



In all things faithful

July 2021

Dear parents/carers,

I trust that you are keeping well. Welcome to the last letter of the 2020/2021 academic year. This letter contains some updates and information for your perusal in these strange times.

### Plans for September

It is my hope that there will be a return to some normality in September. However, at the time of writing there is some uncertainty about the national plans and whether testing will continue in school. Therefore, the plan for re-opening is as follows:

- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September: INSET day. School closed for pupils.
- Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September: School open for Years 7 and Years 11 only
- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September: School open for **all** Year groups

The above is subject to change depending on, if any, new national guidelines.

### Share Day

Wow, what a great day! It was fantastic to see children having fun after so much disruption to their routines. This year the theme was the 'Wild West' and it was a huge success. Many occasions in the past I have been called a 'cowboy', but I really was one for a day! 😊 A big thank you for your kind donations to this day as it is tradition to raise money for charities. This year our chosen charity was 'Macmillan Cancer Support'. I hope to share with you the amount we raised but any and all donations are warmly received.

### St Damian's and the Manchester 10k

Team Damian's are entering the Manchester 10K on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. This year, we have had too many colleagues who have faced cancer and several staff and I are running [some would say walking] to raise money for charity. Training so far is going well and our quest to raise as much money as we can for Macmillan spurs us on. I ask that you donate [no matter how small] to this worthwhile cause via SimsPay or the JustGiving page - [www.justgiving.com/stdamiansrcsciencecollege](http://www.justgiving.com/stdamiansrcsciencecollege). I will write again in September, but can I say thanks in advance.

### Work Experience

Well done to our Year 10s who organised work placements in a variety of sectors including education, health, leisure, construction, charities, retail and personal care. Comments have come back from employers to say how impressed they were with their positive attitudes, willingness to learn and readiness to take on a range of responsibilities. Congratulations also to the Y10 pupils who took part in the Virtual Work Experience with our new business partner, Fortem, a well-established property maintenance company. Pupils were involved in live links with Fortem employees via Teams and were

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busy completing a range of modules which included Innovation, Design, Resource Allocation, IT project management, IT development and designing your own Business Plan. St. Damian's pupils with good academic qualifications and strong employability skills developed during work experience will be attractive to colleges, universities, and employers in the future. A reminder to Y10 pupils, out on placement, that they must submit their work experience booklets to Mrs Henshaw on Friday 3rd September.

### **Growing in Faith Together [GIFT] update**

On 13<sup>th</sup> May we relaunched our GIFT Team at our 'Pizza and Prayer' event. During the relaunch, the team came up with fantastic and insightful ideas about how we can make St Damian's prayer life even more vibrant and dynamic! Despite Covid restrictions, the GIFT team has been active, leading Stations of the Cross during Lent and updating displays across the school. The focus next year will be on our Bereavement Garden, making this a more inviting and reflective space.

Finally, the GIFT team worked closely with Fr Simon and they are sad to see him move on to a new parish but thank him for all his time and commitment. We look forward to meeting and working alongside Fr Matthews in the new academic year.

### **Covid Updates**

What another couple of chaotic weeks with rising numbers of pupils being sent home to self-isolate. Sending pupils home is not ideal and not only disrupts their learning but also has an impact on their well-being. I can assure you that if we send a child home it is because we are following the National Guidelines. My sincere apologies if this has had a detrimental impact on you and your child. It's not what I want to do!

At the time of writing, the indications are that there will be no bubbles when the pupils return in September. However, it is looking likely that during September pupils will continue to carry out two supervised lateral flow tests onsite [at school], 3-5 days apart. Then moving forwards, you will be encouraged to continue testing at home. Our new Year 7 pupils will also be required to start supervised testing and all parents/carers should have already had a text message with a link to give so parental consent to carry out supervised tests.

Guidance will be issued to schools over the summer break, and I will keep you updated on any significant changes which may affect pupils.

### **Safeguarding Updates for the Summer**

During these difficult times our Safeguarding Team has endeavoured to support children with their wellbeing. However, I am aware that some pupils may need to access further support over the summer holidays in relation to mental health. Below are some services that can offer advice/support over the holiday period.

- [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)-. Free, safe and anonymous online counselling and support
- TOGMIND: Katherine Street A-U-L. 0161 330 9223
- The Anthony Seddon Centre- George Street A-U-L. 0161 376 4439.

As a rule of thumb, work on the assumption that no child is immune from mental health issues or needing support with their well-being. Please take the time to listen to your children and gain the support and help necessary to help your child flourish.

- ✓ Vapes: There has been a number of incidents where pupils are bringing vapes into school and using them in the local community. Vaping on school premises or being in possession of a vape will not be tolerated at St Damian's and if your child is found to have a vape or have been involved with pupils vaping then sanctions including fixed term exclusions will be issued. I ask that you support the school by speaking to your child / children about this concerning matter.
- ✓ Outdoor safety: As we approach the holidays, we are all hoping for some warmer weather. However, this brings its own dangers. Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service have put together resources to remind us how to stay safe around water in the summer. I strongly advise that you take some time to look at this with your children: <https://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/your-safety/campaigns/safe4summer/> . Finally, Tameside Council have launched a wide range of outdoor activities and sports for children and families, these activities will enrich the learning of your children as well as helping to keep them physically fit. All details can be found at: <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/outdooractivities> . Make the most of the summer, have fun but most importantly stay safe.

### Investors in People [IIP] update

As you know, we have achieved the prestigious IIP 'Gold' and last week we had an external assessor in St Damian's as we began the process of renewing our IIP accreditation. The process is rigorous and 'measures' our staff well-being and performance. Carol Davidson, our IIP assessor, will report back to me after she completes her report, and I hope to share the report with you as soon as possible.

### Update on our 'Excellence in Pupil Development' Award

St. Damian's has committed to achieving the 'Excellence in Pupil Development' award. We recognise that in an ever-challenging world, each child needs to develop excellent personal skills as well as an excellent academic education. Last week Ms. Joyce met with the assessor, Mr Noble, who spent the full day in school. He said he had "a fantastic day" and was particularly impressed by the calm and purposeful environment as he toured the school as well as the provision already in place. He will now work with the school to produce a plan to ensure that our personal development' is exceptional. He will return in early 2022, to verify the further progress made.

### ASPIRE Assemblies.

To celebrate the success of our fantastic pupils, Heads of Year have held their final ASPIRE assembly of the year. Pupils were given awards for their continued effort and academic achievements. We have also celebrated the positive contributions individual pupils have made to form time and recognising the positive pupil leaders in our community. Despite the challenges of the last 12 months, some students were also recognised for making huge improvement or managing to sustain an excellent attendance. Whilst not all pupils received an award, I would like to congratulate all of our pupils on their continued hard work, resilience and positivity. They have made us all very proud!

### ASPIRE Day - 5<sup>th</sup> July

On Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July, our pupils took part in the final Aspire Day of the year. At St Damian's, we develop the 'whole child' and through these days, we aim to prepare pupils for their future careers whilst also ensuring that they leave school with the skills and understanding to lead confident, healthy and independent lives. Workshops included topics on the Environment, Careers, Finance and PSHE. Some pupils listened to talks from ex-pupils and learned about life at university. Pupils also engaged in talks from guest speakers from the RAF, BROTHER and NHS and were given the opportunity to take part in live Q&A sessions. The aim was to give pupils first-hand knowledge of different job sectors and to help them to make the right choices about their education. Gambling, budgeting, money choices and well-

being were also delivered in the finance talks. Year 10 pupils took part in talks about relationships, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and substance abuse. The 'Dare to Aspire' roadshow covered the importance of resilience and positive mindsets. Pupils learnt about how to manage risks and make informed choices about their physical and emotional wellbeing and where to get help with this. Our guests were impressed by the high standards of behaviour, engagement, and dedication of our pupils. Can I just say a massive well done to our pupils whose behaviour was impeccable!

