



In all things faithful

**St Damian's RC Science College**

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**Headteacher**

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

**October 2021**

**Dear parents/carers**

Welcome to my second letter of the academic year. The following contains lots of important information for all things St Damian's. I hope that you enjoy reading.

**The Catholic life of the school**

During September our community has enjoyed our extended form times to deepen our spiritual growth through our Form Time reflection activities. Forms have had the opportunity to pray for the needs of the vulnerable in the world such as the families in Afghanistan, they have reflected on their role in living out Laudato Si and caring for our common home and discussed how we can support people living with Cancer in our own community through our donations and prayers. During October, pupils will take part in a Black History Month reflection activity. Forms are invited to research a lesser-known individual from Black history. As a form, they have read about the life of Julia Greeley, an influential Catholic woman who is on the path to Sainthood.

Our GIFT team are also back in action, promoting our faithful group of inspirational leaders at the Year 7 assembly as we are hoping to recruit more fantastic and enthusiastic Year 7s to proudly wear the GIFT team purple ties and be active in the prayer life of the school. We are grateful that Chapel assemblies are able to take place again and forms have the opportunity to pray and reflect in our Chapel on matters that affect them in their lives as well as pray for the needs of the Church and world.

October is the Month dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God and we are pleased to invite our pupils to come to the chapel to take part saying the Rosary at The Rosary Club, every Monday in the month of October. Pupils can bring their Rosary beads and share the special stories that are so often attached to them.

**INSET DAY**

During our INSET day, staff will take time to reflect on our vocation as educators and what that means to us within Catholic Education. The INSET day will review and update the St Damian's Mission Statement. As a community we often talk about the 'St Damian's Way' and we want to express this through our Mission Statement where our faith, values and purpose are embedded. At the heart of the day will be a focus on our pupils, as we recognise that St Damian's is their school, and that we are here to serve them.

**PSHE, RSE and the St Damian's Curriculum**

Subject Curriculum Overviews are available on the school website for all year groups and all subjects. They can be found under Information/Curriculum Information/Key Stage 3 – Overview or Key Stage 4 – Overview. They are a useful tool for parents to use in dialogue with their child and are a quick checklist when pupils need to revise prior to an assessment.

Since September 2020, it has been statutory that all schools are teaching Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) as a part of the PSHE curriculum. Our RSE curriculum is fully embedded in the values which support our Catholic mission statement and also promote healthy balanced debate. The curriculum enables pupils to flourish in both their academic and personal lives as well as to stay health, safe and prepared for life and work in modern Britain. It enables pupils to develop resilience, know how to and when to ask for help as well

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as access support in difficult situations. The PSHE Curriculum Overviews include the delivery of RSE and are available on the website. We welcome any feedback on any elements of the RSE Curriculum.

### High aspirations

St Damian's is proud of producing pupil outcomes that are consistently above the National Averages in all key performance measures. As a school we have high expectations and this is most obviously seen in our pupil outcomes, attendance levels, accolades collected and being a heavily over-subscribed school. To maintain this, I politely ask that parents support us in the following;

- ✓ *High levels of attendance.* I understand and appreciate that this is difficult at the minute, but my attendance officers have identified a significant number of pupils whose attendance is below our expectations. There is a strong correlation between GCSE outcomes and attendance.
- ✓ *Maintaining our high standards.* For example, our uniform looks great and I ask that parents support us in ensuring this continues. I am always pleased when the pupils look smart and show pride wearing the uniform.
- ✓ *You support us in implementing our 5 simple rules* which we enforce. These rules create the right environment where pupils can develop both socially and academically.
- ✓ *And finally, that as a parent you support and encourage your child* to achieve their potential. As a community we welcome, and appreciate, all parental support and feedback. Thanks in advance for supporting our school. Please encourage and support your child

### Year 11 updates

We have finally received the information regarding next years' examinations. As I write, the expectation is that exams will be taken place next May/June, albeit with some small adaptations. It is fundamental that your child is working hard at home each evening to prepare for these exams and the upcoming Mocks in December. It is equally important that they have a positive attitude towards their studies and have a strong self-belief that they really **can** achieve their potential. This starts with focusing in lessons, attending appropriate revision sessions and working hard at home. I ask that parents support the school in ensuring that your children are working at least 2 hours a night on revision and/or homework. This must not be underestimated as the GCSE exams are linear which means that pupils need to regularly revise. The Year 11 Parents' Evening is Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

### St Damian's online School

The Online School is now up and running. If your child has to isolate with Covid, they will automatically be added to the Online School by Mrs Rowlinson (our Online School lead). If well enough to complete work, your child should follow the timetable of the school day and complete the work that will have been uploaded onto the Online School. Mrs Rowlinson is available on TEAMS throughout the day to support all pupils who are isolating. If you child is not well enough to complete work, please could you let the school know.

### Literacy update

*"Literacy is the single most significant skill needed to function effectively in school, in the workplace, and in society... it is vital to a successful education, career, and quality of life!"* This quote summarises the importance of literacy. As a school, we are focusing on reading this year. I ask that parents support us in this quest by ensuring that your child has a reading book with them at all times to support our reading focus. The following website provides you with some age-appropriate books to encourage your child to read [www.schoolreadinglist.co.uk](http://www.schoolreadinglist.co.uk)

### **ASPIRE day**

Our first ASPIRE Day will take place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Pupils will engage in a range of activities promoting their spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development. Delivery will include external speakers, a theatre group and a band. Themes covered in Year 7 will include healthy friendships, self esteem and anti-bullying. Year 8 will be looking at aspects of the law, relationships and diet, Year 9 will be looking at cyber-safety and racial tolerance and Year 10 will be looking at healthy relationships, gender identity and mental health. Year 11 will attend the Post 16 Forum and meet a range of speakers from local colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers as well as local employers so that they can plan their next steps after leaving St. Damian's. This day is an excellent opportunity to enrich our curriculum.

### **Covid School Based Immunisation Dates**

As you are aware, there are currently plans to roll out vaccinations to 12-15 year olds for the safety of themselves and others. The date that I have been given for St Damian's is November. This is a health issue rather than an educational issue and I will share more details about the plans, including consent, when I receive them. I hope that as many parents consent to their child receiving the immunisation so that St Damian's continues to be a safe place to teach and learn.

### **Covid 'disruption'**

I had hoped that the disruption to your child's education would have settled down but sadly, it continues to disrupt the 'normal' school day with many pupils and staff having to isolate. The impact of this is plain to see. As well as being unwell, a significant number of children are absent and this, no doubt, will have an impact on both their progress and well-being. Secondly, it is having a significant impact on staffing levels within the school. This has affected both teachers and the support staff. I ask that parents are mindful of this fact over the next few weeks and months. NB: Please do not send your child into school if they have Covid symptoms. Please book a PCR test and inform the school.

### **Vapes in and out of school**

Recently in school there has been a spate of pupils using vapes in school. Vapes are increasingly made to look like products that pupils would usually want to use such as highlighters and USB sticks. Vapes contain nicotine and potentially could also contain other serious harmful substances such as cannabis oil. Please check your child's bag regularly to ensure that your child is not in possession of these and that they are not brought into school or used on the school bus. Serious sanctions will be put in place if a pupil is caught with a vape in school or uses a vape on the school bus.

### **Buses**

It has been brought to my attention that a small number of pupils' behaviour on a select few school buses has been below St Damian's accepted standards. Can I ask parents to support us in ensuring that the standards of behaviour on the buses is on par with their behaviour in school. If pupils misbehave on the bus, they are likely to be banned from using the school service and excluded. I expect that pupils are ambassadors for the school, both in and out of school.

### **Fundraising**

As you know, Team St Damian's, completed the Manchester 10k run last week to raise money for Macmillan. It was a great day, a real buzz and I was extremely proud of my fantastic colleagues who supported each other before, during and after the event. Already, many of us have signed up for the Manchester 10k next May. Can I take this opportunity to thank the many parents who sponsored us. It is really appreciated. There is still time to sponsor. Simply google 'St Damian's Just Giving' and the page should appear. No amount is too small, and all donations are greatly received. Furthermore, we held our annual Macmillan Coffee morning. This was very well attended, and in fact I believe it was our busiest ever, and again was part of our fund-raising efforts. At the time of writing, we have not yet got a grand total.

Additionally, 2 staff, Mrs Mattison and Ms Rowlinson completed the Manchester Marathon, again raising lots of money for McMillan Cancer Support. Although, it was tough, they were at work on Monday morning as usual looking after our great pupils! I wanted to personally congratulate them!

### Work experience last July

Last July many of our pupils took part in work experience placements in the local community. These included nurseries, primary schools, hospitals, the construction industry, leisure, engineering and accountancy to mention a few. Although disrupted by Covid, it was a highly rewarding and worthwhile experience for many of our pupils. I will share some comments for your perusal.

Feedback from work placements:

- ✓ *"XX was a pleasure to have...No task was too much trouble...She was polite, conscientious and hard-working"*
- ✓ *"We were extremely pleased with XX's work ethic, attendance, punctuality, attendance and time keeping. XX was friendly and approachable... XX will be a credit to any future employer"*
- ✓ *"Brilliant attitude. Been a big help for me this week"*
- ✓ *"Her teamwork and enthusiasm has been exceptional"*

Some comments from parents included:

- ✓ *"I feel that XX has gained a lot more confidence and has learnt to become more assertive"*
- ✓ *"He is speaking a lot more in groups of people"*
- ✓ *"It was a thoroughly worthwhile experience"*
- ✓ *"The biggest benefit has been the confidence boost..."*
- ✓ *"The skills my daughter developed were: patience, listening, teamwork and communication"*
- ✓ *"XX must have benefitted from this experience as she never stopped talking about it"*

This work experience is a fantastic opportunity for pupils to develop key employability skills such as teamwork, time management, problem-solving and communication skills. A reminder that the current Year 10 will do work experience week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> July 2022, the last week of the academic year. Please put these dates in your diary. The work experience launch assembly will take place on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Pupils will receive further details on how to find a placement. Pupils are also encouraged to use friends and family as useful workplace contacts.

### Our core value is respect...

Can I take this opportunity to say a massive and genuine thank you to the vast majority of parents who overwhelmingly support the school. On the rare occasion there is an issue my staff and I will always go the extra mile to solve the issue. However, a small number of parents think that it is all right to swear at staff, or worse, make them cry due to rudeness. This is not acceptable. We pride ourselves in living out our core value of respect. I politely ask if there is an issue, please speak to the great staff at St Damian's in a polite and respectful manner. I will always endeavour to meet parents but not the few parents who believe it is acceptable to be rude.

### Safeguarding with a focus on Sexual Harassment

Safeguarding is our number one priority and we endeavour to ensure that we educate your child on a range of issues that they will face. Currently we are focussing on sexual harassment and abuse in response to the recent DfE publication (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>). Pupils will be taught about the implications of sexual harassment through assemblies, form time activities, poster campaigns and PSHE lessons. I would like to share with parents that sexual harassment will not be tolerated at St Damian's and a zero-tolerance approach will be adopted. So that parents can support us, I am providing a list of some issues that we deem to be sexual harassment. This includes; use of sexualised or homophobic language, inappropriate physical

contact, intimidating verbal comments or contact or sending inappropriate images. This list is not exhaustive. Remember the mantra adopted at St Damian's is that sexual harassment is not 'just banter' or 'a joke'. It is unacceptable in all forms.

### St Damian's and Careers

In previous correspondence I have always referred to our comprehensive careers strategy that is embedded at St Damian's. Well, a few weeks ago I received an email from Mr Kevin Mullin, the Enterprise Coordinator Tameside and Bury who informed us that St Damian's is "the only school in Tameside to have achieved 100% in all eight Gatsby Benchmarks". This is a fantastic achievement, more so because of Covid, and I am extremely proud of this recognition. As part of our careers provision, we make links to curriculum learning and employability skills, offer encounters with employers, colleges and universities and provide the opportunity for pupils to do work experience. Pupils are able to meet our independent Careers Adviser and learn about the labour market in the local area. Our Careers work is underpinned by work with our Enterprise Adviser, Mr Lee Mason, a local Tameside business leader who has been into school several times and has delivered a range of workshops for pupils. We look forward to planning another busy year of careers activities.

### Finally...

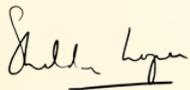
I frequently receive emails from parents regarding the school, the overwhelmingly majority of them are positive. I will end this letter with one such email I received from a parent. This was received a few weeks ago and I asked the parent permission to share.

*Dear Mr Logue, I am writing today to pass on a huge thank you to you and your teaching team. Recently, \*\*Names 4 teachers\*\* all responded promptly to my request for support with a couple of issues I raised concerning my daughter. The issues were dealt with swiftly and action was immediately taken! Therefore, currently resulting with my daughter now comfortable in her lessons and able to fully focus on her subjects.*

*I was positively overwhelmed by the responses and action taken by the teachers and I wanted to highlight this to you as this evidences what a great teaching team you have. My daughter is now in year 10 and I am so pleased she was offered a place at the school, as I feel she has always been supported well by the school to ensure she reaches her full potential! Kindest Regards*

As always, thanks for your support.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Logue

Headteacher