



In all things faithful

April 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to my latest newsletter on all things St Damian's. As we have become accustomed to, the month of March is very busy. I hope that you enjoy reading about the range of opportunities and activities that occur at St Damian's.

### Catholic Life at St Damian's

As the season of Lent continues, the liturgical life of St Damian's continues to be very busy.

- ✓ **Ash Wednesday:** Pupils and staff attended a reflective Ash Wednesday service in the hall. This service provided an opportunity for pupils and staff to reflect on their Lenten promises and receive the ashes as a mark of repentance to God. Pupils listened to scripture and maintained a reverent and prayerful environment. I am delighted that the service was planned and delivered by our Year 9 Liturgy leads.
- ✓ **Lenten Charity:** Each year we have a focus for charity and this year we will be supporting St Joseph's Penny, which supports those living in poverty. Over the past few weeks pupils have raised money through cake, crisp and chocolate sales and a Yr7 v Yr8 competition to see which year can create the longest penny line with all money raised going to St Joseph's Penny appeal.
- ✓ **Reconciliation:** Each Lent pupils are invited to attend Reconciliation in our Chapel. This is an opportunity to receive this sacrament, to say sorry for our sins and become closer to God. This took place on 17th March 2022 and Father Jude was able to hear confessions from many of our staff and pupils during this holy time of Lent.
- ✓ **Lenten Mass:** To prepare for Easter, each year group have had their own Lenten Mass to reflect on their efforts and achievements during Lent and Jesus rising from the dead, defeating death, the most important time in the Catholic Calendar.
- ✓ **Confirmation:** On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March Fr Brown gave a presentation on The Sacrament of Confirmation for our Year 8 Pupils. All Year 8 and 9 pupils will have received a letter on how to take part in this important sacrament. Last year the pupils who received the Sacrament of Confirmation attended a special lunch at school to celebrate, hopefully this year we will have even more pupils attend our celebration.
- ✓ **Ukraine Collection:** As we watch the news, we have felt compelled to help the people of Ukraine. Therefore, as a staff community we have organised both cash donation envelopes at the office and donations via PAY360 online which will be sent to CAFOD and the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Appeal and Caritas Internationalis to help the people suffering the effects of war. Please keep the people of Ukraine and all those who are helping in your prayers.

### Our New Mission Statement: *The St Damian's Way*

Following on from our INSET day in November, our new Mission Statement, referred to as '*The St Damian's Way*', has been launched. This shows our underpinning values and principles that we use as a guide to make sure our community is ambitious, inclusive, strong in faith and is based on our core value of respect.

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

St. Damian's RC Science College

**D**iversity is embraced as we are ALL made in the Image of God  
**A**chievements are celebrated as recognition of our growing gifts  
**M**utual respect is the foundation of our actions  
**I**nclusive is paramount: we 'Believe to Achieve'  
**A**ll are called to be 'Faithful in all things'  
**N**urturing our faith, talents and values  
**S**ervice is at the heart of our Catholic community

### Website Update: Personal Development and Catholic Life

Two new areas of our school website have been updated. The '*Personal Development*' tab outlines a comprehensive range of activities that compliments our ambitious, broad and balanced academic curriculum. The '*Catholic Life*' tab outlines the religious and prayer life of the school, the spiritual and moral formation of pupils and includes our new School Mission Statement. Please take a look at our website to get a flavour of the excellent opportunities here at St Damian's.

### Debating Club

I am delighted to report that we have now formed a debating club where each week two pupils discuss a topical issue and then are asked questions by an audience. This happens every Friday lunchtime and is hosted by Mr Gregory. This is an excellent opportunity for pupils to articulate their viewpoint, improve their reasoning and presentation skills and build their confidence in front of their peers. Furthermore, it encourages our pupils to respect other pupils' views and opinions. Debates thus far have included '*Socialism v Capitalism*' and '*Should vaccination be mandatory?*' I had the pleasure to be invited to a debate on '*Should the Island of Ireland be united?*'. I was extremely impressed with the mature nature of both the speakers and the quality of questioning.

### Year 7 Parents' Evening Feedback

The recent Year 7 Parents' Evening was a joy to behold. It was busy and there was a great buzz to the place. Attendance was 86%. Although this is high, I would hope that attendance at parental evenings is as close to 100% as possible as it is a great opportunity to build relationships and speak to teachers face-to-face. It is great once again to see parents back in the school for face-to-face parental evenings. Parental questionnaire returns were, yet again, overwhelmingly positive. A massive thank you for the comments and entrusting the school to look after your child's education. Your support is never taken for granted. 89 returns out of 90 would recommend the school. Below are some of the comments. May I add that all the comments are on the website for your perusal.

- ✓ *I am exceptionally happy about my daughter attending St Damian's. The school provides a fantastic education and a safe, secure and caring environment for my child. Thank you!*
- ✓ *We are worried that being the only pupil from his school, that he would struggle to settle in. We have been really impressed at everything our son has achieved in Yr7. And are grateful to all the staff for making his experience so positive. Definitely the right choice! Thank you!*
- ✓ *Since my daughter has started at St Damian's she has grown in confidence and is coming on in leaps and bounds. She has made lots of new friends which has done her the world of good. The teachers are exceptional at this school and really helped her in every way possible. Well done to all the staff and thank you.*
- ✓ *An excellent school with good values and learning.*

Please visit our website for all the comments from the evening.

### Safety on Site

On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 there was a road traffic incident outside school that blocked the entrance and exit to the carpark. Thankfully no one was seriously injured. However, it once again highlights the safety of our pupils arriving and leaving school. The number of vehicles using the carpark has substantially increased and it is putting our children at risk of an accident. Please be considerate and do not use it as a drop off point or a turning circle so that buses, disabled vehicle access, staff and delivery vehicles can safely navigate the carpark. Astonishingly I observe cars **driving through red lights at speed** when there are dozens of our pupils ready to cross at the lights.

### Sexual Abuse and Safeguarding

Sexual abuse is an ongoing, hidden issue that many young people are exposed to. Sexual abuse *'involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.'* At St Damian's we have the mantra **'it could happen here'** and I ask that parents also adopt this attitude. If you believe your child is at risk of being sexually abused then please act immediately by contacting children's social care [www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk](http://www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk) (Tameside) or [www.olscb.org](http://www.olscb.org) (Oldham). If you prefer you can contact school and ask to speak to a member of our safeguarding team.

### Attendance

There is no doubt that Covid has impacted children's attendance over the past two years. However, St Damian's, as it is nationally, is still seeing lower levels of attendance than what we would normally expect. As part of our safeguarding procedures, we contact every parent when their child is not present without a reason. I ask that you ensure that your child attends school unless they are unwell. It is important to note that poor attendance has an adverse effect on your child's education as well as being a safeguarding issue as school is the safest place for them.

### Year 11 Update

- *Hard work:* It is now fast approaching the exams in May/June. It is vital that all Yr11 pupils are working hard at both home and school. I can't stress enough that there is **no substitute for hard work**.
- *Revision at Easter:* To help prepare for their GCSEs we have a revision schedule over Easter. Your child will have been told by their subject teacher if they need to attend. Please ensure you support this excellent opportunity.
- *More exams:* As part of the national guidance to complete assessments for all Yr11 pupils in the unlikely cancellation of the exams, Yr11 pupils have recently completed another set of assessments.
- *Yr11 Leavers Assembly:* After a few years absence, I am delighted to report that we will be having a Leavers Mass on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 12 o'clock. This is a lovely occasion and is to celebrate your child's time at St Damian's.
- *Construction Exam:* Congratulations to the Year 11 Construction class who have received some excellent examination results in the January exam. These are worth 25% of their overall qualification. Well done!
- *Prom.* A great tradition and a highlight of the school calendar our Prom is taking place on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July. Sadly, a small number of pupils will not be celebrating the Prom due to lack of work and silly behaviour. Furthermore, a small number of pupils have received a letter regarding attendance

between now and the beginning of the exams or their invitation will be withdrawn. These pupils will have already received a letter.

### Year 9 Football Update

On Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March the Yr9 football team played St. Peter's in the quarter final of the Greater Manchester Catholic Schools Cup. They battled superbly against a very physical St. Peter's team, with the game ending 2-2. St Damian's held their nerve and won 5-4 in the penalty shoot-out. As well as celebrating, they were very gracious towards their opponents and we received the following email from their PE Teacher, Mr Finn.

*"Congratulations on winning what was a brilliant game! I'm just emailing you to say how much of a credit your lads are to the school! On the way out of the Astro, almost every one of your players came and shook hands with the lad who missed his penalty and told him to get his head up. This showed great sportsmanship after a fantastic, competitive game! Good luck in the next round! Kind regards, Mr Finn"*

St. Damian's will now play St. Monica's in the semi-finals after Easter. A quick update on our other teams:

- Yr7 are in Semi Finals of both the Tameside Cup and the GMCSA and will represent Tameside in the Greater Manchester Schools 7 a-side competition in June
- Year 9 are in the semi-final of the Tameside Cup
- Year 10 are in the FINAL of the Greater Manchester Plate
- Year 11 are in the semi-final of the Tameside Cup

Well done to the teams and the PE department. Watch this space!

### National Careers Week [7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March]

National Careers Week was packed with a range of different activities for pupils in Years Yr7-10:

- **'Careers at a Glance'**: Early morning employer talks were live streamed from Greater Manchester Careers Service. These focused on engineering & consulting with *Arup*, Technology, sales and marketing with *Autotrader*, HR, IT & Construction with *BAM Nuttall*, producers, artists and bands with the *Warehouse project* and construction and property services with *Wilmott Dixon*.
- **Careers Week Form Competition**: This focused on 4 key areas of business using St. Damian's as an example to develop key skills in marketing, enterprise, sustainability & creating community links. Entries were of a very high standard and it was very difficult to choose the winning forms. The following forms were the winners for their year group: 8SBY, 9RJS & 10SBR. The Yr7 winner will be announced after Easter.
- **Labour Market Information Assemblies**: Mrs Brierley, from the Department of Work and Pensions gave pupils an update on the local job market looking at the top sectors: retail, motor mechanics, manufacturing, construction, health and social care and education and jobs of the future in artificial intelligence, digital technology, environment and biotechnology. There are plenty of interesting future opportunities for pupils to consider.
- **Employer Encounters**: Yr7 met Ms Lewis, Managing Partner and Senior producer at The Gate Films who spoke about how her team comes up with ideas for adverts and then the stages of production for a range of big brand clients. Yr8 & Yr10 met Ms Duffy, Social Value Lead at TRU West - Bam Nuttall spoke about the Trans Pennine Rail link upgrade and the focus on digital construction and sustainable infrastructure and apprenticeships in Civil Engineering, Construction, Quantity Surveying or Building Services Engineering, Business and Administration. Yr9 met Mr Mason, Managing Director, Stately Strategic Recruitment Group who talked about STEM jobs including civil/chemical/electrical and mechanical engineering and the aviation industry.

- **Careers Ambassadors:** Mrs Henshaw was impressed by the number of high-quality applications for this new pupil leadership role and has appointed a team of 20 pupils to the role of Careers Ambassador, led by Thomas Brown in Year 10, Alice Sloan and Rebecca Ukponrefe-Johnson in Year 9, Marco James in Year 8 and Shaun Shibu in Year 7. Congratulations to all pupils involved.
- **Virtual Careers Fair:** A Virtual Careers Fair was available online for pupils to explore a range of careers with a wide range of sectors and employers being represented.
- **Careers Passport:** This was a reflection task for pupils to identify their key employability skills and think about plans for their future. It also had a number of useful website addresses such as the National Careers website to encourage pupils to do their own independent research.
- **Careers Lessons across the Curriculum:** Bespoke Careers lessons were delivered across all subjects giving pupils a broad range of knowledge of the types of skills needed and the jobs available in specialist areas of the curriculum if they chose to go on and do further study.

As you can see from the activities above, our careers provision is extremely comprehensive.

Furthermore, each month a Careers Update is posted on the school website: <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/careers-updates>. This gives valuable information about careers-related activities and experiences that are available online or in the local area and is targeted at pupils in all year groups. Please encourage your child to get involved in the activities that are being publicised.

#### **Year 10 Realising Aspirations Programme**

We are delighted 28 pupils were successful in being awarded places on the Ashton Sixth Form **Realising Aspirations Programme**. Pupils have enrolled for courses including Art & Design, Business, Economics and Finance, Humanities, Performing Arts, Science & Maths and Social Sciences. Pupils will be set an academic assignment to challenge their independent study skills towards the end of their course. A great initiative to build confidence and raise aspirations. I look forward to hearing of their successes.

#### **Yr10 Visit to the University of Sheffield**

A few weeks ago, Yr10 visited the University of Sheffield to see the university campus and gain an insight into student life. Pupils met representatives from a range of universities and higher education institutions as well as student ambassadors, gaining first-hand information about Higher Education and university life. Many of the pupil evaluations said it had changed their attitudes about applying to university 'It made me realise there are more opportunities than I thought', 'It makes me want to work harder as it opens up more doors and opportunities in the future', 'I have decided that I now want to go to university'. As a school we will continue to promote further education.

#### **Parental Information Evenings**

As part of our re-engagement plans post-Covid, we held 2 Parental Evenings this half term. The Yr10 parental information focused on safeguarding, curriculum and examinations, careers and mental health/well-being. 71 of our Yr10 parents attended the evening. The Yr8 parental information focused on upcoming examinations and revision support/tips, standards and social/emotional support and mental health/well-being. 45 of our Yr8 parents attended the evening. These evenings are an **excellent** opportunity to share important information that is unique and pertinent to that Year group. I ask that parents make *every effort* to attend these so that we can work together to ensure your child gets a great education.

#### **#BeeWell Survey**

St Damian's has taken part in the Greater Manchester #BeeWell survey that focused on the mental health and well-being of pupils in Yrs 8 & 10. 142 secondary schools took part, involving nearly 40,000 pupils. The results for our pupils at St Damian's were overall positive. I was particularly pleased that our pupils feel a great belonging to the school, believe that they get high levels of support from school

and believe that levels of bullying are low. I was also delighted that the pupils believe that relationships are strong. These outcomes all bode well for the future achievements of St Damian's.

### Prefects

We are always very proud of our Prefects as they are exceptional ambassadors of our community. Yr10 have now completed their Prefect applications and the quality of their letters has been amazing! All pupils awarded a prefect tie consistently meet our high expectations. We will be in the process of interviewing and selecting our Head boy and Head girl after Easter. Watch this space! Unfortunately, there some pupils who may not meet the criteria to be awarded a Prefect on this occasion, but there will be another opportunity in September 2022 and January 2023.

### British Science Week 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March

Our science department celebrated 'British Science Week', a celebration of science, technology, engineering, and maths. A paper aeroplane contest saw pupils create aeroplanes to see who could throw them the furthest. This was measured and recorded by our enthusiastic STEM leaders. To enter the contest, pupils were asked to "bring in a tin, for a chance to win", with the donations collected going to 'Tameside East Foodbank' and 4 prizes were awarded. The winners were Franek Chmara [Yr7], Charlie Rayner [Yr9], Ethan Montebon [Yr10] and Viraj Parmar [Yr11]. Well done to the winners! Another activity, the ignition of methane bubbles enabled pupils to observe this eye-catching combustion reaction, as well as discussing fossil fuels being burned to give out energy. Pupils were asked to bring along any spare change they had in to support their penny trail competition. It was fantastic to see the enthusiasm for science by our pupils!

### Trainee Teachers

On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022, St Damian's received an Appropriate Body Quality Assurance Visit from The East Manchester Teaching School Hub. This visit was to make sure that the ECTs (Early Career Teachers) are being appropriately supported. Please find below some key findings from the report for your perusal.

- The school provides a comprehensive CPD programme which is responsive to the needs of the specific ECTs
- The ECT interviewed feels well supported and highlighted many positives about her experience of induction so far at St Damian's RC Science College.
- ECT responses to pre-visit questions were all positive and demonstrated that they are experiencing an appropriate and supportive induction

We are really proud of how our ECTs are progressing and the support that they are receiving at St Damian's. They are our future leaders.

### Pi Day

On the 14<sup>th</sup> March the Maths department celebrated the constant  $\pi$ , known as Pi. Pi is the symbol used in maths to represent a constant that is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. In lessons, pupils used string to investigate the relationship between the diameter and the circumference of a circle. Others went outside and physically measured properties of large circles on the netball court. Our great Maths department was decorated with Pi posters and maths staff wore Pi T-shirts to celebrate the day. All pupils were invited to take part in a competition to see who could remember the most digits. We had lots of great entries with pupils remembering more than 100 digits. Congratulations to Shaun Shibu who remembered Pi to 222 digits! Mr Greenall can remember 54 of them.

### Another pupil from St Damian's going to Oxbridge

I have recently been contacted by an ex-pupil who attended St Damian's from 2015-2020 who shared great news that she has been accepted to study Quantity Surveying at Oxford University. This is a

tremendous achievement. The unofficial motto of St Damian's is 'Believe to Achieve' and there is no doubt that many pupils live out this motto. She wished to remain anonymous, but the St Damian's community wish her all the best in the future! Again, a big Well Done!

### Student Council

For the first time in the history of St. Damian's we have established a Student Council, comprising 16 pupils: 4 pupils each from Yrs7 - Yr10. Pupils were initially nominated by their form tutors and then through an application which summarised their personal attributes that made them suitable for this prestigious role. They will meet regularly to discuss their thoughts and ideas regarding Learning, Teaching and Extracurricular activities. It is great to see our pupils having a stake in the school and I look forward to working with them and Miss Joyce over the next few months.

### Update on our Young Carers

The 16<sup>th</sup> March was 'Young Carers Action Day'. Young carers are pupils who help to support with a caring role in the family home, as well as accessing their fulltime education and as a school we are very proud of them We currently have 14 young carers at St Damian's. We acknowledged their dedication by rewarding them with a trip to Hollywood bowl in Ashton. This allowed our young carers to have a VIP experience away from the stresses of everyday life. Furthermore, we were also lucky to have someone from Kooth [*an online mental wellbeing community*] delivering a young carers workshop, discussing the issues and struggles of young carers across the country.

### Celebration Evening

This year we will be able to celebrate the efforts and achievements of our fantastic pupils as I am praying that we will once again be allowed to gather at school. This is one of my favourite nights of the academic year. Pupils are rewarded for a range of reasons including effort, attainment or attendance. There are also subject specific awards that reward pupils for their extra efforts. Celebration Evening will take place on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

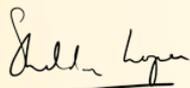
### Finally...

As a school, our role is first and foremost to educate our pupils. However, to do so, we need the best staff. As a school we embrace trainee teachers and I received an email recently from a Lead Tutor from Manchester University who said, amongst other things, "*We need to do something to recognise the work you do at St Damian's – the support has been absolutely exemplary, and as a result we have a trainee who is thriving*". This is testament to the great teacher mentors that we have in school who are, quite simply the best, and a credit to the teaching profession.

I hope that you have a happy and holy Easter.

As always, thanks for your continued support!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue  
Headteacher