



NEWSLETTER No. 8

February 2024

Dear Saint John's families,

This week, I have been struck by Saint John's involvement in our local community. When we speak about "Community" to the children, we are often referring to the school community and how we engage with each other. However, there have been a number of times this week (and before) where the children have been enjoying participating in activities outside school.

One of the strongest community partnerships is with Cheltenham College. This independent school, a short walk from Saint John's, has provided our school with a wealth of experiences:

Each week, one of the infant year groups visits their Forest School, making the most of an amazing outdoors facility, learning through play and discovery.

The Year 5 group spends Wednesday afternoons in the Science and the Design Technology laboratories, experimenting and creating different products, taught by their specialist teachers.

This term, the Director of Music has been leading our Year 6 group in a singing production, preparing them for a performance in the Town Hall in the summer.

Sixth form students come to our school each week to support the children's learning in classrooms, being role models and perhaps learning themselves about other children who live in Cheltenham.

In addition, College provides the occasional minibus to take our pupils to events. For example, some of the Year 4 children spent the afternoon with adults suffering from dementia, singing to them and doing activities with them at Bethesda Church. What a chance for our children to share an experience with others in our locality!

We have set up a connection with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Year 3 will have the opportunity to learn from outdoors experts about the wildlife within our school environment and further afield.

Of course, we continue to have strong links with two churches: St Luke's and Highbury.

We hope that many families will join us next Thursday, 8th January at 10am, for our Celebration of Learning when each year group will share some of the learning for this term. It is a relaxed, informal event and anyone is welcome to join us. Please can we also ask for adults to support us with the walk to and from the church, so that we can keep the children safe.

This term is a short one, but we seem to have crammed an enormous amount into the time; it is just one more week before we break up for the February half term. I want to thank the staff for their steadfast and never-ceasing energy and creativity when teaching our children. When so many are leaving the teaching profession, it is brilliant to note that our staff continue to be committed to being part of our Saint John's family, bringing their skills and expertise to the classroom and school environment each day.

I also want to thank the parents and carers who made the School Disco such a great event. It was a lively and fun evening with many of our children joining us to make some shapes on the dance floor and have fun with their friends. Thank you to the group who organised this and spent their evening supporting the children; we made some money for the PTFA funds which will provide additional support to our children in different ways over the year.

Have a lovely weekend, Mrs Beevers



Written by Sharon Morrow TA



Over the last couple of weeks, **Reception** have been learning more about dinosaurs. The children enjoyed a super drama session with Ms Bolwell, where they learnt more about Mary Anning, the fossil hunter, and acted out some of the main parts of her life. The children's key text this term is 'Tom and the Island of the Dinosaurs'. In the story, Tom and Katy rescue the dinosaurs before a volcano erupts. The children have been making volcano pictures and sparkly dinosaurs. They also had lots of fun making their own erupting volcanoes by blowing bubbles!



Year 1 are loving their Forest School sessions at Cheltenham College on Thursday mornings. On their first visit, it was so cold that the water in the mud kitchen was frozen solid. They spent ages trying to break the ice up with different gardening tools!! Last week, it was warmer and lots of children enjoyed digging and making camp fires. The swing under the trees is also lots of fun, as are the tunnels.



The **Year 2** children had lots of fun at the Wilson Museum. They tried on clothes, sketched birds, played with Victorian toys and looked at lots of artefacts.

"I really enjoyed learning about Edward Wilson's life."

"I liked drawing birds and making snow goggles."

"I liked playing with the Victorian toys."



Year 3 enjoyed a thought-provoking drama workshop, led by Gemma Bolwell, where they explored Apartheid. They thought carefully about how it would have felt to have lived in South Africa at the time and gained a greater understanding of the impact that Nelson Mandela had on the world.



As part of **Year 4's** current art topic focussing on sculpture, the children designed fish which they then carved into soap. A lot of patience was required as the results were not instant and took a while to form. They also took part in an introductory workshop, as part of a cross-generational project called "Creative Age" with Open Arms Artists' Collective, Bethesda Church and Managing Memory Together. Over the coming months, the children will have the opportunity to participate in creative activities such as music, visual art and drama with people living with dementia, and their carers, at Bethesda Church in Cheltenham.



Year 5 have been busy learning how authors create suspense and drama in narratives through the use of a variety of techniques including show not tell, onomatopoeia and use of long and short sentences to slow down the action. They have written some impressive tales of fear using these techniques and have been carefully editing their work to improve their stories even further. The children have also been learning about a variety of balances in gymnastics such as counter balances and counter tension balances and have been exploring ways to create different sequences using one, two and three point balances. Finally, they have been using base 10 equipment to learn to multiply 2-digit numbers by 2-digit numbers. Next, they will move on to using formal methods to multiply numbers with up to 4 digits by 2-digit numbers.



During Art, **Year 6** have been exploring expressive drawing techniques using a variety of drawing tools. Rather than conventional pencils and pens, the children experimented using toothpicks, straws, crumpled paper, etc to create images that inspired them from Maya art works. The children have also been developing calm and relaxation during our yoga sessions. Core strength, balance and focus are being challenged during these sessions – a great way to round off our Thursday afternoons.

In Writing, the class played a range of games that required delicate and precise actions, while also bringing some feelings of jeopardy. It made them think about the skills, feelings and actions that they used and noticed. After collecting ideas and creating useful word banks, they were able to use these thoughts in their independent writing. During Maths, the children have been getting the hang of algebra. They used multi-link cubes to help them understand how to create form expressions, before learning how to substitute

