Challenging Assumptions

In the Year 7 & 8 assembly this week, led by Mr Davenport, pupils were encouraged to think carefully about the assumptions we make about ourselves and others, and why appearances can often be deceptive.

To explore this theme, two stories from the world of athletics were shared.

The first was the story of Cliff Young, a 61-year-old Australian sheep farmer who, in 1983, entered one of the toughest endurance races in the world, the ultra-marathon from Sydney to Melbourne. Unlike the seasoned athletes around him, Cliff had no formal training programme and no experience of long-distance competition. His preparation had simply been years spent running after sheep on his farm. Many people underestimated him before the race had even begun. However, after running for an incredible five and a half days, with very little sleep, Cliff not only completed the challenge, but won the race and broke the course record. In a further act of generosity, he then shared all of his prize money amongst the next five runners.

The second story focused on professional runner Steve Jones. During the 1980s, many competitors believed they knew exactly how to beat him, claiming that he lacked the sprint finish needed to win major races. Rather than allowing these opinions to define him, Steve proved his doubters wrong, going on to outsprint his opponents to the finishing line and achieve victory over a distance of 10,000m. His success provided another example of why we should always be cautious about making assumptions about what others can and cannot achieve.

Together, the stories prompted pupils to consider how other people's opinions can sometimes influence our own expectations, and the importance of maintaining confidence in our own goals and abilities.

Pupils were also encouraged to think about the assumptions they themselves might make about others. We rarely know the full story behind another person's talents, experiences or potential, and the assembly provided a useful reminder of the value of approaching one another with open minds, kindness and curiosity.

This Week at St Faith’s



From Crookhaven to Beast Mode: Author J.J. Arcanjo Inspires St Faith's Pupils

On Tuesday, St Faith's pupils were delighted to welcome Portuguese-British author J.J. Arcanjo to assembly, where he shared the story behind his popular *Crookhaven* children's book series and offered an insight into life as a writer.

J.J. spoke about how his love of books began when he was young, inspired by favourites such as *Harry Potter*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *Adrian Mole*. These stories sparked his imagination and encouraged him to create worlds and characters of his own, eventually leading to the publication of his *Crookhaven* books.

Pupils were introduced to the world of Crookhaven, a school unlike any other, where children learn skills such as forgery, deception and code-breaking. J.J. explained that, while these talents may sound mischievous, the characters are taught to use them responsibly and for good purposes in the wider world. He also spoke about some of the series' characters, including the main character Gabriel, alongside Edgar and Amira.

The pupils were interested to hear that the *Crookhaven* stories have been adapted into a television series, bringing the adventures of Gabriel and his friends to an even wider audience.

J.J. also introduced pupils to his new series, *Beast Mode*, set in the fictional London suburb of Vangsford. In this world, children possess the ability to transform into animals, forming the basis for a new series of adventures.

The visit concluded with a book-signing session, giving pupils the opportunity to meet J.J. in person and have their copies of his books signed. It was particularly interesting for pupils to hear how a childhood love of reading had eventually led J.J. to create and publish stories of his own.

We are very grateful to J.J. Arcanjo for visiting St Faith's and sharing his experiences as an author with our pupils.

This Week at St Faith’s



This Week at St Faith's







Executive Functioning Update

Mrs Davies writes:

"Earlier this term, we shared with parents our focus on helping pupils develop their executive functioning skills. These are the skills that help children manage themselves effectively, from planning and organisation to self-monitoring, time management and task initiation.

As pupils settle into the new academic year, our initial focus has been on two key areas: organisation and task initiation. Encouragingly, pupils across the school are already beginning to establish routines and apply some of the strategies introduced in assemblies and lessons.

Across the school, teachers have been explicitly modelling organisational habits and providing practical scaffolds to support pupils. These include visual checklists, step-by-step task breakdowns and equipment reminders.

Task initiation, or simply getting started, can be challenging. To support this, teachers have been helping pupils break larger tasks into manageable steps, identify a suitable starting point and develop the confidence to begin work promptly and independently.

Teachers have also been using positive reinforcement to celebrate the effort pupils are putting into developing new routines and practising the organisational and task initiation skills that underpin successful learning.

We are very grateful for the support families have provided in reinforcing these routines at home. One of the most effective ways to develop organisational skills is to encourage children to prepare for the next school day themselves. Helpful habits include packing school bags the evening before, checking the homework timetable and ensuring all required equipment is ready in advance.

As pupils build these routines, it can be helpful to encourage them to pause and ask themselves a few simple questions:

- **What will I need tomorrow?**
- **Have I packed everything I need?**
- **If I leave this until the morning, will it create unnecessary stress?**
- **Is there anything I could organise for myself now?**

These simple prompts can encourage pupils to think ahead, reduce last-minute stress and develop greater independence. They also help children recognise that being organised is not simply about remembering equipment; it is about taking responsibility and thinking ahead to make things easier for themselves and others.

As with any skill, executive functioning develops through regular practice. We are not aiming for perfection, and there will inevitably be forgotten pencil cases, missing PE kits and homework left on kitchen tables from time to time. Instead, our focus is on helping pupils make steady progress, reflect when things do not go to plan, and gradually develop the habits and routines that will serve them well both in school and beyond.

We look forward to continuing this work with pupils throughout the year and thank parents for their ongoing support**."**

Nutritionist Visit

Mr Burt writes,

"A Lodestone House Nutritionist visited the Pre Prep on Monday and spent time with each class exploring the important relationship between the brain and the gut. Pupils learned how making healthy food choices can positively support gut health, wellbeing and concentration, with sessions tailored to each age group. The day concluded with a parent Q&A session, where families had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about nutrition. Parents also enjoyed sampling a selection of reduced-sugar desserts from this term's menus."

Science in Focus

Mrs Pritchard writes,

"Our pupils have continued to develop their practical and analytical skills through a range of exciting investigations this fortnight.

Year 5 carried out a GCSE-style required practical investigating the relationship between force and extension using springs and elastic bands. Pupils collected and analysed data before producing high-quality line graphs, demonstrating accurate scaling, careful plotting of points and the use of a line of best fit to identify patterns in their results.

Year 6 have been exploring separation techniques. Pupils successfully separated immiscible liquids using decanting and then put their chromatography skills to the test by solving a fictional ransom note investigation. By comparing chromatography patterns, they were able to state how to identify the pen used by the culprit and apply science to a real-world forensic context.

Year 7 investigated the action of enzymes, observing how amylase breaks down starch into sugars over time. Pupils confirmed their findings using both iodine solution and Benedict's solution, gaining experience with two important food tests. They then turned their attention to the small intestine, evaluating how structures such as villi are specially adapted to maximise the

digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Year 8 have been studying the reactions between acids and metals. Using the acronym MASH alongside the reactivity series, pupils predicted the products formed during chemical reactions and tested their theories using the characteristic test for hydrogen gas. They also used the reactivity series to predict the vigour of different reactions before carrying out practical investigations to see whether the evidence supported their predictions."

Year 8 Creative Arts Theatre Technical Taster

Yesterday, a second group of Year 8 pupils visited The Great Hall at The Leys for a 'technical taster' to understand more about how to 'work backstage'. They learned how to rig theatre lights on a tension wire grid above the auditorium and focus them on stage. The pupils also learned about the skills required to become a sound engineer, which included setting up the microphone, changing the pitch, and altering treble and bass with the sound board. For the pupils, it was fascinating to see the work that goes on backstage in a theatre, and to appreciate the opportunities to specialise in delivering light and sound, as part of the Creative Arts.

