



St Damian's R.C. Science College

# ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER



## A Message from our Headteacher

Alumni Newsletter Issue 3 - January 2022

Welcome to the third edition of our Alumni Newsletter.

As Headteacher of St Damian's it is, yet again, my pleasure to introduce our latest Alumni Newsletter. As you read through its contents you will quickly realise that despite the massive and unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic, the careers provision at St Damian's continues to be exceptional and would rival any school in the country.

Reading the comments from the Class of 2021, I was particularly delighted to read that many pupils talked about the staff and this is what they enjoyed most during their time at St Damian's. This is important as St Damian's can't be the strong community that we have, without excellent relationships between pupils and staff. This is, and always will be, the backbone of our community. My staff and I hope that your time at St Damian's was enjoyable, you achieved your full potential, regardless of ability, and that we had a big part in making you the person that you are today! Good luck in your chosen pathways, whatever they may be.

As a school community we are very proud to hear from ex-pupils and their chosen careers, regardless of what that may be. These careers cover the whole spectrum including teachers, doctors and managing directors. However, regardless of your chosen path or career, we wish you nothing but the best.

I loved reading about Mrs Taylor's 'fond' memories of her time as a pupil at St Damian's. It is great to see past pupils coming back to St Damian's and passing on her experiences to the current cohort of pupils.

Finally, I can't finish without referring to St Damian's unofficial motto. This is simply 'Believe to Achieve'. At St Damian's we try and instil this into our children because it really is true. Believe in yourself, work hard and there should be no limitations of what you can achieve.

### St Damian's Vision Statement for Careers

*To provide an inclusive, effective and ambitious careers strategy which raises pupil aspirations, unlocks their potential and ensures that they have the individual skills, values and qualifications to make informed choices and be successful in further education, training and employment*



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# St. Damian's Gazette

## Where are they now?

Class of 1994

**Liz Hillier**

MA(Hons)  
English Literature  
The University of Edinburgh

Class of 2015

**Joseph Gill**

Undergraduate  
Degree in  
Aeronautical  
Engineering 1st class  
with Honours.

PGCE Secondary  
Physics

Class of 2015

**Bethany Barnett**

Graduated with a  
Psychology Degree  
from The University of  
Manchester in 2020.

About to start her  
training to become a  
Psychology Teacher.  
Still based in Ashton-  
under-Lyne.

Class of 2015

**Jamie Morley**

Currently teaching  
English at 2  
Elementary Schools  
and 2 Junior High  
schools in north  
Japan.

Class of 1996

**Chris McQuillan**

A former engineer, and now  
novelist & travel writer who  
currently resides in  
Wiltshire. I'm currently  
attempting to walk the  
entire 7,500 miles of  
Britain's coastline with my  
dog Moose. There's lots of  
online stuff about what I do  
online, all of which you can  
get to by logging on to:  
[www.chrisandmoose.co.uk](http://www.chrisandmoose.co.uk)

Class of 2005

**Vanessa Puddoo**

Work in Customer  
Service for Rochdale  
Boroughwide Housing

Class of 2009

**Tyra Schafer  
(Watson)**

Acting Head of PE  
at a secondary  
school

Class of 2014

**Emma Oliver**

Currently working as  
a physiotherapist for  
the NHS. I am a  
rotational  
physiotherapist and  
have worked in a  
number of clinical  
areas including  
MSK, stroke,  
medicals and  
respiratory/Covid  
ICU during the  
pandemic

Class of 2017

**Max Woodvine  
(Morris)**

Elected as the youngest  
Councillor in the history  
of the Borough of Oldham

Class of 2017

**Jacob Van  
Weerdenburg**

Works in a nightclub  
in Manchester.  
Studied Musical  
Theatre and has been  
in many shows

Class of 2020

**Thomas Hoyle**

Blackpool and Fylde  
College

Class of 2016

**Roisin Lowrie**

Primary school  
teacher at St  
Ambrose in Chorlton





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## The Class of 2021

**After the challenging journey of completing their GCSES during a global pandemic which included two lockdowns, our 2021 Leavers remained incredibly resilient. It was great to see them celebrate their successes on Results Day. Many students have embarked on college courses and apprenticeships. We were delighted to hear from those who sent us updates**

**Thank you to those who got in touch!**

**We miss you!**

**Good Luck!**



**Scarlett Maxwell-Brahms** Biology, Chemistry, Psychology and Core Maths at ASFC

**Courney Coman** - Criminology, Photography, History

**Priya Mistry** - Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics at ASFC

**Billy Singleton** - Performing Arts at Oldham College

**Antonia Shipley** - A Levels at Loreto College

**Madelyn Peacher** - History, English Literature and Politics at ASFC

**Susanna Shibu** - Biology, Chemistry and Maths

**Patrick Caro** - A Levels at ASFC

**Katie Hadfield** - Health & Social Care, Oldham College

**Josh Connolly** - Apprenticeship

### What did the Class of 2021 enjoy most about St. Damian's?

'The work was easier than college'

'The teachers'      'Friends'

'All the different clubs there were and how as you grew up you went from it all being brand new to being a role model for all the younger years, which felt really rewarding'

'The friends I made there.'

'I definitely miss the support from all the staff- they work round the clock to see students reaching their true potential whilst ensuring their upmost happiness and well-being- and also all the great canteen team and their flapjacks!'

'The teachers and the general vibe.'

'I miss how caring everyone was.'

'Child Development lessons'

### What did the Class of 2021 enjoy most about St. Damian's?

'One of the things I miss the most is the Liturgy Group which I was committed to for 5 years. I remember running to lunch every Thursday and sitting in Room 17 and discussing about the liturgical and charitable life of the school. I always loved the inner community the R.E staff always created as it was a time of self-reflection but also supporting the ethos of the school. Altar serving at school masses made me incredibly connected to the school and supporting the many charities within connected me with the outer world. I will always miss the teachers and staff that gave us knowledge and raised us into intelligent young adults and will look up to you as role-models. I most definitely will miss Mr Logue for telling all of us to 'believe to achieve' when we were all going through a rough patch in year 11'.

'Some of the staff! Some of the staff at St Damian's made the school easy to go to everyday. This is the part that I missed most about the school.'

'The enthusiastic teachers and their passion to teach the pupils'

'I enjoyed engaging in practical/hands on activities whilst also engaging in class discussions'

'Everyone is equal at St Damian's and as soon as entering the campus, you can feel the close touch of the community around you. The teachers and staff are so considerate and hospitable that lessons are filled with enjoyment and enthusiasm. It is very safe to be a pupil at St Damians. I will never forget the memories I made there through the many friendships, the drama productions, the science lessons and school trips'.



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### Class of 2021

## What have you enjoyed most since leaving St. Damian's?

'The freedom about how you study and meeting new people'.

'Longer breaks and study days'.

'Going into depth of smaller topics learnt at GCSE and developing my knowledge in different areas. Independence and social life. Everyone is a similar age 16-18 so it's really easy to make friends with anyone'.

'The course and the people I get to spend the day with. It's a lot more free than school and has a lot more freedoms'.

'Definitely the freedom to study subjects I have a true penchant for and really get to express myself- i enjoy the new routine and newfound independence along with the vast variety of enrichment opportunities available at college'.

'Meeting new people and studying subjects I enjoy'.

'I have particularly enjoyed the freedom and responsibility given to the students to get on with their own work. I enjoy my classes as I am learning about material that I find interest in and would like to progress on for the future. I have made many new friends with people from a myriad of backgrounds and enjoy the difference in their cultures.'

'Allowed to leave the College during break and lunch; allowed technology (i.e. laptops) to complete work and/or to revise'

## Alumni advice for current pupils

'Make the most of it and stay on top of your learning and have fun!'

'Choose you subjects you enjoy; not just subjects you feel like you should choose'

'Do good and leave behind you a virtue of good so that the storms of time can never destroy, write yourself in kindness and love so your name will never be forgotten. It's completely fine to make mistakes but it's what you do with them that defines you as a person in this life'.

## Careers Support

Hearing what our alumni have gone on to do in their careers and life after St. Damian's is a great inspiration for pupils. It complements our careers programme, provides insight and real-life experiences of a variety of employment sectors.

Your experiences can make a real difference to pupils who are unsure which career path might be right for them or how to get into the field you work in.

Career Talks on a wide variety of topics are delivered on ASPIRE Days in October and July each year.

Recently, Alumni Career Talks have been included an Engineering apprenticeship with Rolls Royce & working in Performing Arts.

**Time:** 1 hour

**Group size:** Can be negotiated. Ideally a group of 32 pupils or a whole year group or a smaller group

### Suggested Format:

Careers Workshop

- Talk
- Set a task or challenge
- Feedback to the pupils on the task
- Question & Answer session
- Pupil Reflection

If you would be willing to help, please would you email [alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)  
We would love to hear from you!







# St Damian's R.C. Science College

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### THE SPOTLIGHT

**Mrs H. Taylor**

**History Teacher  
Faculty Leader  
PSHE**

**Class of 2006**

**St Damian's Staff has many Alumni actively serving in the school. This demonstrates that the strong attachment and love of the school that has continued to grow from time as a pupil at St. Damian's to time as an employee ensuring that the next generations of St. Damian's pupils continue to grow, develop and be inspired by the unique ethos of St. Damian's Catholic Community.**

**In our third Alumni Newsletter, Mrs Taylor shares her journey from**

**St. Damian's pupil to Teacher of History & Faculty Leader, PSHE**

I joined St Damian's in September 2001. I had transferred primary schools late in Year 6 which was extremely daunting, but it had also prepared me well for making new friends and embracing my next transition, starting "big" school. My earliest memories at St Damian's were feeling instantly welcomed and I knew straight away that I was going to be happy here. I made some great friends, and I am still close to them today.

I enjoyed most subjects in school apart from Maths which still gives me the shivers to this day. I always loved History and RE and had decided from a young age that I wanted to be a teacher. I will be honest; I have never found any of my studies easy and have had to work extremely hard to gain the qualifications that I have today. I have been brought up on the mantra that you have to work hard for anything in life and as a result knowing that you will appreciate everything you have when you know you have put everything into it.

Throughout my time as a student, St Damian's always offered lots of extracurricular activities and during my time I took part in cross country, the school council, and a talent show. I also enjoyed two ski trips, including one visit to New York which is an experience my friends and I still discuss. I look back on my time so fondly, we had lots of laughs, were taught by some great teachers, and made some fantastic memories.

I remember being devastated when I eventually left in 2006 and missed a lot of the people I had seen every day for the past 5 years. At 16, you think your school friends are your whole world and don't think you will make any new friends as you get older. Many of my friends went to Loreto and Xaverian Colleges but I chose to go to Ashton Sixth Form as it was just so close to home. I was lucky in that I knew what I wanted to do for my career and what steps needed to take in order to achieve it. I studied A Levels in Sociology, History and

Religious Studies. The jump from GCSE to A-Level was extremely challenging, but I enjoyed the subjects I studied and loved that I could now narrow my focus and go into more detail with the subjects I enjoyed.

Following on from my A-levels, I went to Manchester University to study History and Sociology. I decided to move away from home and live in halls of residence. This was such an invaluable experience, and I had a great time gaining some independence and meeting new people. Throughout my 3 years, I lived in Hulme and Fallowfield and loved the buzz of living in the city but also knowing I wasn't too far away from home. During my studies I also had a part time job at Marks and Spencer, and I think it provided me with some invaluable life skills, it certainly helped me my confidence when it came to interviews for my teacher training place.

I graduated from Manchester University in 2011 and applied to do my PGCE straight away. I felt quite determined and wanted to get into work as soon as possible. I had considered having a year out to travel and work but I was concerned that I might struggle then to get back into studying again. I loved learning but I also had a clear vision of what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be by a certain age. I completed my PGCE at Edge Hill University and made some great friends there.

The year was extremely difficult, but I knew it would be worth it and I had to stick at it. I stayed at home during this time and was glad that I had passed my driving test whilst studying at university as my school placements were in Rawtenstall and Bolton. I applied for my first teaching job at St Joseph's in Horwich and enjoyed my first few years of teaching there. Travelling to Bolton every day was tough, but the school was very similar to St Damian's and I received a lot of support and training from an outstanding history department.

When a job came up at St Damian's, I couldn't miss out on the opportunity as I knew I wanted to come back eventually. I have worked here for 7 years now, and I love the place. I know a lot of people who have opted out of teaching, so I know how lucky I am to work in such a supportive department and school. The pupils here are wonderful and every day is different. Teaching is extremely challenging but also such a rewarding job. I am confident that it is a career I will be sticking with for the rest of my working life.



**If you are a former member of staff and would like to contribute to our Alumni Newsletter, please email:**

[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)



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### Have you got a key worker story to share?

Our next edition of St.  
Damian's Alumni Newsletter  
will be in Autumn 2021

Please tell your story & inspire  
our pupils!

Please email:  
[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

### Are you a St Damian's pupil at college?

Please tell us about your  
current studies, your  
achievements & your future  
plans!

Please email:  
[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

### Are you a St Damian's pupil who is currently doing an apprenticeship ?

Please tell us about your  
work, your achievements  
& your future plans!

Please email:  
[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

### Are you a St Damian's pupil at who has set up their own business?

Please tell us about what  
you do and how you set it  
up!

Please email:  
[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

### Are you a St Damian's pupil at university?

Please tell us about your  
studies, your  
achievements & your  
future plans!

Please email:  
[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

## Keep in touch!



We're always keen to  
keep in touch with St.  
Damian's Alumni.  
Whether it's memories of  
your school days, stories  
of your travels, career  
details or reunions. Please  
email:

[alumni@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:alumni@stdamians.co.uk)

Read the Alumni section  
of the school website

- Join the online alumni  
community via Linked  
In
- Create an online  
profile
- Keep your contact  
details up to date
- Connect with old  
school friends
- Contribute to the  
Alumni Newsletter
- Register to receive the  
Alumni Newsletter



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