

JULY 2021

SPARKFISH

Newsletter

Inspiring young people in faith, hope and love!

Message from the Director

At the end of what has been an incredibly strange year in school's ministry I firstly want to say a HUGE thank you to our amazing SparkFish staff and trustees team who have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic to maintain contact with staff and students in schools, deliver high quality RE resources and keep up enthusiasm, laughter and creativity throughout!

God has blessed SparkFish with amazing members of staff and trustees and this year has really highlighted what a gift they bring to local schools and our local community. To all of you – I want to personally say a huge thank you!

I recently completed a survey on school's ministry and one of the questions asked; 'How has your schools ministry been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?' My first reaction was 'Completely!' and this is wholeheartedly true, SparkFish's school's ministry has been hugely affected by the pandemic. Much of our work went online, our interactive RE events had to be recreated into a digital experience, we learnt how to engage and build rapport with young people online and we rethought all of our work to make sure it was Covid secure. It has been amazing to see God working through all of these experiences and even in the midst of great difficulty we have seen our ministry grow and develop in ways that many years ago would have felt impossible.

This year we recruited a Secondary School's Worker and a sessional Secondary School's Worker dedicated to the needs of the local students in 4 Secondary Schools – St Bede's, The Warwick, Reigate School and Merstham Park.

We partnered with Tim Hill, Pioneer Worker in the Horley Anglican Team Ministry, who is reaching schools in Horley. The team shared digital assemblies, and digital Christmas and Easter resources with nearly all of the local Primary Schools. Jen Smart and Lindsey Hardwick continued full time, we recruited Christine Starkey as our new administrator and we had several new faces join the trustee group. This is just a small list of the opportunities God blessed us with this year and there are so many more opportunities to come in the new academic year.

We still face challenges ahead – we are looking for more funding to be able to sustain our work, we face unknowns in how schools will operate in September and we are desperate to get in touch with our amazing volunteers again. But, we know that God is good and He is faithful and we are excited to see where He takes us in the next 10 years and beyond.

To all of our supporters – thank you for bearing with us as we found our feet this year. We are so excited that we will hopefully get to see you in person and reach out to our amazing volunteers about the many opportunities next year holds. Blessings.

Harriet

"One thing I have learnt is to be kind to myself"

"Really calming when lessons are stressful"

"I have enjoyed the freedom and creativity"

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Learn

In the summer term the 'Learn' Strand has usually focused on supporting year 6 students to prepare them for their move to secondary school through our Year 6 Transition Workshops. This year we produced a video resource with an accompanying activity sheet to send out to our local schools in place of our usual live workshops. The move from primary to secondary school is a very important step for young people, and our workshops aim to support young people in feeling more prepared for their new start.

Hope

I have been working with students at St.Bedes, offering one to one mentoring to young people weekly. One of the young people who was referred to me was being bullied and had various issues with classmates and friends. We set some goals together and spent lots of time talking about various things, we played games and did various activities to help assess their strengths and build confidence. The student learned about themselves and how they relate to other people. We unpacked some of the problems with friends and classmates and how to deal with conflict and differences well. After 3-4 months this young person felt ready and confident to graduate from our mentoring meet-ups feeling more confident and happy in himself.

Almare

Think!

Think! has been somewhat on hold this term as schools have been busy adapting to the ever-changing guidelines. But I have been busy behind the scenes planning for the Think! Spaces we have booked in for the Autumn term and am very much looking forward to those. We're also excited to be supporting Reigate School's summer holiday transitions programme in August with a secondary school transition themed Think! Space session for the new year 7s. This is a new opportunity for us and we are looking forward to meeting each new year 7 class across the two week summer school period.

Jen

Our resource enables young people to look back on what they have learned at primary school, celebrate their achievements and say goodbye. They take some time to think about hopes and dreams for the future and hear our top tips for making a positive start to year 7. We hope and pray that our digital workshops have been a helpful resource for our local schools and year 6 students

Lindsey

I've had an incredible time this term mentoring students and running the Upbeat course for boys. There's been much playing of Uno and Connect 4 but also a lot of brilliant in-depth conversations. One boy recently came out of his first session saying to his teacher that for the first time he is excited for his future. It's those things that make this job so worthwhile - even more than the Uno victories!

Charles

Horley Team Ministry

Hi from sunny Horley! SparkFish produced Easter and Year 6 Transitions videos which were useful to several schools, and I was happy to be a part of. I was also invited to lead 9 assemblies in 3 days at Oakwood School around Easter. Harriet and I met with the YMCA team running Youth Clubs in Horley town centre and I have now started helping there. When the rules allow visitors, I expect to be in several schools taking Lessons and Assemblies ... keep praying!

Tim

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