

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

24 April 2020

Welcome back! While it may seem a little strange to say this, we are indeed back together, albeit in a rather different way. I hope that you and your family enjoyed the lovely weather over the Easter break and your children have settled in to the routine of the Home Learning programme. Thank you very much for the many warm and encouraging messages over the past few weeks. The Coronavirus pandemic has brought many challenges and it is heartening to have your support as we aim to provide both a service for key worker children in school and a remote learning programme for those at home.

Home Learning Programme

Lessons of a distinctly different feel started on Wednesday as our new Home Learning programme kicked off. For Years 3 to 8, lessons are delivered virtually with tasks and tutorials available via the VLE and Microsoft Teams. From Monday, many lessons will be delivered via pre-recorded video or narrated power point sessions and some classes will trial 'live' streaming. In Pre Prep, children in Foundation are receiving their virtual education via the 'Tapestry' programme, whilst Years 1 and 2 have a rather uniquely named programme, 'Purple Mash' to supplement work on the VLE. More details are available in the letters sent to parents earlier in the week and via Mrs Davies' video which is available on the [VLE](#).

We are grateful for the support you are providing to your children with their home learning and fully understand the efforts involved. I know from your comments that you are appreciative of the staff team who have worked tirelessly over Easter in preparing the wealth of resources. Despite the inevitable teething problems, as we all adjust to the new systems and technologies, the Home Learning programme has started smoothly this week. Although there are still a few bumps in the systems, each day is getting smoother. We have been impressed by how well the key worker children in school have adapted to the new system and it has been reassuring to see them settle in their new routines.

Looking ahead, we will continue to develop the resources in a considered, incremental way in line with feedback and best practice across the education sector. The sidebar of this newsletter shows some of the excellent work which has been completed this week.

If you are experiencing any technical issues please do contact Mr Mitchell (jmitchell@stfaiths.co.uk) or Mrs Oxborough (eoxborough@stfaiths.co.uk) so that any issues can be resolved as quickly as possible.

Re-Opening of Schools

Over the past week, there has been speculation in the press about the formal re-opening of schools. The Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, has responded to this speculation by making it clear to school leaders that, 'no decision has been made on when we will re-open schools. I can reassure schools and parents that we will only re-open when the scientific advice indicates that it is the right time to do so.'

[read the secretary of state's speech in full](#)

Outreach

I am sure that many of you are buoyed by the many acts of kindness and generosity during these times of adversity. Ninety-nine year old, Captain Tom Moore hit the headlines by raising over £23m for the NHS as he set himself a challenge of walking one hundred laps of his garden by the time he is one hundred years old. What a wonderful example of looking beyond one's own problems to find a way of helping others – something we value greatly at St Faith's and aim to instil in our pupils.

Over the last month, our children have written letters and created art work to provide a little

cheer to the residents of the local Royal Albert Alms Houses on Hills Road. From beautiful spring pictures and messages of Easter joy to images of rainbows, our pupils have gone a little way to brightening the lives of the residents there. The rainbows can be seen proudly displayed in the Alms Houses windows should you be passing by. We have also delivered St Faith's prepared food packages to the wardens who have shared these with residents. In a letter of thanks to Outreach coordinator Miss Kennerley, the warden Mr Amps said, *"Thanks so much. We all appreciate this act of kindness and support and do hope that all of you at St Faiths are managing as best you can. The residents were very uplifted by their Easter messages and gifts. Although the weather was great, some of the residents are struggling with not seeing their families and friends, so this was a huge help to their morale."*

As well as delivering groceries to the Alms Houses, we have supplied lunches to our elderly and vulnerable neighbours on Newton Road. Head chef Kevin has cooked delicious meals for pupils and staff in school and has made extra food each day which he, Miss Kennerley, Mr Brent and Caretaker, Mr Whitehead, have delivered to those in need in the neighbourhood.

Continuing on the food theme, Miss Gilford, Year 4 Tutor, has used her Easter break, and exceptional baking skills, to create some remarkable cakes and cookies for front line NHS workers, as you can see from the images below.

To raise money for the Blue Smile charity, Louisa (Year 8) asked friends and members of staff to supply her with photos of their pets, from which she created these charcoal and pastel drawings in exchange for a donation to Blue Smile. As you can see, they are truly amazing! See if you can spot the one of Mollie!

Our parent body, too, is coming up with a wonderful array of creative ways to lend support during the crisis. I know many of you are volunteering to help in many different ways. You may be interested to learn that actress and song-writer Simona Morecroft, mother of Millie in Year 8,

has re-written a song she originally composed for her sister, and has dedicated it to the NHS. After recording the song she has managed to gain some local media interest with the track being played on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire breakfast show. All proceeds from the song will go to the NHS. You can download the song at Simona's website; www.simonamorecroft.com and support the NHS in the process.

As you know, during the holiday we kept school open for the children of key workers and our staff volunteered their time to look after them in school. I recently received a lovely letter from one key worker parent which I thought I would share with you as it so concisely puts into words the reason for the change in life we are all experiencing.

'I just wanted to write to thank you and your wonderful staff again for all the support and for giving the children such fun times at school these past few weeks. It has been quite a stressful and uncertain time as a redeployed NHS worker, a total career change in a matter of days! I have to say knowing that the children are being so well cared for and that they can't wait to come to school has made such a difference to us as a family and enabled me to give my sole focus to the patients I am treating. The cherry on the cake (or should I say brownie!) this evening was coming home from my shift to some homemade chocolate brownies from Kevin the chef! Please thank him so very much, they are delicious and I am taking one of the packs to the hospital staff room in the morning to share with my team. We feel so lucky to have the support of such a fantastic school and can't thank you all enough.'

BBC 500 Words Competition

During the school holiday, it was very uplifting to receive a message from Mrs Harmsworth, that Lucy's story has been selected for Round 2 of the BBC 500 Word story competition. 'The Girl Who Wanted to Become a Zoo Keeper' can be read [here](#). We wish Lucy (in 1VH) all the very best of luck as her delightful story progresses through the competition.

Virtual Community

Have you seen the Virtual Community page on the [VLE](#)? Here you will discover House Assemblies, 'Thoughts for the Day', suggestions for non-screen based activities, PSCH information and the popular weekly St Faith's Podcast, hosted by DJ Gorick and including weekly guests from the school community. **I have been informed by DJ Gorick that the first podcast of term will be released next week; in the meantime you may listen to past podcasts [here](#).** In a world where we cannot be physically together this Virtual Community page aims to bring the spirit of St Faith's into our own homes.

Finally...

You may recall my account of Mollie chasing a Muntjac across the school fields at the end of last term. Well, last week we had further wildlife dramas when, to our amazement, a duck and 14 new-born ducklings emerged from a large bush in our garden – we had no idea there was a nest there! With the mother duck keen to be on the move, we opened the garden gate as she processed her new family across School House field, clearly knowing where she was going. We then opened the Sports Hall car park gate as she confidently exited the school, turning right on to Newton Road and then left in to the gardens by the flats, with Jane and I (and some nurses from the Nuffield who came out to watch) in pursuit. There followed a fractious ten minutes as the mother tried to find the gap in the garden fence that would eventually take her and her precious offspring down to the brook which flows in to Hobson's Conduit. Altogether, a magical moment which I managed to capture on camera, as you can see here.

I hope you and your families stay safe and well and I look forward to being in touch with you again next week. In the meantime, I send you my best wishes.

Nigel Helliwell