



January 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

A warm welcome to the first newsletter of 2022. This newsletter contains lots of important information for your perusal. Before sharing all the information, I hope and pray that 2022 is going to be kind to our community, especially our great pupils and staff.

### Covid Updates

As you know, we had a staggered start to this term to accommodate the supervised onsite LFT testing of pupils upon their return. I am pleased to report that all ran smoothly and I wish to thank you for your support. In order to reduce the possibility of transmission in school, please do not send your child into school if they have Covid symptoms or feel unwell, take a LFT test and inform school. Also, it is important to continue to perform LFT tests twice weekly at home to identify anyone who is asymptomatic.

### Covid School Based Immunisation Dates

During February, the school Immunisation Team will once again be in school to offer 12–15 year olds the option of receiving Covid-19 immunisations. As I said in my previous letter, this is a health issue rather than an educational issue, but we fully support the immunisation roll-out. I hope that you take up this offer so that St Damian's continues to be a safe place to teach and learn. The planned dates for this are **16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February**. More details will follow in due course.

### Year 11 Key Messages

The week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> January I delivered an assembly to Yr11 that outlined key messages about being successful in their forthcoming GCSE exams. These key messages included having a revision schedule, taking responsibility for their learning, time is of the essence and importantly, there is **no substitute for hard work**. As a parent, you can support your child by ensuring quiet revision time, speaking to your child about their work and looking after their general well-being. Working together is the best way that we can ensure that your child maximises their chances and fulfil their potential. On 4<sup>th</sup> February your child will be doing more 'mock' exams in the sports hall under exam conditions. As such, it is expected that your child is 'studying' for up to three hours each night to ensure they are well prepared for these exams.

### Year 10 Updates

- *Yr10 Realising Aspirations Programme with Ashton Sixth Form College:* 28 pupils have applied for 12 allocated places across a range of courses such as Art & Design, Business, Economics & Finance, Social Sciences, Humanities, Maths & Science. Interest has been high and it is great to see the high calibre of applications. We will hear soon how many pupils have successfully been awarded places.
- *Yr10 Work Experience:* The deadline is Friday 28th January 2022. Many pupils have shown initiative in sourcing placements in a range of sectors such as health, education or leisure. Placements must be registered on the work experience app. they will then be put forward to our work experience company, Changing Education, who will do a risk assessment to ensure that every placement is safe. Pupils who have gained workplace skills alongside strong academic qualifications will be attractive to employers in the future. Any queries or assistance, please email: [careerprospects@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:careerprospects@stdamians.co.uk)

### Year 10 Parents' Evening feedback

A few weeks ago, we had a socially distanced Yr10 parents evening. Attendance for this was 82% with 143 pupils being represented. From 110 questionnaire returns only one parent would not recommend the

school. However, no name was on the questionnaire return and therefore, I am unable to speak to the parent to ascertain why they wouldn't recommend St Damian's. As a parent myself, I know how important it is to be confident in the school. The questionnaire feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and I share some of these comments below for your perusal.

- ✓ *Fantastic school. Thank you for helping my daughter reach her potential*
- ✓ *Thank you for all your work especially throughout the pandemic*
- ✓ *All teachers remained positive and complimentary. It is clear they all care about pupil achievement*
- ✓ *Very pleased with St Damian's*
- ✓ *St Damian's continues to provide exceptional learning and support and as parents, we couldn't be happier*
- ✓ *Excellent teachers and I am very proud of the school*
- ✓ *I would highly recommend St Damian's and feel proud that my son attends this school.*

But my favourite comment was;

*"I have no regrets for choosing this school for my children's education, all I have is praise for the excellent job the school has done. Two of my lads are doing well in university now, if not for their excellent school experience in St Damian's, this would not have happened. Thank you and keep up the good work."*

Furthermore, I was also really proud that several parents commented upon the Year 9 'helpers'. This builds their confidence and leadership skills. These included the following;

- ✓ *Pupils showing parents around parents evening were beautifully behaved and very helpful*
- ✓ *The children were wonderfully helpful this evening and a credit to the school*

I love reading comments about our great pupils and it is just recognition for their stewardship and service to the St Damian's community.

## Year 9 Update

- ✓ **Yr 9 exams:** I am pleased to report that Yr9 pupils approached their recent exams with great maturity and were an absolute credit to themselves. Once marked, pupils will receive feedback which will help them identify their strengths and areas to develop. It is vital that pupils continue to work hard in all subjects and ensure that they are in a strong position to embark on GCSE & vocational courses next year
- ✓ **Year 9 Options:** This will take place on Thursday 17th March at 6.30pm. After February half-term, Yr9 pupils will be given information about KS4 pathways, GCSE & vocational courses and guidance on decisions that need to be made at 14, 16 & 18. Pupils will then be able to make informed decisions and can follow a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects their interests and strengths.

## Year 7 and Social Media

There have been a small number of incidences of social media misuse in school, particularly in Yr7 that has resulted in suspensions. Misuse and/or inappropriate use of social media contravenes our school rules and is a form of bullying, and as such, will not be tolerated. Please speak to your child about using social media in an acceptable manner. Please could parents support us by re-enforcing this message at home. Thanks in advance for your support.

## Year 7 Boys Football

Last Wednesday, 9 Yr7 boys represented St Damian's in the Greater Manchester 7 a-side competition. Mr Burtles said the boys were an absolute credit to St Damian's and they won the tournament. They will now represent Tameside in the Greater Manchester Finals, held at MUFC training ground in Carrington, in June. Mr Burtles and the PE staff have said "Good luck"!



## Alumni

On our website is our third *Alumni* newsletter which gives updates on the careers and successes of past pupils. Growing our Alumni network is key. If you are a past pupil or know a past pupil, please encourage them to click on the 'keep in touch' button and to tell us their news and hopefully they will be able to feature in future newsletters. We would love to welcome back past pupils who would like to come back to school and inspire our current pupils by delivering a short talk or workshop. If interested, please email: [alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

## Early Career Teacher [ECT] Update

We currently have five Early Career Teachers who are being supported by subject specific mentors within the school. These newly qualified teachers now have to complete a two-year induction and complete research and tasks from the government's Early Career Framework. We are delighted with the progress that our ECTs are making, and we look forward to watching them continue to make further progress over the next few years at St Damian's. One of the ECTs said *"Never felt more supported in my life. All the staff are amazing and the students are a pleasure to teach."*

## BeeWell Updates

- **Yr9:** We are pleased to announce that three pupils in Yr9 have been selected to represent St Damian's and take part in the BeeWell Youth Steering Group run by Greater Manchester Combined Authority. These pupils will work with pupils from other schools and discuss matters relating to mental health & well-being, representing the views of young people across Greater Manchester.
- **Yr10:** Three pupils in Yr10 have been nominated to take part in a Young Researchers Programme in collaboration with the University of Manchester. Pupils will be introduced to the world of academic research, with a focus on wellbeing. Pupils will get the opportunity to get hands on with the #BeeWell data analysis and shape future research carried out by the University of Manchester team.

The above demonstrates our commitment to providing our pupils with great opportunities to improve their confidence, work as a team and develop as leaders. Well done to all those who embrace these opportunities!

## Safeguarding and the Curriculum

Safeguarding is the number one priority of **all** at St Damian's. Educating our pupils to ensure their safety and wellbeing is paramount and to prepare them for experiences that they could encounter throughout their life. In response to this we have a robust PSHE curriculum which also includes a comprehensive RSE (relationship and sex education) curriculum which is delivered to all pupils in every year. We strongly believe at St Damian's that by delivering an honest, balanced education that we are empowering our pupils to make informed moral decisions as they navigate adolescence and adulthood.

Included in the curriculum are topics such as body image, sexting, LGBTQ+, FGM and CSE to name but a few and although these topics are sensitive, we believe that having a knowledge and understanding of these issues will empower our young people. For further details you can see the curriculum overviews on the school website or ask your child what they are learning about in PSHE as this will help to break down further barriers. Last week Mrs Brophy, in her half termly safeguarding briefings to staff, delivered a presentation outlining our responsibilities. I encourage that you read the Curriculum Overviews and give us feedback on any elements of the RSE Curriculum.

## Personal Development: Pastoral Themes

At St Damian's we believe that our mission is to *'develop the whole child.'* To support this, each half term, Form Tutors explore a different pastoral theme with their form groups. Each theme is based around *Fundamental British Values* and how they can make a positive contribution to society. This half term Form Tutors have been looking at 'Personal Happiness' and how pupils can 'train' themselves to be resilient, positive and happy. These traits are vital for their future.

### Attendance

Can I please take this opportunity to remind you that if your child is going to be absent from school you contact us before 9:00am to let us know. Safeguarding your children is a responsibility St Damian's takes very seriously and if your child is absent at form time, and we haven't been informed, it sets in motion a series of events to ensure your child's safety. A telephone call before 9:00am can avoid this.

### Lunch Cards

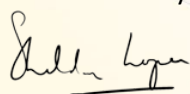
It has been brought to my attention that pupils are not taking care of their lunch cards. Many are getting lost and some are even deliberately damaged. These cards cost the school a considerable amount of money and the money spent continually replacing them could be put to better use.

As I have said before, if cards are deliberately damaged, or a pupil repeatedly loses their card we have no choice but to pass the cost for replacements on to parents. Therefore, as of Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January, if your child has lost or damaged their lunch card, you will need to order a replacement card via Pay360 online at a cost of £2 per card.

### Finally...

Although there has been massive disruption to pupils' learning due to Covid related attendance, our community has risen to the challenge this presents. Despite the fact that our online school mitigates some of the disruption to learning, nothing beats face to face teaching. As I said in my opening paragraph, I hope and pray that the disruption over the past few years will soon come to an end so that your children, our pupils, get the true benefit of being a pupil at our school. As ever, thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue  
Headteacher