

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

12th March 2021

Welcome back!

There is only one word to describe the return of all pupils and staff this week – joyous! With broad grins and oodles of enthusiasm, children literally skipped past me in to school as I stood at the gate on Monday morning. The relief and joy of parents was also palpable. Excitable chatter then filled classrooms as friendships were reunited and pupils were reacquainted with school routines. It was heart-warming to see and brought home to me how much we have all missed normal school. Whilst full normality is some time away, there is a real sense that we are moving in the right direction and the worst of the pandemic restrictions are behind us. It has been a wonderfully up-lifting week, when so many people have commented to me about how happy they are to be back, and there is a strong feeling of gratitude for something we used to take for granted.

Earth Restoration Service

This week, Miss Gamble, our Eco Coordinator, took delivery of 50 saplings. Over the next two years we will act as the carers of the saplings, on behalf of the [Earth Restoration Service](#). Yesterday and today, pupils from Foundation to Year 8 planted the saplings in the grounds here at St Faith's, which caused much excitement. The mini Oaks, Maples, Hornbeams and Wild Cherries will be nurtured by our children here in school before being moved as more substantial trees into the local community in two years' time.

Great British Nature Day

Staying on an eco theme, next Monday sees the whole school celebrating the school's fourth Great British Nature Day, when all lessons across the curriculum will include a theme linked to the nature of Great Britain. Gill Perkins, CEO of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will be our virtual guest speaker and I look forward to sharing more about this unique day with you next week.

Reading is Power

On World Book Day last week, Mrs Switsur asked her Year 8 English class to read and respond to an article on the benefits of reading. The extracts from the Year 8 written responses below may be inspirational to some of our younger, more reluctant readers.

'Having my trusty book always by my side, helps me through the tough times. It feels so good to listen to someone else's life and jump into their life adventures.' (Jeanne)

'Reading can help you understand how people feel, who are in different countries or are different from you. This book gave me a lot of information on how to put myself in other people's shoes and find out how they're feeling.' (Joseph)

'Sometimes after finishing a book, it feels as if the characters are still there. Currently, I am reading the 'Diaries of Anne Frank.' (Molly)

'Personally, I have found that reading has helped influence my thought processes. Books I have read, have influenced who I have become and shaped my personality. I have also learned lots of valuable life lessons from some of my favourite fiction novels. I've learnt a lot about different styles of writing and how other people think, and about friendships through reading.' (Eve)

'Reading will help calm your mind before sleeping. For example, I used to find it difficult to sleep at night, but when I started reading every day for 10–20 minutes it was so much easier to put my head down and go to sleep' (Arjun)

'Apparently, it makes you live longer! A study followed 3,635 adult participants for 12 years. Those who read books survived 2 years longer than those who chose not to read any books, magazines etc. This study also told us that people who read more than 3 ½ hours a week are 23 % more likely to live longer than those who didn't read at all. It is also proven that reading can help strengthen your brain. After a lot of tests, scientists discovered that brain scans showed that throughout the reading period, brain connectivity increased.' (Annabel)

'Novels allow the body to de-stress and drift away from real life. I remember once after an argument, I went upstairs and read my favourite book on space. Within minutes I was fully engaged in the book and feeling calmer.' (Ethan)

'Most of my life I have not been the biggest fan of reading and I was quite put off by reading, because in Year Two I read a really long, hard book and I found it tricky to finish. Recently, I started reading again. The book was 'The Secrets Within Me'. Suddenly, I realised that I do like reading and the books I read before, were not for me. In conclusion, reading really calms me and it takes me into a whole new world, leaving reality behind me. I think it is really important that you find the right books for you. A good idea is to ask your friends what books they like and you can look online for recommended books. Once you have found the book for you, you will love reading.' (Stephanie).

Goodnight Mr Tom

On the theme of reading, 6F are currently studying Goodnight Mister Tom, a novel based on a vulnerable evacuee in World War II. In the story, one character, Zach, writes a postcard to his parents, using a magnifying glass as he writes, so that he can pack the card as full as possible with his news! Mrs Davis challenged her class to write as many words as possible in the character of Zach and then post their cards to Mrs Davis at St Faith's. Mrs Davies was so impressed with the quality of work submitted that she made World War II themed prizes for the children.

Chess

The final round of this year's Cambridge Chess Championship is completed and I am pleased to say that our four teams all performed very well with St Faith's A finishing 3rd, St Faith's B 4th, St Faith's C 9th and St Faith's D equal 12th. Matches this season have been played virtually using the lichess.org website under the intimidating sounding 'team battle mode'. A round robin system has ensured that each team has played 13 matches. My sincere thanks to Mr Mitchell, the founder of this league, for continuing to organise this popular event.

Oxford University Computing Challenge

Over 100,000 pupils from 50 countries competed in the Bebras Challenge, a computational thinking competition. The top 10% in each age category then qualify for the Oxford University Computing Challenge (OUCC), of which Round 1 involved timed coding challenges. I was delighted to learn this week that Ryan in Year 7 recently came joint top overall in the first round of the OUCC and will therefore be taking part in the final next week. Clearly this is a significant achievement. We wish Ryan all the very best in the final.

Road to Paris Challenge

For the final week of Home Learning, Mr North, Head of PE, set pupils in Years 6-8 the challenge of covering the distance from Cambridge to Paris. Competing as Tutor groups, the children were asked to record any distances they covered while running, walking or cycling to see how far they collectively travelled. 8B were the clear winners in Year 8, covering a collective 592.78km and exceeding the distance to Paris. 7N won the race in Year 7 covering 374.13km, while 6C significantly outstripped their year group covering 500.43km. Individual recognition goes to Hannah and James in Year 8 who covered 117.34 and 159.1km respectively; Gemma and Nate were the individual winners in Year 7 running or walking 125km and 75km respectively; while in Year 6 Amy travelled an impressive 105.5km and Alex 130.5km. Well done to everyone who took part!

Finally...

I thought you would like to take a moment to enjoy this delightful piece of art, by Ekim in Foundation, which Miss Hendry proudly shared with me this week. He was inspired by the artwork of sculptor and photographer Andy Goldsworthy who is known for his site-specific installations involving natural materials and the passage of time.

And as you enjoy Ekim's art, let's finish this newsletter with two musical clips – one from Year 2 Music lesson this week and the other from Lochie, playing the bagpipes in Ashburton Courtyard yesterday. These are just the type of spontaneous moments that I have missed so much over the past 8 weeks.

<https://youtu.be/mQ2OPwXly4I>

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell