Ellen Thompson
Headteacher

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is hard to believe that the Term 3 has almost come to an end, and what a busy term it has been! We started March off with Mr. James and Ms. Joanne offering parent workshops on Internet Safety and Reading. I would like to say thank you to them for the extra time required to prepare their sessions and also to the parents who were able to attend. The purpose of providing these is to ensure a transparency and consistency in what we teach at school so that it may be built on at home. Therefore, it is crucial these continue to have good attendance.

Ms. Joanne will be organising our World Book Day from the 4th - 6th May, so be sure to start working on your child’s costume of their favourite character (Prizes to be won for most creative and most original) over the next few weeks. The main focus of March was, of course, the Family Fun Day. It is always great to see our students, their family and their friends, outside of the normal school routines. I can confidently say that this year greatly surpassed all of our expectations and was easily the best Family Fun Day I have experienced! Of course, it could not be done without the support of my staff here, as well as members of the PTG, so I have to thank them for their tremendous help and enthusiasm at the event. Just prior to the Family Fun Day, we held our House Day for Term 3. Mr. Mike organised another excellent day with support from the teaching staff and it was clear that the children thoroughly enjoyed the activities. This time, a new team celebrated lifting the trophy! Orange house ran home victorious, well done to them. Continuing with the sports theme, hopefully you will have noticed the extra events that we have attended this year. Having assisted Mr. Mike at several of them, it has been a real pleasure to see the children wear our colours with pride and represent the school accordingly. A huge pat on the back must go to them, and to Mr. Mike himself, for getting them into a position to compete and enjoy themselves. March has also seen a lot of important work behind the scenes at Saigon Star. Brendan, James and Becki all attended a week log training session in Malaysia for the International Primary Curriculum.

Since they have returned, they have been working closely with the teachers to share all the valuable information they received on their course that will help further develop the school and the academic processes we have in place. May I also congratulate you all for ensuring that we increased our percentage of attendance this year. The average attendance is currently 96.8% compared to 92.6% at the end of last year. We also have 14 students on course for 100% attendance. Last year there was only two students who got the award (Yuzene and Kotaro). It is fantastic news!

Finally, Ms. Sherley is organising the schools Earth Day on the 22nd April. Your child’s teacher will be emailing you with more information. Also, don’t forget to sign-up for the upcoming Parent/Teacher meetings on Tuesday, 26th April from 3.30pm to 6.30pm. This time, the meetings will be for 15 minutes, enabling a more comprehensive discussion about your child and their progress. Contact Ms. Thanh in the office for more information and to schedule your appointment.

Please note that school will be CLOSED the week of the 11th April - 15th April for Spring Break.

Kind regards,
Ellen Thompson

Dates for your diary
★ Monday 11th - 15th April - Spring Break Half Term
★ 22nd April - Earth Day
★ Tuesday 26th April - Parent/Teacher conferences
★ 4th-6th May - World Book Week

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Parents, I hope the previous Montessori columns have been useful to you for information that may help your child continue their learning at home. In March, we welcome Spring to the Northern hemisphere and when it comes to Spring, I’m sure many of you will think of the famous cherry blossom in Japan. In Montessori, we always strive our best to celebrate cultural diversity, which is also part of the Montessori’s Peace Education area of learning. So this month, I’m going to show you some activities that you can do at home to introduce the Japanese culture and the beautiful Sakura flowers to your children. For those children who have never been to Japan, introducing the Japanese culture may be too abstract, so I encourage you to make full use of the social media on offer to us, by showing them two clips from the internet. These two links below showcase what happens during the Hanami/Cherry Blossom Festival in Japan.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5L08Cu9wLQQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vl7nlBpVBHk

The younger children can be encouraged to decorate a Japanese fan with stickers, like these. Slightly older children with better coordination skills can try to make these lovely Kimono dolls with tissue rolls and origami papers. If your child is able to manipulate scissors, why not try to make these cut-and-paste Sakura flowers? And if your child has strong fingers, you can also try to dye some tissue pink, tear, roll and paste on a paper plate to decorate your home.

For the materials that you need for these activities, such as the fans and origami papers, you can easily purchase them from one of those ‘all items are 40,000 VND’ shops dotted around Saigon. I know that two exist in Vivo City, one across Sherwood, one in Saigon Pearl, and another two in Phu Nhuan District.

After the Tet holiday, all Early Years classes welcomed the new topic - Changes. To cater to this topic, many interesting experiments were introduced to the children. Children were experimenting and investigating various objects to find out whether they would sink or float in the water, whether the object was magnetic or non-magnetic, mixing primary colours to make new colours, putting detergent into the milk to observe the breakdown of the fat, observing the tissue absorbing the water, or triggering the Vitamin C to erupt in the water. All of these have been adapted to ensure that the children would be able to accomplish the tasks independently. Other than having Science fun, our Montessori community also embraced a new change - incorporating mixed-age groups. Reception A children have been joining Montessori sessions with Year 1, while Reception B with Nursery. A lot of great learning and cooperation was going on. We could easily find older children helping younger ones, while younger ones learned from observing the older ones. Many children were behaving more maturely and more independent too. Self-motivation and a passion of learning could be sensed when we noticed many children trying to do the same activities and make progress every single time, while some children initiated new projects to challenge their knowledge and skills. For example, some children were making their 500 Line or Big Book of Flags.
Our creative little scientists had made a lot of discoveries in their IPC theme CHANGE. The science experiments were simple but engaging. The children become responsible for their own learning through observation and object manipulation. Our young learners were given the opportunity to experiment with baking soda and vinegar, shaving cream and food colouring, soap dishes and milk and using pipettes and beakers for transferring liquid. The children were so amazed and mesmerized by the chemical reactions that they wished to do the same activities over and over again. They watched the objects closely and observed any changes that took place. Our Pre-School class really were ‘Super Saigon Star Scientists’. Great work class!

March has been an exciting month in Nursery for Mr Warren and his class. The children have entered their new IPC topic changes with an inquisitive approach to activities. For the entry point to the topic, Nursery pupils attended a science fair held by Early Years classes. Each class teacher presented a science experiment and the children were able to participate at each station, exploring the changes and reactions that took place. For their investigation, Mr Warren and Nursery observed the chemical reaction when mixing baking soda with vinegar, adding food colouring to the vinegar beforehand. In the weeks following, Nursery have explored a number of other changes to materials, creating and then melting ice, melting chocolate to create cereal cakes and making jelly. With the growth topic underway, Nursery also planted beansprout seeds and have been monitoring their progress and watering them daily. One of the main changes Nursery enjoyed exploring was the physical changes which they had underwent in the past three years. To view these more clearly, Nursery parents were kind enough to send in baby pictures which allowed the class to explain how they had changed. Nursery focused on two separate stories during literacy sessions this month with Jack & the Beanstalk and Mummy’s Little Sunflowers being two popular choices. This presented them with many learning opportunities surrounding flowers and tied in well with their numeracy lessons which centred around measurement. Nursery welcomed other into class to measure and compare height. Finally, the children dressed all in green as they celebrated St Patricks Day by making some Irish flags and listening to traditional Irish music.
The month of March has been full of ‘changes’ for Reception! They began their ‘Changes’ topic with an ‘Early Years Science Fair’ which sparked the children’s curiosity and questioning and have been investigating ever since. Ms Rebecca and Ms Grace said that their learners have become excellent at making predictions and reporting what they have seen and are Super scientists! Investigations they have carried out include: looking at what happens when salt is added to ice, how chocolate melts, taste testing different kinds of chocolate and planting various seeds. All members of the Reception team are very proud of how much the children have improved their questioning skills. I wonder what their Exit Point Activity will be?!
Since the Tet holidays, Literacy in Year 1 has centered around ‘Where the Wild Things Are’ by Maurice Sendak. This classic story of a boy sent to bed without his supper, who then embarks on a wonderful adventure, has provided the children with a wealth of learning opportunities. We began by immersing ourselves in the text using lots of drama, role-play and art to imagine and recreate what it might have been like for Max on the island. Then, we used actions and oral retelling to memorise the story to help us in our writing. Next, we changed parts of the story to make our own new version of the tale using lots of adjectives to describe the characters and setting. Ms Natasha has been saying to the children ‘Tell me more!’ to encourage them to use more descriptive language and they have certainly made her proud with their creative ideas. Maths in Year 1 this month has been all about measures! We have enjoyed lots of fun activities to do with length, weight, time and capacity. The children have completed lots of practical activities to do with these areas and have been taking their learning outside the classroom. For example, they used the seesaw in the playground to explore direct comparisons with weight and had fun looking at the capacity of different containers in the swimming pool!

Year 1 - Mr. Brendan and Ms. Natasha

As part of their targets last term, Year 2 were asked to learn their 2, 5 and 10 times table. All of the children took it upon themselves to practice at home. Then in school, we had a weekly test. All of the children managed to learn these important facts. This term we have used that knowledge and tried to apply it to solve Word Problems. This is an important skill where Maths is applied to situations in everyday life. Before trying to solve the Maths problem, the children are encouraged to look for key words which will help them to understand what the calculation might be. We also tried to look around school for examples of “real-life” situations where multiplication and division take place. The children then tried to come up with some of their own word problems. This was a useful example to the children to see how Maths is used in everyday life, not

Year 2 - Ms. Joanne

We want to plant 3 trees in each corner of our rectangular playground. How many do we need?

If 3 children can play on 1 set of swings, how many children could play on 3 sets of swings?

If there are 20 books on a shelf, how many are on three shelves?

I get 3 points if I score 1 goal. If I score 3 goals, how many points will I get?
Miss Stacey’s Year 3 class have been incredibly excited to be learning all about the scientific method in (and outside) of her classroom! Students have been conducting experiments centred around their IPC topic “On Tap”. This unit is dedicated to enhancing a student’s understanding, of not only the scientific possibilities of H2O, but also its vast international and personal significance. This topic has opened the door for some truly thought-provoking discussions and analysis of world health. Year 3 has been researching the impact access to clean drinking water can have on a community as well as the harmful effects pollution can have on our planet. In literacy, Year 3 have been exploring the “Talk to Write” curriculum to help with acquisition of non-fiction texts. They performed their recount, “DiNovember” for the entire school, and they have recently begun rewriting and reimagining the events in their own, creative ways! Stay tuned for their exciting collaborations!

Having completed their IPC topic about dinosaurs and prehistoric life, the children of Year 4 have begun their next one, entitled ‘On Tap.’ The unit explores the importance of water to living organisms and how we use it, but also looks at the availability of fresh, clean water to humans and asks whether it is evenly distributed. In Maths, the children have been learning about Shapes and Measures, including the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes, standard units and time. In English, they have begun looking at persuasive writing, incorporating the ‘Talk For Writing’ strategy that was implemented by Mr. James. This involved the class retelling a well-known tale, but with lots of actions to compliment the words, with some rather funny results!
The past few months have absolutely sailed by for the Year 5 and 6 class, with a number of events, trips and activities to peak their interest. Whilst the children demonstrated their increasing levels of maturity by helping Ms. Natasha and Mr. James sell ice creams and popcorn at the recent Family Fun Day, the highlight was the field trip to the Mekong River at the end of February. This was the culmination of many weeks’ hard work and effort by the class and Ms. Natasha, in which they focused on the Geography, History and Science behind rivers during the Go with the Flow topic. The children had an incredible amount of fun, trying freshly made coconut candy, sailing down the river to the tune of Rebecca and Jasmine on the microphone, and mud fishing! The class were also delighted to welcome Mary’s Dad, Thomas, who provided an introduction and expert analysis of the program Wordpress, to help kick off their new Computing unit, 'We Are Bloggers'. The children have been blogging regularly on a variety of school topics, including our visit to the Mekong River. If you ask nicely, I am sure they will show you what they did! In the core subject of Literacy, the class were immersed in the thought provoking text, The Matchbox Diary, in which the main character reflects upon a previous life growing up in Italy and moving to America when he was young. The children completed the unit by writing a letter to the Grandma left behind in Italy, with terrific results. Mr. James was proud of how they improved their work after feedback.

Since the beginning of this school year in August, some parents have kindly volunteered to help out at the library. Minh and Vy have regularly helped to process the many new books we have received. The work includes labelling new books and repairing old ones. They have also helped reorganise the library so that it could accommodate more than 500 recent additions. Thanks to their dedication, Ms. Bonny has been able to place these books on shelf in record time for your children to access. Thanks library team!
On Tuesday March 1st, a team of 20 of our fastest runners participated in the annual Saigon International Schools Athletic Conference (SISAC) Cross Country Meet at the Phu My Hung Golf Course in District 7. There were over 400 students from 18 international schools involved in the race. Our young Sun Bears participated with stellar effort and admirable sportsmanship. Even though our Sun Bear team was one of the youngest squads in the race (and participating for the first time in an event of this kind), they were able to finish impressively. Our Under 9 Girls team captured 8th place and our Under 9 Boys team finished in 5th place. Equally impressive was our team sportsmanship that was on display as our team enthusiastically cheered on their teammates and other runners with encouraging chants. Our Sun Bear Cross Country Team included the runners listed below. The runners are listed in order of finishing for our school in their age groupings, which were determined by the runners’ ages on August 1, 2015. The distance of each race was: 1.1 km for Under 9, 2.2 km for Under 11, and 3.3 km for Under 14.

Under 9 Girls:  
Kaelyn (Y3)  
Sarah (Y4)  
Phuong (Y3)  
Sasha (Y3)  
Bella (Y3)  
Aida (Y2)  
Karen (Y3)  
Jessie (Y2)  

Under 9 Boys:  
Angus (Y4)  
Daniel (Y3)  
Kobi (Y3)  
Bryan (Y3)  
Phi An (Y2)  
Kotaro (Y2)  
Alaric (Y4)  
Louis (Y2)  

Under 11 Girls:  
Pallavi (Y5)  

Under 11 Boys:  
Calvin (Y6)  
Jaeden (Y5)  

On returning from the Tet Holiday Break, Mr. Michael’s Physical Education classes spent two weeks focusing on Strategy and Challenge Games such as Freeze Tag and Capture the Flag to continue developing teamwork, cooperation, and critical thinking skills. During this unit, the students not only had fun working as a team, but also continued to build their cardiovascular endurance through participation in the “Golden Mile” run and other locomotion activities. A three week Swimming unit followed to close out the month of March. Our young Sun Bears have become quite strong swimmers with a noticeable increase in their water confidence and an impressive improvement in their swimming techniques. They have learned many new swimming strokes, including the Breast Stroke, Back Stroke, Front Crawl, and Elementary Back Stroke. Water safety and emergency swimming skills were a focus of each swimming lesson. As always, Mr. Michael encourages students and their families to exercise daily with at least 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise, stretching, and strength building, especially on days when students do not have Physical Education classes.
Saigon Star was delighted to celebrate a different festival recently, with the Japanese celebration of Hanami Sakura being enjoyed by all of the pupils and staff. The Cherry Blossom festival, as it is also known, was held on Friday 25th March and many of the children wore traditional Japanese attire, as well as take part in various activities. We even welcomed one of the parents to give us a presentation on the customs of the celebration.

Football Fixtures - Mr. Michael

On Wednesday, March 16th, our young Sun Bears took on an older and bigger squad from The American School of Vietnam. We held our own for much of the match, but ended with a 0-3 loss to the Mustangs. Displaying terrific resilience, our Sun Bears responded positively and bounced back with a 5-0 victory against FOSCO International School on Tuesday, March 22nd. The entire team played well with a cooperative effort. Scorers included: Angus (Y4), Alaric (Y4) with 2 goals, and Chi Bao (Y6), also with 2 goals. Our schedule as it is currently confirmed is below.

**Football Schedule** (Home games at Saigon Star are in **bold**.)

1. **Lost (0 – 3)**, Wednesday, March 16th (3:00 kick off) at Saigon Star vs. The American School of Vietnam
2. **Won (5 – 0)**, Tuesday, March 22nd (9:00 kick off) at Saigon Star vs. FOSCO
3. Wednesday, March 30th (3:00 kick off) at The American School of Vietnam
4. **Wednesday, April 6th (3:00 kick off)** at Saigon Star vs. The International School of Saigon Pearl
5. **Thursday, April 28th (9:00 kick off)** at Saigon Star vs. FOSCO
6. Wednesday, May 11th (3:00 kick off) at The International School of Saigon Pearl (small field = 5-v-5)
7. Wednesday, May 18th (3:00 kick off) at Saigon South International School
8. *Wednesday, May 25th (afternoon, TBA)* SISAC Tournament at American International School (*pending official invitation)*

*Alaric scoring one of his 2 goals.*

*Jasmine impressively marauding down the wing.*

*Calvin in action against TAS in our first fixture.*

*The Sun Bears and FOSCO line up for their official photo!*
House Day Term 3

Phi Lac using all his power!

Blue team bowling along nicely!

Green team shooting for success!

The enjoyable flip flop game.

Aimy and the red team striking into the goal.

Orange House, who were the eventual champions on the day!

Family Fun Day 2016