

March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to give you an update on a few developments over the last term which has been another busy but yet another extremely successful term for the Community of St Damian's.

Salford Diocese Inspection

On Wednesday 9th March we were inspected by the Diocese. Inspections occur every 5 years. The last time we were inspected was in January 2011 and St Damian's was graded as 'satisfactory' across the board. I am delighted to report that this time we were inspected in 7 different areas and achieved *outstanding* in all 7 areas. This is another first for St Damian's and I hope that you are as proud as the governors, my staff and I. I enclose the parents letter for you to read and the full report can be read on the web site. The report states '**St Damian's is an outstanding Catholic school**'.

Liturgical Life of the School

This continues long after the inspection finished! As always, this term the Pupil Chaplaincy team have been very busy. During the period of Lent, every Wednesday and Thursday the pupils led the Stations of the Cross in the chapel using the CAFOD readings on social justice. We have had the Reconciliation services for all year groups, giving each child the chance to receive Gods Love and Mercy. During Holy week we have remembered Jesus' suffering through our services reflecting on the Stations of The Cross through Drama and song.

Letter from Minister of State for Education

In February I received a letter from Nick Gibb MP, the Minister of State for Schools, in which it said St Damian's "*is one of the top 100 non-selective state-funded schools in England*". I enclose this for your perusal. This is not only another first for St Damian's but is also another great accolade for our Community. This is the outcome of great pupils, fantastic staff, supportive parents and hard-working governors working together for a common purpose of ensuring that your children receive a world-class education.

'Well-being' night for Parental Information

As part of our efforts to safeguard our children, Mrs Banks is organising our first ever Parents' well-being evening. This is due to take place on Wednesday 27th April from 6.45pm - 8pm. This evening is in response to the needs of our pupils and feedback from our parents. The evening will be a mixture of Personal, Social, Health Education [PSHE]. Final details are yet to be agreed but it is hoped that important issues such as '*sexual exploitation*', '*dangers of drugs and alcohol*', '*Cyber bullying*', '*Mental Health*' issues will be some of the topics highlighted. I can't stress enough that in many cases parents are unaware of these important issues and the impact it has on children at St Damian's.

Behaviour

As always, I must commend the vast majority of pupils for being excellent ambassadors for St Damian's. Without exception, external visitors are always impressed with their manners and good behaviour. However, as I have said before, I will not tolerate repeated poor behaviour by *any* pupil. It simply is not fair for a few pupils to 'ruin' the education of others. ALL pupils know my expectations and the standards that I expect. Indeed, at St Damian's we only have 3 rules: these rules have not changed since I became Headteacher and are unlikely to ever change. These are simple, fair and accepted.

1. Be respectful. As a proud Catholic school this underpins all we do at St Damian's
2. Uniform/Hair. Our pupils look great in their uniform and whilst wearing it are ambassadors for the school. 'Hoodies' are strictly prohibited and hair must be natural looking; boys hair should not be too short.
3. Mobile phones. These are not allowed in school. On the rare occasion these are taken off pupils it is policy for the parents to collect these from reception.

Can I take this opportunity to thank parents who work alongside the school to make it such a great place for our children. I value and really appreciate the overwhelming support.

Attendance

St Damian's has a proud attendance record that is above the national average and currently is at 96%. This is a reflection that pupils want to, and indeed, enjoy attending St Damian's. It is vital that your child attends so they can achieve their full potential. Please ensure your child has great attendance and is also punctual to school. The holiday dates for next year are now on **our** web-site so that you can plan ahead. Please do not ask for me to authorise absence for holidays. It will only be granted in exceptional cases.

Year 11 Updates

Easter Revision: There is a comprehensive schedule during Easter that I would like parents to support by encouraging pupils to attend. This is an excellent opportunity to improve GCSE outcomes for your child. The schedule will be given to all Year 11 pupils and will be on our web site.

Leavers Mass: The date is Friday 27th May at 12 o'clock and allows both parents and staff to celebrate the Mass with the students. It will be a very moving, spiritual and memorable occasion which I hope that you will be able to attend. As is the same over the past few years, if any pupil is misbehaving during College before this date then they will not be allowed to attend.

Year 11 Prom: A magnificent occasion for our Year 11 leavers and the date has been confirmed as Friday 1st July. The procedures are as follows: *The formal invitation to the Prom will be distributed to students in April.* This will **only** be given to students who have contributed to school life, have excellent attendance and punctuality and completed all Controlled Assessments to a satisfactory standard. Sadly, a few Year 11 pupils will not be permitted to attend the Prom. Pupils have been told repeatedly throughout the year many times that this will be the case. It is a privilege, not a right, to attend this joyous occasion.

Parents Evenings

The support from parents is simply phenomenal. My staff and I really value this support and never take it for granted. As Headteacher I am truly humbled by the genuine comments about St Damian's. For a

detailed break-down please see the web-site. I include one parental comment from each Year group for your perusal;

Year 11, Nov 2015: *The teachers are exceptional and have brought out the best in my son*

Year 10, Jan 2016: *We have always been delighted we chose St Damian's as the school for our children*

Year 8, Jan 2016: *This is an excellent school –nothing more to say. Be proud in all you do in school*

Year 7, Mar 2016: *My daughter's confidence has grown and grown since she came to St Damian's. I thought the transition would be daunting but she is loving every minute!*

Year 9, Mar 2016: *Keep doing what you are doing. The results speak for themselves. Strong leadership and great staff*

If you have any issues, please contact the relevant member of staff so that we can attempt to resolve before an issue becomes a problem. Homework is an area parents often ask about. Ms Joyce coordinates homework clubs and both parents and pupils can find additional support tasks by accessing our school web site, followed by student and then the section called 'homework'.

Other highlights from the term

Caritas, Community & Culture Day. This was a resounding success, led by the great RE team, and it was fully embraced by pupils and staff alike. Numerous activities included a Lenten reflection trail to allow pupils to walk with Jesus and reflect on their own personal life journey. Pupils were actively involved in kite making to commemorate and learn more about the Hindu festival of Vasant Panchami. Pupils also learnt about the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah and took away their own bamboo seed as a reminder of this special day.

Year 9 options evening: A fantastic and informative presentation by Mrs Henshaw was well received and she passes on her thanks for the prompt return of the option sheets. Pupils will receive confirmation of their Option choices in May once the curriculum plan for September has been finalised.

Sylvia Lancaster visited St Damian's in January to speak to pupils about the need for both justice and forgiveness. She spoke about 'bullying' and the harm that this can do. Her impact on Year 9 pupils was real and she left a lasting impression on the entire year group. Systematic bullying will not be tolerated and goes against every value we hold dear at St Damian's as a Catholic Community.

Talent Show: Our annual Talent Show allows pupils from all years to have a showcase for their talents. Furthermore, it allows pupils to grow in confidence and fosters their self-belief. It is a great opportunity to allow the St Damian's community to come together to celebrate the wonderful work of our dedicated, ambitious and aspiring stars. Feedback from pupils and parents was very positive!

Pupil Learning Forum [PLF]: Led by Mrs Lowe and Mrs Jones, chair of governors, the newly elected Year 10 PLF have played a significant role in supporting high learning expectations at St Damian's. As positive ambassadors for learning they support pupils at KS3 homework and intervention clubs, act as enthusiastic mentors for both literacy and numeracy and during the recent 'Literacy Awareness Week', Year Assembly and Form visit presentations were delivered to improve pupil standards in Presentation and Communication.

TALL Awards: In February, the English Faculty were delighted to receive recognition at the Tameside TALL Awards for the outstanding outcomes of pupils studying English at St Damian's. Outcomes for

pupils in 2014/2015 were well above the national average in all key measures and the outcomes in English for pupils in 2014/2015 have improved since 2013/2014.

Literacy Awareness Week: One outcome from this was the corroboration between the Music and English departments where Year 9 pupils entered the BBC Ten Pieces Symphony Competition. Pupils' were asked to create a piece of Performance Poetry using Shostakovich's symphony as inspiration. If successful, the winners will have a chance to perform their poetry at The Royal Albert Hall.

Raising Aspirations. Selected Year 10 pupils are partaking in a Gifted and Talented programme at Ashton Sixth Form College. The benefits of this are immense including making our pupils have high expectations and building confidence. This alongside the many STEM opportunities will ensure that pupils will continue to have high aspirations for their futures.

A message from Mrs Jones, Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governors I would like to express my thanks to all the members of our Community: pupils, staff and parents who have worked so hard over the last few years to get St Damian's where it is today. The school continues to grow from strength to strength and I believe this is because of the great and genuine relationships within the school. Collectively we should all be proud, indeed very proud of our achievements!

Finally ...

Thank you for your continued support and I can assure you that the governors, my Leadership team and my staff, both teachers and support staff, are hard-working, conscientious and determined to ensure your child achieves a great education.

I hope that you had a Holy and happy Easter. I look forward to the summer term and some good weather ☺!

Yours sincerely

Mr Logue
Headteacher