



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

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Headteacher

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

September 2022

Dear Parents & Carers,

A very warm welcome to my first monthly newsletter of the year. As you read, I hope that you get a great sense of the purpose of our community, to provide an outstanding holistic education in a safe, respectful environment, underpinned by our strong Catholic ethos.

Mr Tuck

It is with a very heavy heart that I write to inform you that Mr Tuck passed away in the early hours of Monday morning at home with his family. Mr Tuck has been a valued member of the St Damian's community since 1990 and his impact on the school has been immeasurable and this is being demonstrated by the large number of condolences we have received already. Mr Tuck was a great colleague to all who had the pleasure of working with him and please join with me, the staff, pupils and governors in keeping Martin and his family in your thoughts and prayers. May he rest in peace.

Our Chapel is a central and special place within our school and is always open for your child if they would like some quiet time to pray and reflect. We will open up a book of remembrance for Mr Tuck.

The Catholic Life of the School

It has been a really busy start to the term for the Liturgical life of the school. The following is an overview for your perusal.

- St Damian's has a new **school hymn** written by Mr McArdle, our new Music teacher. This is called '*How Great is Our God*' and the current Yr7 are currently rehearsing it. This will become prominent in school Masses and other school events, such as Celebration Evening. Several staff have heard it and are in awe at how our pupils can sing with such gusto!
- Our **GIFT team** are already building on the work they started last year. One of the actions from our planning was to lead and plan a Chapel Assembly for departments. The first of these took place on Monday morning with the Senior Leadership and the English department in attendance. It was very respectful, and the pupils read with confidence.
- Our **Caritas Ambassadors**, a group with responsibility for charity, are actively helping to plan for the Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee Morning (scheduled to take place on Friday 30th September at 10:00am), from organising a raffle for staff and pupils to serving cake and tea on the day.
- Our **staff Formation meeting** was an opportunity to reflect on our collective Mission of Catholic Education, as well as take time for Prayer as a staff community. During the meeting, we re-affirmed our purpose as Catholic educators and understanding of the importance of collective worship, the significance of Mass and the celebration of the Eucharist. Finally, our RE link governors, Father Jude and Sister Aluko took part in a Q&A session with staff, expressing the importance of prayer life and the support in the development of their faith.
- **New signage** around the school celebrating our Mission statement which is accompanied by the school prayer that pupils say each day.

St. Damian's RC Science College

GCSE Results: The Class of 2022

Firstly, I am delighted to report that our GCSE outcomes are again above both Tameside and National Averages. St Damian's was, once again, one of the highest achieving schools in Tameside and indeed TOP in many headline measures, such as the Ebacc qualification and Attainment 8. Both of these performance indicators measure how well students attained across a range of academic subjects. As a school, both governors and staff are extremely proud of these fantastic achievements. This is as a direct result of high-quality teaching and dedication from both students and staff. The results were even more impressive considering the disruption to learning the Class of 2022 have endured due to Covid. However, as a proud Catholic school we also believe that these sustained results are also due to exceptional pastoral care and the formation of genuine positive relationships. It is the intention of everyone at St Damian's that next year we will again achieve high grades. It was an absolute joy to see so many happy children and parents on results day! Watch this space in August 2023 as we again aim to produce outstanding results. I will update parents again when the official results are published by the Government.

New Staff September 2022

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to new staff who have started St Damian's. I am sure that you will give them all a very warm St Damian's welcome and that they will soon become part of the St Damian's great team! Our new teachers are Mr Healey [PE], Mr McArdle [Music], Mr McCallion [Maths], Mr Nyarko [ICT], Ms Yates [RE] and Mrs Hayworth, our new Inclusion Manager. These new staff are great additions to a great staff who all go the extra mile for your child, ensuring that they receive a great education.

Safeguarding Update

This year St Damian's has joined **National Online Safety** (NOS) to support us in educating pupils, parents and staff. We are embracing the 'Wake Up Wednesday' campaign and each week through our social media platforms we will share a wide variety of 'what parents need to know about... posters'. The information displayed is user-friendly and produced by experts so that you are provided with the tools to protect your child from harm. This half term all pupils have had a safeguarding assembly on positive social media use. However, if you do have concerns, please contact your child's form tutor for advice.

The Literacy Hub

We are delighted to announce that our new school library named '**The Elizabeth Jones MBE Literacy Hub**' opened for business in September. As a purpose built, single storey building at the heart of the school, the Literacy Hub will be a place of learning. It includes a full-size classroom as well as a fully stocked library. Our school librarian is on hand, before school, at breaktimes, lunchtimes and after school, assisting the bibliophiles amongst us to choose the perfect book and lose themselves in a world of reading. As a school we understand that reading underpins learning.

Study Clubs and Independent Learning

As part of our continuous efforts to raise attainment and build confidence we have 'study clubs' each Tuesday for each year. This will be for selected students, and I outline the particulars for each Year below.

- ✓ **Year 7:** It is great to report that Yr7 students have made a great start to St Damian's. This study club focuses on building resilience in students who have been identified by form tutors as needing extra transitional support
- ✓ **Year 8:** This year the focus is on Independent Learning, supporting organisation and study skills

- ✓ **Year 9:** The focus is on Independent Learning and helping prepare students for year 9 examinations, selection of options and developing good study habits for Key Stage Four
- ✓ **Year 10:** Students have been identified through monitoring and will have extra tuition to meet homework deadlines. This will enforce the importance of completing homework and independent learning at the beginning of Key Stage Four.
- ✓ **Year 11:** Pupils will be selected for focused intervention, and this will increase as the year progresses.

I ask that parents support the school and ensure that your child attends the above study clubs if selected.

Parental Evenings

As well as traditional parents' evenings, we also have an additional parental evening where key staff impart important information to parents. Yr7, Yr10 and Yr11 parental evenings have already taken place in September. Below is an outline of these events:

- Yr10: Focused on '*getting GCSE ready*' and the sensitive issues of drugs, alcohol and mental health. Parents asked questions regarding homework, study and progress and understood the balance between study and 'down time'. Two external agencies provided further information; Kooth [www.kooth.com] on their online mental health service and CGL [www.changegrowlive.org] on vapes and nitrous oxide (balloons), giving parents the information they need to have meaningful conversations with their children. It was superb to see parents being open minded regarding these issues. Ultimately it will allow parents and school to work together to protect our young people as they navigate adolescence.
- Yr11: A very well supported event concentrated on the partnership between home and school. Pupils and parents/ carers were given clear expectations of Year 11 in what will be a very challenging year for all parties. Parents were provided with key information on Post 16 pathways, college open day dates and times as well as how as a school we support the child making these decisions. Parents and pupils were also given revision guidance through specific subject information handouts along with revision tips and strategies through this very successful evening. Any concerns parents can contact Mr Burtles.
- Yr7: Focused on 'how to support your child at home'. Information shared included; attitude to learning checkpoint, Progress Check, baseline assessments and pupil organisation. Information was shared with parents on how to support their child with revision, literacy and numeracy and how to access to the school digital library 'SORA' and encouragement to read at home.

Yr8 & Yr9 parental evening will take place on Thursday 13th October. I ask that parents make every opportunity to attend as working together is the best way to ensure your child fulfils their potential.

Beewell Survey

In October, students in Yr9 and Yr10 will take part in another online survey as part of the BeeWell programme. This is a research project led by The University of Manchester, to find out about challenges and issues faced by teenagers in the Greater Manchester area. Students will be asked questions on the following topics: Health and Routines, Hobbies and Entertainment, Relationships, School, Environment and Society and their future. The information gathered will be used to work with partners of the programme to determine how our young people can be supported to ensure they have every success in the future. St Damian's will receive information gathered about our cohort of students as a whole but no individual responses will be shared with school. I hope to share this information with relevant parents like last year.

St Damian's Standards and our 5 Simple Rules

As Headteacher, I am very proud of the way the vast majority of our students behave. At St Damian's we have 5 simple rules that underpin all we do. Briefly, these are as follows;

1. Correct Uniform. Our students should be proud to attend St Damian's and wearing the correct uniform is the most outwardly sign of this. This includes no jewellery, no earrings, no make-up, no fake tan and no false nails or nail varnish. Girls' skirts should be a decent length. Extreme hair styles are also not permitted. Hair should be natural looking and not too short. However, this is not an exhaustive list.
2. Mobile Phones. These are NOT allowed in school at any time of the day. Students MUST not use their phones until they exit the green gate. If caught using them, which is rare, they will be confiscated and parents will collect from reception.
3. Chewing Gum: NOT allowed in school as we want a clean and tidy environment. Chewing gum will be confiscated and a detention will be issued.
4. Eating 'Zones': To keep the environment tidy for your children there are areas in school where no eating is permitted: these will be clearly sign-posted. Food will be confiscated where this happens

The above 4 rules are underpinned by our core value of respect; respect for each other, for staff and for the environment.

Students who consistently undermine the above rules put their place at St Damian's at risk.

Inclusion Quality Mark [IQM]

In July, after a rigorous 2-day assessment was carried out by Mr Dirk Pittard, St Damian's was re-awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark. The report fully encapsulates the high-quality inclusive provision at St Damian's. During the assessment students, parents, staff, link agencies and governors took the opportunity to showcase our wonderful community. I will let you read the report in its entirety, but I highlight some of my favourite sentences below for your perusal.

"St Damian's encapsulates the true values of a Catholic School"

"The assessor consistently witnessed staff and students showing mutual respect for each other, which created a calm, purposeful and inclusive feel within the school"

"The behaviour of the students was always exemplary during the visit"

"During conversation, students explained that there was the expectation that they would achieve. It had become ingrained in them".

"Parents... gave the very clear message that St Damian's was a life changing place for their children to study"

"The quality of the teaching...was a real strength"

The full report can be read on the school website under the 'General Information' tab.

Excellence in Student Development Award [EPDA]

We are exceptionally proud to announce that in July we received the award for 'Excellence in Student Development'. On the day, Mr Noble, the external assessor said, "This is a fantastic School with outstanding practice. Staff relationships are exceptional, and staff, parents and students feel they belong." He was extremely impressed with the students he met stating, "The students showed enormous insight and perception as to why they were the articulate, confident and thoughtful young people they had become." It makes me extremely proud reading such comments about the St Damian's community. Personal development and providing a holistic education is at the heart of St Damian's and is integral to our success. Below are some quotes from the report which can be accessed on the website under the 'Personal Development' tab.

"Parents not just enthusiastic in their praise and support...but spoke from a point of well-informed appreciation"

"Students, similarly, showed enormous insight and perception as to why they were the articulate, confident and thoughtful young people they had become"

"This negotiated set of approaches and values" through our culture of the 'St Damian's Way' was articulated by students and staff alike.

Headteacher's Surgery

As part of maintaining our excellent relationships with parents I am holding a Headteacher's 'surgery' on **Monday 10th October**. The purpose of this is to give all parents an opportunity for a face-to-face meeting with myself and discuss any issues. If you would like to meet me please contact Mrs Biggs on admin@stdamians.co.uk for an appointment. As Headteacher I really value the support of parents to make sure that St Damian's continues to be an outstanding community for all.

Yr 10 Work Experience

Last years' work experience was a resounding success, and it is very important that all students in Year 10 experience the 'world of work'. This is part of preparing them for their next stage of their education or employment as well as building their confidence and communication skills. The feedback from employees was fantastic and reflects the mature attitudes of our pupils. I will share a comment from an employer;

"We have had the pleasure of accommodating four of your students this week on their work experience placements. Can I take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution and compliment them on how well they have conducted themselves throughout the week. I hope it has been a valuable experience for all of them. We look forward to helping other students from St Damian's in the future".

This year again all students will be conducting a weeks' work experience. Ms Joyce will release further details in due course.

Dates for the Diary

Here are some important dates for your diary for this term only:

- 3rd Oct: Open Evening 5:30pm – 8:00pm. **NB: School closes early at 1.15**
- 13th Oct: Yr8 & Yr9 Parental Information Evenings
- 17th Oct: ASPIRE day
- 20th Oct: Yr7 Welcome Mass
- 20th Oct: Yr11 Certificate Evening
- 21st Oct: Yr11 Geography Field Trip and school closes for half-term
- 9th Nov: Yr11 Parents' Evening
- 18th Nov: INSET Day: School closed for pupils
- 23rd Nov: Yr9 Parents' Evening
- 28th Nov: Yr11 Mock exams start
- 12th Dec: Christmas Carol Concert
- 16th Dec: School shuts for end of term
- 4th Jan 23: School re-opens for the start of the Spring term

Changing the School Day

Last year the government announced that each school should deliver a school week of **at least 32.5 hours** by September 2023. At St Damian's we are currently below this minimum expectation, and I am currently consulting staff on changes, including the option of starting earlier, finishing later or a combination of both. For example, the school currently starts at 9am but an option would be start at 8.40am or finish at 3.30. As part of this consultation, I would like to know the views of parents. If you want to comment on the change to the school day, please email your views to schoolday@stdamians.co.uk by 12 noon on Wednesday 12th October 2022.

Fundraising Share Day July 2022

One of my favourite days of the academic year is 'Share Day'. This is a great tradition at our school and celebrates another successful year for our community whilst raising monies for charities. This year's Share Day was a resounding success, despite the unprecedented hot weather. Our great pupils [and staff 😊] embraced the spirit of our Share Day theme 'St Damian's Waves'. As a proud Catholic school, we often partake in fundraising. This year was no exception! Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our families, we are able to support our chosen charities by donating £2,000 each to Teenage Cancer Trust and Bowel Babe, £1,000 to The Christie, £500 each to Caritas and The Mayor's Charity. On behalf of our St Damian's, a **massive thanks** for all your support.

Our Values and Parental Behaviour

As a school community, it is great that the support from parents is **consistently and overwhelmingly positive**. This is reflected, for example, in questionnaire responses and the great positive working relationships that have been established over the past ten years. As a school we take great pride in our work and ensure that your child gets a first-class education. However, we are not perfect, nor do we always get things right. If this happens, we strive to put things right. However, if we get things wrong, it does not, and never will, excuse the behaviour of a very small number of parents who believe that they can verbally abuse the hard-working staff of St Damian's. For the avoidance of doubt, verbal abuse and/or shouting at my staff is never acceptable.

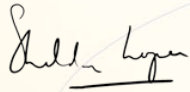
A big Well Done to ...

- Archie O'Brien [Yr8] who won a Gold medal at the Taekwondo National Championships and is now the British Champion in Taekwondo – a fantastic achievement!
- Charlotte Marsden [Yr8] who completed the Willow Wood Twilight Wander with some of her family and helped to raise a fantastic £640. Charlotte also spends time helping out at other events at Willow Wood and her local Church. An example to us all.

Finally...

It has been a great start to the academic year and long may this continue! For all parents, new and old, the unofficial mantra of St Damian's is '**Believe to Achieve**'. At school we support and encourage our children to achieve the best that they can. Parents can support this at home by praising their children and taking an interest in their work. As I have always said, working together, is integral to our and their success! This works as has been proven by consistent great GCSE outcomes over many years!

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher