

September 2015

Dear Parents,

I hope that your child has had a restful break and is ready to start the new academic year with high aspirations. The purpose of this letter is to outline some important information.

The Class of Year 2015 are Record-Breakers! [GCSE outcomes]

Firstly, I am extremely proud to say that the class of 2015 have received the **BEST** GCSE results ever with 79% achieving 5A*- C grades. Indeed, on this important headline measure we were the **TOP** school in Tameside. For the second year in a row English achieved over 80% and the Maths results were an incredible 90%! Record pupil outcomes were also achieved in a range of subjects, including RE, Science, Geography and Technology. Our vocational outcomes, in a variety of subjects, were also great. These results are the product of the determination and commitment of the staff at St Damian's working together to ensure a world class education for your child. My staff and I are determined for this to continue!

Liturgical Life of the College

In June we created a formal liturgical group called '*United in Faith*'. This group's purpose is to maintain, promote and develop the Catholicity of the College. Currently it comprises staff, pupils and governors. However, to ensure it is representative of all St Damian's stakeholders we need 2 parents to be included in this group. If you would like to be involved please write me a letter FAO Mr Logue by Friday 25th September 2015, stating your interest and how you could benefit the group. Details are to be finalised but the commitment is likely to be attendance at three meetings per term, each lasting 1.5 hours and these will be during the school day.

Some Accolades from the past 12 months

Last year was yet another fantastic year for the Community of St Damian's. Below are some highlights;

- Nearly 250 parents put St Damian's as *first* preference. With only 150 places this is a **record** and frankly quite incredible. This simply shows the confidence of the community in our school in general and its great staff in particular. We hope to repay this confidence by educating your children to a world-class standard
- In December we received an award for our **outstanding** GCSE English results [2014] at the inaugural TALL awards hosted by the LA. We received a plaque which was "*in recognition of outstanding outcomes for pupils in English where outcomes were above National Averages in all key measures*"
- In February we received a letter from the Minister of State for Education that was congratulating us on disadvantaged pupil results over a sustained period of time. As a Catholic school we take great comfort and pride that our exemplary pastoral care is acknowledged in such a manner and that this results in high expectations and outcomes
- In April 2015 we had a monitoring visit from Mr Berry, Head of School Performance and Standards, which was very complimentary about the school. The conclusion of the report stated "*St Damian's RC Science College is without doubt a place of learning with great ambition, people like working here and the young people enjoy studying here*"

- In July we were runner-up in the **Brains of Tameside** Secondary Schools Competition. Well done to our 4 competitors, Niamh Connaghan, Anna Murphy, Thomas Glynn and Joseph Jones. Next year our intention is to go one step further and win!
- **Investors in People GOLD**. This is external recognition that we take care of the staff at St Damian's. This in turn means a happy staff, which equals a happy school, which ultimately results in happy children. In an era where 'happiness' is often under-rated, we pride ourselves in the safety and overall well-being of both our staff and children. The full report is on the school web site; www.st-damians.tameside.sch.uk

As we are a forward looking Community our aim is to replicate and better some of the above this year. We also welcome an inspection from Salford Diocese - watch this space!

Year Groups General

Year 11: Time is of the essence. Can I please ask parents to support the College in terms of revision, homework and any other extra sessions, including school holidays, that staff may put on. Remember, this is for the sole benefit of your children. Last year's results are proof that hard work and attendance at extra sessions is really vital to success. There is an important information meeting for all parents of Year 11 pupils on **Wednesday 16th September at 7pm**. I am also available to meet on an individual basis any parent who has a concern. If you would like to arrange an appointment please ring my PA, Mrs Biggs, on 0161 331 4752

Year 10: This is the start of a 2 year GCSE course. It is vital that pupils and parents understand the importance of working hard, adopting the correct attitude and completing homework to a high standard. Indeed most pupils will be sitting final GCSE exams next May/June. Additionally, all pupils will be completing Controlled Assessment which is a crucial part of the final grade in many subjects. An information meeting will be held on **Wednesday 23rd September at 7pm**.

Year 9: Another important year as pupils study content and learn skills for GCSE's in Year 10. This is the year pupils choose their options: more details will follow in due course. I ask parents to ensure that an appropriate amount of time is spent studying at home and completing homework to a high standard.

Year 7: I want to take this opportunity to formally welcome Year 7 pupils to the school. From the joy on their faces this week, I have no doubt that they will love being here. A welcome mass will take place on **Wednesday 21st October at 2.15pm**. Mrs Henshaw, Deputy Headteacher organised a summer school for some Year 7 pupils and it was a resounding success. More details on the summer school will follow in our first half termly newsletter.

Expectations and Rules

I make no apologies for ensuring our high standards are maintained. The behaviour of our pupils is excellent and they are a credit to the school and you as parents. The school only has three simple rules and they will be enforced. These rules are;

- Be **respectful** to everyone. We are a fiercely proud Catholic school and the value of respect underpins our ethos and all that we do. Without exception, **every** external visitor comments upon both the calm learning environment and the fantastic relationships in the school that is based on respect, tolerance and consideration for each other
- **Uniform** is compulsory and includes no make-up, ear rings and natural looking hair for girls and not too short for boys. Your children are ambassadors for the school and a smart looking uniform is a reflection of their 'pride' to be in the school

- **Mobile phones or ICT gadgets** ARE not permitted during the school day. This is so that we can focus on Learning and Teaching. Our policy is to take the phone off a child and place at reception ready for parents to collect at a convenient time. Thankfully, this is a rare occurrence as both pupils and parents are fully aware of this 'rule'

Can I take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to parents who support the school in these simple and accepted rules. **High** standards lead to **high** expectations, which in turn lead to a **high** performing school. However, repeated poor behaviour [which is very rare], will not be tolerated at St Damian's. Under no circumstances will an individual pupil be allowed to disrupt the education of others.

Relationship with Parents

Our relationship with parents, based on respect and wanting the same thing for your child, has never been so good. Indeed parental questionnaires after events such as parents evenings continuously show that 99% plus of parents support the school and would recommend it to another parent. This is a staggering level of parental satisfaction and confidence. The outcomes of these are on the school website and there are 100's of positive comments from parents. I take great delight in reading all these but one of my favourites from the last academic year was the following from a Year 11 parent

"I think you and your staff are showing everyday that this school is getting better and better. So much so we have applied for our younger daughter to attend next year. Your staff are a credit to you and the school. They have taught and encouraged my daughter to a very high level and I am proud to say my daughter goes to St Damian's".

I love the words 'staff are a credit', 'high level' and 'proud' as they encapsulate what we are all about!

A message from the Chair of Governors, Mrs E Jones

To be a Chair of Governors is a real privilege, but to be Chair of Governors at St Damian's it is something very special. The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve year on year, borne out by the improvement in exam results, especially this year. With the exceptional staff we have, the facilities available, and the determination of all to ensure we achieve our aim to become an Outstanding Catholic School, you can be sure your child will be educated in a caring, safe environment where they will achieve their full potential. I truly believe there has never been a better time to send a child to St Damian's. Every child matters at St Damian's, not just academically, but whatever their strength or weakness, the best will be brought out of them. We are fully inclusive and we are a school where 'good' is not good enough, we don't settle for second best, we strive for all round excellence.

Lastly...

I look forward to another fantastic year and I am excited about the prospects that lie ahead. Nothing is beyond the possibility of the St Damian's community if we believe! Our drive to raise standards, promote the well-being of your children and develop them into decent young adults remains our core purpose and we will continue to be relentless in our pursuit of these goals.

My staff and I will continue to work with you as parents to ensure that the great children here get a first class education. They don't deserve anything less! We are privileged to share a part of their journey with the children here.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Logue
Headteacher