



12<sup>th</sup> February 2014

**St Damian's RC Science College**

Lees Road  
Ashton-under-Lyne  
OL6 8BH

**Tel** 0161 330 5974

**Fax** 0161 343 7642

**Email** [admin@st-damians.tameside.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-damians.tameside.sch.uk)

**Web** [www.st-damians.co.uk](http://www.st-damians.co.uk)

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we approach the end of this half term, the following letter outlines some important information that I would like to share with you.

### English Results

GCSE English Language results achieved by the current Year 11 [from early entry in November] show that they already match the results in English achieved **at the end** of the last academic year, both in terms of progress and attainment. With a few months to go, I have no doubt that these results will improve. The English staff are focused on achieving record results this year. This is down to high expectations and ambitions in English. Can I ask that you check whether your child is required to attend English revision after half-term and, if so, that you ensure they attend?

### Liturgical Life update

The RE department have a busy half term approaching – we are lucky enough to have a Holocaust Survivor coming to school to do a presentation for all Year 9 pupils, this is followed by the Year 9 weekend retreat to Castlerigg: 45 pupils and 5 staff are heading to Keswick at the end of February. Year 8 are having class Masses in the Chapel – they are preparing this as part of the scheme of work looking at Faith Journeys and the Sacraments. The RE department are getting ready for a 'Chip Eating' competition with Year 8 this week too – this is to raise money for Millie's Trust. We will let you know how we get on!

As Lent is approaching, we are preparing to recognise its importance in school. Ash Wednesday Services will take place and some pupils from our feeder primaries will be joining us for this. We are launching an appeal to collect 'Backpacks' for Mary's Meals as part of our Catholics duties (more information will follow about this) during Lent too. Father Simon will be visiting all classes across the school for 'Grill the Priest' sessions – this allows all pupils to ask Father Questions about our Catholic faith. Our Pupil Chaplains and Liturgy Group are doing special assemblies for Lent, creating a Lenten display and running our charity, this is alongside the new prayer book for St Damian's they have been working on all year. We are also planning Reconciliation Services and the Sacrament for all years later in the year as well as special liturgies when we break up that prepare us for Holy Week and Easter. We are looking to recruit and commission more Pupil Chaplains over the coming weeks as our older pupils prepare for their GCSEs (more information will follow).

### Uniform and Hair

I am delighted that our pupils look extremely smart in their full school uniform and for this I would like to thank you. A high standard of uniform is a reflection that the pupils are proud to be at St Damian's. Recently, a small minority of pupils had 'hair styles' that were not permitted. Can I remind parents that unnatural hair colour and shaved heads are *not acceptable*. Pupils are well aware of what is acceptable and what is not. 'Challenging' pupils with unacceptable hair styles simply wastes energy as well as the learning time of the pupils [and staff]. Please support the school as we maintain high standards in all our pursuits, including uniform and hair. These rules are simple and have not changed. I expect **all pupils** to abide by them.

### Mobile Phones and Make-up

Can I also take this opportunity to remind parents that mobile phone use is not permitted in school: the policy has been in place for the past few years and again, all students are well aware of the

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Consequences; if your child's phone is confiscated it is school policy that parents come into school to collect them. Having said this, nowadays it is only on the very rare occasion that we have to confiscate a phone. I would also like to ask for your continued support regarding make-up and nail polish. The wearing of make-up and nail polish in school is not allowed, and anyone caught wearing it will be asked to remove it immediately.

### **The Correct 'attitude to learning'**

The right attitude to learning is crucial and it is vital that your child works hard and develops a good work ethic and positive attitude towards their KS3 and KS4 studies immediately. In Year 11 much Controlled Assessment has been completed whereas in Year 10 Controlled Assessment in many subjects is on-going. Year 10 also have GCSE exams at the end of the year, for example in Science and ICT. Although pupils may believe that their 'exams' are a long way off, this could not be further from reality. I can assure you that our most successful pupils work hard right from the beginning. At KS3, pupils must maximise hard work, along with the **'belief they can achieve'** to ensure success. Attached is a summary that I expect from pupils with regards to 'attitude to learning'.

### **Revision**

Revision is a vital tool when preparing for exams, particularly GCSEs. Teachers offer a range of revision lessons that take place before, during and after school and can often make a tremendous difference to your son or daughter's exam preparation, please encourage them to attend. I cannot praise my staff enough for the quantity of revision classes they are currently delivering. Indeed as I write this, a parent of a Year 11 child asked me to pass on to my staff that it *"really is appreciated"*.

### **Half term Revision**

School is open on Monday and Tuesday of half term for selected pupils in Product Design, Science and PE. Again, please support the school by ensuring your child attends if needed.

### **Attendance**

St Damian's has a fantastic attendance record, our current whole school attendance is 96.4% and this is above the national average. This shows that pupils want to, and indeed, enjoy attending St Damian's. It is crucial that regular attendance remains a priority throughout your child's time at St Damian's. Pupils are rarely able to make up lessons lost due to absence and it is surprising how quickly a day here and there mounts up to significant lessons lost.

### **Year 11 Prom**

The Prom will be held on **Friday 20th June 2014, at The Village Hotel, Ashton-under-Lyne**. It is a time to reward each and every pupil for attendance, behaviour and the hard work put in during the run up and completion of the GCSE exams. Only pupils who are a prefect will be invited to the Prom and this has been made clear to pupils since the beginning of Year 11, and indeed throughout Year 10. **Every** pupil is given the opportunity to become a prefect and pupils who have lost their prefect tie still have the chance to earn this back. However, parents should note that **I reserve the right NOT to allow any pupil to attend the Prom**. If any Year 11 pupil does not give a determined effort in their studies and if they have poor attendance to school then I may withdraw their invitation. My intention is that every pupil will be permitted to attend the Prom! *As a rule of thumb: work to the best of your ability and display a positive attitude in and around school and attendance at the Prom will be a certainty.*



### **FAME! The Musical**

The dates have now been finalised for the performances of FAME! The Musical. Three performances will take place on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 12, and 13<sup>th</sup> at 7.00pm. Tickets will be on sale very soon and are looking likely to sell out fast. A great evening to showcase our fantastic pupils!

### **Parents' Evenings this academic year**

Since September we have had three Parents' Evenings, Year 11 in November and Years 10 and 8 both in January and I would like to thank you for the *massive and genuine* show of support for St Damian's. In particular for the appreciation of all the hard work that teachers undertake for your children. As I am sure you are aware, we take this opportunity to hand out a questionnaire for all parents to complete, below are some of the statistics and comments made:-

When asked, 'if you would recommend this school to another parent?'

	<b>Year 11, November</b>	<b>Year 10, January</b>	<b>Year 8, January</b>
Yes	57	90	76
No	2	1	0
No Comment	3	2	0

The above is overwhelmingly positive and my staff and I are absolutely determined to ensure that your child gets a great education whilst at St Damian's.

When asked 'is there any particular aspect of the school that you really like and would like me to share with staff?'

- 'Please thank the staff for all the hard work they put in. Their efforts have made a difference and my child is succeeding'.
- 'The teachers are role models rather than disciplinarians'
- 'My daughter has gone from strength to strength whilst being at St Damian's'
- 'You should all be very proud of your school'
- 'Teaching is visibly improving across all subjects – Well Done!'
- 'The drive and enthusiasm of all your staff is clear to see and I feel this has a great impact on my children'
- 'School is fantastic, my child makes an absolute effort to be there every day, they absolutely love it and couldn't be happier to be there – and nor could we'

The above is simply a 'flavour' of the comments, 99% of which are extremely positive. For that I offer my sincere thanks.

We also ask parents if *'there is any particular aspect that we could do to make the school better?'* This question is as important as I want to continuously get feedback to improve. Therefore if there is a concern, please put your name at the top of the questionnaire so that I can investigate further. I assure you these questionnaires are private and confidential if there is an issue.



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**Upcoming Dates**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014

All pupils return to school

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Year 7 Parents' Evening

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Year 9 Retreat to Castlerigg

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Year 9 Options Evening

11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Fame! The Musical

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Year 9 Parents Evening

Finally, I hope that you and your family have a restful half term.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Logue  
Headteacher

*St. Damian's RC Science College*



### What is a 'good' attitude to learning?

#### A pupil who:

- Is always fully equipped (Log Book, pencil case with pens, pencils, ruler, sharpener, rubber, glue stick, coloured pencils, exercise books) & PE kit
- is always on time to school and arrives to class promptly
- is smartly dressed in their uniform
- joins in class discussions without being prompted
- responds respectfully to both pupils and staff & has good manners
- takes pride in the presentation of their work
- hands homework in on time and completed to the best of their ability
- incorporates teacher feedback into their work
- cares for the school environment, keeps it tidy and avoids dropping litter
- is achieving **IN LINE** with expectation

### What is an 'excellent' attitude to learning?

#### A pupil who achieves all the aspects of 'good' and in addition:

- actively requests teacher feedback and incorporates it into their work
- actively seeks enrichment and / or extension
- demonstrates interest in lessons through curiosity
- asks questions with enthusiasm and positive energy
- initiates class discussions
- volunteers to take on responsibility and contribute more widely to the school community
- is achieving **ABOVE** expectation