

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

8th January 2021

Welcome Back

With so many challenges facing us all, 'Happy New Year' doesn't sound quite the right greeting this January, but I will say it anyway and sincerely wish you a safe and positive 2021 when hopefully, a return to some kind of normality will prevail. I trust that you and your family enjoyed the Christmas break and your children have settled in to the routine of the Home Learning Programme.

It is great to be back together again, albeit in a rather different way. The pandemic continues to bring significant challenges, often with very little notice, but with your on-going support, and the unwavering commitment and talent of our staff, we have managed to adapt to the latest requirements and introduce both an online learning programme and critical worker service this week.

Online Learning

Visiting the classrooms in the Pre Prep and Years 3 and 4 has been inspiring, with teachers working with children of critical workers in class whilst live streaming their lessons to homes, something few would have thought possible a year ago. Pupils in Years 5 to 8 have also been taught online, following their normal timetable, and staff have supervised critical worker children in school to ensure they can follow the same programme. The cohesiveness and strength of the staff team have shone through and the first few days of term have gone as well as anyone could have expected.

<https://youtu.be/es6WeSfBrGM>

Assembly

On Wednesday morning, after pupils reconnected with their Tutors and tutor group friends, I presented an assembly, via Teams, to pupils in Years 3 to 8. With over 350 participants this was like no other video call I have ever participated in! Once a few small technological hitches were overcome and the inevitable reminders of 'please use the mute button' were exchanged, we all

fell into our stride as I asked pupils to recognise a series of well-known doors and gates, both within the school and from public buildings and movies. I explained that the start of a new year is like standing before an unopened door - we don't know what is yet to come. As we stood in front of the door last year, we certainly couldn't have predicted what would happen in 2020.

I moved on to talk about the Queen's Christmas message, particularly her reflections of 2020 and her focus on community spirit and kindness being more important now than ever. She paid a specific tribute to the kindness of young people last year and I was able to highlight the extensive outreach and charity work of our own children, including the making and distribution of hundreds of Christmas cards to elderly people in Cambridge who spent Christmas on their own. In the past week, Miss Kennerley (Head of Outreach) and I have received several messages of thanks for these cards including this one from a lady called Anthea: *'Dear Head Teacher, I was the fortunate recipient of one of the Christmas cards distributed by Age UK to older folk. Please thank all the children, particularly Matilda who made my card, and express my joy that I was chosen. Christmas is for giving and your children certainly did that.'*

Kindness, community spirit and outreach activities will continue to be a focus over the coming months.

And Finally...

Whilst there have been relatively few technical issues this week, we expect a few minor bumps as the online systems settle down and everyone becomes accustomed to the new ways of working. We greatly appreciate the many messages of thanks to the staff this week – these have meant a great deal to us during what has been a huge and complex task in setting up online learning and a critical worker service at such short notice. As many of you have acknowledged, online teaching and learning is tough and more demanding than normal classroom teaching, so staff, and I suspect many parents too, will be breathing a sigh of relief that the weekend has arrived.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for all your support with the Home-Learning programme. We are acutely aware that with young children, parental assistance at home is essential if they are to reap the full benefits of an online education. The common cliché, 'We're all in this together', has never applied as much to our community as it does now.

With many thanks and best wishes,

Nigel Helliwell