

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

22 November 2019

At this time of the year, school life is in full swing, pupils are hard at work, heads firmly down in their academic studies, many preparing for forthcoming exams. Drama rehearsals and music practices intensify as they turn to the Christmas events and competition on the sports field steps up a gear as the seasons come to a climax. Life at St Faith's is in full flow, everyone has their foot to the floor and there is never a dull moment! The darkness may be drawing in but the rigorous and innovative teaching and learning I have witnessed this week has shone like a beacon of light. Prospective parents visiting the school (2 or 3 tours per day nowadays) have been blown away by the quality of lessons they have seen and as usual, our staff and pupils have found time to enjoy many special events - as you can read in this newsletter.

Professional Portrait Artist Visit

On Tuesday, professional portrait artist Heloise Toop visited St Faith's to spend time with Year 8 on the subject of portraiture. Most children chose photos of celebrities to draw using graphite, while the enrichment group focused on completing their self-portraits in oil. Heloise provided plenty of advice on portraiture techniques and also reassurance about self-doubt – something which can be common for artists, she highlighted. The results of their work were spectacular as you can see below.

Fideliants in the Community

This week, our musicians visited the Royal Albert Homes on Hills Road. Members of the Senior Brass Ensemble, Senior Trumpets and String Quartet all played pieces and Natalie S sang a solo, Faure's *Pie Jesu*. Afterwards, our pupils and staff enjoyed a cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit with the audience. As often is the case with this type of event, both parties benefitted; the residents clearly enjoyed meeting our pupils and listening to the music and our musicians relished another opportunity to perform in public. One of the trustees of the Alms houses who was there emailed me afterwards to say, 'the standard of music was really high but what really struck me was that the pupils made a point of going up to our residents as they sat and chatted to them in a way that the residents greatly appreciated.' As part of our outreach programme, we plan to return later this term to help the residents celebrate Christmas!

1RP Assembly

According to poet, Robert Wyland, 'The ocean stirs the heart, inspires the imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul.' On Wednesday morning 1RP inspired us with their poetry skills in a delightful assembly, highlighting the wonders of the ocean. From *Tiny Tim* to *The Island*, *A Fish I Wish* to *The Owl* and *The Pussy Cat* and many others, the confident delivery and the clever use of props and puppets brought the poems to life and entertained the many parents, staff and pupils who were there to see it. As one parent commented to me afterwards, 'It was the perfect way to start the day.' Thank you to 1RP for such a wonderful assembly.

Visiting Teacher from Kenya

On Monday morning we welcomed a special visitor, Alex Kihugu, a school teacher from a Namuncha, a small town in Kenya. Alex is spending two weeks visiting schools in Cambridgeshire as he seeks to spread awareness and share best practice about future-focused teaching methods and STEM education in particular. Alex observed lessons in the Science laboratories as well as in Engineering where Year 3 pupils were building pyramids. His visit was perfectly timed for Year 8 who are currently studying Africa in Geography lessons, so he called in to speak to our top year about his home country. He also added value to the Year 7's work on volcanoes by talking to them about the extinct volcanoes of the Rift Valley. It was great to meet Alex and we are grateful to him for spending time with our pupils.

Sports Round-Up

Our gymnasts were on top form last weekend at the ISGA National Two-Piece Championships

held in the impressive facilities of The Royal Masonic School in Rickmansworth. Our U13 boys swept the board with the team being awarded 1st place and Viraj S taking home the individual national title. Our U11 boys were narrowly pipped to the post, losing to St George's, Weybridge by just 0.10 of a mark, with Max B claiming the individual national title. Understandably the U11 team is looking forward to a re-match with St George's at this coming weekend's IAPS National finals! For most of our U9 boys this was their first gymnastics competition and they performed superbly to finish in Silver medal position with Freddie J (Year 1) finishing in an impressive 2nd place individually. As always, many thanks to Mr and Mrs North and Miss Butler for their incredible commitment to the coaching of our gymnasts. Not surprisingly, I have recently received several much-deserved emails extolling their great work.

On Wednesday our U12 girls travelled to Rugby School for the regional IAPS National Hockey Tournament. The girls, on good form, finished the group stages in 2nd place after wins against Hurstpierpoint and Farleigh, a draw against Millfield and a loss to Clifton College. Sadly they were knocked out in the quarter finals by Daneshill (the eventual winners), but their coaches, Mrs Thompson and Miss Wacey, were thrilled with the way the girls played and the improvement they are showing as a team.

SFPA Christmas Fair

It is just two weeks until the annual Christmas Fair in the Ashburton Hall on Friday 6th December 3-6pm. We are delighted that Santa Claus will be with us again and as always, there will be lots of stalls and activities for all the family. We hope that you will be able to join us for what promises to be a fun-filled family event. The SFPA Committee require donations towards the ever-popular Chocolate Tombola (a firm favourite!) and for volunteers to help with both the pre-Fair set-up and during the Fair itself. Further details of how to help are in the side panel of this newsletter.

Speech and Drama Tea-Time Recital

Later this afternoon I will have the pleasure of witnessing today's Speech and Drama Tea-Time Recital. This informal performance event gives our budding thespians an opportunity to practise their pieces in front of a supportive audience of fellow pupils and parents, ahead of their New Era Academy exams next Friday. I am sure that Miss Tucker, our Speech and Drama teacher, will have the children beautifully prepared for their performances which I understand range from Mime and Acting to Prose Reading. I wish everyone the very best of luck today and, of course, in their exams next week.

And Finally....

I am delighted to report that, for the second consecutive year, St Faith's has been included as one of the top 50 UK Prep Schools in *The Cricketer* Schools Guide (published today). According to *The Cricketer* all entries were judged against an extensive set of criteria, with the chosen schools having outstanding facilities, fixture programmes and coaching. Chris Silverwood, England Head Coach and St Faith's parent, kindly sent this message to me from New Zealand (where the England team are currently playing). *'Congratulations to all at St Faith's for making the Cricketer magazine's top 50 prep schools. It is through the hard work of both the teachers and pupils that this sort of recognition is made possible. Well done'*.

Please click the icon below to read the full page.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell