



St Damian's R.C. Science College
ALUMNI
NEWSLETTER



A Message from our Headteacher

Welcome to the second edition of our Alumni Newsletter. As you know, our vision is simple and that is to be outstanding in all we do. Our careers provision is just that, outstanding. Despite the many restrictions 'imposed' by Covid, our Careers provision continues to be exceptional and is embedded throughout all years and the curriculum. For example, only last week, pupils had excellent opportunities to participate in career talks and discussions from a range of potential employers during our final ASPIRE day. These included massive employers such as the RAF, the NHS and Brother. These opportunities involve a massive amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that they are a success. In fact, they are unique to St Damian's.

Another exciting aspect of our Careers provision is bringing back ex-pupils to talk about their first-hand experiences of Universities. These facilitate Q&A sessions allowing our pupils to gain knowledge of 'life on the campus'. Furthermore, these talks from ex-pupils inspire our pupils to work harder so that they can achieve better which allows them more opportunities after they leave St Damian's. In recognition of our Careers provision, Mrs Henshaw was shortlisted for an Individual Best Practice Award as Careers Leader of the Year by the Career Development Institute in March 2021, acknowledging her commitment to Careers education for our children. As a school, we are also proud to be achieving 100% in each of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, a national framework for Careers Education ensuring that we are achieving our mission of preparing and inspiring our pupils for the fast-changing world of work.

I continue to be excited by the news of our past pupils and love hearing about your successes. I would encourage you to pass this newsletter to friends, family and contacts so we can further grow our community of alumni. Who knows it may re-ignite many more happy memories and friendships in the future? I hope you enjoy reading this second edition and the experiences of our past pupils. I hope that their time at St Damian's played a part in shaping their lives!

Mr Logue

St Damian's Vision Statement for Careers

To provide an inclusive, effective and ambitious careers strategy which raises pupil aspirations, unlocks their potential and ensures that they have the individual skills, values and qualifications to make informed choices and be successful in further education, training and employment



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ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER

St. Damian's Health Workers

St Damian's recognises the outstanding hard work and dedication of all the health workers in our Alumni who have worked tirelessly to support others in our communities both at local, regional & national level. A huge thank you to you all. You have been truly inspirational! We asked some of our Alumni to share their experiences during the pandemic. Thank you to Ann-Marie and Niamh who have shared their experiences with us.

Assistant Practitioner in General Practice

What does your role involve?

I was a student at St. Damian's between 1999 and 2004.

I have worked in the NHS since leaving school in various different roles and in different areas. I have experience of working in General Practice, Cancer Services, Emergency Department and Primary Care Network.

Since completing my foundation degree, I currently work as an Assistant Practitioner in General Practice. This role involves seeing patients face-to-face in clinics and providing care, support and education to patients in North Manchester. I carry out reviews for long-term chronic diseases, health checks, ear irrigation, weight management, smoking cessation, blood tests and observations amongst many other things. It is a deprived and diverse area, so health promotion is a big part of my job.

What has been the impact and what have been the challenges of working during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic has impacted me in many ways. We are unable to perform certain tests on patients, we have to wear PPE every day, isolate if in contact with a positive case, test twice a week and clean the room and equipment after every patient.



The challenges for me have been that my children have had to isolate frequently due to a bubble closure at school, trying to juggle a childcare and work has been tough. Also, the worry of contracting Covid at work and potentially taking it home to my family has been a worry, especially as my husband was on the shielding list. The NHS has struggled more than ever with extra demands and pressures and also staff shortages, we were unable to take annual leave in the first wave and it was tiring.

The positives for me are that I have learn so much during the pandemic, which will benefit me in future if we ever experience a similar situation (hopefully not!), it has also been an honour to work in the covid vaccination clinics and vaccinating the care homes and housebound patients. A few patients cried happy tears when they received their vaccines and the care home staff cheered each time a resident received theirs, to give them a little hope and protection after a very challenging year was very humbling and fulfilling for me!

What about the future?

Next month I am going back to University to study for a degree in Nursing as an apprenticeship and I cannot wait for my new adventure!

Ann-Marie Marshall
Class of 2004

Junior Doctor

What does your role involve?

As a junior Doctor you're often one of the first people a patient will see. For a junior role you have a large responsibility for the patients in your care. Particularly when on call or during a night shift. You are often expected to have formed your own list of potential diagnoses and management plan, whilst also knowing your own limits and asking your seniors for help whenever you are unsure. In all aspects of medical care, being a good follower in a team is equally important to being a good leader.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted you?

In terms of personal impact, I have been very lucky. Whilst not having an in-person graduation wasn't ideal, it really pales in comparison to how others have been impacted and I'm definitely mindful of that.

What have been the challenges of working during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Witnessing difficult discussions with patients and their families. I understand how hard it must be to comprehend the severity of this pandemic when most people are fortunately so far removed from it. However, when you see it first hand, people not being able to be at their relative's bedside at

solemn times such as results of a terminal diagnosis, or even at times that are meant to be happy like the birth of their first grandchild for example, that was hard to see.

What have been the positives?

A little kindness goes a long way, and despite how much everyone's lives changed drastically during the pandemic, it seemed to bring out so much good in a lot of people. I hope these attitudes continue! Another positive I have seen, especially on social media has been a more open dialogue on the importance of mental well-being. Whilst some people have learnt new skills or increased physical exercise (another positive!), having just about got through this time doing your normal routine is not something to be overlooked, it's an achievement you should be proud of.

Niamh Davies-Kelly
Class of





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ALUMNI
NEWSLETTER

The Class of 2019 (Y13 Leavers)

After leaving St Damian's, none of our 2019 Leavers ever imagined they would be for studying for their A Levels during a global pandemic. Despite that, they have continued with their studies at college and are now looking forward to their next big steps in the Autumn.

Well done and thank you to those who got in touch!



Laurence Cull

Since leaving I've studied Law, Sociology and Philosophy at Ashton Sixth Form and have secured a part time job as a tailor at Slater Menswear. Going forward I'm doing Law at the University of Leeds with the hope of becoming a barrister/ QC. Finally, looking back, the thing I miss the most about St Damian's is the laughs I had with all my friends and teachers. The memories you make at school are truly some of the best!

Erin Hall

I'm Erin Hall and I left St Damian's in 2019. I then went on to Ashton Sixth Form College to study Philosophy, Ethics & Religion, Drama & Theatre and Sociology, and I've now confirmed my place to study Sociology at Lancaster University in September, with big dreams of then studying to become a teacher! I'd say the best bit of my time at St Damian's was meeting lifelong friends, and advice I'd give to current students is to start revising early and don't leave anything to the last minute! God knows I would've saved myself a lot of stress!

Oliver Cooney

After leaving St Damian's, I went on to Oldham Sixth Form, where I studied Psychology, Sociology, and French, as well as an AS level in English Literature. Admittedly, my college experience has been a strange one given the pandemic, but I have really appreciated the extra time it's given me. Not having to travel to and from college has meant I can spend more time reading, writing, and exploring completely new hobbies like sewing or painting (neither of which I can say are my forte, but at least I've been able to try them!). If results day goes to plan, I'm hoping to go on to Cambridge University, where I'll be studying Linguistics. I'm hoping this will be my stepping stone into the world of academia, where I can stay to conduct research with indigenous and minority language communities, as well as teach and supervise others. Looking back at secondary school, I think my favourite memories are from performing in school shows; the hours we put into Annie were some of the best times I had at the school. That experience really informs my advice to current pupils, which is to really make the most of it. As proud of my GCSE grades as I am, I don't value them nearly as much as I value the time, I spent truly enjoying secondary school and making the most of any opportunity that was given to me while there.

Thank you for including me!



St Damian's R.C. Science College

ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER

Mackenzie Forbes

I studied A level Law, Criminology, and Geography at Ashton Sixth Form College. I am going to the University of Huddersfield to study a Criminology with Law degree and I hope to teach these subjects in the future.

Phoebe Hollin

What did you study at college? or do as an apprenticeship?

I studied a BTEC National Extended Diploma in Sport and Exercise Science at Leigh Sports College

Despite the challenges of Covid 19, what did you enjoy the most?

The course was a good mix of practical and theory and even included a sports massage qualification that I really enjoyed.

What are you doing next? Which university, which subject? OR what next after your apprenticeship? Have you secured your first job? What will you do?

I've been lucky enough to be offered a full scholarship as a student athlete over in the USA so on the 26th July I'm flying out to Philadelphia to study Exercise and Sports Science at Temple University. I'll be there for 4 years in total.

Hopes and dreams after that.

I'd love to continue my football career and get a professional contract but if that doesn't work out, I'd like to be a PE teacher (maybe even return to St Damian's)

Looking back at your time at St. Damian's, what were the best bits?

All of it! The teachers, the friends I made, oh and share day was always fun

What advice would you give to other St. Damian's pupils now?

To take every opportunity that is offered to you to learn new things. It's such a difficult time for young people at the moment and finding college places or jobs is as competitive as ever. Put something on your CV that makes you stand out from the crowd. Work hard and have fun, this really is the best time of your life! 😊

Thank you!

Thank you to two of our alumni who spoke to Year 8 pupils at our recent ASPIRE Day on 5th July 2021. Jamie Lowe spoke about her experiences in her first year studying for her BA (Hons) in Biochemistry at the University of Liverpool and Sadie Butterworth who spoke about her BA (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS at the University of Edge Hill. Congratulations to Sadie who will graduate with a First-Class Honours degree later this month. Good luck to all our other students currently awaiting examination results.

Careers Support

Hearing what our alumni have gone on to do in their careers and life after St. Damian's is a great inspiration for pupils. It complements our careers programme, provides insight and real-life experiences of a variety of employment sectors.

Your experiences can make a real difference to pupils who are unsure which career path might be right for them or how to get into the field you work in.

Career Talks on a wide variety of topics are delivered on ASPIRE Days in October and July each year.

Recently, Alumni Career Talks have been included an Engineering apprenticeship with Rolls Royce & working in Performing Arts.

Time: 1 hour

Group size: Can be negotiated. Ideally a group of 32 pupils or a whole year group or a smaller group

Suggested Format:

Careers Workshop

- Talk
- Set a task or challenge
- Feedback to the pupils on the task
- Question & Answer session
- Pupil Reflection

If you would be willing to help, please would you email alumni@stdamians.co.uk
We would love to hear from you!





St Damian's R.C. Science College

ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER



Ms M. Guilfoyle

**Faculty Leader
Physical Education**

Class of 1997

St Damian's Staff has many Alumni actively serving in the school. This demonstrates that the strong attachment and love of the school that has continued to grow from time as a pupil at St. Damian's to time as an employee ensuring that the next generations of St. Damian's pupils continue to grow, develop and be inspired by the unique ethos of St. Damian's Catholic Community.

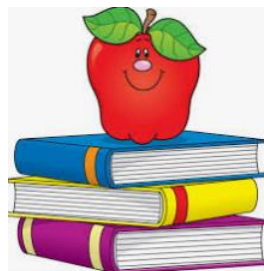
In our second Alumni Newsletter, Ms Guilfoyle shares her journey from St. Damian's pupil to Faculty Leader, Physical Education.

I stepped through the doors of St Damian's in September 1992 as a very little Yr7 with an enormous, oversized blazer and energy to match. I was described by one teacher at parents evening as 'an absolute nuisance' and a 'potential superstar' by another. So, having returned to St Damian's as a staff member in 2004, I wondered which version of me would be remembered?

St Damian's was always a school that offered a range of opportunities and experiences. This was perfect for me as an enthusiastic 'joiner-inner' because I was encouraged to be involved in all aspects of school life including sports teams, school productions, class masses, assemblies, paired reading programs and prefect responsibilities.

Having done my best impression of Gina Gee at the Yr11 leavers 1996 Christmas concert and enjoyed what I believe was the first ever St Damian's prom in July 1997, I joined Oldham 6th Form College to study A Levels. I studied English, Biology and PE, but was unsure as to what to do next!

I decided a year out from study was what I needed to refocus my future choices as I was torn between nursing and teaching. My decision to wait was the right one. I used the year to learn to drive, train as a lifeguard, work part time jobs and to travel to the USA to work on summer camps before returning home to study PE/Sports Science and English Literature at Chester University.



The many sporting experiences provided at university came thick and fast; with more opportunities to play, travel and coach sport abroad, and find part time employment at local football and swimming clubs – all of which guided me towards a career in teaching.

After graduating and qualifying as a PE teacher, I started my career at Saddleworth School in 2003 before joining St Damian's in 2004. Here, my own teachers became colleagues and in time my own pupils have become colleagues. I have had the privilege of teaching my own family members alongside the children of my own St Damian's classmates; all of whom embrace and appreciate the family feel that has continued. At an open evening a few years ago, I chatted to a Yr6 parent, herself a past pupil who noted that 'the building might be different, but St Damian's is still the same'.

Teaching is incredibly challenging but forever rewarding and I would consider myself privileged to have experienced these rewards as both a pupil and a member of staff at St Damian's.

Each year when we welcome the new intake of Y7's to 'big school', I always like to keep an eye out for the ones who are likely to be a 'little bit of nuisance' but always our future 'superstars'.

The 'St Damian's Way' is true. However, it is not a 'thing' that was ever written down, it is not a quote or a specific ideal, it's not our motto – it's the continued legacy of the special St Damian's experience, and once you know, you know!



If you are a former member of staff and would like to contribute to our Alumni Newsletter, please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk



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NEWSLETTER



**Have you got a
key worker story
to share?**

Our next edition of St.
Damian's Alumni Newsletter
will be in Autumn 2021

Please tell your story & inspire
our pupils!

Please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk

**Are you a St
Damian's pupil at
college?**

Please tell us about your
current studies, your
achievements & your future
plans!

Please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk

**Are you a St
Damian's pupil
who is
currently doing
an
apprenticeship
?**

Please tell us about your
work, your achievements
& your future plans!

Please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk

**Are you a St
Damian's pupil
at university?**

Please tell us about your
studies, your
achievements & your
future plans!

Please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk

**Are you a St
Damian's pupil
at who has set
up their own
business?**

Please tell us about what
you do and how you set it
up!

Please email:
alumni@stdamians.co.uk

Keep in touch!



We're always keen to
keep in touch with St.
Damian's Alumni.
Whether it's memories of
your school days, stories
of your travels, career
details or reunions. Please
email:

alumni@stdamians.co.uk

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of the school website

- Join the online alumni
community via Linked
In
- Create an online
profile
- Keep your contact
details up to date
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school friends
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