

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

26 January 2018

Independent School Gymnastics Finals

As the medals were being presented to the winners on Sunday evening I reflected on what had been a wonderful day. Two hundred and forty gymnasts in over forty teams from twenty-one schools came from as far and wide as Belgium, Wales and Scotland, to compete in the Independent Schools Four-Piece Finals here in our Sports Hall. The standard was amazing. Young gymnasts soared over apparatus, tumbled across mats and performed eye-watering stretches that most people of my age can only dream about.

This was an ambitious event to organise, which required a huge team effort from the St Faith's community to pull it all together. One parent email to me on Monday morning remarked, *'I must first mention that we were immediately struck by what a fantastic job the school and staff had done to put together such a well-planned and run event. Not just in the competition hall itself - where Mrs North did a masterful job of keeping everything running tightly and on-schedule and making sure teams, individuals and parents knew what was expected at all times - but also the hospitality made available for competitors and their families around the school: changing rooms, practice halls, parents rooms, hot and cold refreshments and even a (very popular) BBQ in the snow.... These things take careful thought, planning and hard work in execution and it was abundantly clear how much effort had been put in by staff and volunteers before and throughout the event.'*

The cherry on the cake, and a very large one at that, was the performances of the St Faith's teams, two of which (the U9 and U11 Boys) won national titles, with three pupils – Max (U9), Viraj and James (joint winners in the U11s) becoming individual national champions. Many congratulations to all the boys who took part and their dedicated coaches, Mr and Mrs North and Miss Butler, who not only coached the teams but also organised the event. Mrs North was the commander-in-chief, directing operations with her characteristic endless enthusiasm and energy.

Cambridge Chess League

Tomorrow we will be welcoming more visitors to St Faith's, this time to play chess in the

Cambridge Chess League, founded and organised by Mr Mitchell and his team of enthusiasts. When I see the Ashburton Hall full of chess players from over twenty schools, I can hardly believe that six years ago there was no school chess league in, of all places, Cambridge. It is now great to see the league thriving, with girls and boys from state and independent schools enjoying the challenge of this fascinating game. Long may it continue.

Integrated Arts Project

This week it was the turn of Granta School in Linton to host the annual Integrated Arts Project, a two-day drama workshop in which fifteen of our Year 7 pupils work with children in two special needs schools – Castle and Granta. Drama is an ideal forum for the children of the three schools to connect and work together, each learning from the others, the skills and confidence to create a group performance. It's challenging for all those involved, but for many an experience they will never forget. For our pupils, this is, of course, much more than Drama. Their work with the children who have learning difficulties requires considerable empathy, patience and understanding; life skills which should hold them in good stead in the future.

Royal Society

In the first newsletter of this term I mentioned the benefits of St Faith's having membership of the Royal Society Schools Network. Well, last week, we heard that our Head of Science, Mrs Price, has been invited to be a panel member to shortlist books for this year's Royal Society Young People's Book Prize. Mrs Price is the only teacher on the six-member panel, which will be chaired by Professor Yavinder Malhi, Ecosystem Ecologist from Oxford University. This is a great opportunity for Mrs Price and a reflection of the respect with which she is held in the Royal Society Schools Network.

Finally

We wish every success to our Head Chef, Kevin Johnson, who will be competing in the finals of the Chartwell's 'Chef of the Year' at Olympia next week. Here are photographs of the dishes he will be preparing for judges: a lightly smoked oyster wrapped in mooli with buttermilk and cucumber foam, lime gel and a squid ink tuile; roasted rump of lamb served with wild mushrooms, sweetbread, salsify and artichoke puree finished with a lamb jus; and a Paris-Brest filled with rhubarb and pastry cream with stem ginger ice cream on an oat crumb.

Whether you are having cheese on toast or a Michelin Star meal this evening, I hope you enjoy it!

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell