



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

Lees Road
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 8BH

Tel: 0161 330 5974

Fax: 0161 331 4744

Email: admin@stdamians.co.uk

Web: <http://www.stdamians.co.uk/>

Follow us on Twitter: @StDamiansRCSC

Follow us on Facebook

Headteacher

Mr S Logue BA (Hons), MEd., NPQH, NPQEL

December 2023

Dear Parents & Carers,

A warm welcome to my last newsletter of the calendar year. And what another highly successful year it has been for our community! As I write, I am reminded and very grateful for the calibre of staff that work here, who all go that 'extra mile' for our great children. In fact, I am both privileged and humbled to lead such great people who include the wonderful support staff, highly professional teachers and competent leaders! A true example of a real authentic catholic school!

The Catholic Life of the School

As ever, the Advent season provides opportunities for formation, prayer and reflection.








- Weekly reflections have focused on hope and peace. Students have reflected on Global issues through CAFOD's Advent Calendar in form time and Sister Rosaline led a breaktime prayer reflection for staff and pupils. These voluntary events were very well attended, reflecting our community's commitment to prayer and service.
- Our Yr7 GIFT team lead our traditional 'Traveling Nativity', based on the Mexican tradition where it is known as posada. The idea is that a set of simple figures make their way from form room to form room each morning. In Mexico, the Nativity will arrive in the Church on Christmas Eve, at St Damian's the Nativity will arrive at our Staff Advent prayer reflection on Friday Morning.
- The staff *Liturgy* also focused on Peace and staff reflected on family life and bringing peace into our homes this Christmas. St Damian's staff go above and beyond for our great students, so at Christmas we pray that they rest and dedicate a little extra time to their loved ones over the break.
- Our *Caritas Ambassadors* have pledged to raise at least £500 to support more vulnerable members of the community this Christmas, taking part in 'Thought for the Day', sharing their hopes for themselves and other people or what small change they will make to #BeeThere for others this Advent.
- The *Carol Service 2023* was slightly different this year, with our Choir taking center stage. Mr McArdle and the choir spent many hours practicing and this event showcased our talented students and Mrs Gerschler and her RE team ensured exceptional readings and dance performances that created a feel-good factor for a magical Christmas. Thanks to our fantastic parents for coming out on a cold evening to watch and support our students. I hope that you were proud of our students, your children! On the evening we raised an incredible £248.56 through the raffle and refreshment donations which will go towards the St Damian's Caritas Ambassadors £500 pledge for @CaritasSalford.

St. Damian's RC Science College

- For their commitment to the liturgical life of the school, our outstanding GIFT teams are going to receive a 'Gift for the GIFT team'. This is a 'thanks' from the RE department and the whole community. They are at the heart of our liturgical provision that allows us to share in the message and life of the Church.
- In RE lessons students have been completing an independent study booklet to perfect their independent learning skills. The RE team have had great support from Sister Rosaline who has been teaching this half term. Sister has worked in Nigeria as a teacher and is volunteering here to gain experience of teaching in an outstanding school.
- Excitement is growing for the Yr7 *retreat to Castlerigg Manor!* This week final arrangements will be made including a meeting for students to outline our high expectations.
- The RE team would like to thank Anna Silver, the Education Officer from The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for providing CPD for the department. This focused on gaining a depth of knowledge in to the 'Why' of the practice or belief in Judaism. Anna shared her depth of knowledge with us and provided Sources of Authority that can be used to increase our RE GCSE outcomes. The staff found her knowledge invaluable and an excellent opportunity for us to ask questions from a member of the Jewish faith tradition.
- Finally, the RE team are currently planning activities for our annual St Damian's Day on 2nd February 2024. The theme this year '*The St Damian's FEAST day*'. A Catholic feast day is when we celebrate something or someone important to our faith. The word feast comes from the Latin 'festes', meaning joy and symbolises a time of celebration. We are going to celebrate our whole community and provide opportunities to 'FEAST' on all the great things our community offers! It is going to be a St Damian's FEAST day to remember. Watch this space!

Safeguarding Update

It's important that we always remember the true meaning of Christmas. Often both adults and children get caught up in the festivities and this in itself can create a false illusion of everybody having a wonderful time. The truth is, many young people feel lonely and isolated at Christmas due to their daily routine temporarily disappearing and them believing that everyone else is having a fun and exciting time. To help support our young people, parents and families I would like to signpost you to the services below which will be available whilst school is closed. Furthermore, I am pleased to tell you that the Heads of Year have taken time in assemblies to share this information as well as expressing how important it is to take some time out to relax and put themselves first during the holidays!

Youth in Mind	Anthony Seddon	Kooth	Shout	Young Minds	Samaritans	Papyrus
						
https://www.togmind.org/youth-mind	https://tafund.org.uk/	https://www.kooth.com/	https://giveusashout.org/	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/	https://www.samaritans.org/	https://www.papyrus-uk.org/

Yr11 Update

Overall Yr11 students have worked extremely hard since September and have conducted themselves brilliantly in their Mock exams. Many staff have commented to me about their maturity and focus. Well done Yr11 and I ask that parents praise their efforts I pray that they have done themselves justice. They must now have a well-deserved rest over the Christmas holiday, so they are ready for the run-up to their GCSEs in May/June. Students will receive their Mock results in a special assembly on **Friday 12th January 2024**. There will be a further opportunity to sit a further Mock exam in English and Maths on **Friday 2nd February 2024**. Additionally, the GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition students from Mrs Brophy's class have been showing off their culinary skills as part of their qualification. The Technology Faculty are exceptionally proud of their mature attitudes and most importantly their determination to succeed! All of this bodes well for their successes next summer. Well done Yr11.

Staff Professional Development. A Focus on Literacy

At the end of November in our staff Twilight, Mrs Heenan launched our whole school literacy strategy which is called *READ*. This unique and innovative literary strategy will transform the way our students improve their literacy. Ensuring that our students are literate is a strategic objective of St Damian's. In essence, if our students can't read or write then they can't access our knowledge-rich curriculum. *READ* is an acronym and each letter represents a key strand of what we are trying to achieve. **R** stands for **Reading**. We want all our students to read fluently, be able to comprehend and increase their vocabulary skills. **E** stands for **Effective** writers as we want students to be able to communicate effectively through the written word. **A** stands for the ability to **Articulate** themselves. This, for example, includes the ability to communicate orally during conversations in class and in paired or group discussions. **D** stands for **Developing** student's vocabulary. In practice, this means exploring new words and subject specific words to enable pupils to express themselves clearly. Parents can support the *READ* strategy by encouraging pupils to read more widely at home. *SORA*, our digital library, has 6000 books freely available for students. At St Damian's, we will continue to foster a love of reading and vocabulary for all of our students.

Computer Science

Our Computer Science provision continues to become embedded at both key stages. The appointment of a new subject lead, increased curriculum time at key stage three and new GCSE course not only matches the ambition within St Damian's for the subject, but also recognises the increasing impact computing has on our students and the wider society. Mr Tabas has continued to review and effectively implement many curriculum changes that align with the National Centre for Computing Education guidelines on good practice. Recently, Mr Tabas has formed a partnership with Mrs Murray, Senior Professional Development Leader for STEM learning Ltd to support professional development on teaching Computing Science at St Damian's further. Mrs Murray sent me an email after her visit which was extremely positive, including *"It was delightful to wander around and see and hear such a positive learning environment. I didn't really want to leave 😊"*. I look forward to our students benefiting from this enhanced provision and participating in interesting and exciting projects in Computing. Watch this space!

Punctuality

Punctuality at St Damian's is two-fold, punctuality to school and secondly, punctuality to lessons.

- ✓ *Punctuality to school:* Increasingly more students are late to school. Students arriving after 9am without a valid reason will be issued with a lunchtime detention. Students who are repeatedly late will be issued with further sanctions. I ask that parents impress upon their children the importance of good routines and being punctual. Additionally, please consider allowing enough time for your morning commute: 'Traffic and dropping off siblings' is not considered a valid reason for being late.

- ✓ *Punctuality to lessons:* This ensures lessons start positively, shows great attitudes to learning, avoids classroom disruption and minimises wasted time for both students and teachers. Students will be sanctioned by their class teachers for being late to lessons.

May I take this opportunity to say that the majority of children are punctual to both school and class.

Tameside Cross Country



A massive congratulations to the Cross-Country team for their outstanding team and individual performances at the Tameside Cross Country Championships held early December at East Cheshire Harriers Running Track. Our students braved the weather to be part of a successful St Damian's team. Yr7 Girls were crowned Yr7 Tameside Team Champions. The Yr8/9 girls team did exceptionally well, with fantastic individual performances of Thea Brophy in first place and was crowned Tameside champion. The Yr10/11 girls team also did superbly well, finishing as runners up, with four students finishing in the top 20. Mr Burtles said, "An excellent showing by the girls". The boys also contributed to some outstanding results most notably the senior boys Yr10/11 team who finished 4th overall, with Bobby Burton being crowned Tameside Champion again with his excellent first place finish! Well done to all who contributed to these fantastic results and good luck to those runners who qualified for the Greater Manchester Cross Country. And, can I thank Mr Burtles for his encouragement with



all our athletes.

Staff Profiles

In this month's newsletter there are profiles of 3 new members of staff, Miss Brookes, Mr Lowe and Mrs McDonald, a member of our support staff. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

- *Miss Brookes, Drama teacher.* I have always enjoyed Performing Arts and in theatres watching any new upcoming Musical, Play or Dance performance. I was inspired to become a Drama teacher, from my Drama teacher at school. I remember his passion, enthusiasm, dedication, and the ability to master fun, exciting lessons for his students, a culture I hope to create here at St Damian's. I studied Theatre and Performance at the University of Salford, before completing my Teaching Drama degree in Liverpool. This is my second year of teaching at St Damian's and I have been utterly blown away by how lovely and supportive the staff are, and the commitment and enthusiasm from all the students. Taking on this role has been fantastic and I have learnt a lot from the students and how Drama has always been here at St Damian's.
- *Mr Lowe, Science teacher.* I have always been curious about the world around me and how everything works and why it is the way it is. And so, when I started high school, I quickly discovered my passion for Science. This led to me pursuing a career as a Science teacher. I now hope to foster this same curiosity and interest in the children that I teach, inspiring the next generation of scientists. I am extremely grateful and privileged to work in an outstanding Catholic school, like St Damian's, where the staff and students are fantastic.
- *Mrs McDonald, Learning Support Assistant.* I started at St Damian's in September 2023 and it is a great school to work. I have been made to feel very welcome by both students and staff. My own son hopes to be a part of the St Damians community next year when he moves to Yr7. I am currently studying a Level 3 qualification in teaching support. I have always wanted to work with children and

since having my own even more so. I enjoy spending time with my young family going for long walks, playing board games and watching films. I hope to be part of this wonderful school for many years to come.

Personal Development Updates

- *Young Carers:* Our Young Carers enjoyed a trip to the Manchester Christmas Markets on 24th November where they enjoyed a hot chocolate while buying Christmas presents for their friends and families. It allowed for the opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves without any responsibilities. Then on 8th December they enjoyed their annual Christmas lunch with a twist: they opted to have pizza and chips rather than a traditional Christmas dinner! Santa has sent them all a Christmas treat to put under their Christmas tree's to open on the big day.
- *Duke of Edinburgh:* We now have 28 students registered for their Silver Duke of Edinburgh award. They should be receiving their welcome packs in the coming weeks. Monday 11th December was the deadline for Bronze Duke of Edinburgh sign up.
- *Sports Update:* The girl's development friendly football and netball matches took place this term. This is in preparation for the new Tameside league and cup to start in Jan 2024. Well done to the Yr9 and Senior teams who had some good performances against Droylsden, GAA, Laurus Rycroft, Mossley Hollins and Fairfield this half term in both sports. Good luck to all teams for the new year. A thanks to Miss Guilfoyle who has high expectations for these teams in 2024.
- *Student Council:* This leadership group of students have been working hard to produce next half term's Student Council Newsletter. This will be uploaded to our website under 'Personal Development/ Student Council Newsletter' in January. If you haven't yet looked at this half term's to find out what the Student Council learnt about 'JFK', then why not have a look over Christmas.
- *Journalism Club:* This student leadership team have recently completed the Christmas edition of our school newspaper. The team is made up of 8 students across Key Stage 3. We are exceptionally proud of their hard work that is illustrated in the newspaper. The newspaper can also be found on our school website; it is a wonderful paper that recognises our achievements, builds relationships between staff and students, celebrates SEND, and celebrates students work.
- *Aspire Assembly Term 1.* During the past week, all year groups participated in their termly ASPIRE assemblies. There are so many wonderful pupils at St Damian's and these assemblies provide the opportunity to celebrate and formally recognise their efforts and hard work. Students are rewarded for a range of successes: 100% attendance, progress, effort, making improvements and having a high number of achievement points. As always, all the staff here are so proud of all our students. 😊
- *Careers.* Mr Healey, our new Careers co-ordinator, has been working very hard to enhance our Careers provision. As part of this he plans to produce a Careers Newsletter called 'Career Compass' that will be published 3 times a year. This aims to impart information for our parents, Careers ambassadors, Careers week and Careers curriculum.

A Personal Achievement

It is always nice to have a paragraph about a pupils personal achievements and in this newsletter the spotlight is on a pupil in Yr. 7. A few weeks ago the mother of Lola Booth, emailed to tell me how very proud she was of her daughter who completed a 5k run for the MacMillan Cancer Charity. This took place at Alton Towers mid-November. Not only did Lola achieve a personal best, an incredible time of 45 minutes, but she also raised £410 for Macmillan. I would like to formally acknowledge both her personal best and the money she has raised for charity. St Damian's will pledge to also donate an extra £410 to this charity. A massive *well done* Lola! Here is a picture of Lola with her father.



Respectful Reminder to Parents

The number of students who are coming to the office asking to 'call home' has significantly increased. As you will appreciate, our office staff are always busy, and as such, are unable to make non-emergency phone calls home e.g., forgotten PE kits, homework, books etc. Please make sure your child remembers everything they need before they leave home for school each morning.

Finally... accolades we, the community of St Damian's, have won this calendar year ...



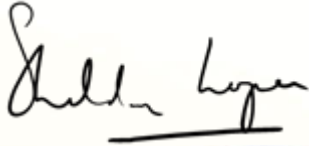
I am delighted to the share some tremendous news with you all. This year, St Damain's have won FIVE separate awards. This includes achieving an incredible 'treble' of being recognised as 'Secondary School of the Year' three times, at three separate awards ceremonies in one single year.... and 'stop the press' a HUGE coup, we were also honoured to receive the national 'Overall School of the Year' at the Education

Today Awards in London. This is truly wonderful recognition of our amazing pupils, staff, governors and families, all working together to make St Damian's such a successful, catholic, caring and lovely community. As you know, this is on top of achieving a 'back-to-back' outstanding Ofsted in June. Words fail me on how incredibly proud and privileged my staff and I are to be associated with such a wonderful school with students who are 'simply the best'. These accolades truly epitomise 'The St Damian's Way', and the strength of our community. I am particularly proud of the mutual respectful relationships between the students and the staff. It is these relationships that makes St Damian's the special place we all know and love!



On behalf of all the staff at St Damian's, I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas. And I hope that 2024 is another highly successful year for St Damian's.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher