



## St Damian's RC Science College

Lees Road  
Ashton-under-Lyne  
OL6 8BH

**Tel:** 0161 330 5974

**Fax:** 0161 331 4744

**Email:** admin@stdamians.co.uk

**Web:** <http://www.stdamians.co.uk/>

**Follow us on Twitter:** @StDamiansRCSC

**Find us on Facebook**

### Headteacher

Mr S Logue BA (Hons), M.Ed., NPQH

December 2022

Dear Parent & Carer,

Welcome to my last letter of the calendar year. The following contains lots of important information for all things St Damian's. I hope that you enjoy reading about all that has been going on this term.

### The Catholic Life of the School

As always, the Catholic life of the school is strong, varied, and purposeful! in the season of Advent, this is no exception.

- ✓ Advent Reflections took place in the Chapel for both Staff and students during Advent. Each Friday the Yr10 GIFT team would lead us through reflections, scripture reading and prayers. Resources chosen were from CAFOD and reflected our schools Mission Statement, the 'St Damian's Way'. All events were voluntary and were very well attended, demonstrating our community's commitment to prayer and service. As a thank you, the Yr9 GIFT team provided hot chocolate before the final Advent reflection.
- ✓ Our Christmas Carol service returned this year and was as good as ever! Our Yr7 students were spectacular, singing festive Carols along with the grand finale "How Great is Our God", our new school hymn. A wonderful and reverent retelling of the Nativity was performed and beautifully read readings, prayers and poems set the tone for a peaceful and prayerful evening. Thank you for the fantastic parents and community too for supporting this event. I spoke to all parents as they left and the feedback was unanimously positive!
- ✓ Our Caritas hampers have been a huge success and we have been overwhelmed with the donations received. A massive thank you to everyone for supporting this very worthy cause that will directly benefit our whole community.
- ✓ Christmas Jumper day this year was a donation for Caritas #BeeThere campaign. A fun day for our staff and students that will benefit others. More information can be found on their website <https://www.caritassalford.org.uk/beethere/>
- ✓ For all their hard work and commitment to the liturgical life of the school, our outstanding GIFT team enjoyed a special lunch in the hall as a 'Thank-you' from the RE department. They are at the heart of the liturgical life of the school and allow us all to share in the message and life of the Church.
- ✓ In RE lessons students have been completing an independent study booklet within their class time and homework tasks to perfect their own independent learning skills. The RE team also conducted a 'Boys Breakfast club' to discuss how boys in Year 11 best learn. From this, staff are producing a revision guide that has been designed around some of the comments made. This will be launched in January in preparation for the run up to the GCSE exams.
- ✓ The RE team are currently planning activities for students and staff as part of our annual St Damian's Day on 3rd February 2023. The theme this year is *Catholic Social Teaching* and the impact this has on our community. One of the events planned will be a 'Diversity Panel'. This will be a discussion on inclusivity and diversity within our St Damian's community. We are looking for volunteers with different 'protected characteristics' to be part of the panel.
- ✓ This half term for our 'Local Community Reflection', parishioners from St Ann's and St Christopher's were invited into school, and it was a great success. With hot drinks and mince pies, a liturgical Advent service led by the Yr10 GIFT team and a presentation from our Caritas Ambassadors. Our visitors enjoyed a hot meal

in the school canteen and watched the final preparations for the Carol Concert. Our parishioners also received a hamper donated by the Caritas team. A very successful day and we will be sure to have more meet ups in the New Year. Below is an email I received from one of the parishioners who attended;

“Please accept our sincere thanks for organising our visit last Friday.

*The parishioners from St Ann's and St Christopher's all had a wonderful time and very much appreciated all the kindness shown to them. We were all very impressed with how the students behaved, they were very polite and well mannered at all times. Please say a massive thank you to all the students and their families for contributing to the hampers everyone was given, it was so thoughtful of you and we are very grateful.*

*Sending our best wishes to everyone at St Damian's and wishing you all a very happy Christmas”.*

#### **Safeguarding**

- **Assemblies.** As we break for Christmas many students plan in their minds ‘the perfect Christmas’. This usually includes presents, visiting family, Christmas dinner, decorated houses, snow and meeting friends. However, the reality is that many students feel lonely and isolated at Christmas. To help our students, Mrs Brophy led assemblies based on *Anna Freud's Seasonal Self Care Survival Kit*, a simple tool based on 6 strategies that children can refer to. If your child appears a little ‘fed up’ over Christmas talk to them about this survival kit and encourage them to follow some of the ideas. Further information can be found at: [www.annafreud.org/media/8677/seasonselfcaresurvivalkit.pdf](http://www.annafreud.org/media/8677/seasonselfcaresurvivalkit.pdf)
- **Senior Mental Health Lead [SMHL].** I am delighted to share with you that Mrs Brophy, our Designated Safeguarding Lead, has now completed the DfE SMHL training. This training, which helps schools understand how to best support students, teachers, parents and the wider school community will be used to help us devise a range of strategies bespoke to St Damian's. We strongly believe that wellbeing and resilience is the key to academic success as well as supporting them personally and socially.

#### **Yr10 BTEC Tech Award Construction**

Yr10 Construction students carried out their practical assessment worth 30% of their qualification. This required students to apply joinery and carpentry skills to produce a timber frame. They spent time mastering different joining methods and applying their knowledge to produce high quality products. Mrs D'Rozario said they were brilliant and appropriately showcased their practical abilities they have gathered since starting the course and was extremely proud of their hard work and determination. It is clear they have a bright future in the construction industry. Well done!

#### **Headteachers' Surgery**

As part of St Damian's ongoing objective to ensure effective communication with parents, I am holding a Headteachers' surgery on **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January**, commencing at 7am until 6pm. This is an excellent opportunity to meet me and raise any issues, good or bad, you may have. If you would like to meet with me please contact my PA, Mrs Biggs, on 0161 330 5974 or via email [jbiggs@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:jbiggs@stdamians.co.uk) to arrange an appointment.

#### **Sharing Outstanding Practice to deliver for our SEND students**

Mrs Baynham led another successful training session for teachers and LSAs where outstanding classroom practice was shared. Teachers and leaders from Technology, MFL, PE and Geography demonstrated their commitment and high expectations we have for our SEND students so that they thrive in our community and achieve high academic standards. Feedback from SEND students was shared with staff following ‘student voice’. From this, it is obvious students value their teachers and the support they receive. For example, one student stated, “*St Damian's has helped me to overcome challenges and pushes me to achieve my best*”. Can I take this opportunity to thank the 24 members of staff who delivered their expertise to others and the SEND department for organising.

#### **Focus on Literacy Update**

- **Literacy Hub.** Mrs Heenan and Mrs Toole continue to be pleased with the use of the Literacy Hub since opening in September. At the time of writing, there have been over 600 book loans from our Hub and our digital library. Unsurprisingly, the most popular books have been non-fiction books on football stars, such as Neymar and Ronaldo. Links to our Accelerated Reading programme and our digital library are on the website under ‘library tab’.



- **Book Buzz Initiative.** This is a reading programme from BookTrust that aims to help students inspire a love of reading. Participating students have the opportunity to choose their own books which are all carefully selected by a panel of experts to ensure quality, suitability and to encourage reading for pleasure.
- **Accelerated Reading.** During December, our Yr7 students were delighted to receive their free books. They had a fantastic range of books to choose from. For example, *'When the Sky Falls'* a book from a child's perspective on WW2 and *'You are a Champion'* by Marcus Rashford: Marcus shares tips and advice that he has learned on his journey to becoming a football star as well as how to handle issues about anxiety.

The ability to read underpins **all** learning of **all** subjects. I quote Margaret Fuller: **"Today a reader, tomorrow a leader"**. I encourage parents to ensure that their children are reading and use the great facilities that St Damian's has to offer.

### 'A different kind of gift'?

As part of raising awareness of literacy, members of our Yr9 Literacy class submitted entries to the *'Tameside Libraries Poetry'* competition. The task was to write a poem of no more than 200 words on the theme of 'a different kind of gift'. The class generated a range of wonderful ideas and spent time drafting and redrafting their entries. The standard was extremely high within the class. Mrs Butterworth, their class teacher, was very proud that two of our students have been recognised for their thoughtful and creative poems. First prize has been awarded to Jacob Thorley for *'The given gift'* and the third prize goes to Elvin Mixhaj for *'The time is a gift too'*. A big congratulations to Jacob, Elvin and Mrs Butterworth!

### The St Damian's Times: Volume 2

I was delighted to read volume 2 of the *'St Damian's Times'* that celebrates the varied activities of the St Damian's community. Miss Jameel, along with our great journalism club, produced yet another outstanding newspaper. This builds confidence, teamwork and problem-solving skills within our students who were treated to 'fish and chips' last Friday for all their hard work! Items included examples of poems KS3 students have written as part of a Tameside poetry competition, an interview with Mr Stoneley and examples of the different ways St Damian's celebrates our community's outstanding achievements. The St Damian's Times is on the school website, under the Curriculum and Literacy Tab, for your perusal. I hope that you enjoy reading it.

### Yr11 Update

The Mock exams are now complete, and I was pleased with the attitude of the vast majority of our students. Well done Year 11! On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023 students will be given the results of their Mock exams in an envelope. This is an attempt to replicate the GCSE results day in August. It is important that the students rest over the break before they start back to a structured revision schedule in January. I am currently planning a Yr11 Parents' Evening presentation on **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January at 6pm**. I am hoping for a full house that evening where I will outline important information and the way in which you can support your children to achieve their full potential.

Congratulations to the Yr11 students who have completed a section of their GCSE **Food Preparation and Nutrition** practical work where they have to plan, prepare, cook and present 3 dishes to meet a specific need. This year the tasks were based on North and South American cuisine, low calcium diets and teenage vegan meals. The students worked exceptionally well and produced food of a very high standard. Both Mrs D'Rozario and Mrs Brophy were exceptionally pleased with their efforts and this practical will stand them in good stead for their written paper in the summer! A big well done from me too!

### Ambrose aspiring student leadership opportunity

The month of December sees us celebrate the feast day of St Ambrose. He was a passionate educator who lived a simple life. Ambrose provides a calming, reflective, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all students who access it. An Ambrose Monitor position is another opportunity for students to experience student leadership within the school. They are responsible for supporting Mrs Hayworth during break and lunch times, developing their own interpersonal skills, and showing excellent peer support for others in Ambrose. There is currently one Ambrose monitor who since being appointed to the role has developed their own confidence, resilience, and problem-solving skills. Due to the success, there will be opportunity for another Yr10 student to become a monitor in the New Year.

### Yr10 Work Experience Programme

Yr10 Work Experience week will take place from **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July - Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023**. All Yr10 students are expected to take part in this 5-day work experience programme. Students are expected to arrange their own placement and the deadline for self-placements is **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023**. Some tips for finding a placement:

1. Talk to friends, parents, family members and enquire if they can help out or support
2. Do research using the internet, or local employers who might give you a placement
3. Email, telephone or visit employers in person to make an enquiry

If you have any further queries please contact [careerprospects@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:careerprospects@stdamians.co.uk).

### Yr9 Parents' Evening

There was a fantastic turnout and a great 'buzz' 😊 at the recent Yr9 parents' evening. I had the pleasure of speaking to many parents and the parental questionnaire responses were really positive. Out of 123 responses, 122 parents *would recommend* the school. This is greatly appreciated by my staff and I. Unfortunately, the sole parent who would not recommend the school did not include their name on the questionnaire and therefore I can't support/help. If that parent would like to contact me to discuss, please do so. The full response of the questionnaire is on the website under parental information, but below are some comments for your perusal.

*My son is very happy at St Damian's and I would definitely recommend the school*

*We are very happy with my daughter's progress and feel that the school cares about the students*

*The staff at St Damian's are an absolute credit to the school, they give everything 110% and we know as parents if we need to contact any of them, they deal with issues quickly and efficiently, thank you*

*It has been an amazing evening, each member of staff was very polite and extremely complimentary about my child. I cannot thank you all enough for the support you give to our family*

*Fantastic school, both children enjoy going here and we feel that the teachers are great at helping them reach their potential*

*We're delighted with the school. We know how hard everyone works, thank you*

*The staff are all excellent and can genuinely see how much they want each child to succeed*

*The teachers are professional but genuine and this is perfect teaching that related to my child. I'm really happy and I'm 100% sure that this was the best high school option for my child. In my opinion 100% the best High School in Tameside*

*My child excels at St Damian's and we are really happy with the staff and how they treat our children. We would 100% recommend St Damian's to other parents and children. Our children are very happy with St Damian's*

I look forward to another excellent turnout at Options Evening which will take place on **Wednesday 15th March 2023**. Please save this date.

### Update on our Student Premium Students

Around 25% of students at St Damian's are classified as 'Student Premium' and are amongst our more vulnerable children. As a strong Catholic community, where all students are cared for and valued, we have a moral, as well as educational, responsibility to ensure these students are given extra support to achieve. To this end, Mrs Brophy [Senior lead on Student Premium], is implementing the St Damian's 'CLEAR' strategy. This is outlined below:

- **Careers:** Raises aspirations and prepares them for the job market and their future
- **Literacy:** Enables them to access our academic curriculum so they have a rich body of knowledge
- **Educational progress:** Ensuring they achieve their academic potential
- **Attendance:** Removing barriers to learning so they thrive at school, educationally and socially
- **Resilience & wellbeing:** Building character to deal with challenges they will encounter

By adopting 'CLEAR' at St Damian's, we have an effective strategy in place to ensure that all our great students are given the best possible chance to succeed and to receive the first-class holistic education that they deserve.



## Staff Profiles

Below is the latest instalment of staff at St Damian's. I hope you enjoy reading them.

- ✓ **Mr Spencer: Science teacher.** Working at St Damian's is both a privilege and a joy. Having taught across a range of schools over the past 9 years I've never felt so welcomed. Having only began my second year as part of St Damian's, I already feel part of a community that seeks to support, invest, and develop everyone both on a personal and professional level, regardless of their background or beliefs. There is always a positive buzz around the school, where both students and staff all want to succeed and not only believe they will but are willing to work hard to ensure they do. Working in the Science department I get to see our students have those 'lightbulb' moments daily and observing and facilitating them to relate science into everyday context is a moment I really do cherish. Having recently taken on an additional teaching leadership role I can't wait to see how we can further progress the success and ambitions of our separate scientists so that they give genuine consideration into future STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) based careers. Finally, as part of the Catholic Faith we are encouraged to practice charity and so this past month I have been taking part in 'Movember' to raise awareness of men's health issues. While the moustache has enabled conversations with both staff and students about the issues of men's health issues, my particular focus has been aiming to raise money for a defibrillator in my local gym that could potentially save lives. You can donate using the following link: <http://gofund.me/dd0bc8fa>
- ✓ **Mrs Biggs: Headteacher's PA.** On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 I had been at St Damian's for 20 years! In that time St Damian's has changed massively. Prior to St Damian's I worked in advertising as the PA to the Managing Director of an Advertising Agency. As I had always wanted to work with children, I applied for the job at St Damian's. I was delighted when Mrs Jones MBE, current chair of governors, telephoned to offer me the job. In my role, every day is different, but I thoroughly enjoy my job. I love helping the children here and they treat me with great respect. I've had a very difficult 18 months and the St Damian's community has been integral to my recovery – I really couldn't have done it without them by my side. St Damian's is a wonderful community, and I count myself as extremely lucky to work here.

## ASPIRE Assemblies

We are at the end of a very successful term at St. Damian's. As usual, our students have worked exceptionally hard and made excellent progress. To celebrate their success, all year groups have had their termly 'ASPIRE' assembly. Certificates have been awarded for 'Excellent Effort' and 'Outstanding Achievement'. Students with 100% attendance have been recognised and the 'Top Achievement Point Scorer' from each form has been entered into a prize draw. It was great to see many of our students' efforts recognised and celebrated.

## Form Time

This half term, Yr7 - Yr10 students have explored the theme of 'Success' during form time. There have been a range of activities and initiatives led by Form Captains and Vice Captains. Form groups have decided what 'success' would look like for them this half term, both as an individual and as a form group. Next term we will be 're-electing' Form Captains & Vice Captains. If your child has not volunteered for either of these roles before, please encourage them to do so. Student leadership helps to build self-esteem and confidence, whilst developing students' oracy and presentation skills.

## Tameside Cross County Championships

Last week, 50 of our students took part in the Tameside Cross Country Championships at East Cheshire Harriers in Ashton. Once again, our students were a credit to St Damian's and performed well in very cold conditions. I am very proud to say we had 2 overall winners; Harriet Byrnes won first place in the Under 14's girls race and Bobby Burton won first place in the U16's boys race. Both students will represent Tameside in the Greater Manchester Cross Country in February. A number of students have been selected to run for Tameside in the Greater Manchester Cross Country. These are Emmanuel Odegbasan, Scarlett Newton, Edward Figgins-Barratt, Harriet Byrnes, Thea Brophy and Bobby Burton. Furthermore, Team success went to the Yr8/9 Girls who were overall U14's Tameside champions.

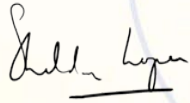
## Finally...

This has been a great term at St Damian's. As a community we continue to be strong. Yes, we are not perfect [where is] and there are many challenges, but nonetheless, working together means we can overcome these challenges, like we have consistently done in the past. Our students, your children, are an absolute delight. My staff; support, teachers and leaders work tirelessly for YOUR children, often going the 'extra mile'. I am very proud of them all.

On behalf of the great staff here at St Damian's, we wish you a happy, peaceful and holy Christmas as we look forward with hope and optimism that 2023 will be another highly successful year for our community!

As always, thank you for your continued support!

Yours faithfully



Mr Logue  
Headteacher