

September 2017

Dear Parents & Carers,

I hope that your child has had a restful break and is ready to start the new academic year with high hopes and aspirations. The purpose of this letter is to outline important information, including the 2017 exam results.

Exam Results 2017

Over the past few years our GCSE outcomes have been some of the best in Tameside. This year, I have to report, is no exception. St Damian's was the **highest performing school** in a range of areas showing that our academic standards are high. The percentage of pupils achieving Grade 4 or above, at 86% was the **highest** in Tameside and the percentage of pupils achieving Grade 5 or above, at 63% was also the **highest**. These basic measures are the foundations of future progress and success.

Across a range of subjects including Religious Education, Sciences, Triple Science, History, Geography and Languages we achieved unprecedented exam successes with these subjects all achieving more than 90% A*-C grades. Within these, many pupils achieved A*/As. For example, in Chemistry 94% of pupils entered achieved an A* or A, or in Religious Education, in which the whole cohort was entered achieved 46% A* or A. These are simply outstanding results and most subjects broke all previous records. Our vocational subjects, including BTEC PE, ICT, CPLD also excelled in their achievements with many pupils surpassing high targets.

As Headteacher, I am really proud of their achievements. The message to our current pupils is if you work hard, listen to your teachers AND believe that you can be successful then there is no better school than St Damian's to attend. As parents, you should also be proud that your child attends such a school where teachers and leaders alike have high ambitions for your children. Our great children are to be congratulated. The staff at St Damian's really are hard-working and exceptionally talented.

These results follow on from winning the *'Most inspirational secondary school of the Year'* last November.

Consistency in Pupil Outcomes

It is important to point out that although our exam results this year have been great, this has been the trend at St Damian's over the past 3 years. This shows our consistency, our embedded expectations and ultimately the great relationships within school, of which the GCSE results are the by-product:

- Aug 2015: TOP school in Tameside - 5A*-C including English & Maths
- Aug 2016: TOP school in Tameside - Disadvantaged pupils progress
- Aug 2017: TOP school in Tameside - % 4 + in English & Maths AND % 5 + in English & Maths

We hope that parents will continue to support the school and up-hold our simple values and rules and watch this space for Aug 2018!

Year 11 Information

Our current Year 11 have a hard act to follow but with the right attitude and belief there is nothing to prevent them replicating the outstanding results above. I ask that parents support the school in ensuring that your children are working at least 2 hours a night on revision and/or homework. Furthermore, it is important that you support the teachers when it comes to the many revision sessions organised by the teachers. These have proved to be very beneficial in the past.

It is my intention to meet as many parents as I can this half term. I will be arranging many meetings but if you want to meet me please contact Mrs Biggs on and I will endeavour to see you as quickly as possible. In the past, I have met parents before school, sometimes at 6.30am. Mr Burtles, Head of Year 11 will be holding a Y11 Information Evening on the *20th September* where important information will be given out. The formal Parents' Evening is on 16th November. Please make every effort to attend both of these.

Year 10 Update

Year 10 pupils have now started preparing for their GCSE exams. There have been substantial changes to GCSE exams and because of this it is vital that your child understands the nature of linear exams. In effect, exams will be sat at the end of Year 11 and there will generally be little coursework. This has the potential to put a lot of stress on children. Hence, independent revision starting immediately in Year 10 is vital. I also ask parents to encourage your child, take an interest in their school work and ensure that they complete homework and/or revision every night. Hard work will result in great GCSE outcomes for your child. Mrs Taylor, Head of Year 10 will be holding a Y10 Information Evening on the *27th September* where important information will be given out. It is important that parents attend the evening to understand the changes and expectations at GCSE, and most crucially what your child needs to do to be successful.

School Rules

At St Damian's our pupils are extremely well-behaved and, indeed, are ambassadors for the school. As a Community, we are proud that a range of external visitors comment upon your great children and the respect they show. Can I remind parents that we have **5 simple, accepted and transparent** rules. These are to ensure that our Community continues to thrive.

- Respect everyone: This is our core rule and is conducive to our positive, welcoming ethos
- Correct uniform: Pupils are proud to be at Damian's and the correct uniform is an outward sign that they love the school. Uniform also includes no jewellery, no earrings, no make-up, no fake tan and no false nails or nail varnish. Girls' skirts should be a decent length. Extreme hair styles are also not permitted. Hair should be natural looking and not too short. However, this is not an exhaustive list
- Mobile phones/IT gadgets: These are NOT allowed in school at any time of the day. Pupils MUST not use their phones until they exit the green gate. If caught using these, which is rare, they will be confiscated and parents will collect from reception. This is school policy. Smartwatches and other IT gadgets are also not allowed during the school day

- Chewing gum: NOT allowed in school as we want a clean and tidy environment. Chewing gum will be confiscated and a detention will be issued. It is also important to note that the school does not promote 'energy' drinks and these should not be in school either
- Eating 'zones': Again, to keep the environment tidy for your children there are areas in school where no eating is permitted: these will be clearly sign-posted. Food will be confiscated where this happens

The use of aerosols within classrooms, due to a few pupils having breathing difficulties, is also banned. If any pupil constantly undermines the above rules, then their place at St Damian's is at serious risk.

NB. 24 hours' notice for an after-school detention. Can I clarify this as there seems to be some misunderstanding. As a school, we do not need to give any notice for after school detentions but we continue to do so to ensure a great working relationship with parents. However, as Headteacher, I reserve the right to give any pupil an after school without any notice. Where I do so, I will endeavour to contact parents but this is not always possible.

Updates

Attendance: Our attendance continues to be well above the national average showing that your children want to be here. There is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement. Unless exceptional, I will not be authorising any absences, including holidays. Please look at the St Damian's official web site for our term dates.

Careers provision: We are proud to have achieved Stage 1 of the '**Quality in Careers Standard**' in July 2017, which is a national quality award for careers education. This award assesses the teaching of careers, employability and enterprise education to ensure that it effectively addresses the needs of all pupils, so that they progress effectively from Year 7 and on to post 16 provision.

Young Carers: We are also very proud to inform you that we have achieved the '**Silver award**' for the support we provide for our young carers in school. As a fiercely proud catholic school we actively encourage these children knowing that they may be under very challenging circumstances at home. Watch this space as we will be applying for the 'Gold' award!

Parental Confidence: Analysis of questionnaire returns from all 5 parents' evenings shows that support for the school is *overwhelming*, reflected in the fact that 99 % of parents would recommend the school. This 'confidence' of the local community is also reflected in the number of **A]** applications to get into St Damian's and **B]** the number of transfer requests in all year groups throughout the academic year. St Damian's has never been so popular; in essence we are a heavily over-subscribed school. I would like to personally thank the 100s of parents that I meet and speak to, the vast majority of whom praise the school in general, and the staff in particular. I hope that this positive relationship continues. However, may I take this opportunity to remind parents to be polite when speaking to any of my staff, including those in reception. Thank you.

Dates this Term for your Diary

- 20th Sept: Year 11 Information Evening
- 25th Sept: Open Evening. School closes early at 1.30
- 27th Sept: Year 10 Information Evening
- 16th Nov: Year 11 Parents' Evening
- 22nd Nov: Year 8/9 Information Evening
- 23rd Nov: Year 7 Information Evening

- 24th Nov: INSET day: School closed for pupils
- 27th Nov: Year 11 Mocks start
- 11th Dec: Our annual Christmas Carol concert
- 20th Dec: School closes at 1.25 for Christmas

An update from the Chair of Governors, Mrs E Jones

It is with great pleasure that I add a few lines to Mr. Logue's letter and to once again say how delighted we are with the success of our pupils. It is not only our 'bright' children who have achieved in the 2017 exams, but across the board our pupils have excelled and again made us so very proud. This could not have happened without our dedicated staff, who throughout the year strive daily to provide the best all round education for your children. This last year has truly been a partnership of pupils and staff working together, supporting and helping each other. I know the parents also supported the pupils and the school and I sincerely hope this will continue to be the case over the coming years. As we start another academic year, the Governors in partnership with the Headteacher and his great staff, will do their best to ensure your children succeed and are happy and safe, and turn out to be members of the community we are proud of. Best wishes.

Finally...

I look forward to the forthcoming academic year and to again work with parents to ensure that the community of St Damian's continues to go from 'strength to strength'. We are a united, strong and very proud community and working together will ensure that this year will equally be a success!

Yours sincerely,

Mr S Logue
Headteacher