

THIS WEEK AT ST FAITH'S

25 January 2019

I chose to wear a few extra layers when on early morning duty this week. With the table tennis tables iced over and the tennis courts resembling a skating rink (until our grounds staff spread the sand and salt) this felt like the week when winter established itself. I am pleased to say that the bitterly cold weather didn't prevent normal lessons – indoor and outdoor – from operating as normal. On Monday I witnessed a group of Foundation children exiting the 'Wild Place', a mini nature reserve at the back of Tom's Garden. Apparently they had been making mud pies! Later in the week, I bumped in to these photographers, studiously taking shots of the large copper beech tree as part of their observations of winter.

Integrated Arts Project

Safely indoors, this week it was the turn of Castle School 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 other, 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. As one parent emailed me afterwards, *'My son was paired with a severely autistic boy and it was so lovely to see his patient side during the presentation today. The experience of helping to provide encouragement to another child who found it very difficult to concentrate, even on a five minute dance routine, was quite emotionally draining for my son, but an experience that I'm sure he will remember for a long time.'* A fuller account of the two days, put together by Ms Allen (Head of Drama), with personal comments from the Year 7s, can be read in the 'index' of this newsletter. I must say that Ms Allen was hugely impressed by the way all our pupils conducted themselves over the two days.

Year 8 Visit to the Castle Fine Art Gallery

On Tuesday, a group of Years 8s visited the Castle Fine Art Gallery in the Grand Arcade to participate in their 'Young Fine Artist' competition. The children enjoyed a guided tour of the gallery to see the various contemporary artists, such as Robert Oxley, a painter and passionate conservationist, whose works were on display. They also saw original 'Mondo Scripto' lyrics and drawings by Bob Dylan as well as work by the Rolling Stone's Ronnie Wood. The children were given the task of creating their own artwork in response to the work of one of the gallery artists. They will return to the gallery in February to present and discuss their finished projects. The winner of the competition will have their artwork displayed alongside the other artists in the gallery, for a whole month. Thank you very much to Mrs Bowes (Head of Art and Design) for arranging this visit.

Year 8 English Study

Year 8 pupils studying the novel *Across the Barricades* by Joan Lingard, set in Northern Ireland during The Troubles, were given a very personal insight into how it would feel living through such times. On Mrs Switsur's invitation, Mrs Price (Head of Science) gave up her time to talk to two groups about her childhood in Northern Ireland. With her help, they began to understand and imagine how conflicts like this can divide communities. Some thoughtful questions were raised and reflected on, and the children were encouraged to respond creatively to what they had heard.

Two girls, Lucie and Lucy, both created cakes which might have seemed a rather light-hearted

response, until the cakes were cut: one cake had the Union Flag for icing, the other the Irish Tricolour, but each had the colours of the *opposite flag* on the inside! This raises the question as to how much which 'side' we are on is just an accident of birth...

National Gymnastics Champions

Last weekend our three boys' teams were in outstanding form at the four-piece National Gymnastics Championships at Vinehall School, Sussex. Two of the teams, the U9 and U11, won national titles and the other (U13) finished as very creditable runners-up. Furthermore, Viraj and Harry claimed the U13 and U9 individual national titles. As I mentioned in assembly on Monday, we must not fall in to the trap of taking these fantastic achievements for granted. Our boys and girls achieve so much success across the curriculum, through a combination of talent, hard work and great teaching from dedicated staff. It is this tremendous commitment from pupils, staff and parents that make these achievements, such as these national gym titles, possible.

Year 4 Cambridgeshire Schools Maths Challenge

Today, we welcomed 120 Year 4 children from 30 schools for an afternoon of mathematical puzzles in the Ashburton Hall. This is a wonderful 'community' event that brings together children from different educational settings under one roof, to enjoy the challenge of solving a range of numerical conundrums. As usual, the enthusiasm was palpable and the room was fizzing with energy as the team revelled in the friendly competition. My sincere thanks to Mr Kite, our Head of Maths, and his departmental colleagues, for organising the afternoon, including a delicious post-competition tea.

The Greatest Fairy Tale Ever Told

On Thursday, the Pre Prep children enjoyed a performance of 'The Greatest Fairy Tale Ever Told'. Actors from the Hobgoblin Theatre Company enchanted the audience with their performance of the Three Little Pigs, who saved storybook characters from the Wicked Queen. It was noisy and fun and there was lots of giggling. As the actors moved through the audience, the children were asked questions about their favourite storybook characters. Answers came thick and fast which made for a fun-filled afternoon.

Finally..

Binky, Miss Jones' Lionhead rabbit, was the star of the show at the 'Animal Adventures' after-school activity this week. When I called in, Binky was revelling in the attention and relishing the freedom of the run of the classroom. The children were clearly enjoying his company and asking lots of questions about the care and welfare of pet rabbits.

Have a lovely weekend.

Nigel Helliwell