

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

24 March 2017

This week, a friend asked me if I was winding down as the end of term approaches! As you know only too well, the conveyor belt of school life accelerates sharply as term progresses and by the time we reach the final week, a rush of high-octane events keep the children's and staff's adrenaline flowing until the final bell has sounded.

A chemistry festival, a national maths competition, national rugby finals, house sports, Great British Nature Day, a swimming gala, three performances of *Aladdin*, the Easter House Challenge, Comic Relief and an Easter Service have all taken place on top of the normal timetable in the past six days. There is so much to say in my final newsletter of the term, that it is difficult to know where to start.

Senior schools and scholarships

So I will begin with the important news that all Year 8 pupils have secured a place at a senior school of their choice, with sixty-four out of sixty-seven (96%) moving to their first choice school. This is a remarkable achievement and a great credit to the hard work and talent of the pupils and staff.

Furthermore, twenty-one pupils have been awarded twenty-nine scholarships to nine different schools. What these results don't show is the manner in which our pupils conducted themselves in their various assessments. Since the results were published, more than one senior school head has contacted me to say that our pupils 'stood out' during the interview process, showing very impressive inter-personal skills and manners; characteristics which I believe are so important if the children are to go on to lead happy and successful lives.

Epsom Rugby

Our rugby teams certainly stood out at the National Rugby Finals at Epsom College on Sunday. It was a grand day out for our merry band of supporters, as all three teams coped well with the very high standard of competition from schools around the country. The U8s won one match, the U9s won three out of their four matches and the U10 side were undefeated, and can

therefore claim to be one of the best three teams in the country (as they were the winners of one of three leagues with no knock-out stages afterwards).

Great British Nature Day

Thank you for all the lovely messages about Great British Nature Day on Monday. Our staff produced over one hundred lessons (some of which are shown in the index) on the theme of British nature and our extended assembly with Nick Baker proved to be enriching and fascinating for everyone who was there to hear him speak. Nick was hugely impressed by the commitment of the staff to the whole day and said to us several times, that he had never seen or heard of anything like it before. His talk was inspirational. I hope and trust that many of the children will now want to take a closer interest in the natural world around us.

Aladdin Performance

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings we were transported to the East when Year 6 presented their version of *Aladdin*. This was a slick, colourful and dynamic musical, fizzing with energy and humour. There was plenty of finesse too, as well as glorious singing and skillful acting which made the show hugely entertaining for the families, friends and staff who were fortunate enough to see it. At times the level of performance, from both the main cast and the year group as a whole, belied the age of the pupils and 'wowed' the audience, with its pace and energy. Crucially, all 74 Year 6 pupils took part, with all the cast on stage for many of the scenes. Shows such as this enable all the pupils to grow in confidence and develop the self-belief to perform in public - something which should prove valuable in later life. Many congratulations to all the cast who worked so hard in rehearsals and performed with so much vitality and enjoyment in the shows themselves, and to the large number of staff who were responsible for producing this musical, particularly the two Directors, Ms Allen and Miss Kennerley. Complimentary emails have been coming in today. This is the first one I received, via Ms Allen, as I opened my inbox this morning:

We thoroughly enjoyed your excellent production this evening. That is one of the best school musicals I have ever seen - all the way from the costumes, the music, singing and acting. It was fantastic, and the children rose to the challenge.

Cambridge University Events

This week has seen several events at Cambridge University. On Thursday, all our year 8 pupils attended a fascinating lecture, full of bangs and flashes, in the University Chemistry Department, as part of the Science Festival. On the same day four Year 8s – Georgia D, Verity

A, Jack S and Sarah B - formed a team in the regional Salters' Chemistry Festival where they spent the day undertaking practical challenges in which they were judged on their teamwork, practical skills and application of knowledge. They competed with a large number of other schools and our team won first prize in The University Challenge. This is quite an accolade and our pupils are thrilled, as I am, of course.

Also on Thursday, our Maths Team competed well in the UK Maths Team Challenge at Cambridge University and this weekend, our Green Goblins will be exhibiting their battery-powered racing cars at the Hauser Forum, as part of the Science Festival. You should be able to spot them easily if you visit the Festival as our team will be wearing their custom-made red St Faith's racing overalls.

National Swimming Semi-Finals

This week we heard that three of our swimmers – Herbie L, Christopher H and Amelia S – have qualified for the National Swimming Finals at the K2 Leisure Centre, Crawley on 6th May. This places them in the top sixteen fastest swimmers in the country for their age.

Jubilee Pond

I will draw to a close with the wonderful news that Philip and Elizabeth, our two new residents on the Jubilee Pond, are still looking settled and happy and now have a pristine new home (pictured here), kindly donated by Mrs Huckle, our Science Technician. As you can see from the sign above the doorway, we have decided to name it 'Duckingham Palace'.

St Faith's Wedding

Staying on the royal theme, we have our own St Faith's 'royal wedding' in the holiday, when Mr North and Miss McNally will be tying the knot. I know they are extremely grateful for all the kind messages and gifts they have received from you over the last week. The ceremony will be in The Leys Chapel and the reception here at St Faith's, with the catering being provided by our own Chartwell's team. With most of the staff attending and the future Mr and Mrs North being the centre of attention, it certainly will not be a quiet wedding!

Comic Relief and this afternoon's traditional Easter Service provided contrasting themes for our final day of a very busy and hugely enjoyable term. I hope you and your children have a restful holiday and I very much look forward to welcoming you back to school at the beginning of Summer Term, on Wednesday 19th April.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell