



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

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Headteacher

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Dear parents/carers

Welcome to the first school letter of the year. It is great to be back under much more 'normal' times.

Start to the Year

Firstly, I would like to say a huge well done last year's Year 11 pupils on the excellent results they received earlier this month. There has been a lot of negativities in the media, but I know the vast majority worked really hard to earn their grades and were thoroughly deserved. I hope that St Damian's played a part in shaping them into decent young adults equipped with the values, skills and qualifications to be successful in their futures. On behalf of the great St Damian's staff, GOOD LUCK to each of them.

Secondly, it has been a fabulous start to the year. The pupils have come back looking smart, enthusiastic, and ready to learn. It is refreshing to be back in school and enjoying simple routines, for example, the buzz of the dinner queues or pupils walking freely from room to room during lesson changeover. Every pupil I spoke to, without exception, loved being back in school. This bodes well for the future.

I hope that there will be no repeat of last year when we had to send many children home to self-isolate if they were identified as a close contact. Below is some important information regarding Covid that aims to keep all of St Damian's safe in the next few months.

Covid and updates

Despite being back to some 'normalisation', the dangers of Covid have not gone away. It is still dangerous and as such we must all remain vigilant. The following outlines some information regarding expectations. This has already been sent via text.

- ✓ If your child develops symptoms of Covid, they must isolate and you should arrange a PCR test via <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested-or-by-calling-119>. The main symptoms are well known now: high temperature, a new, continuous cough and a loss or change to sense of smell or taste. If the test is positive your child must self-isolate for 10 days. Please inform us if it is a positive test result.
- ✓ If there is a confirmed case of Covid at school, close contacts are no longer required to self-isolate and can continue normal activities provided your child does not develop symptoms, however it is recommended that you book a PCR test for your child as a precaution.

All pupils have now completed **TWO** supervised onsite lateral flow tests and are not required to do a third in school. However, pupils should now continue to test twice per week at home. Home/self LFT test kits are widely available, and you can find out more information on the GOV.NET website <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

It continues to be the expectation that pupils wear masks as they walk around communal areas to ensure the safety of all. This will be reviewed at the end of September.

St. Damian's RC Science College

Meeting Year 11 parents

This half term, Senior Leaders and I will be meeting parents to ensure that there are no misunderstandings about the expectations regarding work in Year 11. I am very conscious that your children have missed out a lot on their education due to Covid and lack of face-to-face teaching. However, this alone is a prime reason why your child must be working very hard right from the beginning of Year 11. From experience, those pupils who start working hard and revising early, usually do best in their exams. It is important that we work together to get this key message across.

Year 11 Post 16 Pathways

Careers and progression to the 'next stage' is important for Year 11 pupils. They will start the term giving consideration to Post 16 Pathways and the possible choices available to them in selecting A Levels, BTEC courses, T Levels, apprenticeships and traineeships either in a Sixth Form, at College or with a future employer. Information on college open events will follow in due course from Mrs Henshaw.

Y11 Intervention

Intervention will take place before school (8am-8.45am) and after school (3.10-4pm) for targeted pupils in Year 11 starting Monday 6th September. Pupils will work in small groups with their teachers to develop key knowledge, understanding and skills in their GCSEs as they prepare for their mock exams later in the Autumn term. To make rapid progress, it is vital that your child attends intervention each week. Intervention is by invite only.

Aiming for Academic Excellence

St Damian's is very proud to be a high achieving school delivering a robust knowledge-rich curriculum. **ALL** pupils regardless of starting point and academic ability are encouraged to 'Aim for Academic Excellence' as they start the new academic year by demonstrating their very best in two key areas which underpin the ability to make rapid progress.

1. **Attitude to Learning.** This means producing work that meets or exceeds their target, giving extended answers both verbally and in writing, asking questions, having a strong work ethic, engaging well in lessons demonstrating excellent behaviour.
2. **Independent Learning.** This means completing quality homework and meeting deadlines, responding to the advice and guidance given by teachers and showing evidence of independent research. Pupils should read outside lessons, revisit work and do regular revision.

Recap of our expectations post-Covid

The past 18 months or so has seen massive disruption to your child's education. There is little doubt about that. However, my staff and I are determined to ensure that we welcome back some kind of normality. A strong aspect of our school community, and one which we pride ourselves on, is our high expectations and standards of behaviour. I again reiterate that I am very proud of the manner in which our great pupils behave in school and without exception, all external visitors refer to a calm and purposeful learning environment when they visit the school. I would like to take this opportunity to make clear the five simple rules that underpin all our successes and all pupils are expected to adhere to.

1. **Correct Uniform.** This demonstrates that pupils are proud to attend St Damian's and be ambassadors for the school community. This includes no jewellery, no earrings, no make-up, no fake tan and no false nails/eyelashes or nail varnish. Girls' skirts should be a decent length. Extreme hair styles are also not permitted. Hair should be natural looking and not too short. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

2. Mobile Phones: These are NOT allowed in school and pupils MUST not use their phones until they exit the green gate. If caught using these, which is rare, they will be confiscated, and parents will collect from reception.
3. Chewing Gum: NOT allowed in school as we want a clean and tidy environment. Chewing gum will be confiscated and a detention will be issued. It is also important to note that the school does not promote 'energy' drinks and these should not be in school either.
4. Eating 'Zones': Again, to keep the environment tidy for your children there are areas in school where no eating is permitted: these will be clearly sign-posted. Food will be confiscated where this happens.
5. The above 4 rules are underpinned by our **core value of respect**; respect for each other, for staff and for the environment. I politely ask parents to be respectful when speaking to staff, in particular the staff working at reception. Shouting or being rude will not solve any issue faster and I will not tolerate it.

Pupils who consistently undermine the above rules put their place at St Damian's at risk.

Macmillan Cancer Support

The statistics are frightening, and it is estimated that one in two people will be diagnosed with cancer. Last year, several members of our staff were affected by cancer. The treatment they received has been outstanding. However, due to Covid, there has been a decrease in fundraising activities for charities, including Macmillan Cancer Support.

With the support and generosity of our school community St Damian's would like to raise as much money as we can for Macmillan Cancer Support. Therefore, following on from our successful Share and Reward Day our fundraising continues.

- **Macmillan Coffee Morning - Friday 24th September 2021.** For our local community we will be opening our doors for the first time in a long while to host our St Damian's Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. We warmly welcome anyone who is able to join and please feel free to stop by for a coffee and cake from 10.00am until 11.30pm on Friday 24th September 2021. Our pupils will have their own mini Coffee Morning during form time and as a special treat pupils will be allowed to wear their own clothes. We kindly ask for a suggested donation of £1.50 per pupil. As we are a cashless school the donation must be processed through our online payment system **SIMS pay**.
- **Manchester 10k - Sunday 26th September: St Damian's running for Macmillan.** Several members of staff, myself included, have decided to run the upcoming Manchester 10k run. I appreciate that it is challenging times, but I ask if you can make a donation. Any donation, no matter, how small will be warmly welcomed. You can donate via [SIMS pay](#) or via our JustGiving page www.justgiving.com/stdamiansrcsciencecollege and you will be able to access the JustGiving page by the end of the week to make your donation.

As always, we thank you in advance for your continued support and we will announce the grand total raised for Macmillan Cancer Support before the end of this half-term.

Form Time Captains

Pupil leadership encourages pupils to develop independence, resilience and communication skills. A great opportunity to build these skills is to become a Form Time Captain. This entails planning and delivering form time activities, being involved in pupil-led assemblies and supporting their form teacher on a daily basis. I ask that you encourage your child to nominate themselves for Form/Vice Captain roles. Pupils will be re-elected on a termly basis to ensure as many pupils as possible to get involved. Pupils actively contributing to school life underpins *the St Damian's Way!*

Year 10 Update

Over the past few years the GCSE exams have become increasingly difficult and linear in nature. This has been exacerbated by pupil 'absence' during lockdowns. Both of these factors have the potential to cause stress for your child who is starting their formal KS4 years in Year 10. However, the following 'tips' should mitigate some of these fears:

- Importantly, each course that your child will be starting, will be new and consequently they will be starting from fresh. Tip: Look at the present and forward rather than at what has been 'missed' out.
- From past experience it is vital that pupils start their independent study immediately so that work does not get on top of them later. Tip: Get into a good working habit now, which means working 2 hours each night as hard work in Year 10 provides the foundations for Year 11 and great results at the end of Year 11.
- As parents, I ask that you ensure you support the school by taking an interest in their work and that they are completing homework to a high standard. It is a fact that hard work in Year 10 underpins success!
- Mr Willerton, Head of Year 10, will be holding a Year 10 Information Evening on Wednesday 22nd September where important information will be given out. It is important that parents attend the evening to understand the changes and expectations at GCSE, and most crucially what your child needs to do to be successful.

Year 7

We warmly welcome our new Year 7 pupils, who have made a highly positive start to St Damian's. This is to be commended, especially considering the upheaval and challenges faced throughout their last 18 months at primary school and a virtual transition. I am sure they will settle in quickly and thrive in our caring community.

Years 8 & 9

I understand, and fully appreciate, the loss of learning time in school may have had an impact on your child's learning and well-being. But the mantra of St Damian's is now to 'look forward'. As well as engaging in their academic work, I urge pupils in years 8 & 9 to get involved in as many additional activities as possible such as liturgical activities, extra-curricular music and sport as well as put themselves forward for leadership responsibilities. There are so many ways in which they can develop their wider skills and talents and contribute to our wider school community.

GOLD Investors in People

As a school community, a strength that we have, is to celebrate our achievements. Being externally recognised by amassing a range of accolades boosts morale and ensures a great 'feel-good' factor in the school. In July we were inspected by an external assessor who interviewed numerous staff, conducted a whole staff survey and reviewed numerous documents. I am pleased to say that we received, again, the GOLD standard. The full report will be put on the website for your perusal.

This is great recognition of the strong teamwork that staff have in the school. In the final analysis, happy staff are more likely to go the extra mile for your child, and hence the main benefactor of this accolade is your children. May I take this opportunity to say a massive 'thanks' to all the staff; support staff, teachers and leaders. During Covid there was massive and unprecedented disruption to both their workload and work patterns. Behind the scenes they worked incredibly hard under difficult circumstances. It is an absolute honour to lead them, see them grow and develop and a joy to see them working together as a united team.

Literacy update: Year 7

We are really looking forward to reading the book reviews that Year 7 have completed over the holidays. Mrs Heenan, our Literacy Co-ordinator, will be awarding a prize for the best one. Additionally, could pupils please hand in the 'letter to my future self' task, to their form tutors where they will be stored until year 11. It will be fantastic to look back at these in 5 years' time to see if the class of 2026 have fulfilled their St Damian's ambitions!

Safeguarding update.

As the new school year starts, I advise you to follow a few basic procedures to ensure that your child is safe including the following;

- Make sure that school has a minimum of 2 up to date emergency contact numbers. if you need to make changes, please email them to admin@stdamians.co.uk
- Your child understands their daily routine such as how to get home safely and what to do if they have lost their key/phone or if their mode of transport is delayed/cancelled
- Monitoring your child's online activities and be aware of who they are contacting and the content of their communications
- Keeping all lines of communication open with school so that we are able to support your child if they are experiencing any difficulties or concerns. Their form tutor is your first point of contact.
- Encouraging your child to contact student support when they need help and guidance by emailing sso@stdamians.co.uk

To help our new year 7 pupils settle into secondary school there is lots of helpful advice on:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1>

Dates for this half term

Below are some important dates for your perusal. Please take a note of these, especially the information evenings as they are designed to convey important and pertinent information.

- Friday 24th September: Macmillan Coffee Morning
- Monday 27th September: Open Evening: School will shut for pupils at 1.30 on this date
- Friday 15th October: Knife Crime Drama for Year 9 pupils
- Thursday 21st October: Celebration Evening for 2021 GCSE results
- Friday 22nd October: ASPIRE day

The following parental evenings will focus on pupil well-being, important information and key safeguarding messages. Please make every effort to attend these. I apologise in advance, but pupils should not attend due the numbers of parents anticipated.

- Wednesday 15th September: **Year 8 & 9 Parent Information Evening**
- Monday 20th September: **Year 11 Parent Information Evening**
- Wednesday 22nd September: **Year 10 Parent Information Evening**
- Thursday 30th September: **Year 7 Parent Information Evening**

These evenings will commence at 6pm.

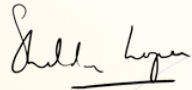
A few words from Mrs Elizabeth Jones, the Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governors, it is my absolute privilege to welcome you and your children to this new year intake at St Damian's. You can be assured that your child will have a great education and be well cared for. As I walk around school, I am proud of the numerous accolades from various outside agencies complimenting our wonderful staff on the care they show to our pupils, your children. Every child is important to us and deserves the very best education. If you visit our website, you will find numbers to contact if you have any worries about your child. Once again, a very warm welcome and a special thanks to our supportive parents with their continued belief and trust in us.

Finally...

My staff and I are looking forward to another great year ensuring that your children get a great education. Watching and listening to your great children being back in school smiling really is a joy to behold. Let's make the academic year 2021-2022 a year to remember for the whole St Damian's community, especially the great staff and our wonderful pupils!

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher