



In all things faithful

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Headteacher

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Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome to my second letter of the academic year. The following contains lots of important information for all things St Damian's. I hope that you enjoy reading.

The Catholic Life of the School

The Yr7 Welcome Mass was held at St Christopher Church giving us an opportunity to form strong links with our local parish. The St Christopher's congregation warmly welcomed us and the pupil's reverence, respectful behaviour and outstanding reading ensured the Mass was truly a celebration of their first term at St Damian's. Our Yr 7 *'took the roof off'* with their joyful singing of the new school hymn, *'How Great is Our God'*. I was astounded by the pupils' enthusiasm and the occasion was an example of St Damian's celebrating our faith and community at its best! Well done to the RE team and to Mr McCardle for introducing the hymn.

Our GIFT team have been extremely busy! They led the October Rosary Club which was well attended with standing room only in the Chapel. At the recent open evening they represented our community by meeting and greeting prospective parents and discussing the wonderful work they do in school. The Yr10 team leads have launched an art competition dedicated to teaching our pupils about the role and importance of the Virgin Mary during October. Pupils were invited to produce an artwork piece or poem about Mary. The 'winner' gets to skip the lunch queue for a week! The quality of the entries is of an exceptionally high standard. Follow us on Twitter to find out who our talented winner was. Currently, the GIFT team are collaborating with the Language Ambassadors to plan for November, the month to remember those who have died. Pupils have decided that they would like to create an 'Ofrenda Altar' traditionally found in Central America as well as parts of Spain. These altars commemorate those who have died. Pupils will be asking for photos of loved ones who have died to be placed in the chapel on the altar for the community to pray for them.

In November we will commemorate Remembrance Day with special assemblies, form time activities and a liturgical service during which school will hold a two minutes silence. Cadets are invited to wear their uniforms on 11th November and will lay the wreath at the foot of the Altar in memory of those service men and women who died in conflict. We will pray for peace around the world and especially remember those effected by war today in Ukraine.

Our Caritas Ambassadors are launching the Caritas Catholic Social Teaching trophy. Bishop John has presented each school with a reusable trophy to award an individual, team, group or class who have demonstrated commitment to social action/justice. This will help us to embed Catholic Social Teaching by encouraging, recognising and rewarding love in action. Our Caritas Ambassadors are currently working on our first project as well as a suitable and prominent place to position the trophy in school. The winners will be congratulated by Salford diocese each time the trophy is awarded.

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Service for Mr Tuck

I now have the details of Mr Tuck's funeral and I would like to share them so if you would like to pay your respects, you may do so. Mr Tuck's service will take place on Monday 24th October at 11am at Dukinfield Crematorium. This will be an occasion where we can celebrate the life of Mr Tuck while paying our final respects to a man who served the St Damian's community so well over such a long period of time.

A 'Just Giving' account has been set up for the National Arts Trust in memory of Martin. If you would like to donate, click on this link: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/martinjtuck

Safeguarding

As part of keeping all our children safe at St Damian's, we regularly conduct pupil voice. Each half term a randomly selected group of students are asked to share their experiences about 'sexual harassment' Sexual harassment covers a broad spectrum of issues and educate our children on these issues to make school a safe and pleasant environment. St Damian's students are expected to uphold our 5 simple rules, of which the most important one is 'respect'. If your child feels that sexualised comments/actions are being used against them it is **essential that they report it to a member of staff**. At St Damian's we have a zero-tolerance of Sexual Harassment.

Attendance and Achievement

At St Damian's we promote high levels of attendance and traditionally, attendance levels have always been higher than National Averages. There is a **strong correlation** between good attendance and good GCSE outcomes. As an example of this, I will show real outcomes of 2022 GCSE results. Students that had attendance of over 95% had an average progress score of 0.7 and an average grade of 6. Contrast that with students with attendance below 90% who had an average progress score of -0.37 and an average grade of 4. The difference in attainment is stark. The key message is that good attendance equates to good GCSE outcomes. Furthermore, good attendance ensures your child is safe and socially interacting with their peers.

Revision Tip: Flashcards

At St Damian's we have been promoting revision techniques with Yr10/11, and in particular the effective use of *Flash cards* and the difference between knowledge and familiarity. The strategies that were shared with the students are;

- Start with material that you have already understood
- Turn the information into flashcards that are; a) simple b) numerous and c) overlapping

The purpose of using flashcards is to revisit previously learnt information so that it sticks in long-term memory. In essence, the more you revisit the content, the more likely you are to remember it. Remembering the content taught is vital in the preparation for the GCSE exams where success will involve recalling lots of information. I ask that you support your child by regularly testing your children on things they have learnt at school and encouraging them to make and use their own flashcards.

Targets for Key Stage Four

Yr11 students have been re-issued with new targets after receiving some information from the Department of Education and doing a thorough analysis of the year 10 assessments. Most of the targets remain unchanged, but you may find that your child's target has increased or decreased. For example, some have had specific subject targets increased due to exceptional performance in year 10. Year 10 students will be issued with end of Year 11 targets during November.

Musical Theatre Group

The Performing Arts faculty have started a new Musical Theatre group aimed at introducing our students to quality opportunities in singing, drama and dance! Our aim is to nurture and develop our students potential and talent, stretching young imaginations and building confidence. We run sessions every Tuesday after school from 15:10 - 16:10, so come join the fun! This term, we are looking at the Howard Ashman musical '*Little Shop of Horrors*' and performing selections from this show which will be used at our end of year celebration evening. Watch this space for further updates!

Macmillan Coffee Morning

Our annual Macmillan Coffee Morning was a resounding success. It was great to see that so many members of our school community took the time to drop in for a coffee and cake to support our event. Students were also able to enjoy 'tucking into' cake at break time. Together we raised an incredible **£2,013.57**. The impact that this amount of money could have on people living with cancer is all thanks to your continued generosity. A massive thanks!

Open Evening

On Monday 3rd October we had our annual Open Evening. This is always a great night and an excellent opportunity to showcase the whole St Damian's community. As I expected, the evening did not disappoint, and it was extremely busy. Feedback questionnaires were extremely positive. One of the comments said *"Out of all the open evenings we have attended, St Damian's was by far the best. All staff and children were amazing in making us as parents at ease. Most importantly my child fell in love with the school after being very scared about high school he now can't wait, thank you"*. As I always say, the seamless relationships between students and staff make St Damian's a great place to learn and to work!

Duke of Edinburgh Award

We will start to take nominations from students in Yr9 & Yr10 next half term to take part in the bronze and silver awards. Silver applications are open to all students in these year groups even if they *didn't* complete their bronze last year. Students will learn new skills, volunteer in our local community and keep active as they work towards achieving the award. In the Summer term, students will complete the expedition part of their award, working as a team to navigate and camp in our local countryside and further afield. This is an invaluable experience learning outside of the classroom and we hope many of our year 9 and 10 choose to take part. In previous years this has been a resounding success!

Staff Profiles

In all my future newsletters, I intend to include a staffing profile of several members of staff for your perusal. I hope you enjoy reading them.

- ✓ **Mrs Allmand: Lead teacher in RE.** I have enjoyed working as a teacher for 20 years in Liverpool, St Helens, Wigan, Prestwich and now Ashton. The great thing about teaching is its variety, no two days are the same and it enables me to inspire children. My additional responsibility, promoting the Liturgical Life of St Damian's, brings me into greater contact with a range of students, staff, priests and other faith leaders. Although I come from a teaching family (both my mother and grandfather were teachers), I did not realise I wanted to teach until my second year of University, when I spent time in a children's village in Ladakh, NW India. This inspired me into ensuring teaching was my vocation. Working at St Damian's over the past 3 years has shown me the importance of kindness, love & forgiveness and being able to teach the amazing diverse subject of RE.

- ✓ **Mrs Mattison: Receptionist.** I can only describe working at St Damian's as being part of a very large family where everyone plays an integral role, both educationally and holistically. Each day I speak to many Parents/Carers, Staff, Governors and external agencies. Some of the conversations can be challenging, but I am always supported by my colleagues and the Leadership Team. I attended St Damian's when I was younger and went on to work in the private sector, while dedicating some of my spare time to the role of Governor/Chair of Governors and also working with the Sacramental team at the primary school my daughters attended. I have been able to transfer my experience working in different areas of the school team, always being encouraged to take on different challenges. Currently during my spare time, I am a keen runner and have run several marathons in aid of Cancer Research. It is a pleasure and privilege to be part of our students journey through school and the essence of the St Damian's Way.

Success4life

As part of raising aspirations a number of KS3 students were given the opportunity to explore the possibilities of furthering their education by going to University in the future. *Success4life* is an 8-week course which helps students to understand post 16 choices through attendance at Manchester Metropolitan University. Most importantly, these students will get to experience a graduation ceremony, with themselves receiving certificates for their completion of the course. We look forward to hearing about their experiences and graduation around Christmas!

Parental Evening Yr8 & Yr9

Thank you to those parents who attended this Parental Information Evening. The value of Parental engagement is never underestimated or under-appreciated at St Damian's. Attendance, Independent study habits and high expectations are all fundamental to your child's success. We hope that you found the evening useful and if there are any further enquiries, please contact either Miss Stoneley (Head of Yr8) or Mrs D'Rozario (Head of Yr9)

Yr10 Careers Trip

Careers education is a vital part of our personal development programme. On the 3rd November, Mrs Harrison will be taking out a group of 30 pupils to spend the afternoon at the 'Connell Careers Fair' and students will have access to a number of employers, universities and apprenticeship providers. It will also give them the opportunity to see what the college offers with regards to post-16 provision. We hope that this will raise student aspirations and aligns with our mantra, 'Believe to Achieve!'

Beewell November

During the past 2 weeks Yr9 & Yr10 students have completed the online 'BeeWell' survey. This is a research study led by The University of Manchester, to see what influences the well-being and happiness of young people in Greater Manchester. I will share our results in January as a group as individual student responses are not known or shared. Furthermore, we will use the information gained to review our PSHE curriculum to ensure we are meeting the needs of our students.

ASPIRE Day

On Monday 17th October, all pupils participated in ASPIRE day. Each year benefitted from a bespoke PSHE curriculum which complements our academic curriculum. Students in Yrs7-10 explored what healthy relationships and respect should look like in their everyday lives. This helps to promote their future happiness and informs them about the support services available. Yr11 focussed on post-16 options and heard from a variety of Sixth forms and Colleges. Students in Yr11 had the opportunity to participate in workshops with employers and apprenticeship providers, finding out how they could access different career paths, and the qualifications that are required.

The St Damian's Times

Following on from our successful launch of the *St Damian's Times*, the Journalism Club have held 4 meetings so far this year. Students have begun planning various articles and the art group are working towards creating their impressive digital illustrations. We hope to publish our very first Christmas edition of the newspaper week commencing 5th December! Watch this space.

SEND Festival of Learning

Our first SEND festival of learning took place a few weeks ago where we shared the outstanding teaching practice at St Damian's. Departments shared strategies such as: scaffolded learning, knowledge organisers, the use of visualisers, wordless books, simplifying language and the effective use of whiteboards. Underpinning all these strategies was our culture of high expectations for **all** our students. The festival was a celebratory occasion, and it was wonderful to see and hear teachers' passion for teaching and their determination to ensure every student has access to an ambitious curriculum. A special thanks to Mrs Walker and Mrs Baynham for organising!

Yr11 Updates

- ✓ *Mock exams and expectations:* These start on the 28th November for 2 weeks. Students should be working towards these. Having routines and a revision timetable/schedule is vital. I ask that parents support and encourage your child by, for example, ensuring a quiet place to study.
- ✓ *Yr11 Prom:* As in previous years, I look forward to the Prom next July where the staff and I can celebrate the achievements and 5 successful years with your children in style. However, this is by invitation only. If a Yr11 student receives a suspension from school, they will then be warned that a further suspension will result in a withdrawal of their invitation to the Prom. Furthermore, students with poor attendance are also putting their place at risk.
- ✓ *October Half-term History revision:* Mr Gregory, on Wednesday 26th October 9am - 12pm, will be holding a Yr11 History intervention. The focus will be on improving student's exam technique. Although aimed at Mr Gregory's classes, any History student is welcome to attend.

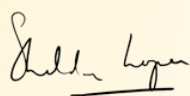
The teachers are working very hard on behalf of your children. It is important that parents [and students] realise that there is **no substitute for hard work**. This is a critical factor in the success of our students next August.

Finally...

I will end this months' letter on 2 points. Firstly, this is, arguably, one of the best starts to St Damian's in my tenure as Headteacher in over ten years! The school is absolutely buzzing, and our community is extremely strong, reflected in the seamless relationships between students and staff. It really is fabulous to see. Secondly, it really is a pleasure to see happy and well-mannered students who are real ambassadors for the school and lead such professional staff who are committed to ensuring your children, our children, to achieve their potential.

Have a great break!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher