



In all things faithful

**St Damian's RC Science College**

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**Headteacher**

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

January 2023

Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome to my first letter of the academic year which is jam packed with lots of important information. I hope that you enjoy reading.

**The Catholic Life of the School**

As always, I begin my letter with the Catholic life of the school. As you read you will soon see that our provision is excellent, ensuring that our children experience a true and rich holistic education.

- **Gift Team update for January.** Our GIFT team have already started preparing new activities for the year ahead. With the sad news of the death of Pope Benedict XVI, our Yr8 Gift Team created a fact sheet to educate students on his Papacy. They have led the way and shared with form groups. Our Yr7 GIFT team showed their leadership and confidence skills by creating and delivering an assembly on the meaning of *Catholic Social Teaching* in preparation for St Damian's Day. One member of staff said "I just wanted to let you know how fantastic the three girls were that came into my form this morning to deliver the presentation. They had such great confidence." This is a great example of commitment to prayer and service. Our Yr9 GIFT team are planning for our upcoming St Damian's Day by preparing a spiritual reflection so that St Damian's Day starts with the love of God at its core. Finally, the Yr10 GIFT team have been developing our '*Lectio Divina*' sessions. This is prayer that is practiced by listening to Scripture and meditating on the meaning. It is also called dialogue with God through Scripture. They have created a booklet that will form the basis of the reflection and will lead the group each Tuesday.
- **Chaplaincy Training.** Mrs Allmand, lead teacher for RE, has received Chaplaincy training at Salford Diocese. The day consisted of ideas and insight into further developing the Catholic life of the school alongside the liturgical calendar. Our focus for prayer is to create prayers that inspire us to action. We have launched our new GIFT team motto, "*Raising our hearts and minds to God to put his words into action*", and further developed an extensive Weekly Chaplaincy events programme. Watch this space for future events!
- **Caritas Ambassadors.** This group presented the "Love in Action" award in Yr7 assembly. This month's winner was Form 7HJL. During Advent, this form went above and beyond to raise money for those in need. Using the Pastoral Theme for the half term "*Success*" they were able to track their fund-raising efforts and demonstrate a determination to succeed! They raised a massive £500 for Caritas on top of our local food bank collection. This is the *St Damian's Way* in action! Our Caritas Ambassadors have also booked in some personalised training with Kathryn Ansley the Formation Co Ordinator from Caritas Salford Diocese. This will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and will bring new ideas and energy for our fantastic group of pupils.
- **Staff Training on Catholic Social Teaching.** This occurred last week with the strategic aim of ensuring our great staff have a deep and clear understanding of the principles of '*Catholic Social Teaching*' and to recognise that we are called, through our Mission statement, to live out these principles every day. These principles underpin our positive interactions and positivity we have within our community, especially with our most vulnerable students. During the training, staff listened to the words of our students and reflected on what their needs are to ensure that we, all at St Damian's, give them the best possible education to help them in their futures.
- **Catholic Social Teaching Award.** Last week we launched a 'Catholic Social Teaching award' to formally recognise service and love in action within our community and celebrate the unseen actions that make St Damian's a place of hope. This is a chance for staff to nominate each other and recognise the small everyday actions that make St Damian's a great place to be. I look forward to sharing the first person to receive this award in the February newsletter.

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- *St Damian's Day: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February.* Preparations are well underway for this year's St Damian's Day where our theme is *'Catholic Social Teaching in Action'* with a focus on outreach into the community. Yr7 are visiting the Hindu Temple BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Yr8 are going to St Christopher's Church to celebrate Mass and a Yr10 group are going to EMMAUS Mossley to learn about the charity and the work they do to support vulnerable people. In the Summer Term, Yr9, will be visiting Holy Law Synagogue as part of their education on Judaism. Furthermore, a *'Diversity Panel'* with special guest speakers from diverse backgrounds will answer questions. We are also excited to invite a volunteer from the Catholic Charity, CAFOD, to talk about the importance of their work and the impact that Catholic Social Teaching can make to the lives of others. Y9 and Yr10 will hear from the charity SPUC [*Society for the Protection of Unborn Children*] with a focus on human dignity. SPUC is a grassroots campaigning organisation, defending the right to life from the moment of conception until natural death. Pupils will be supported by form teachers during the day and will reflect on themselves and the wider community.

Can I take this opportunity to thank Mrs Gerschler and her team for consistently providing a range of activities across the school that really does ensure that our catholicity and values are at the heart of the St Damian's Way.

### **Our Charity Work Continues...**

At the heart of the St Damian's Way is looking after the vulnerable and those who are less fortunate than us. Our traditional Christmas jumper day raised nearly £670 which will go to the Caritas Salford Advent Appeal – Will you #BeeThere for someone this Christmas? Over the Christmas period, thousands of local people faced acute crisis and needed our support, as the cost-of-living crisis deepened. Through the generosity of our school community, we were also fortunate to help out local families in real need with our Christmas Hampers and food bank donations. These items were shared out between Infinity Initiatives, Tameside East Food Bank, The Town House and The Power of Resilience Food Bank.

### **Safeguarding Updates**

- *Online Safety.* As parents are aware the internet can put the safety of **all** children at risk if it is not monitored properly and at St Damian's we educate students, parents and staff about how to maximise safety online. We are extremely proud to say that we have now successfully completed the *'National Online Safety Certified School Accreditation 2022/23'*. This is awarded for our whole school community approach to protecting children online and demonstrating our commitment to keeping children and young people safe online. Please look out on our social media feeds for support from National Online Safety. Remember the St Damian's mantra: *internet safety applies to **all** children.*
- *Vapes.* Children's services have issued a warning to all schools in Tameside about the dangers of vaping. Current concerns are around 'THC' vapes. These are vapes containing synthetic cannabinoids. They contain unknown chemicals and substances and are causing adverse reactions in children. Research has shown that these high potency vapes can cause sickness, psychiatric disorders, depression, changes in brain anatomy and poor memory. Please don't accept vaping as a safer option as children in Tameside are falling ill due to these unregulated vapes being sold and ending up in hospital needing medical care. I ask that parents don't have the mind-set that *'it isn't my child'*.
- *Staff Safeguarding Training.* In preparation for Children's Mental Health Week 2023, Mrs Brophy, our Designated Safeguarding Lead, recently delivered training on how to support children with low mood, depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. Although we cannot diagnose mental health conditions (this has to be done by medical professionals), we educate both our students and staff of the impact that poor mental health can have on the wellbeing of our children. If you feel that your child would benefit from speaking to one of our student support officers please don't hesitate to contact school. Again, it is important to stress that Mental Health issues can affect everybody.

### **Personal Development Updates**

- *Knife Crime Awareness: On the 24th January 'Alter Ego' visited St Damian's to perform their 'Breaking the Chain' play for Yrs7 - 9. The performance was to highlight the dangers and seriousness of knife crime. This is part of the PSHE curriculum. A lot of thought and expertise has gone in to making 'Breaking the Chain' and it is appropriately hard-hitting but suitable for its target audience. Unfortunately, knife crime is increasing and it is vital for students to be aware of the risks and how to protect themselves. It is essential our students are educated on this matter.*

- **Holocaust Memorial Day:** Last week Yr9 students joined a national day of reflection to remember the Holocaust Memorial Day. This event, run by the Holocaust Educational Trust, gave our students an appropriate introduction to the horrors of the Holocaust by telling the stories of the people who witnessed the events. They heard about the lives of those who perished and reflected on the impact the Holocaust had on the survivors. There are so few left who can still bear witness to that time and this makes their story even more important. It allowed our students to see how easily discrimination and isolation of a group of people led to them becoming dehumanised, and it serves as a reminder to us at St Damian's that all people, of all faiths deserve respect.
- **KS3 Volleyball Club:** This club runs every Monday between 3.15pm and 4:00pm. If students wish to attend, they simply go to the sports hall with their PE kit and a water bottle.

**Misogyny and Social Media**

Many young people, including our children at St Damian's, are exposed to potentially dangerous views on different social media platforms. A topical example of this, are the views of Andrew Tate. I ask that parents read this article so that you can familiarise yourself with topics that your child may have been subjected to [Andrew Tate: How schools are tackling his influence - BBC News](#). To ensure that our students have a balanced viewpoint I will be holding assemblies with Yrs7 - Y10. In these assemblies I will reinforce the 'St Damian's Way' and our values as a Catholic school. One of our core values is 'respect' and under no circumstances do we condone misogynistic and toxic masculinity at St Damian's. To further support our children in understanding this pertinent topic, Mr Gregory, Mr Burtles, Mr Spencer and Mr Healy offered an open forum for pupils to discuss Andrew Tate and his viewpoints in a safe and controlled environment.

**Study Clubs for Students with Additional Needs**

Following the success of homework and study clubs for Yr7 and Yr8 in the Autumn term, similar clubs started in January for Yr9 and Yr10. This provision develops good study habits, prevents homework building up and provides adult support in a positive, learning environment. Each club has computer access and is led by a member of the Learning Support department. Students with additional needs can attend on one, two or three nights. I encourage parents to support this initiative.

Please see details below:

Year	HLTA Lead	When		Venue
Y7	Miss Gardiner	Mon, Tue and Wed	3.10pm - 4:00pm	Ambrose Suite
Y8	Mrs Burrows	Mon, Wed and Thurs	3.10pm - 4:00pm	Room 11
Y9	Miss Walthew	Mon, Wed and Thurs	3.10pm - 4:00pm	Room 19
Y10	Mr Wardle	Tue, Wed and Thurs	3.10pm - 4:00pm	Ambrose Suite (staircase side)

**Supporting our Dyslexic Students**

Following on from the purchase of *Reading Rulers* for all classrooms, school recently purchased a new *international font* called Aravis which has been developed to support people with dyslexia. The font minimises the effect of visual stress in a text which can be caused by pattern glare. When using the Aravis font each letter is unique, even if reversed or flipped and spacing is designed to help all readers, including those who read sometimes by recognising word shapes. Staff are now encouraged to use Aravis as a font for work sheets and documents in school.

**Teaching & Learning Update: A Focus on Assessment**

Effective teaching requires an effective assessment system. In practice this means pupils, parents and teachers need to understand the process. In simple terms, pupils need to 'know what they know, and importantly don't know', teachers need to use assessment to 'inform their practice' and parents need to easily understand 'how their child is doing' at school. At St Damian's we use research to inform best teaching practice and latest research shows that ongoing regular formative assessment, for example, strong questioning, use of mini-whiteboards or structured recall activities all contribute positively to pupils' learning. These skills are the focus of our on-going professional development. Furthermore, we are currently reviewing how we report to parents and we will share this with you in the near future. Watch this space!

## Update on Yr11

Thanks for the many parents who attended the Yr11 Parents' Evening last night. The following are some of the key messages that I delivered.

- *Btec Sport Exam*: This will be taking place on **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023**. Students should be revising really hard at home for this. Intervention will take place Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, 9.00am – 11.30am, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 3.10pm – 4.00pm, Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 8.15am – 8.50am and Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February, 8.15am – 8.50am. Any concerns please speak to Mr Burtles. All revision sessions are also on Teams for the pupils to use and consolidate their learning.
- *Leaver's Prom*: A great tradition and highlight of the school calendar, our Prom will be held on **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at The White Hart, Lydgate**. It is an evening that rewards students for good attendance, appropriate behaviour and hard work during the run up and completion of their GCSE exams. The evening celebrates one last time with the year group that is, the *Class of 2023*. Parents should note that I reserve the right to withdraw any student from the Prom who is not meeting our expectations. Several letters were sent before Christmas warning about future conduct and one student has had their invitation withdrawn.
- *Yr11 Mocks Results Day*. On **13<sup>th</sup> January**, students were given their Mock results. These are a crucial indicator on whether your child is working hard enough to achieve their potential. It is hoped that parents of Yr11 students have had meaningful conversations with your children that supports and encourages them maximising their achievements.
- *Key to Success Forms [K2S]*: We have launched our K2S forms for Yr11. Some students have been placed into either a Maths or English form based on Mock results to provide extra support to achieve higher grades. Other forms will focus on History, Science and independent revision.
- *SEND revision & focus*: On **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February** students with SEND have been invited to attend the first of the Year 11 study skills programme. The sessions have been designed to facilitate student's organisation and implementation of revision strategies which will support their revision for the upcoming GCSE examinations. The first session will be from 3:30pm - 5:30pm and support from parents is essential for the success of the programme.
- *Half Term Revision*: As part of our ongoing efforts to maximise student achievement we will have half term revision sessions. Further details will follow in the next newsletter but these are an excellent opportunity for focused revision. Below is the timetable for this half term and your child will be informed if they have to attend. I ask parents to support us in ensuring your child attends.

Date	Time	Teacher	Subject	Band
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	9:00am – 12 noon	LGY	History	X
	9:00am – 12 noon	MGR & RE Dept	RE	Y
	10:00am – 12 noon	RTU	English	Selection of pupils
	12:30pm – 3:00pm	LGY	History	Y
	12:30pm - 3:00pm	MGR & RE Dept	RE	X
	12:30pm - 2:30pm	RTU	English	Selection of pupils
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	9:00am – 12 noon	SHN	English	11xy/En6
	10:00am – 12 noon	SSH	Spanish	11A/Sp1

- *Ongoing Intervention:* There are extra ‘intervention’ classes across the week and across all subjects. I ask that parents support us in ensuring that your child attends these. Students who attend these classes achieve better in their GCSE exams. Students who have not been invited to attend intervention are welcome to attend the Literacy Hub before and after school that is supervised at all times and is a great quiet space place for students to revise. The timetable below details the times of intervention.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 - 8:50			History/Geography	MFL	Food/Sport
3.10 - 4:10	English	Maths		Science	RE

**Update on Yr 10**

- *Yr10 Construction feedback.* Recently our Yr10 construction students carried out their internal assessment for the component ‘Construction in Practice’. The component focuses on joinery, carpentry and methods used within the Construction industry. This is worth 30% of their overall final grade. The students had to follow an externally set brief, to produce a timber frame showcasing a number of joinery and carpentry skills, as well as assess the health and safety involved. The feedback from the external examiner was very positive indeed including saying “the centres submission is top drawer”. I know that Mrs D’Rozario was very proud of the commitment from the students.
- *Yr10 Child Development.* Yr10 BTEC Child Development students undertook their first externally verified unit of work in December. Each and every student worked diligently to produce their best work under examination conditions. Verbal feedback from the external assessor complimented the students on their high-quality work. This is a superb foundation to build on for the rest of the course and I look forward to your official results day in March. Mrs Brophy was delighted with their efforts. This bodes well for the future. Well done!
- *Yr10 English Trip to the Lowry.* Mrs Butterworth recently took 37 Yr10 students to see a matinee performance of JB Priestley’s ‘An Inspector Calls’. This remarkable performance, directed by Stephen Daldry, was a revelation to our students and many commented on the insight it had given them into the themes and ideas conveyed in this GCSE Literature text. All the students, without exception, were well-behaved, polite, and appreciative of the experience. Two members of the public approached Mrs Butterworth after the performance, to praise our students for their impeccable conduct and behaviour. Thanks also to Mrs Harrison and Mrs Toole for accompanying the students on the trip.
- *Raising Aspirations at Ashton Sixth Form.* Ashton 6<sup>th</sup> Form have provided us with a limited number of places where a small group of Yr10 students can participate in curriculum enrichment activities and can get an insight into post-16 education. Students selected will engage in 4 taster sessions, complete an assessed task and attend an awards ceremony. The programme will run from February to May 2023. Those pupils who have been successful in securing a place will be informed by February 14<sup>th</sup>. This is an excellent opportunity to challenge our students and ensure that they are thinking ahead after leaving St Damian’s.
- *Six Rules for Study Day at MMU.* On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 30 Yr10 students were given the opportunity to embrace university life, reflect upon their study habits and aspirations and learn how to improve their independent study routines. Among the six rules were taking responsibility, understanding short term goals, what qualifications do you need for your future career aspirations and accept to learn from mistakes. I reiterate these in this letter. Believe to Achieve is the mantra at St Damian’s. Both Mrs Harrison and Mr Burtles said this was an amazing experience and as usual our students’ attitudes were impeccable.
- *Yr10 Oxford University Talk.* Last week 20 Yr10 students enjoyed a talk from Oxford University. Students received a range of information regarding entry requirements, the application process and the financial support available. They were also given an insight into the social aspect of university and how to get the most out of university life. Over the last 10 years we have had a number of students gain places at Oxbridge

Universities and this indicates that our students can achieve anything. Remember the St Damian's motto, 'Believe to Achieve'.

- *Yr10 Parents' Evening.* This was a well-attended and fantastic evening. There was a real buzz about the place. On the evening, I spoke to many parents, and it was really positive. Out of 116 parents, 109 would recommend the school, 2 wouldn't and 5 couldn't decide. As usual, all the comments are on the website, but I have extracted a few for your perusal. Again, on behalf of the staff, thank you for your overwhelming support. Working together is the best, and only, way to ensure your child achieves their potential.

*"Very impressive teachers, so grateful for their enthusiasm and passion. Thank you very much, amazing school."*

*"When my child comes home from school and she is happy, she makes all the family happy. She feels amazing in school. Happy school, happy children, happy family. Thank you for taking care of our kids".*

*"Very pleased with the school, excellent communication from the school if needed, would highly recommend".*

*"This is the best school in Tameside, thank you!"*

### **Our Commitment to Training Teachers**

I am delighted that St Damian's have received a plaque from the University of Manchester in recognition of the 'Excellent quality of its commitment, involvement and expertise as an Outstanding Established Partnership School for Initial Teacher Education'. This plaque recognises the high-quality support St Damian's staff offer trainee teachers from the University of Manchester. St Damian's relationship with the university is mutually beneficial as it means we have access to potentially great teachers while the university is able to send trainee teachers to St Damian's secure in the knowledge they receive *outstanding support and guidance* at the start of their careers. We currently have four members of staff, Miss Bury, Miss Jameel, Miss Hughes and Miss Smith, who we have permanently appointed through initial teacher training at St Damian's.

### **Staff Profiles**

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

- *Miss Lucas: Lead teacher in MFL. I am in my 7th year of teaching at St Damian's and I love it! My favourite parts of the job are building relationships with our wonderful young people in school, passing on my passion for languages and sharing my own culture (I am from Brittany, the land of crêpes!). While in school in France, I developed a keen interest in languages, first for English and then Spanish. I will always remember my school trip to Eynsham, a town near Oxford, when I was in year 9. I stayed with a guest family and the whole experience was unforgettable: I got to eat fish and chips for the first time. I then decided to studying languages and went on to study English and Spanish at University, with the intention of becoming an English teacher in France. As part of my degree, I studied at the University of Leeds and it changed my life! I decided to stay in England and become a French teacher instead. I completed my PGCE at the University of Manchester and in my opinion, languages and studying abroad gave me so many valuable skills, such as confidence, resilience, and independence.*
- *Mrs Hayworth: Inclusion Manager.* I began working at St Damian's in September, but I can honestly say I feel like I have been part of school a lot longer. My role involves holistically supporting students when they visit Ambrose and promote our ASPIRE values and catholic ethos with students who use Ambrose. I lead a group of motivated and enthusiastic 'Bully Busters' who raise bullying awareness around school. Personally, I am currently studying for a BA Honours degree and in my spare time I enjoy hiking around the Peak District and being a taxi driver for my teenage children's chosen hobbies. It has been a pleasure getting to know the students and staff at St Damian's. I have a smile on my face every morning as I feel lucky to be part of a wonderful school family!

### **Student Voice**

As part of St Damian's relentless drive to ensure students are happy and cared for at St Damian's we systematically conduct student voice, asking groups of students a range of questions with the aim of improving our offer to students. Student voice indicates that the support from our Student Support Officers gives students the 'tools' to self-regulate their emotions, best look after themselves and cope with modern day pressures. If you feel your

child would benefit from working with Student Support please encourage your child to ask for an appointment in school or use [sso@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:sso@stdamians.co.uk) to initiate a meeting. Sexual harassment and following our mantra of 'it could happen here' we encourage children to speak to a member of staff if they hear inappropriate language or see inappropriate actions. This ensures we can help victims and educate perpetrators. Many sexual harassment incidents occur online and whilst we educate about the seriousness of sexual harassment I urge parents to read the following link by the NSPCC [Keeping children safe from online sexual abuse | NSPCC](#). Our last major student survey of over 400 students was overwhelmingly positive. I will share some statistics with you; 97.5% are 'Happy', 96% 'Enjoy Learning', 99% agreed teachers 'listen' to them and 98.5% agreed they were 'encouraged to respect students from other backgrounds'.

#### A well done to the following pupils ...

- ✓ *Joseph Scofield*, a Yr11 student, has been selected to play cricket for Derbyshire County U16's team. This is a just recognition of his hard work, belief and abilities. This is a great example of our motto, 'Believe to Achieve'. Everyone at St Damian's wishes him the best of luck for the future!
- ✓ Some talented female footballers had the opportunity to play a visiting interstate team from Australia at the start of January. It was an action packed and fast-paced game with a score line of 1 - 0 to Australia. However, the following pupils must be recognised for their efforts and contributions to play in such a game. Well done to *Ruby Morrell, Imogen Williams and Theadora Brophy*.
- ✓ *Brendan Newton* (Yr8) attends the cerebral palsy pan disability training at Manchester City and has scored so many goals in the Salford Disability Counts League that he was rewarded with VIP tickets to the Manchester City v Tottenham game. As part of the day, he had a 5 course meal, watched the game from the VIP box, met with some members of the team and managed to collect a couple of autographs. He had a great day! Congratulations

#### Strike, Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February

Following on from my letter to parents last week regarding potential strike action on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, I can now confirm that school will be closed to all students on Wednesday, except those who are most vulnerable and selected Yr11 students who will be sitting their ICT exam or preparing for their GCSE Child Development. In essence, this means that the school is open for all students in all years who are vulnerable. This includes students with an EHCP, LAC, medical needs and where safeguarding is identified by school. Teachers who are *not striking* will put work on **Teams** for their classes that day.

#### Finally ... an email I received at the end of December ...

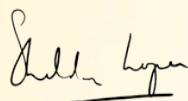
As Headteacher I always enjoy reading emails or comments from parents regarding St Damian's. In this letter I include an email I received from a parent. I asked the parent for permission to share some of the email; it brightened up my first day back in January.

*"Dear Mr Logue. I just wanted to send a quick email with my thanks to you and all of your staff hard work at St Damian's. My daughter is in year 10, and like most teenagers she has her ups and downs, but I can honestly say she loves St Damian's and so do I. She has flourished since starting there back in 2019. We as parents have no doubt that we made the right decision to send her there and we hope her younger sister will follow in her footsteps in the future and attend St Damian's. All staff are so lovely all students are polite. The whole school just has a lovely welcoming family feel to it. Her grades are improving, teachers care about her and her future and for that I want to thank you all for your hard work".*

As always, thanks for your continued support.

Regards

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue  
Headteacher