

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

04 September 2020

Welcome!

'Happy New Year!', as I said to the children in the first whole school assembly of the year yesterday. Despite the slightly different way of working, it has indeed been a happy start to the new academic year. The children are fresh and eager, new routines are becoming established and there is a real sense of energy and expectation around school. As part of the assembly (which I presented to one class and live-streamed to all the others as shown in the photo), I highlighted that the start of term is also an exciting time for the staff too, even those long in the tooth like me. After the extensive work that has been carried out across all aspects of the school to prepare for the forthcoming year, we are now keen to crack on and make the most of the time ahead of us. Even in these unusual circumstances, I feel as excited now as I did when I started teaching thirty five years ago.

May I convey a particularly warm welcome to the many new families who joined St Faith's at the beginning of term. Nowadays, our new families come from far and wide and this year is no exception. The diversity of our pupil body has become a real asset to the school in recent years and I mentioned this too in the assembly. At the last count our pupils had over 20 different mother-tongue languages between them. As I remarked to the children, irrespective of background and race, we will value each and every pupil as a uniquely gifted member of the St Faith's family, respecting individual differences and encouraging everyone to be their best self. I look forward to the children making the most of their different talents this year. Judging from my conversations with them over the past two days, they are delighted to be back at school.

Summer Works

Whilst there has been no big building project this summer, there has been a lot of maintenance and development work across the school. Some of this work is visible, such as the resurfacing of Southfield drive, the refurbishment of classrooms and the installation of the Covid safety measures.

Much of the work, however, is hidden, such as the upgrading of the IT network servers, the deep cleaning of the whole school, the re-writing of schemes of work and of course, the intensive planning in adapting the school for these different times. Our staff team has worked tirelessly during the summer in preparing the school for this year. The pandemic has brought a lot of extra work for everyone. I therefore extend my sincere thanks to all members of staff who,

once again, have gone the extra mile in ensuring we are as ready as we can be for the year ahead.

Thank you too, for your understanding and patience with regard to the drop-off and pick-up arrangements. Just when we thought we had covered all aspects of our Covid-19 planning, along came the unexpected challenge of the Trumpington Road disruption due to the essential gas main works. As Mr Brent mentioned in his message to parents, we are working closely with the contractors and are hopeful that sometime next week, the road works outside the school will have been completed and we can then implement our initial plan for the drop-off and collection of children.

Starting School

Can you remember the day you started school? Many can, because it is a significant moment in life. As we met the new Foundation children on the first day of term, the significance of that moment was there for all to see, particularly as our brave parents, for the first time in our history, handed over their children at the school gate rather than going to the classroom. Fortunately, the familiarisation visits went well last week, so we had very few tears and plenty of happy children skipping in to school with bags that looked bigger than them! I am delighted to report that the Foundation children have made a great start. Here are a few photos of the children in their half-class sizes for half-days (until 11th September) while they settle in.

Prefects

At the other end of the spectrum, the start of term saw the new Year 8s receive their Prefect ties and badges. Unlike many schools, St Faith's does not select Prefects as we believe that every child at this age deserves the opportunity to take on additional leadership responsibilities. Over the years, this system has proved highly successful in developing our pupils' confidence and leadership skills. Many, for example, have gone on to be appointed to leadership positions at their senior schools. On the first morning of term, Mr Critchley and I outlined our expectations of this year's Prefects and their important role in setting an example to the younger pupils. We have confidence that our Year 8 pupils will rise to the challenges of their additional responsibilities this year.

Junior Maths Challenge

Over the holidays, the results of the Junior Mathematics Challenge arrived, and a number of our pupils have done well, with over half gaining an award. The competition is aimed at Year 8 students nationally, and so the fact that many of our Year 7 and 8 pupils took part is a testament to their ability. We had 26 pupils gaining bronze, 18 silver and 9 gold. All those who took part

should be congratulated and proud of their efforts. Special mention must go to Henry W and Zac R who were the best in Years 7 and 8, but the outstanding result was from a Year 6 pupil, Ryan S, who only got one question incorrect. Further details are in the side bar of this newsletter.

Finally...

I will finish with photos of the children settling in to school this week, including the new dining arrangements. Kevin's curry on Thursday was simply amazing and quite a few people – children and staff – commented on how pleased they were to be having school lunches again. That is certainly not a remark I heard when I was a pupil at school!

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell