



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

Lees Road
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 8BH

Tel: 0161 330 5974
Fax: 0161 331 4744
Email: admin@stdamians.co.uk
Web: http://www.stdamians.co.uk/
Follow us on Twitter: @StDamiansRCSC
Follow us on Facebook

Headteacher
Mr S Logue BA (Hons), MEd., NPQH, NPQEL

September 2023

Dear Parents & Carers,

A very warm welcome to my first monthly newsletter of the academic year. Firstly, I would like to say that students have come back to school with a really positive attitude. This is great to see and long may it continue! Secondly, as you would expect from an outstanding school, we have lots of real positive information to share with you. I have no doubt that when you read the following that you will get a sense that this is a very strong catholic community with lots of energy and enthusiasm for the year ahead. Enjoy reading!

The Catholic Life of the School

In the last few weeks of the last academic year, we continued with the formation of our students and staff. The following outlines these opportunities;

- **Retreat Day:** Welcoming JUST YOUTH into our community for our Yr8 students to experience a Catholic retreat day. Students reflected on their own faith and how we are created in the image of God. Father Joel was very impressed with the respectful behaviour and exceptional engagement of our students.

- **Staff Formation and Pilgrimage:** Last July, staff completed a 'Walk for Creation' up to Hartshead Pike. Using resources from Salford Diocese, our intention was to raise awareness of the challenges facing our common home, enjoy opportunities for prayer, reflect and support our Beewell initiative in school. Staff gathered for prayers in the Chapel and then walked in silence to the top of Hartshead Pike. At the top we gathered for a prayer, before descending for refreshments and a closing prayer. This was a great opportunity for staff to bond and reflect on our Mission. Our formation focus has been Catholic Social Teaching and this event linked with Participation, Stewardship, Care for Common Home, and Solidarity.



- **Share Day July 2023.** Yet another fantastic day for both students and staff that showcased the strength of our community. It celebrated the end of another highly successful year whilst raising monies for those who are less fortunate. The theme this year was Diamond Jubilee Festival marking 60 years of the St Damian's community. It was embraced wholeheartedly we were able to raise an incredible £5,461.00 for our chosen charities which were Reuben's Retreat, 60 for The Christie and Emmaus, Mossley.



- **September Staff Liturgy:** Our new academic year started with the theme **"Refocus on your vocation"**. The reading from St Paul directed us to act on the grace that God has given us, in this reading we hear a reflection of the St Damian's Way, *"if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if*

St. Damian's RC Science College

it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." As we start the year our staff will act of the message of fraternity from Pope Francis and build friendship and support among our community.

Finally, this year we have been notified that we are due to an external catholic inspectorate inspection. We were last inspected in March 2016 when we were awarded **outstanding in all 7** categories. As a fiercely proud catholic school we are looking forward to welcoming the inspection team to St Damian's as an opportunity to showcase an outstanding catholic community.

Safeguarding

Staff and students have been updating their knowledge about how to **stay safe online** this half term. Technology rapidly develops, and although the internet/social media can enhance our daily lives we must continue to remain vigilant about the harm that can be caused through computer misuse. Staff have been updating their knowledge of monitoring and filtering systems in school in line with the expectations of KCSIE, including understanding their roles to *'teach, notify and report'* to maximise online safety. Students have had assemblies with a focus on the 4Cs: **Contact, Conduct, Content and Commerce**. This is an effective way to teach them how to be aware of who they interacting with online, assessing if content is appropriate and making sure that they are behaving in an acceptable manner. If you wish to know more about this approach visit: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2023/september/4-cs-of-online-safety>

GCSE Results: The Class of 2023

I am delighted to report that our GCSE outcomes are again **well above** both Tameside and National Averages. St Damian's was, once again, one of the highest achieving schools in Tameside and indeed TOP in many headline measures, such as the Ebacc qualification and Attainment 8. Both of these performance indicators measure how well students attained across a broad range of academic subjects. As a proud and consistently high achieving community, the Governors, staff and I are extremely proud of these fantastic results which are not only the direct result of quality teaching and high expectations, but also the commitment and hard work of the students and support from parents! The results were even more impressive considering that the national picture showed a drop in outcomes. It is always a joy to see so many happy children and parents on results day! In summary, the GCSE outcomes of the class of 2023 are befitting of an outstanding school! I will update parents again when the official results are published by the Government.

Yr11: Key Messages

A massive thank you to all the parents who attended the Parental Information Evening on Monday. I cannot stress the importance of parental support for your child's success. I reiterate key messages here for your perusal.

- **Attendance.** There is a strong correlation between **achievement and attendance**. Please ensure that your child has great attendance. Students rarely 'catch-up' on work missed.
- **Hard Work.** There is **no substitute for hard work**. From experience, students who work hard achieve well. I expect students to be doing at least 2 hours a night including weekends.
- **Mock Exams:** These start on the 27th November. Students should be revising for these. Having **routines and a revision timetable** is vital. I ask that parents support and encourage your child by, for example, ensuring a quiet place to study.
- **Yr11 Prom:** This is a key event in the St Damian's calendar. However, it is **not an automatic right** as it is not a curriculum entitlement. In essence it is invitation only and reserved for students who work hard, attend school regularly and follow our simple rules. If a child is suspended twice, the invitation is automatically withdrawn.

The teachers are working very hard on behalf of your children. It is important that students realise that there is **no substitute for hard work**. This is a critical factor in their success next August.

New Staff September 2023

I would like to introduce you to several new staff as well as update you on those staff whose job roles have changed. We have the following new subject leaders: Miss Price in Maths, Mrs Baynham in Science, Mrs D'Rozario in Technology and Mr Tabas in Computer Science. We welcome back Miss Hogan as teacher of Science, who will also be the Head of Year 7, Mr Lowe, a new Science Teacher and Miss Mayoh as an ECT in Maths. Miss MacDonald will join us as a new Learning Support Assistant and Miss Hibbert will join our admin team as Receptionist. I know that you will wish them all well in their new roles. I also, wish them every success, and I have no doubt that they will be great additions to the great staff at St Damian's.

Staff Profiles

In each newsletter I plan to profile 2 members of staff. In this newsletter it is 2 new staff members;

- *Mr Tabas, teacher in charge of Computer Science:* I have been teaching Computer Science since 2006. I have worked in Blackpool and Greater Manchester. What drew me to teaching was the hope that no two days would ever be the same and I can say hand on heart that, that that has been the case throughout my career. Coming to St Damian's has given me the chance to lead my own subject area. My love for computers came from playing computer games and I want to pass on what I have learnt to students.
- *Miss Hogan, Science teacher and Head of Yr7:* I have always loved learning about the world around me and so science lessons at school were what I looked forward to most. I was inspired by my science teachers who were always able to turn complex ideas into understandable realities. It's for this reason I decided to become a science teacher. I studied for a degree in Chemistry at the University of Bristol, before moving back up north to complete my teacher training in Salford. I have previously spent a year teaching at St Damian's and when the opportunity arose to come back, I jumped at it, knowing just how brilliant the staff and students are here. St Damian's is a wonderful school where staff and students are always willing to do their best. This year, as well as teaching Science, I am taking on the extra responsibility of Head of Yr7. The transition from primary to secondary school is big step, and I feel honoured to help pupils through this.

Curriculum Updates

A] Curriculum Content. What is your child learning?

We have revamped the curriculum section on our website to include information about each department and what content students will be learning throughout the year. Please look at our website and click on the curriculum tab at the top, alternatively use this link www.stdamians.co.uk/subjects. Each subject has a page and includes curriculum overviews for KS3 and KS4. We hope that you will find the information useful.

On the website there is a snapshot of what each subject teaches each term. Click [here](#) for the KS3/KS4 snapshot.

B] Curriculum Subject: Spotlight on English

The English Faculty were delighted with the GCSE outcomes. A record number of students secured at least a 'strong' grade (grade 5 or higher), along with an incredible 19 grade 9s across the two subjects! This is testament to the dedication of staff and the exceptional hard work and resilience of our students. The department comprises of an eclectic mix of enthusiasm, experience and expertise. We are very fortunate to have an AQA Literature Paper 1 Team Leader and SENDCo in our department that adds to the strength of the team. A number of colleagues have worked at our wonderful school for over a decade and some are former students! As a team we aim to inspire your child to become a life-long reader and encourage them to express themselves through the medium of the written word. We are



looking forward to sharing another successful academic year in the company of our fantastic St Damian's students.

C] Stretching our Key Stage Four students in Maths

In the 2023 exams, we entered students for the AQA Level 2 **Further Maths** qualification, designed to stretch and challenge our more able students. It also bridged the gap for students who wanted to study A-Level Maths. Ten students sat the qualification, and they achieved really impressive results with 100% achieving Grade 9-6 and 50% achieving Grade 9-8. Furthermore, the course supported students in maximising their potential in the Maths GCSE with 5 Grade 9s and 5 Grade 8s. These are outstanding results. As the new academic year begins, we hope to build on last year's success. Currently we have 20 Yr11 and 38 Yr10 students attending this excellent extra-curricular opportunity. A massive thanks to both Mr Willerton and Mr Wilson for leading on this initiative.

D] Our Cultural Capital 'Curriculum' [CCC]

At St Damian's we immerse our students in many rich experiences to build their 'cultural capital'. This is simply exposing our students to a range of experiences, activities and knowledge that ensures that they can confidently and competently talk about the world in which they live. Please visit our website (under curriculum) to read about the extra-curricular activities that we will be offering throughout the year. The first learning experience will be led by the Technology department, showcasing the best of British food during British food week, or look out for MFL celebrating European Day of Languages at the start of October hosting a 'Pintxo' party and tasting German food! To support parents a 'half termly cultural capital task' for the family is on the website! This half term focuses on The Titanic. See if you can answer the knowledge questions: answers will be shared at the start of next half term! Good luck!

E] Reports

Yrs7-10 students will be receiving a 'Standard's Checkpoint' towards the end of October. This is a quick snapshot of how your child has started the year at St Damian's in terms of trying their best with classwork and homework and their behaviour in lessons. Parents should ask; Are the gradings mainly 'Always' or 'Often'? Please praise your child if they are- it means they are meeting our standards. Are any subjects graded as 'Sometimes' or 'Rarely'? If there are, please discuss this with your child. What are the reasons for this? What can your child do to improve? How can you support them? Yr11 will be receiving a similar report, but it will include Current working grade and Predicted Grades.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Information for Students

As part of our commitment to supporting personal development, being inclusive and celebrating diversity, the Literacy Hub's range of books about special educational needs and disabilities has been extended. They are currently displayed at the entrance of the hub. Student-friendly books are available, for example, about Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia. Please encourage your child to borrow one of the books if they would like to find out more about common additional needs.



Reading Groups

As a school we understand that the ability to read is fundamental to accessing the academic knowledge rich curriculum that we provide at St Damian's. Over 110 students are in these reading groups. Below is a synopsis of these groups;

- I am reading 'Jekyll and Hyde' to 10 Yr8 boys. My aim is to build their confidence while also increasing their reading skills, vocabulary and general cultural capital.
- Mrs Brophy is reading 'The Firework Maker's Daughter' to support the development of new vocabulary.
- Mrs Heenan is reading 'Abomination' by Robert Swindells, with a Yr8 group. Her aim is to increase their reading fluency and confidence with reading out loud.
- Ms Joyce is reading 'A.N.T.I.D.O.T.E.' to a group of Yr9 students to help these pupils develop a love of reading, whilst helping to grow their imagination.

- Mrs Kelly is reading 'Jane Eyre' to Yr8 students. Her aim is to support students with comprehension and build their vocabulary.
- Mrs Walker is reading 'I am the Minotaur' with selected Yr10 SEND pupils, ensuring a focus on improving their reading skills for the demands of KS4.
- Mrs McArdle is reading 'Lord of the Flies' with a Yr7 group of exceptional readers. The challenging vocabulary in this text will deepen their knowledge of tier 2 words.
- Ms Toole is reading 'Wink' with a group of Yr7, an emotional story that will develop pupils' empathetic skills.

Our fantastic LSAs will also be running some targeted small group intervention to increase reading fluency, and some one-to-one reading with individual pupils.

Extra-Curricular Clubs

As part of our ongoing commitment to raise attainment and build confidence we have a range of clubs. These support our students socially, emotionally and academically. Your child will know if they have to attend these.

A) Study Clubs: Year groups every Tuesday

- **Yr7:** Support with organisation and independence as they start secondary school. [Room 25]
- **Yr8:** Raising aspirations of and helping them form positive relationships in school. [Room 13]
- **Yr9:** Supporting students with independent learning strategies. [Room 19]
- **Yr10:** Ensuring preparation for GCSE demands including learning how to study effectively. [Room 28]
- **Yr11:** A focused intervention group. An excellent opportunity for students to boost their learning skills and support to prepare for Mock exams in November. [Room 40]

I ask that parents support the school and ensure that your child attends the above study clubs if selected.

B) Lunchtime Clubs

✓ **Games and Card Club.** A place where students can socialise and play a range of popular card or board games. They build resilience when the game does not go their way, develop strategies to out-think their opponents and develop communication and social skills whilst having fun.



✓ **Key Stage 3 Social Club.** This club aims to increase students' confidence through providing a safe space for children to come together and informally chat and play games as a group.



✓ **Mindful Drawing Club.** This club offers a calm place of peace throughout lunchtime and is popular with students who want to have a quiet break from the more active outside spaces and competitive games and card club. Relaxing music creates a soothing atmosphere.

C) Homework/Study Clubs for Pupils with Additional Needs

Homework and Study Clubs have been launched for students with additional needs in each year group. Parents of students who would benefit from this support have already received texts and parents of Yr7 students involved have also received a letter, but here is a reminder of when and where they are:

Key Stage 3	Room 19	Tuesday and Wednesday 3.10pm-4pm
Year 10	Ambrose (staircase side)	Tuesday and Wednesday 3.10pm-4pm
Year 11	Room 11	Tuesday and Wednesday 3.10pm 4pm

Each room has computer facilities. Students do not have to attend both weekly sessions and can choose how long they stay for, depending on the work they have to complete. Attending the clubs will help establish good

routines and the extra support of staff is reassuring for many students. Last year, the purposeful atmosphere in the clubs was a joy to behold.

Parental Evenings

Over the past few weeks we have engaged parents with three parental information evenings that are designed to impart pertinent information to each year group. In the Yr11 presentation there was a focus on revision and the importance of working hard both at home and school. Yr10 focused on the importance of good study habits in Yr10 and the additional opportunities open to them with regards to work experience and pupil leadership and in the Yr9 presentation the focus was on standards and expectations, with the increasing demand of the final year of KS3. This year group will be making option choices for their desired pathways as they move towards GCSEs.

Yr8 parental evening will take place on Thursday 12th October. I ask that parents make every opportunity to attend as working together is the best way to ensure your child fulfils their potential.

Year 7 parents will have the opportunity to meet form tutors during the next half term.

St Damian's Standards and our 5 Simple Rules

At the beginning of the year, it is appropriate to outline our simple, transparent, fair rules which we enforce. This ensures that we have a safe, thriving community. As Headteacher, I am very proud that the vast majority of our students behave and are true ambassadors for our community. At St Damian's we have *5 simple rules* that underpin all we do. Briefly, these are as follows;

1. *Correct Uniform.* Our students should be proud to attend St Damian's and wearing the correct uniform is the most outwardly sign of this. This includes no jewellery, no earrings, no make-up, no fake tan and no false nails 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. This is not an exhaustive list.
2. *Mobile Phones.* These are NOT allowed in school at any time of the day. Students MUST not use their phones until they exit the green gate. If caught using them, 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.
4. *Eating 'Zones':* 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 5th rule is respect.* This means respecting your peers, all adults and the environment. This is our core value.

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

Detentions

Unfortunately, there are times when students don't make the right choice and, as a result, they may be issued with an afterschool detention. These are not optional for students if given and I politely ask that parents support us. We endeavour to give 24 hours' notice via text, but as Headteacher, I reserve the right to keep students on the same day. Obviously, if your child follows our 5 simple rules, there will be no need for a detention to be given. 'Refusal' to attend the detention is defiance and is likely to result in a suspension.

Yr10 Work Experience

Work experience is an invaluable part of the education entitlement of our great pupils. It helps to prepare them for the workplace by building their confidence, character and communication skills.

- ✓ **July 2023.** I have received several emails from last years Yr10 cohort congratulating their maturity during the work experience. Words used included "*exceptionally well behaved, presented and inquisitive*", and comments stated about how our students were enthusiastic, had great work ethic and were incredibly helpful. The comments made me very proud and they were truly great ambassadors for St Damian's.

✓ **July 2024.** This year again all Yr10 students will be conducting a weeks' work experience. This is planned to take place the last week of the academic year on the **15th - 19th July 2024**, and is an important part of their personal development. Ms Joyce will release further details in due course. The expectation is that all Yr10 students will embrace this excellent opportunity.

Dates for the Diary

Here are some important dates for your diary for this term only:

- 2nd Oct: Open Evening 5:30pm – 8:00pm. NB: School closes early at 1.30
Please Note; The 771, 864, 770 & 775 school bus services will *not* be running at this earlier time and pupils will have to make their own way home
- 12th Oct: Yr8 Parental Information Evening
- 16th Oct: ASPIRE Day
- 18th Oct: Yr7 Welcome Mass at St Christopher's
- 19th Oct: Yr11 Certificate Evening
- 20th Oct: Yr11 Geography Field Trip– further details to follow
- 8th Nov: Yr7 Parents' Evening with Form Tutors only
- 15th Nov: Yr11 Parent Evening
- 17th Nov: INSET Day: School closed for students
- 22nd Nov: Yr9 Parents' Evening
- 27th Nov: Yr11 Mock exams start
- 11th Dec: Christmas Carol Concert
- 15th Dec: School shuts for end of term
- 2nd Jan 24: School re-opens for the start of the Spring term

Additionally, I am delighted to announce we will be holding our **Santa Dash and Christmas Markets** on **Saturday 25th November 2023**. There are many ways in which you can support the event from taking part in the Santa Dash, holding a market stall, visiting the event on the day for a hot chocolate and a mince pie or even volunteering to help on the day. We really hope that you can join us and support what will be a truly amazing event. If you would like more details, please email Mrs Jinks mjinks@stdamians.co.uk. All proceeds will go to Infinity Initiatives and our local foodbank charities. Please save the date and support this event!

Pre-Loved Uniform Sale

I am delighted to announce that our Pre-Loved Uniform sale has once again been a massive success. Thanks to the hard work and organisation of Victoria Ormston and her team of volunteers, Victoria handed a cheque over to school for **£520**. This will now go towards the grand total for our 3 chosen charities, Rueben's Retreat, Emmaus and 60 for The Christie. The preloved uniform sale is such a fantastic initiative which supports our families, and also great for the environment too! A huge thank you to everyone who has supported this extremely worthwhile cause.



A Spotlight on Students' Personal Development

School Choir. Our newly formed choir is an harmonious blend of young voices that has started to fill the halls of St Damian's with melodious enchantment. Comprising talented students from various year groups (7 - 10), the choir is a testament to the school's commitment to fostering creativity and artistic expression. Under the guidance of Mr McArdle, the group will explore a diverse repertoire, from sacred to secular music, infusing each note with youthful exuberance.



Student's dedication to practice and the camaraderie is already flourishing among its members ensuring that this choir is not only about music but also about building lasting friendships. As students embark on their musical journey, I am looking forward to their upcoming performances at Christmas, Easter and the end of year Celebration Evening.

- ✓ *Trip to Barcelona April 2024.* Excitement is building for this wonderful opportunity which will be the first overseas trip post-covid. We have had our inaugural meeting and students are counting down the weeks to the trip by finding out an interesting fact about Barcelona. This weekly newsletter will be shared with parents so that we are all immersed in Spanish culture by the time we set off! We are currently planning trips for London and Paris. Watch this space for further details!



Philip Harris 'Science Technician of the Year 2023' Award



I am delighted to announce that Natalie Hartshorne, our Senior Science Laboratory Manager, has won the prestigious 'Philip Harris *Science Technician of the Year 2023 Award*'. This award is supported by ASE, the Association for Science Education. From over 80 entries, Natalie really captured the judging panel and stood out for her work with engaging students in science and supporting the science department, especially with their impressive GCSEs that they achieve. In addition, she was commended for her length of service and commitment to all students in school and everyday school life. A massive 'WELL DONE' Natalie, this is so richly deserved.

Proud Advocates of Anti Bullying.

Here at St Damian's, we have a strong commitment to educating and informing our pupils about Anti Bullying. We are proud to announce we have achieved the BIG Award for Excellence in tackling Bullying for the 5th consecutive year. Last academic year our team of pupil leaders, the Bully Busters worked incredibly hard to fulfil the criteria and provide evidence for the award.



In conjunction with this we are looking forward to welcoming a theatre production company, Open View Education into school before Anti Bullying week to deliver workshops with Years 7, 8 and 9 on our focus theme for the year – *Being an Upstander!* There will be opportunities for pupils to join our successful Bully Buster Team in the coming weeks .

ITT Partnership with The University of Manchester

Our English department welcomed 12 English PGCE students to St Damian's as part of our successful ITT partnership with The University of Manchester. The trainee teachers observed a number of English lessons and participated in a planning session with Mrs Turbatu, Head of English. They will return in a couple of weeks to teach a poetry lesson, the content of which is linked to our current curriculum themes of "Greek Myths" and "Journeys." They loved meeting our students and we are looking forward to participating in the exciting lessons they have planned.

Governor's Update

At the most recent full Governing Body meeting, Miss Loretta Dean was elected as our Chair of Governors and Mrs Kathryn Connor as Vice Chair. Both have considerable experience as governors and bring a wealth of skills, such as finance and human resources, to our strong governing body. Miss Dean said *"It is an honour to be Chair of Governors at St Damian's, a school I attended as a student. I am determined to continue the great work of Betty Jones to ensure that the children here continue to have a rewarding educational experience"*.

Are you interested in becoming a Foundation Governor at St Damian's? The role of our Governing Board is to operate at a strategic level, ensuring that the Catholic vision and character of our school is upheld. If you are interested in applying to become a Foundation Governor and supporting the mission and aims of our 'outstanding' school, please contact Angela Ogden at school for further information.

Ex-pupils' Success

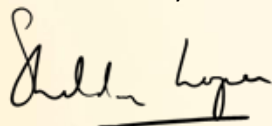
It is the aim of St Damian's that our students are well prepared for the *'next stage of their education'*. I frequently receive emails from ex-pupils/parents who are eager to inform me of the journey they are currently on. I recently received one from Mrs Stoddard, mother of Noah-Shane Stoddard who left St Damian's a few years ago. He has just received 3A*s and an A in his A-Levels. These are exceptional results and Noah is now going on to study for a degree in History at the University of York. Mrs Soddard said *"Noah gained excellent GCSE results from St Damian's and really enjoyed his time there, his younger brother, Theo is a current Year 10 pupil of St Damian's too"*. A massive well done to Noah who *'believed to achieve!'*. Please share good news stories and I will promote where applicable.

Finally...

It was a *great finish to the end* of the last academic year when we received the outstanding Ofsted report, and it has been a *great start to this academic year* with our excellent GCSE outcomes which are the best in our history. St Damian's has never been stronger! The wonderful staff and governors are committed to ensuring that our great children continue to receive a first class holistic education. That is what they deserve and that is what we will strive to achieve.

As always, thanks for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue
Headteacher