

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

18 January 2019

The New Year

One of the quirky features of working in a school is that there are two new years every year! There is, of course, the new academic year in September when everyone arrives back from their summer holidays, all fresh from the summer break, ready for life in a different year group with new teachers. And there is January, the beginning of the calendar year when although classes won't necessarily have changed, it still feels for many, like a fresh start. This week, the school has been fizzing with energy and there has been a notable spring in the step of the pupils as they have moved around the school. It is great to see the St Faith's community reunited after the break and back in to our usual routines with a renewed sense of purpose.

The Community

Speaking of community, the first full week of term is the time when several of the school committees meet to plan the forthcoming community events. On Monday evening I joined the St Faith's Parents' Association (SFPA) Committee to review last term's events (the Fireworks display and Christmas Fair) which I am sure you will agree were a fantastic success. We then spent time organising the next two SFPA events, a 'treasure hunt' in Cambridge (in May) and at the end of the year (the academic year that is!) a summer party. Details of both occasions will be sent to you in due course.

Tuesday evening saw the termly meeting of the Old Fidelian (OF) Committee, a group of old and not so old girls and boys who, in a most convivial atmosphere, plan the many OF social and sporting events throughout the year. It is always a great pleasure to talk to former pupils about their time at St Faith's and their subsequent education and careers. As I said to the Committee on Tuesday, it is very unusual for a prep school to have such a thriving alumni network – this is usually the preserve of senior schools – and this speaks volumes for the fondness with which so many former pupils hold the school.

The James Bradfield Observatory

On the subject of Old Fidelians, the new Observatory on the top of floor of The Hub, named after James Bradfield, an OF, started to take shape this week. Tuesday saw the first meeting of the inaugural Astronomy Club and there was great excitement as the telescopes were assembled, ready for star-gazing to commence next week. Here is a photograph of the club members along with some examples and notes from Dr Hoyle of the images they will be able to see through the telescopes.

- *The Bay of Rainbows (Sinus Iridum) on the Moon can be seen in detail. The polar cap on Mars, rings of Saturn and the great red spot on Jupiter's surface will also be visible clearly.*
- *Albireo is a true binary system, is 430 light years away and the stars take 100,000 years to orbit each other. Through the telescope it is clearly noticeable that one star is gold and the other blue which is due to the stars composition and temperature so they emit different wavelengths on the electromagnetic spectrum.*
- *The M57 Ring Nebula is roughly 2300 light years away from us (1 light year is 5.88 trillion miles!). When looking through the telescope it may look like a fuzzy Polo mint but it is in fact a bubble of gas surrounding a dwarf star and it shows us what our Sun will do when it dies.*

Dr Hoyle and Mr Mitchell have ensured that the fun won't stop when the evenings become lighter. We plan to install in the Observatory a suite of computers with virtual reality headsets, so that our young astronomers can take 'a journey through the galaxies' at any time of the year. I can't wait to have a go! In the future, the Observatory will be used by all pupils as part of their Science classes, as well as in after school clubs.

The New Year's Honours List

We were delighted to hear that James Bradfield's father, Bob, also an Old Fidelian, has been awarded an MBE in the recent New Year's Honours List for services to navigation and maritime safety on the West Coast of Scotland. Our sincere congratulations to Bob on this much-deserved award. Further details can be read [here](#).

The Arts

Rehearsals are in full swing for the forthcoming Drama productions: the Year 1 musical, 'The Musicians of Bremen' (14:30-15:00 on 13th March), the Year 4 Drama Showcase (14:45pm-15:25pm on 7th March) and the Year 6 production of 'Mary Poppins' (19:00-20:30 on 27th and 28th March)

The musicians are also preparing for the Foundation Concert on Tuesday 5th February (19:00-20:30), a biennial event which is designed to showcase the musical talent at both St Faith's and The Leys. The concert will be held in the Ashburton Hall with refreshments beforehand in the Hub. All families from St Faith's and The Leys are most welcome to attend and seats can be booked via this [link](#). Here is a picture of the Big Band rehearsing earlier this week.

Sport

A new year and a new sporting event for St Faith's. For the first time, we entered the National Prep Schools Badminton Championships and our players did rather well, reaching the U13 semi-finals and the U11 quarter-finals at Great Walstead last weekend. Many congratulations to Tommy, Nikita, Harry and Benedict, pictured here.

I wish our gymnasts a most enjoyable two days at Vinehall School, Sussex this weekend, where they will be competing in the ISGA '4 piece' boys' National Championships.

Finally...

When I popped in to Class FLW this week, the Foundation children were busy making capes and masks as part of their new Superhero topic. They had all thought of their own superhero names and special powers and then created costumes thinking about the properties of materials and sustainability for their superhero jobs.

In the middle of the English winter, when the easterly wind is blowing, daylight is in short supply and the frosty ground crunches underfoot, spring can seem like a long way off. So even the

smallest sign of the season changing is much welcomed. On that note, I will finish with a photograph of the cheery daffodil which bravely emerged from the Ashburton courtyard garden this week.

Have a lovely weekend.

Nigel Helliwell