



St Damian's RC Science College

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Headteacher

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October 2023

Dear Parents & Carers,

A very warm welcome to my second monthly newsletter of the academic year. I hope you enjoy reading!

The Catholic Life of the School

Mrs Gerschler and her RE team continue to ensure varied, pertinent, and extensive opportunities to ensure the formation of both students and staff.

- **'Little Way Week'**. This started on 2nd October and is inspired by St Thérèse of Lisieux, patron of mission. As a child, St Thérèse dreamed of being a missionary. With age she understood that very few of us are called to make big and radical gestures, but through small, loving actions we too can deliver God's love to the world. Heads of Year shared the 'Five Fact Assembly' that encourages our community to follow her 'Little Way'. The idea is we all do the small actions to help others we will be able to experience the love of God. Over the week, teachers received 'thank you notes' and forms shared ideas that could help to make other people's week that bit better.
- **Mary's Meals and World Porridge Day**. This was celebrated on 10th October. With the help of Yr8 and Mr Willerton, staff and students could get a warm bowl of porridge and some delicious toppings. Mary's Meals serves children, in some of the poorest countries, steaming mugs of vitamin-enriched porridge, helping them to learn and grow. This charity helps us to connect with our global family and appreciate the richness of our own lives and communities.



- **Share Day Donations**. We welcomed back to school our fantastic charities to hand over our Share Day donations. Three charities, Emmaus Mossley, The Christie and Reuben's Retreat each received £2000! Again, a massive thanks to the St Damian's community for the donations and fundraisers.

- **'Faith in Action'**. This month we are working with the Youth Office for the Diocese of Salford to launch the 'Faith in Action' Award for Yr7 students. The programme rewards active service in schools, encouraging young people to take their service into the wider community and accept greater responsibility for their faith in action.

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• *'Hope in The Future – Schools Celebration'*. Mrs Allmand was accompanied by 3 Yr7 students to celebrate Hope in the Future. The visit included workshops, exhibits, inspiring speakers and live music. We are excited to reach out and make new partnerships and links with the charities and communities that we met. We would like to thank Bishop John and the team at Salford Diocese for such a memorable day.

• *Rosary Week*. October is the Month traditionally dedicated to the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year the Rosary is travelling around our school site, with a different intention for each day, led by the GIFT team. This powerful prayer can be said anywhere, it will easily fit into our busy lives, calm our hearts and enable us to rest in God.



• *Macmillan Coffee Morning*. I am delighted to report this was a resounding success, raising an incredible £2,000. This will now go to support people with cancer; emotionally, physically and financially. A massive THANK YOU for being so generous with your donations! YOU are what made the morning such a success. It was fantastic to see so many of you able to join us for a couple hours and we were overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity: the numbers present reflected the strength of the St Damian's community!

• *Yr7 Welcome Mass*. This was celebrated at St Christopher's RC Church and introduced many students to the local parish priest, Father Jude, who is also a governor. Our school hymn was sung with such joy and enthusiasm it was a pleasure to hear. Thanks to the parents who are accompanying their child on their faith journey.

- *Caritas Ambassadors*. Following the success of the SVP visit to school last year, we were able to have the parishioners join us for an Autumn Reflection, and Fish and Chip Dinner as our Caritas Ambassadors led the way with some wonderful entertainment. A great event celebrating a great school and parish links.
- *GIFT Team*. Autumn Formation session took place this term to prepare for the season of advent. The team started our meeting with prayer, taking time to connect with our own faith and then we reflected on their role within our community along with future plans.

In January, Mrs Allmand and I, will be attending a Catholic spiritual retreat at Castlerigg Manor in Keswick. This will form part of the *'Faith in Action'* award and will be open to students in Yr7 who are currently signed up for the award with Mrs Allmand. More details to follow. I can't wait!!

Safeguarding Update

Do you, as a parent, really know what your child is doing online? Do you know really know what they are watching, playing or listening to? It is sometimes easy for parents to trust their children, but it is important to know exactly what your child is doing online and if it is appropriate for their age. Visit this website <https://www.common sense media.org/> as it has a tab which gives parents good advice. It's well worth a visit!

Mental Health Day

October 10th was World Mental Health Day. St Damian's proudly joined forces with ITV to share the nationwide extra homework set by Ant and Dec. Every child was given the homework sheet to take home, we are asking parents to ask your child about the homework as it is an ice-breaker to get children to talk about how they are feeling. The sheet suggests ways that both children and adults can start a difficult conversation and follows the St Damian's ideal of "If you can help a child, you don't have to spend years repairing an adult". Remember the mantra... mental health can affect any student [Indeed any adult too!] at any time!



Teaching and Learning Update

At the beginning of each academic year, teachers at St Damian's are tasked with reviewing their appraisal targets and setting themselves new objectives for the coming year. These appraisals are used to guide improvements in their teaching and to reinforce teaching excellence and personal professional development. With that in mind, Mrs Heenan, our Teaching and Learning lead, has introduced a new professional development model called 'The Research Model'. In essence, teachers become researchers in improving their own teaching and learning; they take an aspect of teaching they may want to develop and set up or join a research group – with a view that research is a process for improvement. We are very much looking forward to examining the high-quality academic research that our teachers are undertaking to continue to deliver outstanding teaching in our classrooms.

Parents and Issues

Over the past few weeks, a small number of parents have either spoken to staff or emailed school regarding some 'issues', some of which are extremely complex. Some of these have caused staff unnecessary stress and upset. This isn't acceptable at any workplace, never mind in our Catholic community where respect is our core value. As headteacher I can say, with absolute confidence, that all my staff work extremely hard for **every** child and genuinely do their best for them. I am inundated with many emails that praises their work and this is testament to their professionalism, dedication and **kindness**. If you speak to my staff, please be considerate and kind. If there is an issue that can't be resolved, and this is a possibility, please contact me and I will respond.

Furthermore, can I clarify 2 embedded expectations that have been in place for over 10 years.

- *After school detentions.* These are **not** optional and can't be substituted for lunch time detentions.
- *Phones.* If phones are out, they will be confiscated and placed at reception for the parent to collect.

Both of the above are transparent, fair and accepted and applicable to all students. Failure to comply is likely to result in a suspension.

Vapes

Statistics show there is a national issue with children vaping. Any child who brings a vape into school or uses a vape in school will be sanctioned, and likely suspended. This includes any child seen vaping when in their uniform, either on a bus or walking to and from school. It is illegal for any child under the age of 18 to vape. This is because of the serious health implications that high levels of nicotine can have on a child. Students are educated on the dangers of vaping, but your continued support is appreciated.

Yr11 Update

I am delighted with the attitudes of the vast majority of Yr11 students. They really are a credit to both themselves, and you, as their parents. They have worked really hard this half term. Their focus in lessons and general conduct around school has been overwhelmingly positive. Over the half term break students need to balance revising for their upcoming Mocks but also to have a well-deserved break. Their mock exams start on 27th November.

As a school we have reviewed the targets of all students in Yr11. This is due to a combination of factors including receiving more up to date information nationally regarding progression from KS2 starting points. We are fiercely proud of our academic achievements and all target changes are aspirational and are done so without compromising our high standards.

Over the past few weeks in Yr11 assembly, students have had the opportunity to listen to post-16 Colleges and courses. This should raise their aspirations and get them thinking about their futures. Mr Gregory will be running a History intervention class during the half term break; he will let the relevant students know.

The table below shows the intervention timetable that will be in operation after the half term break right up to the beginning of the Mocks. If your child is asked to attend intervention, it is vital they do so, they are an excellent opportunity to improve grades and build confidence.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 – 8.50am			History/Geography	MFL	Options
3.10 - 4:10pm	English (History/Geography)	Maths (MFL)		Science (Options)	RE (Options)

A reminder that Yr11 Parents' Evening is on **Wednesday 15th November 4pm - 7pm**. It is vital that you make every effort to attend and speak to all the subject leaders.

Last night, Thursday 19th October, it was great to see the class of 2023, formally receiving their GCSE certificates. All at St Damian's wish them nothing but the best for their future.

Awards

I am delighted that St Damian's has been shortlisted for 3 different education awards in Manchester, Liverpool and London. This is in recognition of our continued commitment and dedication to ensuring our great students get the 'best' holistic education which includes outstanding outcomes and exceptional pastoral support. This shortlist includes the following nominations;



- ✓ *Educate Awards (Liverpool): a] Mental Health & Wellbeing b] Support Star of the Year: c] Most Inspirational Secondary School of the Year.*
- ✓ *Education Awards (Manchester): a] Secondary School of the Year: b] Wellbeing*
- ✓ *Education Today (London): a] Secondary School of the Year b] Community Champion c] Overall School of the Year*

Watch this Space!

Staff Profiles

In each newsletter I plan to have the profile of 2 members of staff. In this newsletter I focus on two new members of support staff who are both ex-students of the school.

- *Miss Hibbert, Receptionist:* I have just started working as the school's receptionist in September after studying here at St Damian's for 5 years. I worked in the law industry for 5 years where I worked alongside lawyers and some large well-known companies defending claims against them. I also have an Event business, where in my free time I dress up peoples events with balloons! Since working here at St Damian's, I feel a real part of the school community and I am overwhelmed by the kindness of the staff and pupils. I am looking forwards to see what my future holds here at St Damian's.

- *Mr Hennesey, Learning Support Assistant:* As an ex-student of St Damian's, it's good to be home! I've been welcomed with open arms and smiling faces. During my time here as a student I found the teachers to be driven and passionate in all that they do. It now feels awfully strange to call them colleagues. I always felt safe and encouraged in all that I did, achieving the 'Frank McCarron Award for Achievement In the Face of Adversity Award'. I strongly believe that I never would have made it where I am without the St Damian's staff, and seeing just how much one teacher can change a student's life. I studied Primary Education at Manchester Metropolitan University, graduating this year as a qualified teacher. This year, I find myself supporting the year 7s, and I'm happy to be a part of the start of their journey that I experienced many years ago.

Walking Around the School

One of my favourite parts of my role as Headteacher is to 'walk the school' during the day. It is an absolute pleasure to 'feel' the positive relationships, see students engaged in their learning and staff setting high expectations. Last week I was in a Yr8 assembly where the students were true ambassadors for St Damian's in their smart uniform and were extremely proud to witness Mr Willerton and Mrs Gerschler hand over cheques for £2,000 each to three charities, Reuben's Retreat, The Christie and the Emmaus homeless charity. The positivity really is a joy to behold!

Open Evening

A few weeks ago we had our annual open evening. The evening was a resounding success and hundreds of prospective students and their parents attended. The positivity was palpable and many of the attendees were blown away by the conduct of our students. I have included some comments from the evening's parental questionnaires for your perusal.

"Have an older child that already attends and have been blown away"

"Very much hoping our daughter will have the same opportunity as her brother – an excellent start"

"It was a great open evening"

"Pupils very happy and polite"

"The first and only preference"

"It is an amazing school"

"Love the 5 rules. The Headteacher was very honest 😊"

"We visited 4 schools and this was the best one"

"Nice to see teachers genuinely happy at work"

"The pupils were full of pride for the school"

"Ever since our daughter was born we wanted her to attend St Damian's"

I loved reading the overwhelming positive feedback from the evening, especially the comment from the parent who said "You can tell Mr Logue loves this school and cares about it." That is very true, I love the St Damian's community!

I would like to formally state that I was **extremely proud** of the staff and students on the evening. They **always** rise to any and all occasions and on the night truly show-cased the 'St Damian's Way'. Sadly, the school is simply not big enough to accommodate all parents who choose us as their first choice.

Curriculum Updates

A] *What is your child learning? The St Damian's curriculum*

As a parent, it is helpful if you know what your child is learning. I mentioned in my last letter that we have recently revamped the Curriculum area of the school website. The topics that your children will be covering next half term are available to view at <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/curriculum-snapshots>. I hope that this is useful. Furthermore, look at our Subjects link to find further information about what your child will be learning throughout the year.

B] Assessing the taught Curriculum

Over the next few weeks assessments will be taking place which will test the student's knowledge of what they have learnt. Yr10 starts 20th November, Yr8 starts 27th November, Yr7 starts 4th December and Yr9 on the 8th January. Your child should be revising towards these assessments. These exams are linear and therefore will include up to 25% of previously learnt content. For example, a Yr8 History Assessment will include approximately 75% of content studied since September and then up to 25% of content learnt in year 7. This is so that we revisit previously taught material.

C] Reports

You should have received a 'Standards Checkpoint' report. This is a snapshot of how your child has been doing in terms of trying their best in lessons, with homework and their behaviour. As a parent, look to see if the gradings say 'Always' or 'Often'? If so, praise your child. If gradings say 'Sometimes' or 'Rarely' please discuss possible reasons for this with your child so that you can support them. Yr11 will receive a similar report but will include *Current Working Grade* and *Predicted Grades*. The Predicted Grade is what the teacher believes your child will achieve if they continue to work as they currently are doing. If this is lower than their target, please ask your child why. Are they revising? Are they completing all their homework? Is their effort in lessons 'always' or 'often'?

D] Curriculum Spotlight on Humanities: Geography and History

- ✓ *Geography:* The department were delighted with the GCSE outcomes of our 2023 leavers, with 82% of students achieving at least a Grade 4, and 1 in 3 students achieving a Grade 7 - 9. This is the direct result of quality teaching and the hard work and determination of our students. We are hopeful for another successful year for the class of 2024! Through innovative approaches to teaching, the geography department empowers students to understand the different complexities of our ever-changing world. We instil in students the deep appreciation for the world around them, from its diverse cultures and natural landscapes to the importance of sustainable practices in order to protect our Common Home. The department is dedicated to fostering a sense of global citizenship that extends beyond the classroom, to inspire the next generation of geographers.
- ✓ *History:* The GCSE results were outstanding with nearly 40% of the cohort achieving grade 7 or higher which was well above the national average. Just as exceptional was that 82% of students achieved a grade 5 or better, 20% above the national average. The key to this success is quality teaching of a knowledge rich curriculum alongside high expectations of behaviour, homework, and participation in lessons. Many learners choose to study history at Advanced Level. Our AQA GCSE course covers a wide range of topics from the work of Hippocrates in Ancient Greece to the collapse of World Peace in the 1930s. All KS3, students are encouraged to become strong independent learners and to question historical interpretations using their contextual knowledge.

Our *Ebacc outcomes* [a measurement of an academic curriculum] are well above the national average, which is testament to high quality teaching and learning and excellent student-teacher relationships. *E]*

PE Update

Our PE department continues to be busy over the past half term and the provision for extracurricular activities are off to a great start with football and netball this half term. Our boys football teams continue to be successful with Yrs 7, 8, 9 and 10 all winning their first round Tameside cup matches. The senior and Yr9 netball teams played well to win their first-round matches of the season against Mossley Hollins and the Yr7 and Yr8 development netball teams show great promise, and we have high hopes for the next round of friendlies.





Excellent Personal Development Opportunities

- ✓ **ASPIRE Day:** On Monday, our students engaged with our termly 'ASPIRE DAY'. All students were educated on a range of pertinent issues. The Yr7 focus included learning about mental health and anti-bullying, Yr8 was Mindfulness and Meditation, Yr9 was body positivity and consensual relationships whereas Yr10 focus included sexting and building social relationships. All these topics were delivered at an age-appropriate level and was a blend of workshops, presentations and external speakers. The aim of ASPIRE days is to provide a holistic education to support student's personal development, resilience and general character building. Yr11 had talks from various colleges and employers from a range of sectors. Yr11 are currently applying for colleges, so these visits help to aid them in this process. It also gave them an insight into different careers they may not have thought of looking into! As always, our great children rose to the occasion and I was delighted with the conduct of the students and the feedback from the external speakers about your wonderful children.
- ✓ **Musical Theatre Group:** Established under the tutelage of Miss Brookes and Mr McArdle, this has been a transformative platform for students to explore their passion for performing arts. Through rigorous rehearsals, dedicated mentoring and collaborative teamwork, students have honed their singing, acting and dancing skills, showcasing incredible growth in their artistic abilities. As well as developing a deep appreciation for the arts, it has also nurtured self-confidence and discipline. Students have explored a variety of repertoire ranging from established musicals such as 'Annie' to modern shows such as 'Hamilton'. I am delighted to see students blossoming into accomplished performers, fostering a lifelong love for musical theatre. Long may it continue!
- ✓ **Student Council:** I would like to congratulate our newest members of the Student Council in Yr7 and Yr8. On 2nd October our student council delivered presentations to our prospective parents as part of our Open Evening experience. Many parents were impressed with how positive and articulate they were. Next half term they will be updating our 'Cultural Capital half termly tasks'. Why not visit our website and test your knowledge 😊





- ✓ *STEM event:* Our brilliant STEM Leaders have completed their first meeting of the year. The year kicked off with a bang as our STEM leaders delved into the thrilling world of enzyme activity and pH. These rising stars are on a mission to create the ultimate Yr10 revision resource, and their enthusiasm and expertise are bound to make it an electrifying journey! The students' extraordinary performance showcased their unwavering passion and exceptional disciplinary knowledge. Get ready for an exhilarating year of STEM innovation! 🚀 🧪 ☀️
- ✓ *Extracurricular Activities:* Please encourage your child to get involved in school life beyond the classroom. Doing so will build their self-esteem, resilience and enhance their social skills. We offer a variety of extracurricular activities both at lunch time and after school. For further details, take a look at our website: <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/extra-curricular>

Finally, a Reminder...Santa Dash

A reminder about holding our Santa Dash and Christmas Markets on **Saturday 25th November**. This was an annual event pre-Covid and we are re-establishing it as a community event to raise monies for local charities, including local foodbank charities. If you would like to find out more, please email Mrs Jinks at events@stdamians.co.uk and look at the link to our website for further information for potential stall holders <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/santa-dash-2023>.



As always, thanks for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Logue
Headteacher

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