

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

22 May 2020

Home-Learning Programme

It is hard to believe that we have now completed a half term of home-learning. It seems like only yesterday when school was forced to close and lockdown began. As you can see from the examples in the side bar of this newsletter, the quality of work being submitted across the home learning curriculum continues to be of a high standard. We are very pleased with the way our pupils have adapted to the new technologies and working styles. There is no doubt that our prior focus on establishing strong Learning Habits across all year groups has certainly had an impact on pupils' ability to excel in the current circumstances. Importantly, parents are reporting an increase in their children's independence, which will serve them well now and in the future. Next week, we will be sending all families a Home-Learning programme survey to complete, the results of which will inform how we continue to develop the programme over the next half term. The survey has been designed to be brief so that it takes only a few minutes to complete.

Home Learning has brought new challenges for all of us including, of course, our teachers. Wednesday's 'Thank a Teacher Day' campaign was well-timed, therefore, and gave me another opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of our staff over the past two months. To design and produce a comprehensive set of online learning resources in such a short space of time has been an enormous task. I know from your comments how much you have appreciated the lengths to which our teachers have gone to educate and care for your children during these unprecedented times. By the way, I promise that I will not use the term, 'unprecedented times' again, as you have probably heard it enough already! On the same note I will be avoiding, 'new normal', 'flatten the curve' and any other new-fangled phrases that now appear in the news every day. As Jane, my wife, would say, that's my Victor Meldrew moment out of the way.

In-School Provision

We have continued to welcome 30 to 40 Key Worker children to school each day. They too have been following the Home-Learning programme, and have also enjoyed school lunches as well as time to relax outdoors and revel in the gloriously hot afternoons this week, as you can see from this photo of a 'water fight' on Wednesday! Judging from Harrison's Year 4 Maths presentation video (in the side bar), the Key Worker children were not the only ones to indulge in some 'outdoor showers' this week.

School Re-Opening

You should have received a letter from me earlier this week regarding the arrangements we are putting into place should the school re-open on 1st June. Anyone with half an eye on the news, however, will know that this is far from definite and remains a moving target. We will continue to follow the official advice and directives and are doing all we can to ensure that when pupils of specific year groups are permitted to return, we will be well prepared for their safe arrival.

Science

The Coronavirus pandemic has certainly brought science in to the national and international spotlight over the past few months. Barely a day goes by without science being mentioned in political briefings and news stories focusing on the search for treatments and vaccines so that normal life can one day return.

At St Faith's, the rigorous academic focus that we place on the subject has always been a central component of our education. To many, it might seem almost impossible to continue to teach a broadly practical subject remotely, and yet the depth and breadth of topics being covered is hugely impressive, as many of you have remarked. From narrated PowerPoint presentations which explain tricky concepts to live virtual presentations from the laboratories, our staff have gone to great lengths to bring this vital subject into your homes.

To study the biology of plants, Year 5 have explored the anatomy of flowers, pollination, germination and growth, aided by clever practical work, including play-dough modelling and dissections.

Year 6 have been learning how in each element, the composition of atoms vary in terms of number of protons, neutrons and electrons – all through the clever use of sweets! Meanwhile, Mrs Oxborough's class made their own Top Trump cards for the first 20 elements of the periodic table and then played the game in their live lesson, which I understand turned into a highly competitive event!

Whilst many in Year 7 may have been rejoicing that home learning negated the need to dissect a bovine heart to aid their understanding of the respiratory and circulatory systems, the children have none the less had the opportunity to fully interrogate the mechanics of the heart through a computer generated program which Dr Hoyle narrated.

[WATCH THE NARRATED VIDEO](#)

Year 8s work on forces, speed and gravity has seen an array of clever home-built science experiments. These include pendulums hanging from chandeliers, paper planes of various designs to demonstrate the forces of drag, and an ingenious extension task to decide if Galileo or Aristotle were right about gravity, which saw one pupil take advantage of her old tree house to test the theories.

Science is clearly thriving during lockdown at St Faith's and whilst nothing can be quite as good as working in our state-of-the-art laboratories, it is clear that our teachers and pupils have risen to the challenges of online learning.

[VIEW THE SCIENCE WORK](#)

Interactive Book

As a reminder, the next instalment of the Interactive Book is now ready for your enjoyment. According to the book's primary author, Mrs Davis, Chapter 6 is pivotal to the whole book, so get reading [here](#)! As well as guiding the direction that the story takes, pupils have also been contributing to the book through some fabulous illustrations which can be seen below.

Podcast

The popularity of the podcast grows week on week, and Mr Gorick has been receiving some lovely feedback. You may recall that two weeks ago, Miss Gilford gave a step by step audio demonstration of how she baked rainbow cookies. Clearly a number of budding bakers among our community had a go. Here are the products of the Vergine-Moreno family who, after baking the cookies, delivered them to the doorsteps of nearby St Faith's families.

[CURRENT PARENTS CAN LISTEN TO THE LATEST PODCAST HERE](#)

Finally...

Following the great success of [Hawaii-Five-O](#), the Cambridgeshire Online Orchestra, directed by our very own Mr Aldous, is producing their next number, 'La Bamba' and would like as many pupils, parents and friends of St Faith's to be part of this eclectic piece. Details are in the Arts section of this newsletter.

I wish you all a peaceful half term break, away from the computer screens and hopefully, plenty of family time outdoors to enjoy this fine spell of weather. Thank you very much for your support during these uncertain times – it has been very much appreciated.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell