

JULY 2024

SPARKFISH Newsletter

Inspiring young people in faith, hope and love!

Message from the Director

I'm always amazed at what God is doing in our local schools and this year is no different. As I collect the statistics from the staff at the end of a very busy academic year I am astounded that SparkFish have been able to work with 7,369 young people and children in 33 local schools. How amazing is that!

I recently had the privilege of meeting a former student from Furzefield Primary School who now as an adult, remembered so fondly her one-to-one support from a SparkFish member of staff when she was in year 6. It is such a privilege to work with young people in our local schools and journey with them as they go through such a pivotal time of life.

We have had some lovely feedback this year from school staff as well. The Assistant Head of St Matthew's Primary School recently wrote, 'Thank you for all of your hard work with our children here at St Matthew's, we are seeing a real impact.'

The RE Coordinator at Wray Common also wrote, 'Thank you so much once again for all of your contributions to our assemblies this year. The children have loved having you and the Open the Book team in and are always so engaged in your storytelling.'

I always love the magic of spending time in a Think space, or journeying with the children as they gasp in delight at Christmas Journey. The emotion on children's faces as they see Easter Experience for the first time and watch Jesus put on the cross reminds me of the beauty of the gospel message.

And then there are the many children helped through our Hope strand, who experience hope every week when our workers sit with them through their anxieties, grief, sadness and difficulties. I honestly think that we have the best jobs in the world at SparkFish!

All of us at SparkFish are so grateful to the generosity of our supporters for allowing this work to continue. After 14 years SparkFish has grown so considerably, and God continues to open doors for us – so much so that we often find ourselves at capacity!

However, growth comes with a challenge... an exciting one, but a challenge nonetheless. As the cost-of-living crisis continues and both local and national funding bodies face financial shortages, SparkFish continues to face financial challenges. We have a fundraising group that meets regularly to keep on top of the funding situation at SparkFish but we do ask our supporters to continue to pray for us as we look for more sustainable funding that would allow us to resource the work of SparkFish year on year.

As a Christian charity it is often difficult to access funding grants. We rely on the generosity of local churches and Christians who have a heart for school's ministry and this giving continues to sustain us financially. We do gently ask our donors if they can annually review their giving to see if it is possible to increase in line with inflation rises. However, we understand the financial difficulties of day-to-day life so do understand if this is not possible and we are grateful for every gift, large or small.

Our dream is to one day recruit a part time fundraiser to help us fundraise more effectively and we continue to pray that we will find the funding for this post!

In the meantime, thank you so much for your love and support – we are ever so grateful. As I write in every issue of our newsletter, we couldn't do this without you!

Thank you!

Harriet Pearce - SparkFish Director

Learn

It has been very busy over the few months in the 'Learn' area of our work. In the summer term we focus on supporting year 6 students to prepare for their move to Secondary School by providing a programme of workshops. Our workshops include the opportunity for students to look back and celebrate their achievements in Primary School, reflect on those to whom they will be saying goodbye at the end of the academic year, and to think about their hopes and dreams for their new school. Our workshops combine these reflective activities with lots of information, questions and advice for making a positive start to their new school. This summer we will visit around 400 children in 7 local Primary Schools.

As part of our supporting the transition to Secondary School work, we also lead a lunch club for year 6's at St John's School, and are currently preparing for leading workshops for all the year 7 form groups in the Autumn term at Carrington School as part of their 'Excellence Programme'.

It has also been great this term to support two of our local Open the Book assembly teams visiting St Matthew's and Wray Common Schools, and to start to prepare for some new opportunities to lead RE at Secondary School in the new year.

Please do join us in praying for all those students who are preparing for moving up to new schools, colleges and universities this Autumn that they would make a positive start to their new studies.

- Lindsey Hardwick, Deputy Director & Learn Coordinator



Hope

I continue to work in three schools regularly, Merstham Park, Carrington School and Reigate School. It is an encouragement to work with individual students and support them in the challenges and struggles they face in school and at home. I have also started doing some group work in Carrington School and have just finished a 4 week course on friendship with a group of 5 year 7 boys, which has been good - although a little challenging at times!

Very excitingly this term we have also been given the opportunity to start running a Christian Union in Carrington School on a Wednesday breaktime. We will be starting this before the end of term. Please do pray that this will be a good group that the young people in the school will want to come to and bring their friends along to. Pray that it provides a place and time for the students to be honest about faith and gives opportunity for them to discuss openly and to encourage one another in their faith.

Please continue to pray for the work of the Hope strand that it will have a positive impact on the students that I meet with and that I will have wisdom and insight into how to best help them.

- Lizzie Baker, Hope Strand Coordinator

Administrator

We are really excited that Elizabeth Smith joined us as our new administrator in June 2024! Elizabeth comes from a background in project management and has 30+ years of back office experience. She attends Reigate Methodist Church where she wears many hats to support their administration, pastoral teams and children's ministry.



Think!

It has been an incredibly busy spring term and the start of the summer term with a variety of Think Spaces across our Primary and Secondary schools. The excitement and joy that young people express when we arrive at a school never ceases to amaze me. Whether preparing a Think Space or serving God in any way, it can sometimes be easy to think that God needs things to be bigger, better, and more extravagant.

In the book of Zechariah, we read God speaking to Zechariah in a dream, saying, "Who has despised the day of small things?" (4:10). This scripture resonates when I reflect on the various activities at a Think Space. These are small things, simple activities compared to the advanced technology that is now available to young people. Yet, it is amazing to see how God uses just a few simple activities to encourage young people to think about life's origins and meaning.

Here are just a few examples of the profound questions that young people have written at Think Spaces this term: What is our purpose in life? What are we here to achieve? Why was I chosen to be put here? How did I get here? Why are we afraid of death? How does healing work? Why do we have dreams? It can be extremely difficult for any of us, especially young people, to find peace and space to reflect on these important questions.

This is why it is so encouraging to know that God can use the small things, the few activities at a Think Space, to point young people towards something that doesn't change, is always there, is freely available: God's love for them. If you would like to learn more about taking part in this ministry, know that God can use you, whatever small thing you can give, whether that be helping to set up a Think Space or coming for just one lesson a term. Please do get in touch using my details below.

- Charlie Auton, Think Strand Coordinator

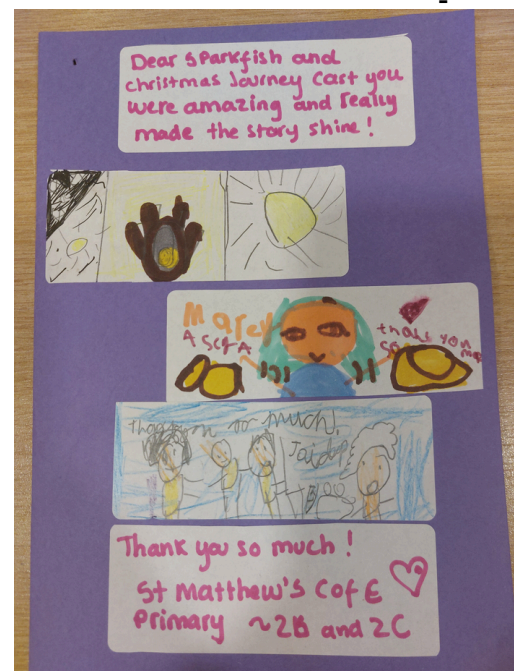


Horley Team Ministry

Assemblies and lessons continue in Horley Schools - the Walk Through the Bible course being a big hit with teachers and students alike. Two schools are having the New Testament course in June/July - the year 6 pupils are responding well despite being tired after SATs and distracted by trips and sports days.

Plans are already underway for the Autumn and many bookings are in the diary. I think what has thrilled me most in recent weeks have been the casual chats at breaktimes - when a child says to me they've started to believe in Jesus my heart just goes ZING! I'm also told by some parents that their children are re-enacting my Assemblies at home! The parents and siblings have to sing songs, do actions and the pupil does an impression of me (but without a greying beard!) this is funny but also means that many more people are getting a Christian message than I could possibly reach.

- Tim Hill, Pioneer Worker & Lay Minister, Horley



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