

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

15 December 2017

Christmas Festivities

This week, the school fizzed with excitement as children and staff exchanged cards and gifts and revelled in the Christmas festivities. On Monday the Dining Hall was awash with cracker jokes, Brussels sprouts and party hats as everyone tucked in to Christmas lunch. Even Father Christmas made an appearance to join in the festive spirit. Kevin, our Head Chef, made a chocolate Yule Log for 1000 people, as he knew many would want seconds! He was right, of course, and by the end of lunchtime there wasn't a crumb of chocolate to be seen.

On Tuesday, there were plenty of fun and games at the Pre Prep Christmas party, then one big afternoon tea when the children shared the festive snacks and sang Christmas songs to the catering staff. I felt obliged to sample the cocktail sausages, for quality control purposes of course, and they were delicious.

It was full-on partying on Wednesday evening when Years 5 to 8 let their hair down at the Christmas discos.

Last House Standing

Yesterday afternoon pupils and staff joined together for 'Last House Standing', an almost indescribable blend of random comedy acts, wildly-enthusiastic competitive singing and general mayhem. One surprise after the next kept us all hugely entertained. This year's theme was '1970s Disco' and the four houses belted out 'Car Wash' (Chaucer), 'September' (Latham), 'We are family' (Bentley) and 'Blame it on the boogie' (Newton). What the singing lacked in finesse, was more than made up for in volume and entertainment. As usual we had unpredictable comedy moments from Mr Critchley and Mr Kite and a surprise guest performer – this year, talented Old Fidelian Josh Thurlby who got everyone singing along to his music. For the first time we had a 'bake off', or rather an 'ice off' as contestants attempted to ice a cake in just a few minutes, and a 'sing off' where houses competed against each other, singing alternate verses of a Christmas carol. In all the mayhem and laughter, Newton won, but the real

winner was the event itself, which once again emphasised the unique atmosphere at St Faith's.

Carol Services

After the frenetic excitement of the Christmas lunches, parties, discos, and variety shows we ended the term on a more traditional note today with our Carol Services. At St Faith's we have much to be thankful for and these services provide a good opportunity for the school community to come together to reflect on the meaning of Christmas and consider those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Thank you to all the parents and grandparents who were able to join us for these special occasions.

Makukhanye School

Speaking of those less fortunate than ourselves, I was delighted to hear this week that many of the classrooms at Makukhanye School, the township school in South Africa which we support, have recently been re-painted, thanks to our fund-raising; here are the pictures showing some of the work. Let's hope and pray that the children and staff of Makukhanye have a safe and happy Christmas.

Reflections

As we reach the end of term, it seems a very long time since we assembled together at the beginning of September, all refreshed from the summer holiday, to begin another school year. It has been another highly productive term with so many memorable moments and notable achievements. We have had the creation of The Hub, a meteorite strike on the Head's House, poetry recitals, music concerts, drama productions, sports matches, art workshops, author visits, chess tournaments, a book fair, a whole school photograph, a Remembrance Service, a silly sock day, a fireworks display, Old Fidelian reunions, nominations for national awards, a visit

from Santa Claus and the arrival of a school partridge!

On a more serious note, I am always conscious that reported school news tends to focus on the wide range of 'public' events, particularly in Drama, Music and Sport, and as you know, there is plenty to celebrate about these at St Faith's. So allow me to put in a quiet word or two for the equally valuable accomplishments behind the classroom doors that take place at St Faith's every day. From the handwriting exercises in the Pre Prep to the learning of Latin conjugations in Year 8, and all the number crunching and Science experiments in between, it is the talent and infectious enthusiasm of our staff and pupils in day-to-day lessons which enable so much progress to be made and so many successes to be achieved. When I conduct tours of the school, prospective and current parents often comment on the quality of our staff, but I appreciate that on a day to day basis, this is largely hidden. In the final newsletter of the term, therefore, I would like to say a sincere thank you to each and every pupil and member of staff for their enthusiasm and inspiration in class every day over the past three months, for it is this valuable work which is the heart-beat of the school and creates the uniquely positive and happy environment which characterises St Faith's.

Good Schools Guide

This positive and happy environment is highlighted in [The Good Schools Guide report](#) which was published this week. One of the editors of The Guide visited earlier this term, spending time in lessons and speaking with pupils, staff and parents. The Guide prides itself on providing unbiased and in-depth reviews of their selection of schools so as such, schools do not pay for inclusion nor do they have control of the editorial content. The report summary states, 'Overall, a very impressive school. Plenty of space, an excellent innovative education but, most importantly, a joyous place to be.'

Finally...

In the very early hours of tomorrow morning, thirty of our pupils will set off to Mayrhofen, for a week of skiing. I trust the recent snowfall gave our skiers a taste of the conditions they will enjoy in Austria; I took this photo of the white school field when Mollie and I went for a walk on Sunday. Whether you are skiing down mountains, walking up hills or just relaxing at home, I hope you have a happy Christmas and wonderful holiday.

See you in 2018!

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell