



In all things faithful
May 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

A very warm welcome to the penultimate newsletter of the year. I can't believe we are at the end of half term 5 already... where does the time go? As always, it has been an extremely busy month for our community. I hope that the following gives a flavour of the holistic education here at St Damian's.

Confirmation 2022

A group of Yr8 pupils are currently participating in a comprehensive programme led by Mr Saul and Fr Brown at St Edward's Church, preparing for their Confirmation. The pupils are reflecting on a range of issues including: making a lifelong commitment to being a Catholic, the gifts and fruits of being a Catholic and what it takes to be a modern day Christian. Fr Jude is supporting by offering the sacrament of reconciliation in the school chapel prior to the confirmation ceremony on 4th June. During the preparation, our staff have helped Mr Saul, 'living out' our mission statement. Mr Saul was taken aback by our kindness and generosity and emailed school to say thank you and finished his communication with *"Maybe it's something in the Damian's DNA ... you're all so helpful & supportive. Greatly appreciated"*. It's always nice to hear such positive comments about the St Damian's staff.

Drugs in the Area

The police school liaison officers have recently made us aware of the increased number of incidents in the local area related to the possession and use of illegal substances. As Headteacher I make it my priority to ensure that the pupils in school are aware of the dangers of drug use and the impact that it can have on them and their life chances. The school policy on illegal substances is clear: we have a zero-tolerance approach. Any pupil who brings drugs into the school is likely to be permanently excluded. It is my duty to safeguard all members of this community.

Year 11 Update

- **GCSE exams:** As I write our pupils are approaching mid-way in their exams. Up to now, I have been very impressed with their mature attitude towards their exams. It is vital that they continue to work hard as there are still a significant number of exams in the weeks ahead. As I have always said, there is no substitute for hard work. The rewards for hard work are great GCSE outcomes that open up so many doors for their futures.
- **Equipment:** Please ensure that you child comes to school with the correct equipment for examinations (especially a calculator for Maths and Science examinations). We do not have enough calculators to provide these for pupils sitting an examination.
- **Leavers' Mass.** I cordially invite parents to our Yr11 Leavers' Mass on Thursday 23rd June at 12 noon to celebrate your child's five years at St Damian's. It is great to be able to celebrate this Mass with pupils and parents again post-Covid.

And a huge congratulations to Harrison Dodd, a very talented Yr11 pupil, who has been selected for the U16s England Rugby League Squad. Harrison will partake in a Four Nations competition this summer. We wish him all the best in this and for the future!

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Headteacher

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St. Damian's RC Science College

Literacy Update

Literacy is at the heart of the curriculum at St Damian's. In essence, being literate is arguably the most important aspect of learning. As a school we always look at innovative ways to improve the literacy of our pupils.

- ✓ **Digital Library:** A new digital library (SORA) has been purchased which has access to over 5000 books. Pupils access this online library through the school website under the student tab and then library. Pupils have been informed how to access the library. The library has been active for 4 weeks with nearly 1000 books borrowed and hundreds of hours of reading undertaken. Parents should encourage their children to read as this is the most effective way to increase vocabulary and increase their cultural knowledge.
- ✓ **Journalism Club:** This was recently launched by Miss Jameel. Our pupils are currently producing a school publication and deciding what type of articles are going to be included. I can't wait to see the first publication in the summer term. Watch this space! We aim to celebrate a range of pupils' writing and there will also be interviews with staff.
- ✓ **Yr7 Parents' Information Evening in May:** An aspect of this evening was simply 'reading'. Parents experienced what it is like to read at 60 words per minute. For comprehension to take place, pupils need to be reading around 200 words per minute. The best way to increase pupils' fluency is for them to read more widely and more often. Lots of work on vocabulary acquisition has taken place in school, with teachers focusing on difficult vocabulary in the classroom. Let's keep up that momentum at home.

And I am delighted to report final preparations are in place for a **new** Learning Resource Centre [LRC]. This will facilitate a full-size classroom and library area, where Ms Heenan (Literacy Lead) and Ms Toole (Librarian) will have the opportunity to create a unique environment at the heart of our school. I am excited at the prospect of this new facility to showcase literacy at St Damian's.

Teaching and Learning

A whole school strategy that we have been trialling this year has been '*cold calling*'. This is where teachers randomly question pupils without hands up. We have found that it makes assessment in the lesson stronger, ensures pupils are engaged and allows teachers to inform their planning. Our recent lesson observations show that this strategy is working well and that pupils are contributing positively to lessons. It is always a pleasure to walk around the school and see the pupils consistently engaged in their lessons.

