Welcome back to a wonderful new year! It is such a pleasure being with our students once again, and listening to their adventures over the holidays! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break. It is amazing that half the year is already behind us. Hopefully over the Christmas holiday, you had an opportunity to read through, reflect and discuss the Mid-Year reports that were sent home with your child. They provide important information regarding your child’s well-being and academic progress, as well as areas with which you can support at home.

Engaging students and getting them excited about learning is the essence of what our staff does on a daily basis. As educators, our staff is called to be more than teachers and administrators. Everyone who enters the school comments on the culture, behaviour and atmosphere - so, I would like to thank the dedicated faculty and staff for their personal commitment to education and for the work they do on behalf of our students.

As we move into term 3, please remember to continue to stay in contact with your child’s teacher. A sustained relationship between home and school allows students to thrive in their educational environment. Staff can be reached through their individual e-mail. As the school continues to grow we need your continued support. Please refer the parents of any students considering a change in schools so they can learn more about the school philosophy. We are always happy to schedule an appointment and demonstrate what a welcoming learning environment we can provide.

On another note, I was delighted that so many families were able to attend Mr. Brendan’s Camping event on Saturday 23rd January. Everyone really seemed to enjoy all the activities and the experience of sleeping outdoors. It was so successful and well received that we shall look to hold this again next academic year.

Thank you for your continued support. I would also like to remind those who wish to attend Mr. James and Ms. Jo’s workshops, that they have been postponed until after the Tet holiday. We shall be in contact with the rearranged dates and times.

In this term we have many events and activities taking place at school. I would like to encourage you to check the school calendar regularly so that you don’t miss out on any exciting events around school. As you can see from the date section, we have World Book Day very soon after the Tet holidays, so I would urge you and your child to consider their costume.

On a final point, I would like you to join me in congratulating Rebecca Lambton as the newest member of the Senior Leadership Team at Saigon Star. She will take up her new role in February as Assistant Deputy Head of Early Years. She will work closely with the teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that they have the necessary support to deliver the highest standard of education to your children.

Everyone at Saigon Star wishes you and your family a fantastic Year of the Monkey.

Ellen Thompson
Headteacher

Dates For Your Diary
22.2.2016 - First day back at school
3.3.2016 - World Book Day
5.3.2016 - Healthy Living Day
18.3.2016 - House Day
19.3.2016 - Family Fun Day
W/C Monday 14th March -
National Science Week
How to Make Your Home More Montessori

Parents, do you know that other than setting up a few Montessori-inspired activities, there are a few simple changes you can do to make your home more "Montessori"? And in doing so, giving your child more chances to be independent and confident. First and foremost, assigning a special area with low shelves, baskets or containers for your child to store their toys and clothes, can be hugely beneficial. It represents their own space, giving your child a sense of ownership and thus a sense of responsibility to tidy up after play time or get dressed independently. Now some of you may hesitate to make the toys available for your child, worrying that they may refuse to tidy up when the time comes. However, from Mrs. Adrienne’s experience, if you respect your child to act as a responsible person, they will be one. Set your boundaries early on and make sure your child agrees to it, for example, telling them that in 30 minutes its shower time. When time comes, if your child refuses to shower, you may try the 'making a choice' strategy. That is, offering two equally good choices for your child to choose. For example, ‘would you like to tidy up now and have a rubber duck for your shower time, or have your shower first then return to tidy up afterwards?’ Remember your child's choice and be consistent. Sometimes, when children have trouble obeying our wishes, letting them choose can let them feel that they are still in control. And sometimes, it can be that tidying up all the lego is simply too big of a project for your child, then you may offer help to do the cleaning up together. Another easy change you can do for your child is to let them sleep on a bed that is low enough for them to get out of the bed independently. It can be a small mattress for the floor or customised bed. This will allow the child the freedom to take care of their needs to go to the toilet during the night independently. Parents, as much as you care for your child, I understand how hard you may find it to grant your child the freedom. But once you do, I am sure you will appreciate how capable your child can be!

During January, Ms. Sherley’s class sailed to different seas and islands in search of adventures! Their imagination led them to meet pirates and hunt for treasure. This ability to ‘pretend’ is a real strength of Ms. Sherley’s class as it helps them to develop their language ability and confidence levels. The ‘Pirate Parade’ was also a hit for the children (as well as parents and onlookers) as they dressed up in their pirate costumes and showed how much they had been enjoying the unit. Their hands were busy too, making pirate snacks, gold play-dough and ‘fishing’. They were exposed to different pirate words and were amused immensely during role-play activities. Ms. Sherley was proud of the class, taking turns and collaborating well with each other throughout the tasks and the unit itself. The class have also been orally delivering simple and repetitive lines from the story, ‘Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?’ This text caused great excitement and participation from the class as they joined in with the reading of basic words and phrases.
January has been a hugely productive month for Mr. Warren and the Nursery class. In their first week back in school, they launched their new IPC topic (Treasure) by taking part in a Pirate Parade alongside the rest of the Early Years department. The parade was followed by a treasure hunt and pirate feast, where some parents joined the class. Mr. Warren wanted to extend a big thank you to all of the Mums and Dads for helping with costumes and for attending and making the day a success. Back in class, Nursery have transformed their usual classroom into a pirate-themed space which now features a desert island book nook, a pirate den role-play corner and a pirate ship with treasure and a sand box for burying! The children have taken to this topic keenly and have enjoyed all of the activities linked to Treasure. During their literacy sessions, Nursery children have been busy writing letters in a bottle for their loved ones and listing their favourite things and objects, which they value as much as treasure. Nursery have been extremely creative this month too, working in pairs to design their own pirate ship. Looking at what they have produced, the children have used different classroom materials to build their own ship. They have also created pirate flags and each designed a simple treasure map of their own. Mr. Warren is immensely proud of his class for their efforts over January, and won’t make any of them “walk the plank”!

**Nursery - Mr. Warren**

Reception have had a ‘ship shape’ month here at Saigon Star! This began with a hugely successful ‘Pirate Parade’ and ‘Scavenger Hunt’. Thank you to all parents who were able to attend and support the children during this event. Reception were also kindly joined by Y3 and Y1, who came to watch as the children showed their fantastic costumes around the school! It’s always wonderful to see our school community supporting each other! The children have enjoyed learning lots of ‘Sea Shanties’ (Pirate Songs) in class and have written messages in bottles in their Literacy sessions. This month you have often been able to hear the children saying ‘Arrr!’ from the Reception classrooms as the children have been working in the colourful Pirate Ship Role-Play areas built by Ms. Rebecca and Ms. Grace! A new addition to the ECA timetable this month has also linked well to the ‘Treasure’ theme. ‘Splash Pool’ is a new club the children get to experience once a week to help promote their confidence in water. Ms Grace and Ms Rebecca said the children are getting very good at searching for items at the bottom of the pool!

**Reception**  
Ms. Grace and Ms. Rebecca
Since returning from the Christmas holidays, the children in Miss Jo's class have been using a book called Mia's Story by Micheal Foreman in Literacy. It is a story with powerful themes of hopes and dreams, and was inspired by a real family living on a dump in The Andes. Year 2 used the story to write as if they were characters, exploring the thoughts and feelings at different points in the story. After the fiction writing had been completed, the children were asked to explore the country where the story was based. The children used some of the tablets to research facts about Chile in pairs. They came up with some ideas that they could research, such as the flag, the language and the currency. Then the children decided what else they would like to find out about it and decided upon the animals and food too. The children worked very well in their pairs to gather facts which they then used to create a Non-Fiction page about Chile. The text clearly had an impact and Miss. Jo was pleased with the results.

The IPC slogan is ‘Great Learning, Great Teaching, Great Fun.’ Never has this been more fitting than to describe Year 1’s recent Science lessons. Using the theme of ‘Toys & Games’, the pupils in Year 1 practised their skills in planning and conducting a simple science investigation to find out which toy car would travel the furthest on different surfaces. Through this process, the Year 1 pupils were introduced to key concepts such as how to perform a ‘fair’ test e.g. using a ramp instead of pushing the cars, putting the cars in the same starting position and making sure they travel in a straight line and not bump into any obstacles. Not only that, pupils practised their measuring skills and practised identifying and describing patterns in results. Over the course of three afternoons, the pupils worked with great enthusiasm, whilst also developing their skills in learning cooperatively with others and thinking carefully about how to perform their tests and record their results in the best way possible (thoughtfulness). Here, you can see the different ‘units’ that students chose to measure the distance that each toy car travelled.
Year 4 has been getting more ‘hands on’ in their IPC work this month, as their ‘Footprints From The Past’ topic comes to a close. Having produced some great work in the History and Geography sections of the topic, they have recently concentrated on the Art and Science sections. They have been art critics, paleontologists and archaeologists – with some great success! The class has had a lot of fun creating their own molds of dinosaur footprints, taking rubbings from various surfaces to recreate the texture of dinosaur skin and making imprints in clay of various fossilised organic matter. They have also looked, in more depth, at the consequences and ramifications of the meteor that impacted with our planet and that is credited with wiping out the dinosaurs… and the effect of this on the food chains and consequent evolution of other organisms.

Year 3
Ms. Stacey

Miss Stacey’s Year 3 class has been nearing the end of their journey exploring dinosaurs. Recently, the class has covered science, art, and international aspects surrounding the IPC topic. During science and international lessons, students have been learning about the process of fossilisation and the role sedimentary rock plays in preserving clues from the past. Additionally, they have explored the technique of carbon dating as a method used by paleontologists around the world to identify the geographical time period to which a fossil belongs. Students have also been learning about the biology of skeletal structures and how scientists use them to correctly classify animals. During art, Year 3 has enjoyed discussions, not only about various techniques and the evolution of representing prehistoric creatures through various mediums, but in-depth conversations about the importance of and criteria against which we consider art. The class has been exploring the questions: What makes a piece of art “good”? How do we decide? This has guided the process for how Year 3 reflect on their own art projects during the topic as well as their self-evaluation of new techniques explored in order to create more complex skin textures of the prehistoric creatures.

Year 3 comparing and contrasting different types of geometric shapes.

Xi Muoi, Eva, Bryan and Kaveesha all exploring the process of fossilisation.

Dat learning about the skeletal structures of dinosaurs.

Sarah and Daniel from Y3 using the molds they made of dinosaur footprints to show them in the soil.

Year 4 taking rubbings from different surfaces to recreate the texture of dinosaur skin in their artwork.

Year 4
Mr. Huw
It had been a busy month for Year 5 and 6 and they have spent their IPC time fully immersed in their ‘Go With the Flow’ Topic. The main focus of the topic so far has been Geography, especially the geography of rivers. The children conducted investigations to see why the shape and flow of river changes through its course. They then looked at how humans use the land on the river and why. They also researched dams, and the positive and negative impacts of these on humans, the economy and wildlife.

Now that the children understand some of the Geography about rivers we moved onto the Science part of the topic. We began by investigating the water cycle and finding out where all of our water comes from. We used this information to make presentations in the style of our choice. Ms Natasha was impressed with the thoughtfulness and hard work put into the projects, and enjoyed seeing the water cycle presented using Art, Drama, and Technology, according to children’s individual learning styles. The study of the Water Cycle has led us into a new Science focus on the effect of water on rock formations. The children especially enjoyed assuming the role of geologists and growing their own stalactites! We look forward to seeing how these continue to form over the next few weeks!

After returning from a relaxing Winter Break, our Sun Bears picked up right where they left off in their Physical Education classes with a week of swimming in the pool. Mr. Michael was impressed with his students’ retention of their swimming and water safety skills that they had practised prior to the break. The Sun Bears are becoming quite strong swimmers with a noticeable increase in their water confidence and an impressive improvement in their swimming techniques. Following the end of the Swimming Unit, students began a three week Football (Soccer) Unit to close out the month of January. The focus of this unit was on foot-eye coordination, as students learned to control the ball without the use of their hands. Specifically, they practiced dribbling through obstacles, passing and controlling a ball with a stationary partner, and passing and controlling a ball with moving partners. The unit wrapped up with match play for the final week of January. During this unit, our students continued to build their cardiovascular endurance through participation in the “Golden Mile” run and other locomotion activities. Our next unit of study will be a one week Sports Review during the week before the Tet Holiday. Students will have the opportunity to participate by “student choice” in any of the sports that they have learned during the school year. After returning from Tet, Mr. Michael’s classes will spend two weeks focusing on Strategy and Challenge Games such as Capture the Flag, Alien Attack, and Freeze Tag to continue building the students’ teamwork, cooperation, and critical thinking skills. A special note is that Saigon Star will participate in the Saigon International Schools Athletic Conference (SISAC) Cross-Country Meet on Tuesday, March 1st. Mr. Michael will select four girls and four boys to represent our school in this running race. Students will be selected by a qualifying race to be held at Saigon Star the week prior to the Cross-Country Meet. Interested students should remember to train and stay active over the Tet Holiday to improve their chances of representing our Sun Bear Community in this exciting event!
Since the beginning of January, Saigon Star has begun a new cycle of ECA (Extra Curricular Activity) clubs for all children from Reception upwards. This term, the children could choose from a host of Arts or Sports activities that would further develop their skills and confidence levels in that subject area. Carefully organised by Mr. Michael, the children have thoroughly enjoyed benefitting from expert advice from their assigned adult(s). Here are some pictures and details regarding each club:

**ECA Clubs**

**Football - KS2**

The Sun Bear Football Team is off to a roaring start under the guidance of Coach James and Coach Michael. The team has been going through rigorous conditioning exercises and challenging skill development drills as they prepare for a full season of matches against other international schools. The team is looking forward to an exciting season ahead! Our schedule as it is currently confirmed is below. We are still working to add several more games and will update the schedule as other schools confirm with us.

**Football (Soccer) Schedule**

(Home games at Saigon Star are in bold.)

**Wednesday, March 16th** (3:00 kick off) at Saigon Star vs. The American School of Vietnam

**Wednesday, March 30th** (3:00 kick off) at The American School of Vietnam

**Wednesday, April 6th** (3:00 kick off) at Saigon Star vs. The International School of Saigon Pearl

**Wednesday, May 11th** (3:00 kick off) at The International School of Saigon Pearl (small field = 5-v-5)

**Wednesday, May 18th** (3:00 kick off) at Saigon South International School

*Wednesday, May 25th* (afternoon, TBA) SISAC Tournament at American International School, (*pending official invitation)*

**Splash Club - Reception**

This term the Reception children have enjoyed our new ‘Splash Pool’ club. It has been great to see their confidence in water increasing as the club provides a more relaxed environment for the children to explore their skills in water. Some children have even been brave enough to swim without life vests! Children have also challenged themselves further by attempting to swim through hoops under water and collecting items from the bottom of the pool. For those children who are still working on their water confidence, they have enjoyed using floats to help them travel to the deeper areas of the pool with the support of Ms Grace and Ms Rebecca. This club has proved to be a huge hit!
For this term, Ms. Adrienne and Ms. Giang will be coaching students from Year 1 and Year 2 in playing badminton, one of the most popular sports in Asia, and many other fun outdoor sports. The students have been playing various games whilst learning badminton skills, such as the serve and improving footwork speed. The students also enjoyed many kinds of relays that encourage teamwork as well as the necessary warm up games. Of course, when it comes to sports, cooperation and resilience are constantly emphasized.

Arts and Crafts - Reception

During this half term Mr. Warren has introduced an arts and craft club for reception children which has allowed them to design, create and experiment with different materials during Tuesday and Thursdays ECA slots. Reception children have collected leaves from the ground to paint and mark make with when designing patterns, used plastic bottles in their painting to press and create a petal effect for flowers and most recently have folded and glued red card to make envelopes for “lucky money” as we approach Tet. The children have worked well with Mr. Warren and Miss Nhan and have enjoyed seeing their work come together and viewing their final products.

Outdoor Sports - Y1 & 2
Ms. Faith and Ms. Hang have also been running an Arts and Crafts Club, this time focusing on the KS1 children. It has enabled the children to improve aspects of their fine motor skills, as well as their presentational and design standards. Since the beginning of this club in January, the children have created pieces of work relating to the imminent events on everyone’s calendar, including Chinese New Year and Valentines Day.

Mr. Huw is running a drumming club with the girls of KS2. Instead of using regular drums, however, they are creating their own instruments by reusing a variety of plastic bottles and cardboard boxes. The result is a loud and energetic sound that they are looking forward to showcasing at the Summer Show!
As ever, we at Saigon Star pride ourselves on the cultural diversity we encourage, display and welcome into our school grounds. We hold each event dearly but the Tết cổ truyền 2016 is particularly important and we celebrated this with numerous activities prior to the holidays. These ranged from making our own dragon masks, lanterns and greeting cards, as well as cooking a local delicacy. We wish everyone a healthy, happy and fortunate Year of the Monkey!

Chuc Mung Nam Moi!