

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

09 October 2020

For me, one of the highlights of the day is meeting and greeting the pupils as they arrive and depart from school. Barely a day goes by without an amusing comment or incident. On Wednesday, one pupil asked me if I am married to Mrs Smith (Head of Pre Prep). Earlier in the week, as one girl ran back from her parents' car whilst being collected at the end of school, I asked her if she had forgotten something. "Yes", she replied as she rushed past, "My brother"! The importance of meeting and greeting in a warm and welcoming way is, of course, a life skill which is one of the reasons I gently encourage friendly dialogue at the school gate each day. Not only do I get to know the pupils a little better, but I believe they learn the simple, yet important skills of saying, "good morning" or "good afternoon" whilst looking the person in the eye and ideally, smiling – even on a damp and cold October morning!

Harvest Festival

This week, we welcomed and greeted, for the first time, the recently appointed Leys and St Faith's Foundation Chaplain, Reverend Simon Coleman, for a virtual Harvest Festival assembly. Reverend Coleman who, until recently, was the Chaplain at Portsmouth University, spoke directly to all Year groups from the Britten Room via video link. As part of his assembly, he showed the children a conker he had picked up from a horse chestnut tree at The Leys on his way to St Faith's, to illustrate his analogy that children are like seedlings, and will grow and develop given the right conditions. He and I took the opportunity to thank the children for their very generous donations of produce, which have been collected by the Salvation Army and will be provided to families in the Cambridge area. As I welcomed pupils to the school on Monday morning, it was heart-warming to see so the many kind gifts filling the collection boxes.

Year 3 Science

Staying on the theme of trees, Year 3 were to be found out and about in the school grounds this week as part of their Science topic. The pupils enjoyed the autumn weather as they identified tree types, measured their trunks and used this information to estimate the age of the trees. Among the specimens measured were a Horse Chestnut with a circumference of over 3.5m and of course our impressive Copper Beech with a circumference of over 5m!

Clubs

Members of the Ornithology Club have also been making good use of the school grounds this week. Mrs Burbridge writes, *'I am thrilled to have such an enthusiastic Ornithology Club this term. The children are knowledgeable and keen to learn new information about all of the birds around them. We spent time outside with the binoculars. Even though there were only a few birds around to see, the children did manage to find a few old birds' nests. We are looking forward to further adventures next week!'*

This week, Year 2 Science Club explored the water-proof properties of tin foil, plastic, tissue and grease-proof paper. Through a series of experiments using sugar cubes and water, the children discovered that only one of the materials – tissue – is not water-proof.

SFPA Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Last weekend the St Faith's Parents' Association organised a virtual Scavenger Hunt for Foundation families as a way of introducing the newest members of our community to our site and facilities. This year's 'Covid-friendly' hunt took place from the comfort of everyone's homes as they completed a number of questions about the school via a 'My First St Faith's'

As one mother wrote afterwards, *'We were excited to start the scavenger hunt together last week. It was lovely to learn about St Faith's together. Our daughter was most amused and initially did not believe that pupils used to sleep at the school. We are looking forward to taking our time to work through the book and are curious how quickly she knows much more than us about the school and tells us interesting things and about her own experiences. Thank you SFPA for this.'*

General Knowledge Quiz Club Finals

Those with a good memory may recall that our quiz teams had been due to take part in the national finals of the General Knowledge Quiz in London back in June. This event eventually took place yesterday with school teams from across the country joining together via Zoom. All eight St Faith's competitors enjoyed the challenge and, as usual, there were some very tricky questions! Well done to Lanna, Oliver, Harris and Ahmed (Team 1) and Ryan, Alexander, Aashna and William (Team 2). They navigated the technology brilliantly and although we weren't placed in the top ten (there were over 90 teams involved), both teams did their best and played with competitive spirit and enthusiasm.

Speech and Drama

This week we heard that several of our pupils (and former pupils) have been awarded prizes by the New Era Academy for achieving the highest marks in the country, in their respective categories, when they took their Speech and Drama exams last year. Ewan S, Dillon K and Noah M have all moved on to senior school so we will be posting their awards to them, but Sofi P (Year 8) will be awarded her certificate in school for gaining the highest Distinction mark in her Grade 3 Verse and Prose exam. Many congratulations to the children on these outstanding achievements.

1WD Virtual Class Assembly

Class assemblies are a much loved part of life in Pre Prep for both pupils and parents alike. This week, for the first time in the history of Pre Prep, 1WD delivered their assembly to their fellow Pre Prep classes and families via video link. The pupils re-told the creation story through the medium of actions, dance and music. Whilst not the same as performing live in front of their peers, this was still a wonderful way of building performance and presentation skills to an audience and one which the pupils clearly enjoyed.

[CURRENT PARENTS CAN WATCH THE FULL PERFORMANCE HERE](#)

Early Years Curriculum

Parents of our Foundation pupils gathered virtually on Monday evening to hear about the Early Years Curriculum and life in Foundation at St Faith's. Our three Foundation teachers – Mrs Bates, Miss Hendry and Mrs Harmsworth – talked to parents about the seven areas of learning which form the framework of our curriculum. The structure of the school day, types of activities and specific specialist lessons such as Music, Spanish and Games were also highlighted. Parents were also given an insight into the basics of our phonics and numeracy programmes as well as the way in which we teach the children to hold a pencil and commence their cursive handwriting skill development. My thanks go to the Foundation teachers for hosting this highly informative evening, and also to the many parents who joined the session remotely and whose participation made the evening such a success.

Balance Bikes

Our youngest pupils have been getting to grips (quite literally) in the past few weeks with their balance and coordination during their Balance Bike lessons. As the names suggests, Balance Bikes are a wonderful way for the children to develop their balance as well as learning the skill of following instructions. It is always one of the most popular activities of the year!

Shrewsbury School Cross Country Championships 2020

The world's oldest running club went global this week when Shrewsbury School organised their annual cross country race as a virtual event for any school wishing to take part. Ever up for a competitive challenge, our PE department was quick to seize this opportunity, which ties in beautifully with this half-term's focus on long distance running. Yesterday and today, selected teams from Years 3 through to 8, as well as a number of keen additional runners, took part in the run on Latham Road fields. One of the conditions for entry to this 'virtual' race was that it had to be filmed, which explains the amusing photo of Mr Welch and Mr Johnson in this gallery. The results are being collated and will be published in next week's newsletter.

Finally...

Marvin, a new recruit this term and friend of Magnus (5L), who I often meet at the school gate in the morning. Marvin always speaks to me, thanks to Magnus' ventriloquist skills. This week, Mrs North, Magnus' tutor, made Marvin a perfectly matching Latham House tie and school blazer, as you can see from the photo. Just another amusing and memorable moment at the school gate this week.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell

Let me introduce you to Ma