppose, but most definitely from Marcus' own knowledge as there is actual footage of Marcus in the Arctic Circle.

To conclude, I will summarize Marcus's main point. He told us that from personal experience people don't take much notice of you if you are too confrontational about climate change, which is why he now takes a much more positive approach to teaching people about this. Effectively, this is why the new film is being promoted, because it is fun, and not too confrontational. However, it brings people to a true realization of how the world around us is changing so dramatically. He said that young people are willing to make the small changes, which if we all make them will greatly help reduce climate change without the need for huge sacrifices. That if we talk people will listen and our aim should be to encourage and inspire our schools to be motivated to help our planet as this is the world which we will inherit.

Ring Pulls



Weald of Kent School are organizing shipments of can ring pulls to the Philippines, where they are used to make purses and bags. The money generated from the sale of these goes towards betterment of the lives of the Philipinos. We have decided to enhance the amount of ring pulls sent by contributing to WOK's collection. If families could save ring pulls and send them in to Ms Lovera in E6 then we will ensure they reach their destination. This will be an ongoing collection so perhaps families would like to set up a collection box in their own homes and send us their stash once a term.

Reusing Paper

The pad maker has been purchased and our first batch of paper pads has been produced. Admittedly we are finding it hard to keep up with the quantities of paper sent to us, but we are finding ways to deal with our production line. Once we perfect the technique, pads will be available for purchase through the library.

Hedgehog homes and Bird feeders

The eco reps were concerned for wildlife during the very cold spell and spent their lunch hour one day hanging bird feeders and creating hedgehog homes out of cardboard boxes. I'm sure they are appreciating the boys consideration!

**Vegetable growing**

Our vegetable plot has been marked out and rotivated. Consideration is now underway as to what to plant.