### **Staff leavers July 2021**

It is with sadness that we say goodbye this year to several members of staff, all of whom have served the pupils of St Damian's with commitment and dedication, ensuring that your children get an outstanding quality of education. The staff leavers are Mr O'Loughlin, Miss Ferns, Mrs Whiteside, Miss Evans and Miss Prosalentis. I am sure everyone at St Damian's will echo my sincere thanks to them and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

### **New staff September 2021**

I am really excited about the new staff that are starting in September 2021. All of these staff have been appointed as they are focused on ensuring that your child receives a great Education. The new staff are Miss Bury [RE], Miss Danko [LSA], Mr Doughty [Music] Miss Holland [RE] Miss Hogan [Science], Miss Jameel [English], Ms Mouallem [LSA], Miss Smith [MFL], Mr Spencer [Science] and Miss Walthew [LSA]. I know that you will give them a warm St Damian's welcome.

### **Sports day round up**

After a year of lockdowns, remote learning and isolation it was amazing to see our KS3 pupils fully engaged in the 2021 Sports Day. Throughout the day, pupils and staff alike were in great spirits as they cheered on the Football, Indoor Athletics and Old School Relay competitions. For our younger pupils, this was their first experience of the St Damian's Sports Day and they performed with real enthusiasm and superb effort. In fact, they were a credit to the school! There were some superb individual performances throughout the day alongside genuine teamwork amongst the form groups. A massive Well done to all involved and congratulations to the following form teams who were crowned overall year group winners:

- Yr7 winners: 7NML
- Yr8 winners: 8JHS
- Yr9 winners: 9HTR

A big thanks to the PE department for organising the day and to all the staff who ensured that the day was a great success!

### **Car parking**

Over the past few weeks, I have received several emails from neighbours who have said that parents have parked inconsiderately, for example, across their driveways and they are being blocked in. Can I politely ask that you are considerate when parking around St Damian's. Thanks in advance.

### **Improving pupils' writing skills**

A few months ago, the English department short-listed over 40 pupils and entered them into a writing competition organised by the University of Manchester. Pupils had to write a letter to the President of the USA about any issues that they would like the new administration to address. Having read the

letters, I was impressed by the topics chosen ranging from the environment to equality to gun laws. I am delighted to share some great news with you regarding our winning pupils. They have been invited to an exciting event, hosted online by the University of Manchester, which will offer a chance to celebrate the excellent winning entries received. The event will be led by competition organisers, Sonja Bernhard and Dr. Andrew Fearnley, and our pupils will also be joined by Kathryn Crockart, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy London and a career member of the U.S. Senior Foreign Service. Well done to all the pupils!

**A personal message from our chair of Governors, Mrs E Jones**

I know and appreciate that it has been a tough year for everyone connected at St Damian's. However, I am proud of the manner in which the community, as a whole, has responded to Covid and all the disruptions caused. We are a strong community and I want to thank the parents for continuing to support the school. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for all their efforts in providing an education under such difficult conditions and also to the pupils who have showed remarkable resilience over the past year. I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday.

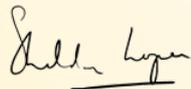
**Finally...**

I end another difficult year for the St Damian's community by praying for a swift return to 'normality' next year. But whatever challenges we face, we will do so the 'St Damian's Way' which is to keep calm, work together and be optimistic. Having said that, I want to pass on a massive thanks for both your patience and support this year. You, the parents, have been fantastic. It has been a very turbulent year and self-isolation of so many pupils has not, frankly, been ideal. But as a school community we are at our best 'in the face of adversity' and must remain positive for the future. In fact, a real strength of St Damian's is that we are a place of hope, and we must never lose that! Finally, I pray that the great children get a well-deserved break. And just for the record, YOUR children, OUR pupils, are amazing! But don't just take my word for it. Below are 2 comments from yesterday, share day.

- ✓ Firstly, the ice cream man commented that he had been to many schools but this school was the best. He said the children "were absolutely out of this world".
- ✓ Secondly, the events organiser said to me that he does many events but the behaviour of our children was "simply the best".

As Headteacher, I could not have been prouder!

Regards



Mr Logue  
Headteacher