

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

23rd April 2021

I hope you and your family had a wonderful Easter and trust that your son or daughter has settled back in to the daily routine of school life. The Summer Term is, for many, the best period of the school year when our green and spacious site comes in to its own. After a long and difficult winter, it has been wonderful to see the fields bathed in sunlight and full of happy children at break times this week. As the girls and boys skipped past me on their way in to school in the mornings, the most common comment to me was 'I can't wait to play cricket!' Judging from their sports bags bulging with bats and balls, they were certainly well prepared. There has also been great excitement amongst the Year 3 pupils when the playground apparatus became available again, after over a year lying dormant.

Back with a Splash

Another sign of life slowly returning to normal is the resumption of swimming lessons for Year 3

pupils this term. Every Year 3 class, and new pupils in Years 4 to 7, will visit The Leys swimming pool at least once this term, to assess their swimming skills with the aim of re-introducing a full programme of swimming lessons from September.

Life Skills

On Tuesday, I welcomed back everyone with a virtual assembly, which focused on the importance of being thankful and the power of resilience. Via a short BBC news film clip, our children were introduced to Ahmed, a blind nine year old boy who is educated daily in the bombed out ruins of a school in Yemen. Despite these challenges, Ahmed appears thankful for his opportunities and determined to make the most of his time at the school, showing remarkable courage in his daily life and extreme kindness in helping others. Judging from the comments I received after the assembly, our children took inspiration from Ahmed and the other less privileged children that I talked about in the assembly.

[CURRENT PARENTS MAY VIEW THE ASSEMBLY HERE](#)

My colleagues and I have seen at first-hand, how our pupils have grown in resilience over the past year, as they have adapted to the ever-changing world and restrictions around them. They have also shown greater gratitude for the school and all it offers, and have expressed to me many times, how much they enjoy being part of the St Faith's community. This significant change in the development of two life skills – thankfulness and resilience - has been one of the unexpected silver linings of the pandemic cloud, and one which can only make our children stronger and happier in the future.

Year 8 Senior School Entrance Results

The resilience of our Years 8s was put to the test, quite literally, when they undertook their Senior School entry assessments last term. Owing to the late notice of lockdown and school closures, each senior school had to quickly develop and staged its own form of entry assessment, many of which were quite different from those for which the children had prepared. Almost all comprised online exams under invigilation via webcams, completed, of course, at home.

Well, I am delighted to say that 98% of our leavers have been offered a place at their first choice school and all have secured places. These are the best results we can remember and are particularly impressive given the circumstances. They speak volumes for the pupils' abilities, hard work and resilience as well as the high quality teaching they have received over the years. I congratulate each and every one of our Year 8 pupils who sat online tests and sincerely thank their teachers for their skill and commitment.

Several senior schools delayed their scholarship assessments until this term, owing to Covid restrictions. I look forward to sharing the scholarship results with you in the coming months.

Mock Exams

Our Year 7 pupils are in the final days of preparations for their formal practice exams, which begin on Monday. In more normal times, these exams, which are set in every academic subject, would be sat over the course of one week in Ashburton Hall. This year, they will take place during the first half of term and will be undertaken in the classrooms. Whilst not being the full exam experience, we trust nevertheless, that the process of revision, planning and exam technique will greatly aid our pupils as they prepare to enter their final year here at St Faith's. I wish every pupil in Year 7 the very best in the weeks ahead.

Year 8 Humanities

A group of Year 8s had the opportunity to 'grill a vicar' on Thursday as part of their Christianity topic. Reverend Chris Lowe, vicar of Orchard Park in Cambridge, visited the lesson via Teams. He answered a range of searching questions on ethical and spiritual issues such as, 'Why did you decide to become a Christian?', 'Why do you think the Bible is true?' and 'Is it possible to believe in God and in science?' It was a thought-provoking and interesting session which ended with a challenge from Chris to our pupils to read the Bible for themselves and to keep thinking and questioning! The Year 8s sent a thank you card to Reverend Lowe and these are four examples of the lovely comments that they wrote:

- *Thank you very much for answering our many complicated questions and helping us to explore and understand differing views.*
- *This was really helpful for me, and helped to answer some big questions. Thanks a lot.*
- *Thank you for a really interesting and engaging session, which helped us to understand answers to huge and difficult questions.*
- *Listening to you was very interesting and fascinating – I enjoyed talking to someone with different views to me!*

Cambridge Rotary Club Young Environmentalist Winner

Over the Easter break, I was delighted to hear that Hermione (Year 8) won the District heat of the Rotary Young Environmentalist Competition and has qualified for the National final. Hermione's entry focused on Sustainable Urban Transportation, and included an investigation in to the effects on air quality by switching from petrol to electric vehicles. Well done Hermione and best of luck in the next stage of the competition.

Finally...

When passing the Art Rooms today, to deliver a birthday card, the soothing sound of classical music and calm, focused atmosphere of pupils practising their observational drawing enticed me in. I spent a few minutes observing the Year 7s sketching peacock feathers and seashells under the expert guidance of Mrs Ankin and Mrs Bowes. As always, I came away from the art studios feeling more relaxed and full of admiration for the artistic skills of our pupils and the wonderfully creative and supportive ambience in which Art is taught at St Faith's.

Whatever you have prepared for in the next couple of days, I wish you a relaxing and enjoyable weekend.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell