



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

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Headteacher

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December 2021

Welcome to the latest information regarding all things St Damian's. This has been a very busy term for our community, and I am delighted that it has been another successful term under very challenging conditions. As I have said many times before, I am so proud to be the Headteacher of such a great school.

January 2022 starting days for pupils

The current guidance is that all pupils should perform at least one LFT in school upon their return to school in January 2022. *[Note: At the time of writing there is great uncertainty, and the guidance may change over the festive break. If it does, I will communicate the changes to you].* The guidance also says that the school must conduct a test on-site. To accommodate on-site testing at the beginning of January, a staggered start will be necessary. The following dates are when pupils will return.

- Tuesday 4th January 2022: **Years 7, 10 & 11 ONLY**
- Wednesday 5th January 2022: **ALL pupils** return to school

Once the on-site testing has been completed, I ask that parents test their children at least twice per week and inform school of the results. This is to ensure protection of the school community.

It is important to remember that if your child has symptoms, or feels unwell, they **MUST NOT** come into school. You should book a PCR test and inform school. Can I also ask parents to remind their children that they must wear masks on the buses and in communal areas in school. Please ensure your child has a mask. If pupils do not have masks, I will ask the pupils to ring their parents and bring one up to school.

Celebrations during Advent

Advent is a time of preparation, and we reflect on our actions, turn away from sin and look forward to the birth of Jesus. Pupils have reflected on the Advent virtues of *hope, faith, joy and peace* and each morning, using the Cafod Advent Calendar, pupils have recognised the importance of praying for others. Year 7 forms have taken part in the 'Travelling Nativity' where figures of Mary, Joseph and a donkey travel from home to home during Advent, a tradition that originated in Mexico where it is known as *posada*.

Closer to home during Advent we have been supporting the Tameside Toy Appeal and asked pupils and staff to bring in a toy or Christmas gift for those who are vulnerable or living in poverty. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of staff, parents & pupils.

Finally, staff have been taking part in 'The St Damian's Way - Act of kindness event'. This was a chance for staff to say 'thank you' to each other for all the hard work and dedication over the term. Staff secretly treated someone to a random act of kindness and spread Christmas cheer.

INSET Day

On Friday 19th November, all St Damian's staff had a day to reflect on what it means to work within Catholic Education but with a special focus on 'The St Damian's Way'. Staff discussed the impact of prayer and service that builds our unique ethos and mission. Staff had opportunity to think about the everyday actions that make up our ethos; the quiet word with a pupil that will make their day, the one-to-one explanation that helps a pupil to understand, the respect that we show in the corridors with each other. Staff were surprised by our extremely important guest speakers – our St Damian's pupils! The pupils spoke very eloquently about why we needed a new Mission Statement that represented 'The St Damian's Way' as they described it. Pupils talked about respect, forgiveness, welcome, equality, resilience, excellence and the best of all, being happy. Our new Mission Statement will be launched on St Damian's Day in February which will mirror our day-to-day experiences in our school.

St. Damian's RC Science College

Inter-faith week

St Damian's, although a fiercely proud Catholic school, is a community of many faiths. During the national Inter-faith week our community celebrated our differences and similarities through our Inter-faith Breakfast for staff and pupils. In groups, staff and pupils discussed 'The Big Questions' sharing their thoughts and opinions with each other. This was a fantastic event that brought together members of community and allowed all to feel valued and their voices heard. We had so much fun that we plan to arrange another breakfast for more diverse debates.

Another accolade for St Damian's

I am delighted to report that Mrs Jones, known affectionately to all as Betty, has won 'Governor of the Year' at the **National Schools Awards 2021**. Betty, alongside her husband and daughter-in-law, was in the House of Lords on Wednesday 8th December where she picked up her award on the night. As a national award, the competition was fierce, but Betty's nomination shone through and impressed the judges. This was justified recognition for her dedication and many years' service to the St Damian's Community. For the record, Betty truly is a remarkable winner!

Online safety

Christmas is a very exciting time for young people and many teenagers get new technology. However, new technology also leaves our young people vulnerable to bullying, grooming, online scams and being exposed to indecent materials. Children only get one chance to be children, so it is important that we as adults protect them and keep them safe. The NSPCC has produced a wonderful set of resources to help parents and children to educate themselves about online safety, I urge you to take a few minutes to look at the resources because you cannot undo what your child has seen, done or heard online once it has been done. Stay safe and use [Online Safety for Children - Tips & Guides | NSPCC](#)

Confidence in the local community

Yet again, St Damian's remains a highly popular and over-subscribed school with nearly 650 pupils putting us down as a choice and well over 200 as a first choice. Sadly, there will be some disappointed parents as our admissions number is 165 for each year group. However, it is very pleasing to see that the local community entrusts St Damian's to deliver a great secondary education for their children. As a staff we take this responsibility very seriously.

Year 11 exams in January/February 2022

The following exams are taking place. Note that Construction is a few weeks after Christmas.

- *BTEC Construction* – 13th January 2022
- *NCFE Award in ICT* – 6 week assessed practical exam starting in January 2022
- *BTEC Technical Award in Child Development* – 10th February 2022

It is vital pupils are preparing for these exams. Pupils must practise past papers and use the revision resources on Teams. Pupils who have been absent must catch up on missed lessons. The school will provide intensive revision pre-exams. These exams make a significant contribution to pupils' final grade in the Summer.

Year 11 General Update

I am delighted with the conduct of pupils during the mock exams and they showed a level of maturity expected at St Damian's. Teachers are busy marking exam papers and will be giving feedback to pupils once moderation and standardisation has taken place in subject areas. If a pupil has missed any exams, they will be expected to sit their exams on their return to school. Ms Jinks, our exams officer, will co-ordinate this. Y11 Results Day will be on **Friday 14th January 2022**. Remember to read the letter on the website dated November 2021 which contains important information about the GCSE exams in May/June next year.

Year 9 Parents' Evening

Parents' Evening: Once again, thanks for the feedback. It was overwhelmingly positive and 95% of parents would recommend St Damian's. This is a high figure, but as Headteacher, I would like this to be 100%. The written responses included the following:

- ✓ 'Throughout lockdown the lessons were great and support from staff was brilliant. Thank you'
- ✓ 'Very proud that my son attends St Damian's'
- ✓ Thank you for being supportive and encouraging at all times. There is nothing I can say negatively about St Damian's

- **Year 9 Exams:** These will take place w/c 17th January 2022. Year 9 pupils need to have a revision timetable and start to prepare for these exams. Performance will indicate a pupil's readiness for the move to GCSEs & vocational courses in Year 10.
- **Year 9 Options:** Options will be launched after February half term. In order to keep choices open in subjects, it is important pupils perform well in **all subjects** across the curriculum. This will avoid disappointment later in the Spring term when they have to choose the courses they wish to study.
- **Year 9 Workshop:** At the end of November, 25 Year 9 pupils took part in an aspirations workshop run by Regeneration Brainery. Pupils embraced real-life challenges based on urban planning and regeneration. At the end pupils were asked to give a presentation and presented a number of innovative proposals and were great ambassadors for the school. Well done to all the Year 9 pupils who took part! Mrs Henshaw and I really enjoyed seeing their confidence and presentation skills.

Year 7

Congratulations to our Year 7 pupils who have successfully completed their first term. I have been impressed by the way pupils have embraced learning and have very quickly become involved in the wider life of the school. All Year 7 pupils have sat baseline assessments in December. Subject leaders are currently reviewing the teaching groups and there will be changes in January to ensure pupils are in the correct groups.

Caring for our most 'vulnerable'

At St Damian's we have many vulnerable pupils, and we aim to ensure that our community is a beacon of hope for them. One particular group, *Young Carers*, are given extra bespoke support to ensure that they feel safe and secure to discuss any worries with school staff. Our pledge at St Damian's is to show care and compassion to our 'Young Carers' and believe through this care they see their strengths and go on to achieve their best.

Year 10 Parents' Evening

Advance notice that Year 10 Parents' Evening will take place on **Wednesday 12th January 2022**. This will be an opportunity for parents to discuss this term's Y10 Progress Checks and agree actions that pupils need to take to further accelerate their progress. I am also giving advance notice that there will be a *BTEC Technical Award in Sport exam* on 8th February 2022. Pupils should be revising for this under the instructions of their teachers.

Anti-Bullying Week 15th November

During the week of 15th November, St Damian's fully participated in National Anti-Bullying Week. The theme for 2021 was 'One Kind Word'. Throughout the week we reminded pupils that bullying, in all its guises, is not acceptable. Importantly, how we use language and what we perceive to be acceptable is something we reminded pupils of. Although we fully embraced the initiative, it is vital to remember that St Damian's has a zero-tolerance approach to all types of bullying, including online bullying and any form of sexual harassment.

Pupil Voice

Pupils are at the heart of all we do at St Damian's, and we strategically conduct a Pupil Voice three times a year. In our recent Pupil Voice 397 pupils were surveyed and I am happy to report that a large majority of pupils are '*happy to be a pupil at St. Damian's*' and '*enjoy their learning*'. Furthermore, 86% of pupils believe PSHE lessons '*encourage them to look after their emotional and mental health*' and an overwhelming 98% of pupils said, '*they were encouraged to be independent and take on roles of responsibility*'. Ms Joyce and I will share all the outcomes of the pupil voice in special assemblies in the New Year alongside the dangers of using social media inappropriately.

ASPIRE assemblies

Celebration is part of the '*St Damian's Way*', and we love to reward our fantastic pupils. During our ASPIRE assemblies this week, pupils were selected for certificates and rewards by their teachers. One pupil from each Year was also selected as the '**Top Achievement Point Scorer**' and received a voucher in recognition for their efforts. As you know, attendance is vital and all pupils who obtained 100% attendance received a certificate and some chocolate. A massive well done to all pupils who work so diligently throughout the year!

Cross country running

On Tuesday 9th December 57 pupils from all year groups braved the icy cold conditions to compete at the Tameside Cross Country Championships. On the day there was some fantastic individual performance as well as overall team performers. In 4 out of 6 different events a St Damian's pupil claimed 1st place with Harriet Byrnes winning year 7 girls, Edward Figgins-Barrett winning year 7 boys, Emily Bowker winning year 8/9 girls and Matilda Byrnes winning the senior girls' race. A special mention to Thea Brophy, Roxy McHugh, Luke Schofield and Rio Ali who all placed in a medal position in their respective races. It was a fantastic day and every pupil who competed should be extremely proud of their achievements. A big well done to the PE team at St Damian's too!

Online school reminder

Since September we have had over 250 children who have caught Covid and numerous staff. Thankfully all have recovered well. However, there is no doubt that it impacts on their education, attendance and well-being. At St Damian's we are proud that we have an efficient online school. If In doubt, when a pupil is isolating due to Covid, they will be added to the Online School by Ms Rowlinson. All work is uploaded at the start of each week for students to complete, following their regular timetabled lessons. Instructions on how to access the work are posted within the Team. If they have any issues, or are unable to work due to illness, they should message Ms Rowlinson via the Teams chat. A link to a help video can also be found here: <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/online-school>

Standards

The high standards and expectations at St Damian's are renowned in the local community and beyond. We have five simple and transparent rules for 2 reasons. The first is so that your children attend a safe and caring school environment where they flourish, become decent young adults and achieve well. The second reason is so that staff are proud to come to work in an environment based on respect and focus on ensuring that your children get a great education. Sadly, a small minority seem to believe the accepted rules don't apply to them. This is not the case and they are putting their place at St Damian's at risk. Please impress upon your child that when wearing the St Damian's uniform, they are ambassadors for our community.

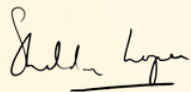
Finally...

After another challenging year, it is important that you spend quality time with your family and loved ones. On behalf of the great staff at St Damian's we all wish you a happy, peaceful and holy Christmas. The St Damian's community is strong and united, and we look forward with hope and optimism that 2022 will be another highly successful year for St Damian's, in particular for our great children and staff.

I will leave you with a quote from a bus driver who I spoke to on Tuesday morning as he dropped off our pupils. He stopped me and said *"The students are lovely at this school. They are no bother at all. You are bringing them up well"*. Obviously, I am proud of this comment, and I thought I would share with you.

As always, thank you for your continued support!

Yours faithfully



Mr Logue
Headteacher