This Week at St Faith’s



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This Week at St Faith’s





SFPA Coffee Mornings

On Tuesday, we concluded our series of parent coffee mornings for the Michaelmas term when we welcomed Year 5 & 6 parents. If you were unable to join us this term, please don't worry as we will host further coffee mornings during the summer term, so we look forward to seeing you then.

A Fantastic Finish to the Football Season

Mr Gillick writes,

"As another football season draws to a close for all, bar our U11 and U13 IAPS Teams, it feels fitting to reflect on what has been a *short but sweet* term of football. Blessed with beautiful sunshine and enthusiastic participation throughout, our pupils have embraced every opportunity to learn, compete and enjoy the beautiful game.

What has stood out most has been the progress made by players across all age groups. While technical development has been evident, it has been particularly pleasing to witness the work rate, determination and desire shown by pupils to work for their teammates. Time and again, players demonstrated a willingness to support one another, understanding that football is at its best when success is shared collectively.

We have also seen a growing appreciation of the tactical side of the game. Football is a truly 360-degree sport, requiring players to constantly assess their surroundings, recognise space and make effective decisions under pressure. Throughout the season, pupils have developed their ability to scan, adapt and problem-solve, showing increasing confidence in both possession and defensive situations. These skills not only improve performance on the pitch but also encourage creativity, awareness and independent thinking.

The season concluded in fine fashion with our Year 4 team taking on Stephen Perse in glorious sunshine. The fixture captured everything that is special about school sport. Played in an exceptionally positive spirit, the match was filled with smiles both on the pitch and along the touchline. It was wonderful to see pupils exploring space on the pitch, expressing themselves and enjoying the competitive environment, while parents watched proudly as their children challenged themselves, celebrated successes and learned from setbacks.

Moments like these remind us that school sport is about far more than results. It is about providing opportunities for young people to grow in confidence, develop friendships and discover what they are capable of achieving through commitment and effort.

Congratulations to all of our players on a fantastic football season, and thank you to the parents and supporters who have helped create such a positive and enjoyable environment throughout. We now look forward to an exciting rugby season ahead."

This Week at St Faith’s



Calling All Old Fidelians!

Dust off your boots, reconnect with old friends, and join us for two fantastic Old Fidelian social events this autumn.

? OF Football v Parents – Friday 13 November | 5.30pm to 7.30pm Sports Hall

Whether you are keen to relive your glory days on the pitch or simply cheer from the sidelines, this promises to be a fun and friendly evening of football, laughter and community spirit. Can the OFs overcome the Parents' team, or will their enthusiasm give way to parental determination? Post- match refreshments will be served.

? Steele Bodgers Rugby Match – Wednesday 25 November

Join fellow Old Fidelians for this much-loved rugby fixture, with **lunch beforehand** providing the perfect opportunity to catch up with friends, former classmates and members of the St Faith's community before the action begins. **Please note that there are only a limited number of tickets for this event.** It is organised directly by a group of Old Fidelians, rather than the alumni association of the school, but please feel free to contact **marketing@stfaiths.co.uk** in the first instance to check availability with us.

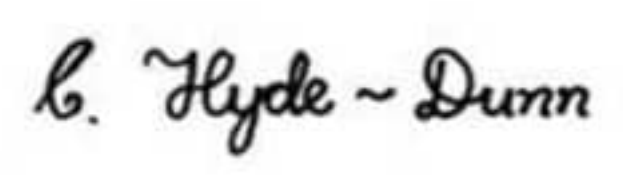
We look forward to welcoming Old Fidelians for what promises to be two memorable occasions filled with friendship, sport and plenty of school spirit.

And Finally…

From a sheep farmer winning an ultramarathon, to a school where pupils learn forgery and deception, not to mention children who can transform themselves into animals, there have certainly been some unexpected characters in this week's newsletter. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that one of our assembly themes has been the importance of questioning our assumptions and remaining open to being surprised.

Wishing you a peaceful and relaxing weekend,

With all best wishes,



Crispin Hyde-Dunn