



In all things faithful

November 2023

Dear Parents & Carers,

A very warm welcome to my November newsletter which showcases and celebrates our vibrant confident community. I am truly amazed at the effort staff put into ensuring your children get the 'best'.

The Catholic Life of the School

As ever, Mrs Gerschler and her RE team are busy ensuring that the opportunities for formation, charity work and preparing for the season of Advent are strong. Below are highlights for your perusal.



• Our *Interfaith Event* was an excellent occasion to connect with people from within the local community. This event included members of the parish, Oldham interfaith forum, faith leaders from both Great Academy and St Christopher's Primary. Our GIFT teams planned and led the entire event. We believe Interfaith dialogue is crucial for all communities and we are committed to ensuring that we play our part in living out Pope Francis' message of fraternity.

• Our Advent Charities this year reflect the theme of 'Hope for all'. St Damian's is a beacon of hope, and we

would like everyone around the world to feel hopeful this Christmas. Miss Bury has organised for Yrs7, 8 and 9 to receive a shoe box and each form to fill it with requested items. The charity describes Operation Christmas Child as a 'simple shoebox gift packed with love and fuelled by prayer that has a huge impact'. And what generosity has been shown by our community. This is looking after the vulnerable 'in action'.



- Our *Caritas Ambassadors* are supporting Caritas Salford, our diocesan charity. With our theme of hope, we can make small changes that will make a big difference to the lives of local people facing crisis right now. Yrs10 and 11 and our wonderful staff have donated toiletry sets, hats, gloves, scarves or socks and Christmas gifts sets. We have pledged to raise £500 for this great cause.
- During Advent the *GIFT teams* will be preparing and leading Advent reflections in the Chapel for Staff and students. Alongside this, the Travelling Nativity reflection will move around form rooms each morning with a special Advent service.
- Our '*United in Faith*' team [UIF] recently met. This team is to promote and evaluate the catholic life of our school. I was delighted that 2 of our link Governors, Sister Roseline and Father Jude joined us for the meeting. The meeting celebrated our GCSE RE results, provided an opportunity to share our plans for the exciting new Religious Education Directory, our new KS3 curriculum and showcased the Catholic Life and Mission Appraisal Target. The UIF also shared the array of Collective Worship and Liturgy events that have happened since September and discussed future plans.

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St. Damian's RC Science College



- "We will remember them" – Our St Damian's Community held a liturgy in our school Chapel and honoured the fallen with a 2-minute silence. As a community we were proud to be supported by our outstanding Cadets.

- We visited the Hindu temple and joined the *Diwali and Hindu New Year* celebrations. The RE Team were joined by 15 members of staff and experienced the vibrantly different and fantastic cultural experience. We received the warmest welcome and we were blown away by the incredible sights



and sounds. A great example of different faiths celebrating together. True 'diversity' in action! In addition, Aditya Patel in Yr11 shared his Hindu faith with all of the year groups in assemblies this week. He did an amazing job, and we know much more about this faith tradition. Well done Aditya!



- Our Christmas concert will have the *St Damian's Choir* taking centre stage supporting the Advent Liturgical service. This event brings the whole community together for a reflection on the true meaning of Christmas and will take place on **11th December 2023 at 6pm**. All are welcome to join us to help us prepare for the birth of Christ. An annual traditional event not

to be missed!

- Finally, the Yr7 retreat in January is booked. Mrs Allmand and I will be taking 30 students to Castlerigg Manor in Keswick as part of their formation at St Damian's. I am really looking forward to this!

Santa Dash

Last Saturday our 'Santa Dash' event returned post-Covid and what an event it was! The buzz was palpable, and it was great to see students, their parents and staff having fun together in a true community event. It is these events which make us more than simply a school, but a strong, united and caring community. And outside the fun, the St Damian's community raised nearly £1,700 !! for the following charities. Infinity Initiatives, Anthony Seddon Fund, Caritas and our local foodbanks



Safeguarding Updates

- *Staff Training.* All staff have been introduced to our new safeguarding software, 'CPOMs'. This will help support students and help keep them safe. CPOMs allows staff to raise incidents regarding students and their wellbeing and ensure appropriate actions, if necessary, are taken. Safeguarding is our number one priority, and our new system will elevate our already well embedded practice. During staff training everyone was given a piece of a jigsaw which meant nothing until all staff came together to create a 'big picture', this simply illustrated that when we work together, we are stronger, and it is our strength that fosters our exceptionally robust safeguarding standards.

- *Sexual Harassment.* Mrs Brophy has delivered assemblies to all years about sexual harassment, focusing on being able to identify what is meant by sexual harassment as well as teaching our young people not to tolerate offensive words and actions as 'banter'. Sadly, our children are exposed to so much sexualised behaviour, for example, through social media, that some have become desensitised. However, for the avoidance of doubt, sexual harassment in all its guises, including 'banter' is not acceptable. I encourage all students to report any incidents to staff. We are a strong and united community where respect is our core value.

Teaching & Learning Update

During November, our Subject Leaders completed Learning Walks in their departments to ensure that our high standards are maintained in the classroom, ensuring our students are receiving great learning experiences. Our learning walks are a fantastic opportunity for Subject Leads to observe our teachers do what they do best – teach! Our T&L Cycle ensures that teachers continue to be reflective practitioners, challenging students through effective questioning, explicit instruction and challenging misconceptions. The relationships that the staff develop with students allows them to thrive. Teaching and Learning is certainly at the heart of all we do.

Standards and Expectations

For a long period of time now, I am proud to say that the behaviour of our great students is a joy to behold. However, now and again, I need to reinforce our high standards and expectations. Standards are a key element of why St Damian's is a great school environment. Let me briefly outline some of these:

- ✓ *Vaping:* Any student vaping in school is likely to be suspended and this will affect end of year trips
- ✓ *Jewellery:* No jewellery is allowed, for example bracelets and earrings
- ✓ *Phones:* Not allowed out whilst on school premises, including after school intervention/homework clubs
- ✓ *Detentions:* These are not optional. Once given, only I can remove detentions
- ✓ *Drugs and Knives.* These are banned. If caught in school, it is likely to be a permanent exclusion

Can I thank parents for supporting the school and upholding these high standards.

Yr11 Update

Firstly, the vast majority of Yr11 are working really hard and they should be congratulated. Sadly, a small number are not working to the best of their ability either in school or at home. This will be reflected in their grade next August and it will have a massive bearing on their futures. Mrs Kelly did a special assembly for key Yr11 students focusing on 'never giving up' and striving to be the best they could be. In a prior assembly to this I focused on the fact that **'there is no substitute for hard work'**.

- *Mocks:* These have started in earnest. It is important that your child is preparing for these by studying each evening for between 2-3 hours in a quiet place that is conducive to learning.
- *Intervention:* Over the past few weeks, Yr11 students have been attending after school intervention. This intervention has been postponed for the duration of the Mocks but will continue in January. Overall, I was really impressed with the attitudes of the students. Please pass on my gratitude!
- *Independent Learning at Home.* It is imperative that parents are supporting their children and ensuring, as a minimum, their child is doing sufficient work at home [2-3 hours], a quiet space to study and to take an 'interest' in their studies. Please don't under-estimate the influence you can have on their motivation to achieve well.
- *Attendance:* Since September, the overall attendance of Yr11 students up to and including 29th November has been 93.9%. There are a significant number of students whose attendance is too low. There is a strong correlation between good attendance and good student achievement. To illustrate

the importance of attendance the progress of students in 2023 with 95% plus attendance was **0.82**, while the progress of students below 90% attendance was **-0.95**. This is a massive difference in student GCSE outcomes which will have a big impact on your child's future.



- *Geography Fieldtrip:* Our Geography students visited Salford Quays to undertake a fieldwork investigation into the impacts of **urban regeneration**. They successfully collected their own data to investigate the environmental quality of Salford Quays. This is in preparation for their Paper 3 GCSE examination in the coming months. The students persevered in adverse weather conditions [Storm Babet 😊] and Mr Stoneley said they were a *“credit to the school”*. Great to hear!



- *Prom.* This is by invitation *only*. It is paramount that both attendance and punctuality are at least 'good'. A small, but significant, number of students are regularly arriving to school late or have poor attendance. These students will be informed that they need to improve their punctuality and attendance or I will withdraw their invitation.
- *Lucky Winner.* Last week Mrs Turbatu was delighted with the attendance and positive attitude of students in the sessions prior to the mocks. Many students, including those not invited to the first round of intervention, completed a challenging online Literature assignment on SENECA. I decided to put these names in a hat and reward one student with a free ticket to the Prom. The lucky winner was Ellie Donnelly. Well done Ellie. Watch this space for future winners!!
- *Yr11 Parents' Evening:* As usual, this was well attended by parents and there was a real buzz in the hall. There were 112 questionnaire responses on the evening. 110 of these would recommend the school, and 2 wouldn't. Sadly, the 2 parents who wouldn't recommend the school did not put their names on the sheet and this has meant I can't contact them to listen to their 'concerns'. Furthermore, one of the parents who wouldn't recommend the school was overwhelmingly positive and agreed with most of the questions. All comments will be on the website <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/parents-evening-feedback>. Below are some comments for your perusal.

“Very happy with the school and how well xxx has been treated by students and staff”

“Thank you. Great school” “Fab school”

“Thank you for your help and encouragement and believing in my child”

“Amazing school. Amazing teachers. XXX is doing amazing. Thank you all”

“So proud my child attends St Damian's”

I loved and appreciated all the positive comments, but my favourite was the following;

“I have been lucky enough for the last 7 years to have been part of the St Damian's school community. I hope this partnership will continue for another 5 years as my youngest has just applied”

Overall, I have been highly impressed with the attitudes of the vast majority of the Yr11 students. Long may this continue. They should all be **'fired up and ready to go'**. This bodes well for the Mock exams and beyond. Mrs Harrison, HOY 11, is always available to support. There are **83** school days before the GCSE exams start for some on 7th May 2024 [Construction] and **85** school days before they start for all students on the 9th May 2024 [RE].

Class of 2023: National Data

In October the Government published the annual national GCSE statistics. See table below. As you would expect from a high achieving outstanding school, St Damian's was well above **ALL** the Tameside and national averages. These GCSE outcomes are the by-product of high expectations and quality teaching alongside student's hard work and focus. I am extremely proud of my staff who work tirelessly to ensure such great results and of the positive attitudes of the students. In fact, our Progress 8 measure, that 'measures' the value added from KS2 of 8 different subjects, was the **BEST** ever. It was categorised as '**well above average**', the highest available. That is a remarkable achievement and is testament to the great staff here.

	Progress 8	Attainment 8	% achieving Standard pass in E/M	% achieving strong pass in E/M	Ebacc entry	Ebacc average point score
St Damian's	0.50	54.20	81%	64%	75%	5.09
Tameside	-0.21	43.2	61%	40%	38%	3.8
National	-0.03	46.2	65%	45%	39%	4.05

Attendance

For years St Damian's attendance has always been *well above national averages*. Attendance is vital for students achieving their potential, builds confidence, social and emotional development and provides a safe environment. Our mantra for attendance is '**Every Day Matters**'. It really does. In reality, most children do not catch-up on missed learning. Furthermore, there is an increasing number of holiday requests and rarely, if ever, do I authorise these. However, despite being well above average the attendance is not as high as it was pre-Covid. I ask that parents encourage good attendance. At St Damian's we promote and reward good attendance. Our attendance team work diligently to ensure that attendance is a key priority. Below shows St Damian's attendance figures compared with national figures for the first half term. For the avoidance of doubt, attendance at school correlates strongly with academic outcomes or 'success'.

Week beginning	National Attendance	St Damian's Attendance
04/09/2022	94.0	95.8
11/09/2023	93.5	96.3
18/09/2023	92.5	96.5
25/09/2023	91.2	95.2
02/10/2023	91.8	94.5
09/10/2023	91.1	94.8
16/10/2023	91.9	92.8

Annual Greater Manchester Beewell Survey

Over the next few weeks, Yr10 students will complete the BeeWell survey. This is a comprehensive survey of all Yr10 students in Greater Manchester which asks students about their social habits, their thoughts regarding personal safety, school and emotions. These results will be published in January 2024. We do not know individual responses. Past surveys indicate our students are significantly happier about their lives and future prospects, when compared to other students in the Greater Manchester area.

Spotlight on Yr7

In my next few letters, I will give an update on a year group. This month, the spotlight is on Yr7.

Yr7 students have seamlessly integrated into our community. They are demonstrating high levels of resilience and enthusiasm and have quickly established great relationships with their peers and staff. Their positive energy contributes significantly to our vibrant atmosphere, evident in both classrooms and extra-curricular activities. In October, our Yr7 Welcome Mass at St Christopher's was a special opportunity to

gather and reflect on their start at St Damain's. Miss Hogan, Head of Yr7 was delighted that so many parents were able to join us.

Yr7 students have amassed an impressive amount of achievement points for their eagerness to learn. Parents should be really proud of them. However, some students are receiving behaviour points for missed homework. Miss Hogan, in a recent assembly, discussed the importance of forming good habits. It is imperative that students consolidate learning in the classroom with independent learning. This is important as we approach the upcoming assessments, which are an opportunity for students to 'show-off' what they have learnt so far at St Damian's. Collectively, my staff and I are really proud to witness their growth, both academically and socially, and look forward to nurturing their potential in the years to come. Well done Yr7!



Staff Profiles

In each newsletter I cover the profile of two staff. In this newsletter I focus on two members of staff who have just recently been given an extra responsibility to lead at whole school.

- *Mr Healey, PE teacher and recently appointed Careers co-ordinator.* I have been a teacher for 10 years now and I love the fact that every day is different. My PE Teacher inspired me to become a PE teacher and I love finding out about how the body works, the importance of nutrition and representing my school in a variety of different sports. I have been at St Damian's since 2022 and it's fantastic to be working somewhere which has great staff and student relationships and where everybody is working towards the same goal. The fact you can make a massive difference in people's lives and work with extraordinary young people is my favourite thing about being a teacher.
- *Miss Hughes, English teacher/leader and recently appointed Duke of Edinburgh [DoE] co-ordinator.* When I am not teaching, I am out exploring! I have always loved being in nature; it is the place where I feel most calm and happy. My passion for the outdoors began from a young age; my parents took me into the countryside to walk, cycle and camp. When I was in Year 9, I was given the opportunity to complete my Bronze DoE award. It was an extremely rewarding experience that bolstered my confidence and fostered an ambition to try other outdoor pursuits. When I went to university, I developed a love (and obsession) with climbing and alongside that, I am now in the process of completing my Mountain Leader qualification. I believe that one of the most rewarding aspects of outdoor pursuits is the buzz that you get from completing a physical challenge. That feeling of success carries over into other aspects of your life and gives you the energy to tackle the ups and downs of each day. In my new role as DoE Coordinator, I have been very impressed with the applications I have received for Silver. Our students are eager to take on challenges and develop new skills!

Curriculum Update: Spotlight on Religious Education

The RE department's motto is that we are 'The Core of the Core Curriculum, a Christ centred, highly academic, and nurturing department'. Excellent teaching, alongside our delightful students, ensures RE outcomes are consistently strong. Our 2023 outcomes showed students achieved 84% grade 9 - 4 with 40% of students achieving grades 9 - 7. This included 13 grade 9s. The average grade was a Grade 6. These results are simply great! A strong KS3 curriculum is the foundation to this achievement, building up the key knowledge components that drive progress at KS4. Setting high expectations and by creating a safe positive learning environment ensures that our students receive the very best catholic education. I am delighted to report that the RE staff, led by Mrs Gerschler, are committed to our student's faith formation academic success, and instil values that enable our students to flourish!

Our PSHE/RSE Curriculum

Miss Bury continues to develop and update our PSHE curriculum. To enrich this, she led on hosting another successful ASPIRE Day last half term. The pertinent theme was 'Mental Health: Respect for Yourself and Others'. Mental health issues are increasing and our ASPIRE day was designed to educate students on mental health, including signposting students towards additional support. We invited in expert external visitors to lead sessions and workshop led sessions, including educating on the impact of drugs and alcohol. The feedback received from these agencies, about our school, staff and students was fantastic! For example, the CGL Practitioner said "Lovely school, engaged in issues facing young people" and "students are very polite" and the workshop facilitator from 2020 Dreams stated "Great staff, great students, great school". It is always nice to get external validation about our great school!

Our Relationships and Sex Education [RSE] is taught as part of the PSHE curriculum to all years. We focus on puberty, friendships, consent, different types of relationships and healthy relationships. Our full curriculum overviews for all year groups can be found on the St Damian's website. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions regarding our RSE/PSHE curriculum.

Music Mark

We are thrilled to announce St Damian's membership of the Music Mark for the upcoming academic year. This exciting collaboration signifies our strong commitment to fostering musical education and enriching the lives of our students through the power of music. By joining Music Mark, St Damian's aims to expand its music program, provide students with enhanced opportunities for musical exploration, and nurture the talents of aspiring young musicians. This affiliation not only showcases the college's dedication to holistic education, but also opens the door to a world of musical possibilities for its students, ensuring a harmonious and enriching learning environment. I have no hesitation saying that Mr McArdle has elevated Music provision at St Damian's to a new level!



Update on Students' Personal Development

Again, last month there was a plethora of varied activities that build character, develop resilience and instil values ensuring that we are delivering a true 'holistic' education. I ask that you encourage your child to participate in these extra-curricular opportunities. Enjoy reading!

- *Form Time Pastoral Theme.* Last half term the theme was 'Tolerance'. This is a key value at St Damian's and our students explore why 'Tolerance' is important within society. Students engaged in a variety of activities, led by Form Captains, to explore when tolerance may be required and how this also links with our golden rule of 'Mutual Respect'. A special mention goes to 9ABM who led an assembly on 'Tolerance', which involved every member of the form. This half term the theme is 'Nurture' which is an aim of our proud Catholic community. In form time, students will explore the value of *being nurtured or helping to nurture someone else.*
- *ICT award:* A number of Yr7 students were invited to trial, for the first time at St Damian's, the **Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award**, known as iDEA. This is an international award-winning programme that helps you develop and demonstrate your digital, enterprise and employability skills. Through great independent study we have our first 4 students achieving a Bronze Award. Well done to Adam Wilkinson, Emma Forristal, Leonardo Malacrino and Lucas McPartland.





- **STEM trip to Loreto 6th form:** These Yr10 leaders enjoyed a visit to Loreto 6th Form to watch an Institute of Physics lecture about the 'Volcanic History of the Moon'. The STEM leaders intend to study Science post-16 and this university-style lecture was a great opportunity for them to hear from Dr Marissa Lo, a researcher working with the Volcanology, Isotope Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry groups at Manchester University. The students even received a surprise gift of refractive glasses! Another great opportunity to aspire our gifted students. Mr Spencer and Mr Lowe really embraced the occasion.

- **STEM Leaders:** Our brilliant STEM Leaders continue to inspire the next generation of Scientists. On Friday 3rd November these STEM leaders planned and led a Bonfire night-themed enrichment activity. Yr7 and Yr8 students were able to conduct flame tests under their watchful guidance. In addition, Luka Anthony Pillai gave a fantastic presentation about the Science behind Fireworks to a packed room, making links with the flame tests taking place and the Science curriculum. Amazing work!



- **KS3 Anti Bullying Update.** The theme for this year's anti-bullying awareness campaign is '**Being an Upstander**' and we were delighted to welcome Lauren from OpenView Education into school who ran theatre workshops with all KS3 students. The performance explored different types of bullying, the impact of bullying, and the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying. Our Bully Busters have been situated in the Piazza providing students with the opportunity to ask questions, get involved in activities and also fill

in an application to join the Bully Busters Team. This team is growing from strength to strength, and we are delighted to have added some new members from Yr7 after their successful applications. Remember that bullying is never acceptable at St Damian's.

- **Maths Enrichment Day.** This week eight Yr.10 girls attended a maths event at Xaverian College. The girls took part in a Psychic Workshop looking at probabilities and confidence levels. They then had the opportunity to meet and discuss careers using mathematics with women from the world of work. After lunch there was an exciting activity on Coding followed by a team competition. Everyone found the day challenging, fun and most importantly very informative. Mrs Marshall who accompanied them said they were a credit to the school.
- **Reading Groups: quick update.** These are proving a great success. As I've said previously, over 100 children are benefiting from weekly reading groups. These build confidence, expose children to increased vocabulary and help them to enjoy reading more. The ability to read and comprehend is crucial, if children can't read, then they can't access our robust academic curriculum.

Careers Update: A group of Yr10 students attended a Theology conference at the XL academy at Ashton Sixth Form College. Students were given the opportunity to listen to a keynote speaker from the University of Leeds, discuss and debate law and philosophy and hear about what it takes to be an 'Oxbridge' student. There will be further opportunities from January onwards in an array of different subject disciplines. We have also confirmed our attendance for an Apprenticeship and



Education Event in March for Yr10. Students will be able to find out more about apprenticeships at all levels, discover educational pathways available to them and talk to large scale employers such as Land Rover and the NHS

Please ensure the Teams Career page is checked regularly for updates regarding events and open days/evenings which are occurring in the local area. In December, St. Damian's new termly Careers newsletter for KS4 will be published. Each term this will contain useful websites and information regarding open days and evenings. The spotlight will fall on a different teacher, summarising their career journey and the different work experience that they have undertaken. This newsletter can be used as a resource to help our students make more informed decisions regarding the various careers they may want to embark upon.

Yr10 Work Experience July 2024

Mr Healey launched Yr10 work experience in assembly on Wednesday 8th November. This is a fantastic opportunity for Yr10 to take ownership of their own futures and have their first experience of the workplace. We ask students to find their own placement, preferably in a sector they feel like they may want to be involved in in the future. This will allow them to make informed decisions regarding the careers they may want to pursue. Placements can be set up using the Connect app and students will have received an individual QR code through their school email addresses. A PowerPoint containing all pertinent information can be found under the 'Careers - Work Experience' section on the school website. If you have any issues or queries, please contact Mr Healey.

Friday 15th December 2023

School will finish for the Christmas break on the 15th December at 1:30pm. Unfortunately, the only school bus provider able to accommodate this earlier change of time is Stagecoach Manchester, the 870 service to Stalybridge bus station.

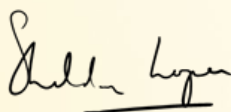


Finally...

As Headteacher I receive much correspondence from parents, the vast majority of which is overwhelmingly positive 😊. Late in October I received an email from a parent whose daughter left last year. I won't repeat the full content of the email, but it was very uplifting and positive. In fact, I had a tear in my eye when reading it. It had the sentence **"It's been a fantastic journey and experience, that my child, attended one of the greatest ever schools in the country, full stop"**. I was very pleased to read this and smiled to myself when I read. Similarly, I am extremely proud and honoured to work with the greatest staff and students **'in the country, full stop'!!**

As always, your support is always appreciated!

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher