

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

18 May 2018

One of the best parts of my job is attending the many special events each week. I try to see as many events as possible but on some weeks, when there is so much going on, and this week has been one of those, it is possible to capture only a small sample. As the following summary of school news shows, it has been a wonderful 7 days when the sheer breadth of lessons, activities and special events has shone brightly. Sometimes I wonder how our pupils pack it all in.

Year 8 Reading Competition

All Year 8 pupils participate in this competition and the best 'public' readers from each class qualify for the final, which took place in the Drama Studio on Tuesday. I have to say that it was a great pleasure to hear our top year pupils reading passages from their favourite books as well as a pre-selected poem. Public speaking is never easy at the best of times, but doing it in front of an audience of peers and teachers is particularly challenging. Our Year 8s rose to the challenge and impressed the adjudicator, Anna Garrett, Head of English at The Leys who complimented the readers on their diction and expression. Miss Garrett awarded 'commended' to Alex Page and Dominic O'Loughlin, 3rd equal places to Lucy Blanning and Rive Lewis, 2nd to Flora McCaig and 1st place to Isabella Bevens. Isabella's reading of a passage from 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' was very impressive.

National and Regional Maths Challenges

The mathematicians have also been in fine form recently. For the second consecutive year, our pupils gained the best ever results in the 17 years we have been participating in the National Junior Maths Challenge. Congratulations to the many pupils who achieved gold, silver or bronze and particularly well done to John Hansen, Isabella Woods, Lex Walker, Juliette Brooking, Emily Hill, Daniel Myhill and Harry Long who have all qualified for the 'Kangaroo' stage. Kuankuan Lin, our top performer, will have the honour of competing in the Olympiad in June. We wish them all continued success in the next stages of this challenge.

Yesterday, the Year 6 Cambridgeshire Maths Challenge, hosted here at St Faith's, provided another opportunity for our mathematicians to apply their skills and knowledge. Over 120 pupils from 29 schools enjoyed an afternoon of computational conundrums, team challenges and most importantly, a nice tea afterwards. We didn't win but our pupils scored very well indeed and the homemade biscuits were delicious.

Assemblies

On the back of the successful duck hatching and launching two weeks ago, the Foundation assembly on Wednesday told the enchanting story of 'The Odd Egg', with our very own live hatching of chicks and owlets. The sight of the children bursting out of containers was both surprising and amusing and made for an entertaining start to the day. We even heard some interesting duck facts - it takes 27-28 days for a duck egg to hatch, duck feathers are waterproof and ducks are omnivores which means they eat both plants and animals – and some duck jokes – *Why do ducks watch the news? We don't know, why do ducks watch the news? For the feather forecast!* Many thanks to the children of FCH, Ms Hendry and Mrs Scott for this super assembly.

Speaking of assemblies, on Monday, Miss Kennerley gave a fascinating talk on the use of plastics and the damage that waste plastic is doing to our planet. There was a gasp of horror when we were shown a photograph of the streets of London littered with thousands of water bottles after this year's marathon, and an intense focus as we watched a clip of 'Blue Planet' in which David Attenborough urges us to be proactive in protecting our environment. Miss Kennerley's bamboo fibre reusable coffee cup certainly caught the children's imagination as a way of reducing waste caused by plastic versions.

Sport

It has been a busy week for our athletes. Last Saturday our pupils won an impressive 22 medals at the County Athletics Championships – a record number for the school. Not surprisingly, Mr and Mrs North and Mr Mageean, our athletics coaches at the event, were absolutely delighted. Further details are available on this [link](#). On Monday, our U10 and U11s competed in the Eastern Region Championships in Norwich and performed very well indeed, with Toby N breaking the school record in the U11 boys 200m. Today, many of our top athletes are competing at Gresham's School, on the Norfolk Coast.

Four school records, some long-standing, were broken during the swimming gala with St Mary's on Tuesday. Many congratulations to Mateo Valenzuela-Niedbalski (25m backstroke), Reuben Critchley (25m breaststroke) and Ava Birmingham (25m backstroke) who broke school records, the latter two of which stood since 2003! The U10 boys medley relay team, Reuben, Mateo, Niall Graham and Archie Nye also achieved a new school record time for this event. With so many children taking part in the gala (over 60) and a great atmosphere of sportsmanship between the competitors, it was a hugely enjoyable and successful afternoon in the pool.

On the subject of swimming, this week we heard that two more of our swimmers, Tomás Valenzuela-Niedbalski and Emily Hill, have qualified for the Nationals Finals. Ten of our pupils

will therefore be at the Finals in London on 9th June.

This week, for the first time, a St Faith's sailing team has been competing in the IAPS Sailing Regatta in Weymouth. Fluctuating winds made for challenging races but our sailors did the school proud and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

While we are on the subject of sport, let's congratulate Kuankuan Lin (Year 7), for winning a bronze medal at the National Fencing Championships last weekend. Whilst we don't teach Fencing at St Faith's, Kuankuan was keen to 'fly the flag' for the school and he certainly did this in style, finishing 3rd in his age category.

This weekend, our pupils are competing in the National Trampolining Championships in Croydon and the Cambridge Schools Golf Tournament at Cambridge Lakes. I wish them every success.

Visits

This week has seen a groups of Year 6s tour the Amazon Drone Laboratory and British Library, two equally fascinating but contrasting visits. The pupils who visited the Drone Lab learnt about the potential of this technology and enjoyed the experience of flying some models, whilst the British Library tour included an interesting workshop on historical maps.

Finally...

Good luck to the Green Goblins who will be driving the school's three Go Karts in the first event of the season in Luton this weekend. Our Year 8s will also be busy, in rehearsals, putting the finishing touches to their performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', which will take place on Wednesday and Thursday evenings next week.

Many congratulations to Charlie Jerman who has been selected as one of the 16 finalists in the Royal Horticultural Society School Gardener of the Year. This is much deserved, given his endless enthusiasm and commitment to the school gardening club.

I will finish with of a photograph of four members of 'Busy Fingers' (an after school activity run by Mrs O'Reilly) proudly displaying their newly made hand puppets.

With all good wishes,

Nigel Helliwell