Safeguarding: Gangs and Youth Violence

As part of our mission to ensure a 'holistic' education it is vital that we educate our pupils of dangers that are real in society and that they may encounter outside school. One of the dangers that we have to accept is that there are gangs in the areas where our pupils live. Gangs are organised groups who often become involved in criminal activities. Young people, including our pupils, are attracted to these gangs because of peer pressure, excitement, status, respect or for a sense of belonging. In essence, young people, including our pupils, have the potential to be exploited and thus be at risk. I ask that you, as parents, are vigilant regarding your child's friends and activities. If you have any concerns, contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or contact the local authority children's services for advice.

Yr10 Updates

- *Greater M/Cr High Achievers Partnership Enrichment Programme [GMHAP].* Twenty-seven Yr10 pupils are participating in the Loreto College GMHAP Enrichment Programme. This is a partnership between Loreto College, Manchester University and high schools across Greater M/Cr and focuses on inspiring the brightest students to academic success through masterclasses in a range of academic subjects. The launch event took place at the start of May and included talks from Loreto staff, former GMHAP students and the University of Manchester.
- *Ashton Sixth Form Realising Aspirations Programme.* Our Yr10 pupils also have volunteered to partake in the Ashton Sixth Form Realising Aspirations Programme. I was delighted to receive an email from Mr Noble, the Realising Aspirations Co-ordinator who stated *"St Damian's students on the programme have been great to work with and I have received some lovely feedback from teachers who have delivered taster sessions on the programme"*. I am always proud when I hear external validation and praise about our wonderful pupils!
- *Y10 Exams.* Mocks have started and will continue until *Friday 17th June*. It has been a steep learning curve for pupils getting into the routine of revision and preparing themselves for external exams. Pupils have had to adapt to the formality of a large exam venue and the strict rules required for invigilation. This is a valuable experience prior to Yr11. Once exam papers are marked, pupils will be given feedback and will be told what they need to do to improve. It is important that pupils continue to work hard and have high aspirations for what they can achieve. The Yr10 Exam Results Day will be on *Friday 8th July*.
- *Work Experience.* Over 130 pupils have now found work experience placements across a range of sectors including engineering, health, leisure, education, retail and law. Risk assessments as well as health and safety checks are currently being carried out by our work experience company, Changing Education. The remaining pupils will hopefully find themselves placements within the next few weeks. The work experience dates are *11th - 15th July*. After half term, pupils will be given advice and guidance on how to conduct themselves in the workplace and we look forward to hearing about their successes.

Head Boy Head Girl

Every year I am blown away by the quality of applications I receive for the prestigious positions of Head Boy and Head Girl. This year has been no exception. The process to appoint is robust and includes an interview and a presentation. After much deliberation, Ms Joyce and I are delighted to announce that the Head Boy is Thomas Brown and the Head Girl is Julita Joshy. I have no doubt that they will be excellent ambassadors for the St Damian's community.

Excellence in Pupil Development Award [EPDA] Update

Mr Colin Noble, our EPDA consultant, returned for a monitoring visit at the end of April. His remit was to scrutinise our PSHE, Careers provision and pastoral care and he was extremely impressed with the extensive opportunities our pupils experience. He also toured the school and lunched with the pupils and observed our Friday debate club. After watching the debate club he commented, *'The behaviour, manners and confidence of the pupils was in fact, excellent!'* As Headteacher, I was proud of these comments. A massive well done to Mr Gregory who chairs the debate club which has grown and gone from strength to strength. I may invite parents to participate in future debates 😊

Football Round-Up 2021-2022

It has been a very busy end of season for our PE department and our football teams.

- Yr 11 were runners up in the Tameside Cup, narrowly beaten 1-0 by Droylsden Academy in a sporting and respectful encounter at Hyde United FC
- Yr 10 were runners up in the Greater Manchester Plate – beaten 3-2 by West Hill after a hard-fought game at Salford FA and were 6 a-side Tameside Champions. Unbeaten on the night, the team held their nerve to win on penalties in the final
- Yr 9 were Tameside Cup and GM Catholic Cup semi finalists
- Yr 7 are Tameside Cup winners and Tameside 5 a-side Champions. They will now represent Tameside in the Greater Manchester Finals at Carrington Training Ground in June. They are in the semi-final of the Catholic cup

A huge well done to all our football teams this year! Well done lads!

Update on forthcoming events...

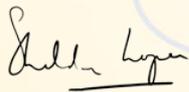
Following on from the April newsletter, a recap on upcoming dates;

- ✓ Celebration Evening. This is one of the highlights of the academic year where, as a community, we celebrate the achievements, efforts, and attendance of our pupils. This evening will take place on **Wednesday 29th June.**
- ✓ Sports Day. Our fantastic PE department are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that we maximise participation in our annual sports day. This will take place on **Friday 15th July.**
- ✓ Share Day. The favourite day for many of our pupils [and staff 😊]. This is another opportunity to celebrate the end of the year but also to raise money for a chosen charity. This is a unique tradition going back many decades. This will take place on **Monday 18th July.**

As always, a massive thanks for your support!

I am looking forward to the last half term before the summer break.

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher