



In all things faithful

January 2024

Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome to my first newsletter of 2024! Last year, 2023, was on balance, a great year for our community. We achieved a second back-to-back Ofsted outstanding, the class of 2023 achieved our best progress ever which was well above the national average and the St Damian's community won many accolades, including overall secondary school of the year and three secondary school of the year awards. I hope that you are as proud of this community as I am. Mrs Jones, our previous Chair of Governors, would have been very proud of this.

The Catholic Life of the School

Yet again, the catholic life of the school is central to our school with a range of formation activities taking place.

- *Live Simply*: We are starting to work towards achieving the CAFOD 'Live Simply' Award. We have sent off our action plan and been accepted onto the programme, where we have to prove we are taking action to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity. This is a great way for us to demonstrate the Catholic life and mission of St Damian's and make positive changes in terms of the sustainability of our school. Some of our actions include planting flowers in our memorial garden to encourage and help bees, holding community events, charity and aiming to reduce our classroom waste. Staff and students will all be involved along the way and our actions will be shared on social media via our twitter feed. Watch this space!



- *@CaritasSalford #Beethere*: This year our Christmas appeal was for Caritas Salford. Led by our Caritas Ambassadors, we pledged to raise £500 for the #BEEthere campaign. However, in true St Damian's style, we smashed that target and raised a massive **£1,394.56!** Fund-raising activities included the Santa Dash, own clothes day and selling refreshments before our Carol service, what a great team effort! I am forever amazed at the generosity of the St Damian's community to support others who are less fortunate and/or more vulnerable.

- Our *United in Faith Committee* [UIF] attended their second meeting of the year and had much to discuss. One priority is our Yr11 students, ensuring they are well supported through quality teaching and intervention. The committee discussed plans for our St Damian's FEAST day to ensure our students experience a varied and dynamic day. Also discussed were our plans for Lent where we will offer all students the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, attend a Year group Mass and a Q&A session with Fr Jude ['Grill the Priest'] regarding our faith and our Church community.
- As part of our preparations for our upcoming Section 48 inspection we have our school improvement partner, Mr McCarron, in school to complete a report for Governors. The focus of a S48 is to look at three key areas, Catholic Life and Mission, Religious Education and Collective Worship. Key members of staff will contribute to these inspections. I look forward to showing off a strong, caring, catholic community.

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

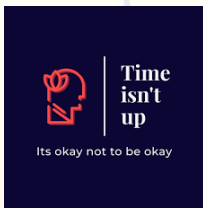
Mr S Logue BA (Hons), MEd., NPQH, NPQEL

St. Damian's RC Science College

- I am delighted to announce that we are supporting the CAFOD Lent appeal and walking to fight poverty this Lent. The challenge is to walk 200Km! Please get involved and help us achieve our goal and join us for our community walk up to Hartshead Pike [or as far as you can] on **Wednesday 27th March 2024 at 9.30am**. Please contact school or email events@stdamians.co.uk for more information. Donations can be made to our JustGiving page - <https://schools.walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/st-damians-rc-science-college>. Let's top the CAFOD School Leaderboard and powerwalk for poverty. We thank you for your generous support with our charity fundraising!



- Mrs Gerschler recently attended the Heads of Department meeting with Salford Diocese. The keynote speaker, Nancy Walbank, presented the morning sessions on an overview of the model curriculum and the themes that run from EYFS to Yr9, allowing us to better prepare our robust curriculum.



- St Damian's Day is tomorrow, and we have confirmed guest speakers from 'Time Isn't Up'. This charity offers mental health support across the UK to take away the stigma of mental health. We are also welcoming 'The Big Issue' Manchester to discuss the work they do in our community and further afield. We will have some Bhangra Dance workshops for students to enjoy as well as a presentation about Islam. We are certain the students are in for a FEAST of experiences!

- Finally, Mrs Jinks, Mrs Almond and myself, had the pleasure of attending a retreat with 29 Yr7 students at Castlerigg Youth Centre in the Lake District. The residential included workshops and walks in the beautiful Keswick countryside and was an opportunity to step back/retreat from life and see the bigger picture. The students made new friends and had new experiences. The Program Leader at Castlerigg said "it was a pleasure to lead the retreat". On a personal level, Mrs Jinks and Mrs Almond totally agree, the children were impeccably behaved, had a great attitude and were highly respectful throughout their stay. It was a real joy to get to know them. We are blessed to have such great children!



Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 – Each year we mark Holocaust Memorial Day and this year's theme is 'The Fragility of Freedom'; freedom is fragile and it cannot be taken for granted. Our Friday Prayer Reflection focused on Holocaust Memorial Day 2024. Everyone received a flame to write a prayer for peace. Year 8 GIFT team have displayed them in the chapel to remember the 6 million men, women and children who were killed, and all people killed in genocides around the world.

Safeguarding Update

- ✓ **Internet Safety Day.** This happens on Tuesday 6th February we will be carrying out a range of activities to raise awareness about the dangers of the internet. This year the theme is 'Inspiring change' and I encourage parents to inspire their own change and spend time asking their child to share what they are doing on the internet, allowing you to put the necessary protective measures in place to keep your child safe. If you need any support, please visit our social media platforms where we share a weekly 'Wake Up Wednesday' information sheet or contact school.



SAFER INTERNET DAY

Inspiring change? Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online.

Safe schools
6th February 2024
Safer Internet Day

Get involved with free resources, tips, advice and more

- ✓ **Measles.** The Government has shared an urgent press release concerning measles. The UK is currently at risk of a measles outbreak. Measles is a serious condition and can lead to serious health complications. According to local records, Tameside has a low up-take for the MMR catch-up programme. Therefore, I ask you check your child is up to date with their immunisations through the NHS app <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/> or by contacting your GP. If your child needs to be vaccinated you can book an appointment by visiting <https://tamesidechildrenandyoungpeople.nhs.uk/our-services/immunisations>. Please be aware of the signs and symptoms of measles, including a high temperature, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, red sore watery eyes, spots in the mouth and possibly a rash over the body.

Attendance

As you may know, school national attendance is a high priority of the Government. Attendance is not at pre-Covid levels, and this is causing concern across the country. Although St Damian's attendance is consistently above the national average, I am still concerned about general attendance. Attendance is crucial for 2 reasons. Firstly, it is a safeguarding issue. The safest place your child could be is in school. Secondly, if they are not regular attenders then they will miss out on learning. Students rarely, if ever, catch up on missed work and 'gaps in learning' are the result. The Government slogan is '*moments matter, attendance counts*'. At St Damian's, which is a thriving safe environment, we want all students to attend and for them to be the best days of their lives. I ask that parents support us in ensuring your child attends school. **NB. Please do not ask me to authorise absence, including holidays.** Unfortunately, the school will fine parents where we believe it is warranted. If we do, we have no other option.

Standards and Expectations

As I have repeatedly said, the behaviour of our students is truly outstanding. Without exception, external visitors comment positively on their conduct. A recent example of this is from Joanne Taberner, a Senior Lecturer in Education, who visited the school as part of quality assuring our teacher trainees and sent me an email saying "*I'm taking the unusual step of writing to you this evening because I was so impressed by all aspects of your school during my visit today. More specifically, from arrival to departure, I was struck by the warm, welcoming and positive atmosphere, the excellent conduct of your pupils, the well-kept classrooms, and the very productive learning I saw taking place. Indeed, in both lessons I observed, there was absolutely no off-task behaviour, and the pupils were fully engaged with the teaching and learning*". This was a lovely email that accurately sums up the atmosphere at St Damian's.

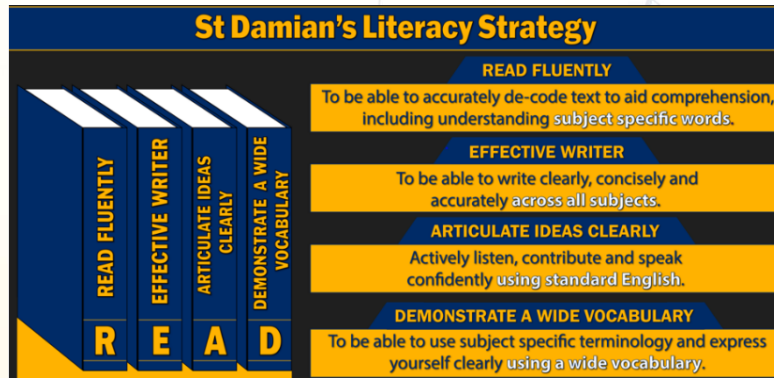
However, if a child does not follow our simple rules their place at St Damian's is at risk. It is also worth noting that if your child **brings drugs or weapons into school** then they are likely to be permanently excluded.

Sadly, I have to also state that a very small number of parents still believe it is acceptable to speak to staff in a manner that does not befit St Damian's. I ask that parents speak respectfully to my staff who work tirelessly for your children. Shouting at reception staff won't solve *any* issue. Thankfully this unacceptable behaviour is not a reflection on St Damian's where respect permeates the entire school.

Curriculum Update. What is my child learning next half term?

Curriculum Snapshots for both KS3 & KS4 for Half Term 4 have been updated and are now available on our school website. Please click here to access them <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/curriculum-information>. These snapshots provide valuable insights into the learning journey your child will experience during the next half term.

READ Update Pupils in Yrs7 - 10 attended the launch assembly of our unique **READ** Strategy delivered by Mrs Heenan. The **READ** Strategy has been created to ensure that our students can access our knowledge-rich curriculum and leave St Damian's as literate young adults who contribute positively to society. An overarching factor of the **READ** strategy encourages our students to read widely and often, to increase their background knowledge, ensuring that they learn new and exciting knowledge to their long-term memories.



To support this, students have access to 'The Literacy Hub' during break, lunch, before and after school, where they can talk to our school librarian and take out a book. We also have an online digital library called 'SORA' which is accessible from the school website, under the student tab and then library. SORA works in much the same way as a normal library, where students can

download a book to a device and read from there. There are 6000 books freely available and the app is monitored by our school librarian. Please continue to encourage your children to read as it supports your child's learning.

Children's Mental Health Week, 5th - 9th February

Mental health in children [and adults] has increased significantly. As a school, where children are at its heart and where we provide a holistic education we educate our students on mental health issues, recognising the signs and signposting appropriate support. During the week commencing 5th February we will have a range of awareness activities to support our children. These include;

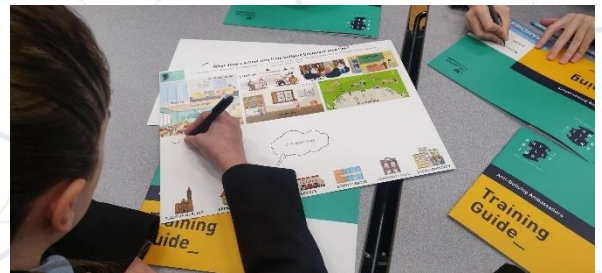
- ✓ Children's Mental Health Week is 5 – 11 February. This year's theme is 'my voice matters'. St Damian's are supporting 'Place To Be' the children's mental health charity that provides counselling and mental health support and training in UK schools.
- ✓ Assemblies to promote Children's Mental Health will include topics such as how we can use our voices to create the changes we want to see and how we can learn to feel comfortable using our voices which express our thoughts and beliefs.
- ✓ On Wednesday 7th February our school *TOGMIND* counsellor, Julie Rushworth, will facilitate drop-in sessions to promote TOGMIND and the services offered.
- ✓ Our experienced and fantastic student support officers will organise 'nattercafes' on Tuesday 6th February and Thursday 8th February to encourage discussions with our pupils around their mental health worries and how they can be signposted for support.
- ✓ On Friday 9th February we will have a *whole school own clothes day*, donation £1, and all proceeds will go to children's mental health charities.

It is important to note that as a school community, we have a significant number of children with a range of mental health issues. A significant number of these are extremely complex and multi-layered. Parents need to know and understand that we do not have the resources or expertise to be successful in all cases, but we will always signpost extra support. Remember that mental health can affect **all students and parents need to be vigilant.**



Diana Award Anti Bullying Training Day On Tuesday 30th January, 10 pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 took part in an Anti Bullying training day in partnership with the Diana Award. We learnt that Princess Diana's message 'Everyone needs to be valued, everyone has the potential to give something back' is as important today as it has always been. We learnt about the types of bullying and how our

social action can play an important role in creating kind and happy environments. Our pupils were engaged and participated all day. We were privileged to be invited to the session along with 10 other schools around Greater Manchester and a big thank you to COOP Academy Failsworth for their hospitality.



Spotlight on Yr9 [Note the dates below]

Yr9 students have demonstrated a growing maturity throughout the year. They have embraced the challenges of Yr9 and are working hard to ensure they are in the best position to excel at Key Stage 4 [KS4]. Mr Burtles, Head of Yr9, said *"It is great to see students taking responsibility for their own learning"*, as exemplified by attendance at the Tuesday evening Study Club. Students have the opportunity to work together, share ideas and to use the school's resources to complete work independently. The year group are also embracing extra-curricular opportunities in a number of sporting, musical and dramatic performances. The Yr9 **Parents Evening** is on **Wednesday 21st February**, and I ask that Yr9 parents make every effort to attend. During the evening you will hear from subject teachers and also be advised on the option choices that Yr9 will be making soon. Mr Burtles said he was *"very proud"* of his year group and the manner in which they embrace the St Damian's Way,

Mrs Kelly is leading the options process this year. This has already commenced through assemblies where students have been informed about subjects and pathways available. This will continue throughout February. **Options Evening** will take place on **Wednesday Thursday 14th March** where you will have the opportunity to meet teachers and discuss the different courses. At KS4 we deliver a robust academic curriculum and the vast majority of students will study the Ebacc qualification consisting of English, Maths, Science, Spanish and History **or** Geography. Furthermore, as a proud Catholic school, all students also take GCSE RE.

Yr11 Update

At the beginning of January, I sent a letter to all parents of Yr11 students. I am delighted to report that that the **vast majority** of Yr11 students are working hard and are focused on their exams. However, a very small minority are still not working hard enough either in school or at home. Sadly, they will regret this on results day. Some brief updates below for your perusal;

- ✓ *Mocks results day.* Students received these results a few weeks ago. These exams were robust, and their purpose was to reflect the 'real' exams. If your child did well, please congratulate them and ensure that they continue to work hard and revise. It will be worth it in the end ! If your child didn't do so well, then they must reflect and ask if they are working hard enough and/or have a positive attitude towards their subjects.

- ✓ Tomorrow, Friday 2nd February, there are further Maths & English Mock exams where they have the chance to improve upon their December mock exams. This is another excellent opportunity for exam practice and to build confidence.
- ✓ *Yr11 Food Technology.* The students have worked exceptionally hard to plan a range of dishes ready for their practical examination. They have each selected recipes that are highly skilled and are challenging, showing their passion and enthusiasm towards the subject. Mrs D’Rozario was both pleased and proud of their attitudes.
- ✓ *Attendance.* Yr11 attendance since September until Friday 26th January has been 93.2%. Our school target is to be consistently above 97% and the aim of Yr11 students should be 100%.
- ✓ *Prom.* As I have repeatedly communicated through letters and assemblies, the Prom is to reward the many great students who work hard, attend school regularly and are consistently punctual. It is by invitation only. Sadly, 9 students have had their prom invitation withdrawn.
- ✓ *Half term intervention.* Maths, RE, History, Science and Art will be doing extra intervention. I ask that parents support these days - your child will be told if they need to attend.

Date	Time	Teacher	Subject
Monday 12 th Feb	Y band – AM: X band –PM	RE Department	RE
Monday 12 th Feb	9:30 – 12:30	DWN	Maths 11xy
Tuesday 13 th Feb	9:30 – 12:30	SKY	Art Catch-Up
Wednesday 14 th Feb	All Day	ABM	11X1 - Separate Science/Chemistry
Thursday 15 th Feb	All Day	AMH & LGY	History

Parents and Supporting their Children in Yr11

As a school there is a real focus on student achievement. My great teachers are, as usual, working really hard to ensure that your child achieves great success this summer. However, we can’t do it alone and parents have a really important part to play. I share five basic ‘tips’ that I believe will have a massive impact on your child’s outcomes in August. All of these are ‘simple’ to do.

1. Ensure your child attends school [and does so with a great attitude to learning]
2. Your child will always have ‘homework’. If nothing is set by their teacher, they can always revise instead
3. Support the schools’ intervention before/after school and during holidays
4. Ensure a quiet place for study for 3 hours a night with no phone access
5. And importantly, take an interest in your child’s work by supporting and encouraging them

Yr8 Parents’ Evening

A massive thank you to all the parents who attended Yr8 parents’ evening last week which was on a cold and bitter evening. As we have come to expect at St Damian’s there was a real ‘buzz’ around the evening. 87 parental returns would recommend the school but 2 wouldn’t. Unfortunately, there were no names given, so I am unable to ascertain the reason for this response. As Headteacher I would like all students and parents to recommend the school. We are not perfect, where is, but it is important that students enjoy their schooling and embrace the positivity and quality of education on offer here. My mantra has always been ‘happy children achieve’. Below are some indicative comments from parents but all comments will be on the website.

“Fantastic parents evening and school. Very proud. Thank you”
 “It was brilliant having the opportunity to learn more about our daughters progress...”
 “Our daughter is lucky to have such fantastic teachers, who are very lovely”
 “Extremely professional and we are very lucky to have a school like this for our children”


Thank you for all the comments and we will also address some of the minor issues that were raised.

Staff Profiles

In this month's newsletter there are profiles of 2 great members of staff, Miss Smith and Miss Gardiner. I enjoyed reading these and I hope that you do to.

- *Miss Smith, Modern Foreign Languages teacher.* I have always been curious about other languages and cultures. Studying French A-Level really piqued my interest, and I think that was due to having such a kind, enthusiastic and amazing teacher who always pushed me to reach my potential. I continued with French at the University of Manchester, where I also learnt Spanish. I have studied at university and taught English in different parts of both France and Spain. These experiences helped me to realise that I wanted to impart my passion onto others. I feel incredibly lucky to be able to do that at St Damian's where both students and staff make teaching such a fun and rewarding job!
- *Miss Gardiner, Special Support Manager.* I started St Damian's in December 2019 as a Learning Support Assistant and it has been a pleasure to work here. In September 2022 I was given the opportunity to progress in my career and was appointed as a Special Support Manager within the SEND department. As part of this, the school supported me through additional training and personal development. In July 2023 I gained my Level 7 Exam Access Arrangements Assessor qualification which would not have been possible without the support of my colleagues. St Damian's truly is a magical place to work. In my free time I coach dancing and cheerleading and have choreographed numerous national winning routines.

Personal Development

- *Maths Quiz:* During the last week of Term 1, the Maths department ran a daily Christmas Maths Quiz. The Maths teachers displayed a different set of puzzles on their classroom doors each day and Yrs 7 - 9 attempted the variety of maths problems with a Christmas twist! Miss Price, Maths Subject Leader, was delighted with how many students took part: they attempted stacking presents, flashing Christmas lights, calculating Terry the Turkey's speed in a race and Santa's snooker game! From the many entries, our prize winners were: Amelia Riley, Ellie-Beth Power, Frankie Kavanagh and Finlay O'Hara, who each won a selection box. Well done!

- *Duke of Edinburgh [DoE] update:* Our 2024 DoE cohort are now fully set up online. Over the next 6 months, students will be completing activities relating to the physical, skill, and volunteering sections of their award. They will be managing their time and uploading evidence on a weekly basis. Alongside the benefit of the activities themselves, this will help to develop their independence and organisational skills. There will be an opportunity for parents to ask any questions at the Yr9 options evening; please look out for Miss Hughes. These are the key dates:
 - ✓ *Silver DoE: Silver practice walk:* Thursday 16th May-Saturday 18th May and *Silver expedition:* Thursday 20th-Saturday 22nd June 2024
 - ✓ *Bronze DoE: Bronze practice day:* Wednesday 15th May 2024 (in school) and *Bronze expedition:* Thursday 11th - Friday 12th July 2024
- *Update on Yr10 work experience.* The deadline for students to source work experience has expired. The vast majority of Yr10 have completed this but there are still some students who have yet to confirm their placement on the app. There is still time to find your own placement in a sector you have interest

in. Remember, a friendly phone call or visiting the workplace with a smile on your face gives you the best opportunity to securing the placement you want.

- This half term we have elected new *Form/Vice Captains*. These students lead activities to support the delivery of Pastoral Themes and represent their forms at assemblies and spiritual reflections and it is also an excellent opportunity to build self-esteem, confidence and resilience. All attributes that help to ensure your child is happy at St Damian's.
- *Fundamental British Values [FBV]*. This half term students will be revisiting FBV. These are a set of 5 values which underpin being a citizen in modern Britain. Mrs Brophy will be delivering assemblies to all year groups and linking the importance of FBV with the recently updated Prevent strategy, with the hope that all our children are educated to a standard where they are able to make moral decisions which take into consideration their own thoughts as well as those of their peers.

Careers Update

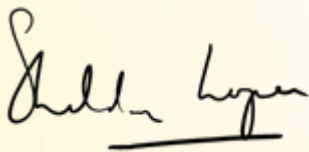
Mr Healey has been busy organising careers events. More detailed reports will follow in the termly 'Careers Compass' Newsletter. During Apprenticeship week [5th - 9th February] students will receive talks from an apprenticeship provider and an ex-student turned apprentice regarding their experience of apprenticeships. The annual Careers Week will be running from the 4th - 9th March allowing students to experience a special careers lesson in each subject, twinned with various talks from different employers and higher education. I am pleased to report that 15 students have been selected to attend a Maths, Physics and Computer Science conference at the XL Academy at Ashton Sixth form, debating the use of AI, hearing from a keynote speaker on AI and listening to what it takes to become an Oxbridge student.

Finally, good news and bad news...

The good news is that over 500 parents put us down as a choice in the recent Yr6 to Yr7 admissions process for September 2024. As a school with an intake of 165 places we are, once again, a school that is heavily over-subscribed. In fact, last week we were in the MEN as a school where it is hard to get a place in Tameside. This reflects the confidence of the local community in the great education that we provide. The bad news is that not every parent who requested St Damian's will get their child in the school. If your child does not get a place, I wish them nothing but the best.

As always, thanks for your support and here is to a great 2024 at St Damian's!

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher