

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

06 September 2019

Welcome

Welcome back! I hope you enjoyed the summer break and your children have settled in well to their new classes. There has certainly been a positive upbeat feel in the school this week. As I spoke to families as they arrived at school for the beginning of term on Wednesday morning, it felt like being in the middle of one big re-union, such was the warmth and excitement with which children and parents greeted each other. It was also lovely to witness a similar atmosphere when all the teaching staff returned earlier in the week. The summer break is refreshing for us all but I hope you feel, as I do, that it is good to be back in our normal routines.

As always, at the beginning of the school year, we welcome many new families to our community. If you are in your first few days here, I trust that you are beginning to feel part of St Faith's – please do ask if there is anything we can do to help you settle in.

Summer Works

Although there has been no major building project, the summer has still been busy here at St Faith's. A wide range of activity courses brought hundreds of children on to the site each day. At the same time our support staff, together with external contractors, carried out important maintenance work and improvements to our facilities in preparation for the new school year. The newly refurbished Ashburton toilets has caused quite a stir and more than a few looks of surprise and delight amongst the children. Those who have breakfast at school will have noticed that the Dining Room is in the process of having a face-lift. Much of the summer work, however, goes largely unnoticed but is vital to the successful running of the school. I thank, therefore, each and every member of the support staff who has worked through the summer to ensure that the school is in great shape for the start of term.

South Africa

At the beginning of the summer break, 35 pupils, 6 staff and many parents enjoyed a fabulous twelve-day trip to South Africa, as you can see from the photo gallery below. We visited six schools to play sport and music, travelled the length of the 'Garden Route' and amongst many other things, came face to face with a large family of wild elephants, visited Nelson Mandela's former cell on Robben Island and saw penguins in their natural habitat. Despite all of that, the

highlight of this biennial trip was, as usual, the two-day visit to Makukhanye, a township school in Jeffrey's Bay that we have been supporting since 2003.

The great news is that we witnessed at Makukhanye, for the first time, significant improvements. The school had a full complement of teachers, classrooms were in good repair, every child had a chair to sit on, pupils looked smarter (and healthier) and there was a distinct upbeat feel across the whole Makukhanye community. We were able to take more provisions with us than ever before (old St Faith's tracksuits, polo tops, white shirts) and, whilst we were there, we bought 200 pairs of school shoes from a South African supplier. The Head, Nono, a larger than life character with a hairstyle I can only dream of, was overwhelmed. In the last few days she has sent photos of the Makukhanye pupils proudly wearing the St Faith's tracksuits for one of their recent sports fixtures against a local school.

Clearly the school still has major issues and there is a long way to go before these children receive the quality of education they deserve, but progress is being made and there is no doubt that the funds raised here are making a considerable difference. After the two days, we all left Makukhanye feeling much more uplifted than on previous visits.

Organising and running a trip of this size and ambition is a significant undertaking. Much credit should be given to the trip leader, Mr Johnson, the accompanying staff, Mr Gorick, Mrs Bowes, Miss Kennerley and Mr Welch, the parents who joined us and were so supportive throughout, and the Bursary staff here at St Faith's who carried out the logistical work behind the scenes. Our pupils behaved superbly, were great fun and a pleasure to be with.

[View the full gallery](#)

We will be going again in two years and in the meantime, our aim is to keep up the momentum in helping Makukhanye. The next main project is to provide three additional classrooms to meet the expanding pupil roll – up to 1300 now (it was 500 when we started the support in 2003). We hope, in time, for our pupils to connect through Skype or other electronic means but that will depend on computer facilities at Makukhanye (they don't currently have any computers but there is a plan to install some in the near future). We will keep you informed of developments.

The next Makukhanye fundraiser is a wine tasting evening on Friday 27th September. All the details for this event can be found under 'Wine Tasting Evening', in the side section of this newsletter. Please do come along if you can.

Speech and Drama

Over the summer we received the results of the many Speech and Drama (LAMDA) exams that our pupils took last term. Even by Miss Tucker's standards the scores were remarkable with 96% of the entries being awarded a 'distinction', the highest grade. Many congratulations to everyone who took these exams and good luck for further success in the year ahead.

Leaders

This week, Mr Critchley and I presented all the Year 8s with their Prefect ties and badges and explained to them their roles and responsibilities for the year. There was a tangible sense of pride as the new Prefects donned their ties and a genuine excitement about the opportunity and challenges of being pupil leaders in the school. In the prep school world, St Faith's is unusual in giving everyone the opportunity of being a Prefect - we don't believe in selection at this age. Each year, it is often the quieter, less assuming characters (who would not have been a Prefect in a 'selective' system) that shine as pupil leaders and come in to their own during their final year in the school. This is a big reason why St Faith's pupils are known for being confident, articulate and able to interact with a wide range of people, and why so many go on to leadership roles in their senior schools. This year, for example, both the Head Girl and Head Boy at The Leys are Old Fidelians – Joanna and Walter pictured here, who started at St Faith's in Foundation, age 4! Over the summer, I met Molly P, who left St Faith's 4 years' ago and has been appointed as Head Girl at St Mary's this year and we have heard that Michelle B, another Old Fidelian, has just been elected onto the Student Leadership Team at the Stephen Perse Foundation. I wish them all every success in their leadership roles.

[Register as an Old Fidelian Here](#)

Finally..

Speaking of Old Fidelians, this evening Jane and I are hosting (indoors I suspect) the annual barbecue for former pupils to come and see their school again, meet some of their fellow comrades and enjoy sharing a few anecdotes about their time here. Some may be interested to see this photo of the St Faith's 1928 football team which we sent at the end of last term.

On a different matter, this week the Tatler Schools Guide was published; here is the [link](#) to the entry for St Faith's.

I wish you and your children a most enjoyable and successful year and look forward to seeing you, if I haven't done already, around school.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell