

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

8 September 2017

Welcome

I always feel slightly surprised to see the children so happy to be back at school. I quite enjoyed school when I was a pupil but I don't remember looking forward to returning to lessons after the long summer holiday. I now find it uplifting to see how cheerful the children are to be back at St Faith's with their friends and ready for the exciting challenges which a new academic year presents. Wednesday morning felt like one big reunion as the children, parents and staff greeted each other enthusiastically. As people scurried through the school gates, there was a real sense that we had all enjoyed a refreshing break and were pleased to be back with colleagues and friends and in to normal daily routines.

I hope you enjoyed a relaxing holiday and your child has settled in well to their new class. I extend a particularly warm welcome to the new pupils and their parents who joined the school this week; I trust that you are beginning to feel part of the St Faith's community. As always, if there is any way we can help, please just ask.

STEAM Hub

It has been a very busy summer at St Faith's. From the moment the marquee was dismantled after Speech Day, St Faith's has been a hive of activity with hundreds of children enjoying the many activity courses and our support staff and external contractors working hard to ensure the school is fully prepared for the new term. Much of the work has focussed on the new glass atrium between the Keynes and Ashburton buildings, which has converted an outdoor corridor in to an indoor STEAM Hub. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Maths and the new indoor facility links these departments and creates a large space for interdisciplinary projects. This summer, the new glass roof has been fitted and the indoor space created. Next summer, the Science laboratories will be extended and refurbished and the STEAM Hub completed. A 'walk through' film of the completed facility can be viewed [via this link](#). There is still a little more work to be done over the next few weeks, but once the contractors have finished the first phase and their machinery and scaffolding is off site, we will see the full splendour of this new facility.

South Africa

It is difficult to put in to words just how enriching the South Africa trip was. Two weeks of school visits, sight-seeing, sports matches, safaris, songs and sun made for a life-time experience that provided a real insight in to the beauty and diversity of this African nation. For the first time, the trip was open to all pupils in Years 7 and 8, music was an integral part of the itinerary, and parents and siblings came along too. Every single day was packed full of action. Typically, we would go to a special place of interest such as Robben Island or Capetown waterfront in the morning and then visit a school in the afternoon for a joint concert or to play sport. We went to six schools in total, some in townships, others in wealthy areas and in all of them, we were struck by the warmth and hospitality. The South Africans were great hosts and loved their barbecues!

The highlight of the trip was the two-day visit to Makukhanye, the township school in Jeffrey's Bay we have been supporting for the past 14 years. On our arrival, Makukhanye held a large 'welcome assembly' at which the town Mayor and a representative from the Department of Education attended. It was wonderful to see how well our pupils and those of Makukhanye mixed and played together; sports matches were held but the special moments were the informal ones, when pupils, parents and staff of both schools just chatted, played and enjoyed each other's company. I have to admit, I had underestimated the extent to which St Faith's is helping Makukhanye. It was clear from the tour of the classrooms with the Headmaster, Mr Mbatane, that the funds we have raised have been put to great use and are really helping the school to thrive, despite the extremely difficult circumstances in which the staff and pupils have to work. I could go on but I won't, suffice to say that the trip was a huge success, thanks to the outstanding leadership of Mr Johnson and the staff who assisted him, Mr Gorick and Miss Kennerley. Jane, my wife, was a little apprehensive about going but speak to her now, and she will tell you it was a trip of a lifetime. We had been to South Africa before but nothing prepared us for the deep, insightful and, at times, emotionally moving experience that this trip provided.

Starting School

Along with Prince George (and my grandson!), this week was a milestone in the lives of our youngest pupils (and their parents) as they started school. It has been wonderful to see how well the Foundation children have settled in this week.

Playground Apparatus

Speaking of the Pre Prep, new playground apparatus has been erected on the Southfield lawn which is proving extremely popular! This has been purchased and built thanks to a substantial donation from the SFPA (St Faith's Parents' Association), so very many thanks to everyone who has supported recent SFPA events and made this possible.

Old Fidelian Reunion

The annual Old Fidelian (alumni) BBQ will take place this year on Friday 15 September, 6.00pm to 8.00pm in my garden (or house depending on the weather). There will be food, drink and live music by Fred's House (the lead singer is our very own Vikki from the school office!). This is a free event, but we do need to have an idea of numbers. Old Fidelians should contact Kirstie Osborne on marketingintern@stfaiths.co.uk. So far, over 90 OFs, ranging from those who left the school last year to those who haven't been back for over 50 years, have confirmed they will be joining us so it promises to be a great evening.

Finally....

You may be interested to know that one of our nurses, Mrs Bryan, was mentioned by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 19 July, as a result of her actions during the London Bridge terrorist attack. Mrs Bryan was in the area on the night of the incident and one of the first people at the scene who was able to provide support to the victims. As a result of her actions, Mrs Bryan was invited to the House of Commons but was unaware that she would be mentioned by the Prime Minister. This is the relevant extract from Hansard:

[The Prime Minister](#) *"As we approach recess, I am sure that Members from all parties wish to thank the staff of the House for their dedication to our work here in what has been a particularly challenging year. We saw terrorists attack our democracy and our way of life—not just in the Westminster attack, but in the attacks at Manchester, Finsbury Park and London Bridge. It is thanks to the professionalism and bravery of people such as Elizabeth Bryan, an off-duty A&E nurse from Cambridgeshire who ran to help at the scene of the Borough Market attack and who is with us in the Gallery today—[Hon. Members: "Hear, hear"]—that these attacks will never succeed. We are united in defending the values that define."*

I could provide further comment but I trust you agree, this speaks for itself.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell