

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

13 January 2017

Happy New Year and welcome back for what promises to be another busy term. I hope that you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas break and your children are feeling refreshed and ready for the challenges of the new term. It is always a great pleasure for me to see the joy on the faces of the children as the St Faith's community comes back together and, as usual, the first morning of term seemed like one big reunion!

Happy New Year

I used my assembly on Wednesday morning to wish everyone a happy New Year, and explore, with the children's input, what makes people happy, particularly young children. There has been a lot in the news about mental health recently, so it seemed a timely opportunity to share my thoughts on how 2017 can be another happy year for St Faith's. My advice, and the children's ideas, included being kind and helpful to others, appreciating our family and friends, being positive and showing resilience when the inevitable setbacks occur, eating, sleeping and exercising well and limiting time spent looking at electronic screens. I don't claim to be an expert on happiness; in fact, my wife sometimes calls me a grumpy old man when I am having what she calls, 'a Victor Meldrew' moment, but judging from the comments I received after the assembly, some of the points clearly struck a chord.

Thank You

During the holidays the School has been a hive of activity with support staff and contractors working hard to ensure the School is fully prepared for the new term. Much of the credit for the excellent condition of our classrooms and grounds should be given to Richard Brent, our Bursar, and his excellent team of support staff including Mick Hullyer (Estates Manager), Charlie Cochrane (Network Manager) and Amy Pearson (Operations Manager). Their valuable work behind the scenes ensures our pupils have the best possible learning environment and at the beginning of the term, they deserve a big thank you from all of us. In my assembly on Wednesday, when I asked the pupils what makes them happy at school, one boy replied, 'the tidiness of the school!'

Ski Trip

In the first week of the school holiday, thirty-five children and four staff enjoyed a week's skiing in Mayrhofen, Austria. Smooth travel arrangements, comfortable accommodation and

reasonable snow conditions made for a great week of skiing and relaxation. I am delighted to say that the trip went very well indeed and everyone arrived back safely, feeling refreshed from a week in the fresh and exhilarating alpine air. The cabin crew on the plane were particularly complimentary about the behaviour of our children, which is always great to hear. My sincere thanks to Miss Kennerley and Mr Leggoe (joint group leaders), Mr North and Ms Cox for all their work in organising and managing this trip so well.

Goodnight Mr Tom

Also, just before Christmas, six of our pupils – Ben Lewis, Anna Bevens, Izzy Bevens, Daniel Morrison, Mya Devi-Edwards and Lucy Haque – performed in the Cambridge Theatre Company's production of *Goodnight Mr Tom*. It was a splendid play, and particularly enjoyable for me and Jane to see our pupils performing so confidently alongside experienced adult actors.

Senior Singers

It was a good start to the year for the Senior Singers who enjoyed the privilege of performing in the Jesus College chapel last weekend. They represented St Faith's with distinction, performing alongside professional musicians, and at the same time, helped to raise money for a school in India. Thank you to Ms Overman and Mr Gorick for arranging this wonderful opportunity for our singers and for being with them on the day.

Lead School Status Renewed

It was a happy beginning to the New Year when we heard that the Department for Education has renewed St Faith's status as a Lead School in the Network of Teaching Excellence in Computer Science. In addition to his teaching at St Faith's, Mr Mitchell currently provides advice and support to over twenty schools in their quest to establish and develop their Computing curriculum. I know from their feedback just how valuable his expertise has been in developing Computing in schools across the region.

Cambridgeshire Chess League

Mr Mitchell will be hoping that our chess teams continue to perform well in the Cambridgeshire Chess League when he hosts the twenty-five school teams in the Ashburton Hall tomorrow. I wish our players a most enjoyable morning.

School Lunches

Given the quality of the school lunches I experienced as a pupil, I never thought I would say that in the holidays I miss the school lunches, but I do. Today I chose the sea bream served with

pan fried potatoes, red onion and green beans, topped with a drizzle of pea vinaigrette. It was delicious and not surprisingly, popular with the children.

Entrance and Scholarship Assessments

This is the time of the year when many of our Year 8 pupils have their heads down, revising for and sitting the various entrance and scholarship assessments to senior schools. They are very well prepared but will still have more than a twinge of anxiety as the day of the exam approaches. My very best wishes to them and indeed every member of the St Faith's community for a happy, fulfilling and successful 2017.

I will finish with a comment from a group of pupils in a Pre Prep class (1RP), who rushed in to their classroom one morning at the end of last term, in a great state of excitement. They ran straight to Mr Pallister, their teacher, pointing at the picture (below) in their class reading books. 'We can't believe it' they squealed with delight, 'Mr Helliwell is in our story book!' It did make me chuckle when Mr Pallister showed me. Not sure about the yellow suit, though!

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell