

September 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

The following is important information for your perusal.

Exam Results 2016

This year there have been massive changes in the way that '*performance*' of schools is measured. Traditionally the headline figure of 5A*- C grades including English and Maths was a key measure. This has now gone and the key performance indicators focus more on progression rather than attainment. I am pleased to say that our indications show that we have positive progression figures and I will share these with you when I get the official confirmation. Nonetheless, my staff and I were delighted to see so many happy faces on results day and that is what makes teaching worthwhile.

Exam Results and the Current Year 11

Our current Year 11 sat a few GCSE exams in the summer. GCSE results obtained show that we are on track to have yet another successful year. For example, 30 pupils sat the GCSE Biology exam resulting in 87% achieving either A*/A grades which is simply an outstanding result and shows the high expectations of both pupils and teachers and is the by-product of quality teaching and learning. Parents of Year 11 pupils should be supportive of their children over the next year and ensure that they are not put under too much pressure. If you would like to speak to me regarding any issues, please do not hesitate to contact the school and ask to speak to Mrs Biggs for an appointment. It is important that any issues are resolved immediately as time is of the essence. There is an important information evening on **Wednesday 21st September** that all parents of Yr11 pupils should attend. Lots of important information will be given out. The formal Year 11 parents evening is mid-November.

Year 10 Pupils

Year 10 pupils have now started preparing for their GCSE exams. It is vital that as parents you support your child by following simple routines such as: encouraging your child, asking them what they did that day at school and ensuring they are completing homework and/or doing a sufficient amount of revision at home. These simple strategies are very effective and are proven to work. Do not underestimate the power of praise and encouragement. There is an important information evening on **Wednesday 28th September** that all parents of Yr10 pupils should attend. Lots of important information will be given out.

Overview of Last Year 2015/2016

Last year was arguably the most successful in the history of St Damian's. I list some of the accolades/rewards that we achieved collectively, as a community, for St Damian's.

- TOP performing school in Tameside with 79% of our pupils achieving 5A*- C grades [First time ever]
- Tameside English Awards for sustained pupil 'outcomes'
- Letter from the Minister of State stating 'top 100 non-selective state funded schools in England'
- Tameside Secondary Challenge STEM Day winners!
- MEN Secondary School of the Year 2016

- Food4life Award promoting healthy education
- Inspiring IAG Stage 2 award ensuring our pupils have good careers advice to help in their future
- Bullying Intervention - BIG Award reiterating our stance against bullying
- Young Carers Award which endorses our aim to support vulnerable children
- Diana Award for our anti-bullying initiatives

The above, simply reflects our commitment to ensuring a first-class, all-round education for your children and shows we are very proactive in developing the whole child which is more than just academic outcomes.

And not forgetting our most impressive achievement which was the outstanding Section 48 RE inspection [March 2016] where we achieved outstanding in 7 out of 7 categories. This was a remarkable achievement.

Confidence in the Community

The confidence in the local community [and indeed beyond] is phenomenal and has never been so high. The number of 'appeals' from all Year groups to get a place at St Damian's has never been so high nor indeed so regular and they occur throughout the year. This is indicative of the esteem in which St Damian's is held by the community of Ashton and beyond. I say that this is down to the *pupils and the staff* working together and being proud to be here.

Behaviour

May I remind all parents at the beginning of the year of our 3 simple, accepted and transparent rules. These have not changed and are enforced by staff. Having a positive and correct '*attitude to learning*' is fundamental to our success. Our 3 simple rules are;

1. Be respectful to everyone. This core value permeates throughout St Damian's at all levels
2. Wear correct uniform. This includes appropriate hairstyles and no jewellery/make-up
3. No mobile phones/ICT gadgets in school. For clarity that includes before and after school

Can I add here that the vast majority of pupils at St Damian's are great ambassadors for the school and their behaviour is impeccable, and parents should be really proud of this fact. Every external visitor, without exception, comments positively on their manners. However, if your child does misbehave, I will not hesitate to deal with it in a robust, but fair, manner. Any pupil that disrupts lessons and the learning of others is not acceptable and if the repeatedly poor behaviour continues their place at St Damian's is at risk.

Attendance

There is a strong correlation between attendance and academic success. At St Damian's our attendance is consistently high and this is because not only do the children love attending St Damian's but also because of the proactive work of our attendance officers. Last year I had many requests from parents to take their children out of school, mainly for holidays. St Damian's has a strict policy where I do not authorise holidays unless it is for an exceptional reason and this is very rare. Therefore, I ask that you please do not take your children out of school during term time. Our term dates are clearly displayed on the school web-site. Good attendance = Good achievement.

Inclusion

At the very heart of any good Catholic school is 'inclusion' where all pupils and staff are treated equally and fairly. At St Damian's we pride ourselves in the exceptional and seamless relationships between pupils and staff. This is one of the strengths of our school and indeed is one of the most important reasons why St Damian's is viewed as 'special' by many people, myself included. In June we achieved another prestigious accolade; '**The Inclusion Quality Mark**'. This was external recognition of our exceptional pastoral care provided by teachers and support staff at St Damian's. This can be found on the web-site under

'Information and Inclusion Quality Mark. Please take time to read this report as it reflects the many excellent practices at St Damian's that the staff do on a daily basis.

'Real Schools Guide', Manchester Evening News, July 2016

You may have seen that, for the **first** time, we were the top school in Tameside according to the above Guide. This is a fantastic honour and is just recognition of the hard work of the great children, fantastic staff, supportive parents and active governors of the school. Again, I hope that all stakeholders are proud, as I am, of St Damian's. If we continue to believe in ourselves there are no limits to what the Community of St Damian's can achieve!

Some Important Dates This Half-Term

The following are some important dates this half term. These will be displayed on the school web-site.

- Wednesday 21st September: Year 11 Information Evening [For all Year 11 parents]
- Monday 26th September Open Evening: School shuts early for ALL pupils
- Wednesday 28th September: Year 10 Information Evening [For all Year 10 parents]
- Wednesday 19th October: Year 7 Mass [For Year 7 parents]

A Note from the Chair of Governors, Mrs E Jones

Once again at the beginning of the Academic Year, as Chair of Governors I take great pleasure in welcoming you back to another academic year. As you have read above we have had an exceptional year and are looking forward to another year of outstanding successes academically, spiritually and sporting wise. You can rest assured everyone; pupils, staff, both teaching and non-teaching and governors will be working together to ensure your children get the best possible all-round education. The governors look forward to meeting you all at various events through the coming year; should you wish to contact me please do so using the school admin email account.

Finally...

A massive thank you from all the staff for your overwhelming support last year and I hope that this continues this year. Parental Questionnaires returned last year showed 99% of parents would recommend the school to another parent. This support is not taken for granted. If there are any issues, please contact the relevant person in school where we will attempt to sort the issue before it comes a problem. Thankfully, problems are a rarity and most are readily resolved.

Here's to another great year for the Community of St Damian's.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Logue
Headteacher