

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

16 October 2020

'The children are really enjoying lessons and we are delighted that school is open', is the most common remark from parents when I meet them at the gate each day. While conversations with pupils often focus on the events of the day, birthdays and pets, I have in the past few weeks been struck by how many parents have commented on the reassuring benefits of normal school life. How long this normality will last, nobody knows, but for the moment I think we all appreciate, a little more than usual, the steady and comforting rhythms of day-to-day routines. It is almost seven weeks since our community was re-united. Systems which felt strange at the beginning of term now feel normal and there is a real sense that everyone has adapted very well to the new way of working. Thank you for your efforts in helping the school to operate effectively in these challenging times. There is no doubt that there will be bumps ahead and school life may well be disrupted at some point, but for the moment, let's celebrate through this newsletter, the many wonderful achievements of our pupils on what has been, thankfully, another reassuringly normal week.

Goblins Back Behind the Wheel

There was no finer example of school life being close to normal this week than the sight of the Green Goblins putting their electric go-karts through their paces on the hard courts. Mrs Oxborough was so pleased to reunite her engineers that Mrs Price had a T-shirt especially made for her, stating 'The Goblins are back!'

Engineers

Meanwhile in the Hub, the Year 8 engineers have been focussing on bridge construction, particularly the fascinating Da Vinci Bridge structure, which fits together without any fixing 'mechanisms'.

Speaking of engineers, I thought you might like to see this [inspirational presentation](#) about women in STEM careers, which Bentley and Newton Houses are showing in their assemblies on Monday. The programme, led by EDF, addresses the under-representation of women in STEM careers and, with Black History Month very much in mind, also covers some of the racial issues which have affected the STEM industries.

Ensembles

Another sign of normal school life resuming is the gradual re-introduction of the musical ensembles. The composition of these ensembles has changed, but the philosophy of making music collectively endures and we have all been thrilled to hear the sounds of string orchestras, woodwind ensembles, and brass ensembles rehearsing once again. The return of more ensembles is scheduled for after half term.

Chess

It was great to see the resumption of the Cambridgeshire Chess League last weekend. Usually, all matches are hosted by St Faith's on Saturday mornings, but this year they are being played online. According to Mr Mitchell, the first set of matches last Saturday ran very well indeed. Results and details of the event are in the side bar of this newsletter.

School Council and Eco Committee Assembly

On Monday, our School Council and Eco Committee presented a virtual whole-school assembly. The School Council, led by Mr Robinson, talked about the developments which

began last year (pre-Covid) and are being picked up again, such as the need for more Year 6 bag storage and a wide range of suggestions to further improve lunches. Food is never far from the thoughts of the School Council. Members of the Council also organise charity events and choose how the funds raised should be donated. Last year, a donation was made to the Bahamas Hurricane appeal to help provide food, water and housing to the islands after the devastation of hurricane Dorian.

Meanwhile the Eco Committee, led by Miss Gamble, talked about their five areas of focus – Plastic Pledge, Plate Waste, Biodiversity, Litter and Energy – and how the Committee members and school as a whole are addressing each area.

Thank you to both groups of pupils for this informative assembly. Members of the Committees are elected by their peers and give up their free time in school to tackle issues of importance to our whole community. We look forward to hearing more about the work of the Committees as the year progresses.

Poetry and Speeches

In the absence of our annual Year 7 Poetry Recital, the English Department recently tasked pupils with learning a poem or writing a speech, in which they imagined themselves in a world without their favourite thing or food, and had to make a case for its return. They were then asked to record themselves as part of their homework. As you would expect from our pupils, the depth and breadth of poetry and speeches that were recorded were nothing less than extraordinary, much to the delight of Mrs Greaves, Head of English. Here are a few for you to hear.

<https://youtu.be/tl1nNI9DKQA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6UgjxPDUmw>

On the subject of speeches, I couldn't help noticing as I walked along Ashburton corridor yesterday, that Greta Thunberg was presenting her thoughts to the class. Year 7 looked enthralled as Mrs Ankin showed clips of Greta's speeches to exemplify the power of speech, in particular, alliteration, use of statistics, rhetorical questions and emotive language.

And at the same time, Year 5 pupils were speaking confidently in a Drama lesson, as they created sketches based on *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

History

Year 8 pupils have been studying 19th century history and this week have focused on the Black and Asian presence in London between 1500 and 1850. The timing of these lessons coincides nicely with Black History Month, an annual celebration of the significant contributions that people of African and Caribbean backgrounds have made to the UK over many generations. Using the National Archives website, Year 8s researched a number of London locations and learned more about key individuals in our country's Black history. Meanwhile, Year 7 pupils have been uncovering the history of the slave trade and this week have rounded off their topic by looking at the role of four abolitionists.

[View their work](#)

Pre Prep Happenings

Foundation pupils have been getting crafty this week by using different media to make self-portraits. From paints to pencils, crayons to clay and a few shreds of ripped paper the children have made some delightful self-portraits and developed their fine dexterity skills in the process.

Meanwhile Year 1 have been focussing on friendships and considering how they are all unique. Their teachers asked them to think about why they are special and how they feel. The children then wrote rules or recipes for friendship, made friendship flowers and played games in the classroom all focused on being a good friend. These activities have developed some of the skills of friendship: listening, talking to work things out, acts of kindness and compliments. Teachers have been complimented on their clothing and shiny shoes!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP75Kb9YtjA>

Sports Update

The last of the Grand Prix cross country runs took place at Latham Road this week with pupils in Years 3 to 8 aiming for the most improved times in their age categories and trying to accrue as many House points as possible. After half a term of training and building strength and stamina nearly all pupils posted an improvement in times across their various distances.

I am delighted to announce that four of our Year 8 girls have recently been selected for the Cambridgeshire Hockey squad. Very well done indeed to Alice, Eva, Stephanie and Hannah. Also this week, we were thrilled to learn that four former pupils who left last year - Barney, Alex, Rory and Connie - have been selected for the England Hockey Performance Centre; we wish them every success in their national training events.

Reporting

With the first half of the Michaelmas Term almost complete and a significant amount of ground having been covered by our industrious pupils, attention have turned to reporting and feedback. This week, Pre Prep, Year 3 and 4 parents met their child's Tutor, virtually of course, with discussions focusing on the academic progress of the children. Next week the Learning Habits and Attainment (L&A) grades for Years 5-8 will be shared with parents and the future may see more virtual consultation events across the school.

Finally...

A reminder that the half-term break begins at the end of school next Thursday, and school resumes on Tuesday 3rd November, so there will be no school next Friday and therefore no

newsletter next week.

I wish you an enjoyable weekend and a restful half-term break when it arrives.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell