

As Easter looms on the horizon, welcome to the March newsletter. It gives me great pleasure to let you see in pictures and words all that is going on in and around school. As I am sure you already know things have been extremely busy; we've had dragons, authors and police dogs in school since our last newsletter so read on for more details ...

Year 7 Places for September 2015

This year saw an unprecedented number of applications for a place at St Damian's for September 2015 and as a result we haven't even been able to offer all the catholic children a place. Letters and information packs will be sent to those children who have been lucky enough to receive an offer of a place. Over 500 parents put us down as one of their choices and we are expecting a lot of appeals. The deadline for appeals is 31st March 2015 and you can either appeal on-line or in writing.

Early Chinese New Year - 13.02.15



On Friday 13th February we had an early celebration for Chinese New Year. All the pupils had the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture across the curriculum through special lessons. Also they were able to taste and experience Chinese foods, prepared by our catering team, as well as taking part in various fundraising activities.

Our dancing Chinese Lion was welcomed by all our school community at break and lunchtime - they loved it! Pupils had a special workshop and were shown how to perform the Lion dance themselves.

It was a valuable opportunity for every child to take part in an experience that develops their cultural awareness. We also raised over £600 for the charity 'Shelter' by wearing something red, as it is the lucky colour in China. Many thanks to all the pupils and staff involved in our Chinese New Year celebrations. A huge success and a very special and enjoyable day.



Year 8 English

Last term, Year 8 studied Gothic Literature. As part of their studies, each student completed an Independent Learning Project for homework. The work produced was outstanding! Teachers of English were highly impressed with the quality of work: projects included models of Gothic architecture, information booklets, posters and power point presentations. It was difficult to choose the best work, but we finally nominated a number of students to be awarded vouchers and certificates. Superb effort Year 8! You should be extremely proud of your work!

Year 11 Chemistry

The St Damian's Chemistry Blog has been designed to support Year 11 students with their revision for their upcoming exams. The blog covers all of the chemistry units and can support students studying core, additional and separate science.

<http://chemistrystdamians.blogspot.co.uk/>

The physics blog is on its way so watch out !! Please encourage your child to use this !

Year 7 Parents Evening – A massive thank you for the overwhelming positive feedback and messages of support after Year 7 Parents Evening. A record 95% of parents attended and 116 questionnaires were completed and

returned. Of those returned 115 out of 116 (99%) parents said they “would recommend this school to another parent”. Below are some of the comments (these are indicative of many of the comments).

- ❖ ‘Really pleased with all aspects of school life. My daughter has settled in well and school has made the transition from primary easy for her, thank you’
- ❖ ‘I imagined that my child would feel lost in such a big school. I have found that staff and pupils have taken her under their wings and I never have to worry that she will not be looked after while she is at school’
- ❖ ‘Our daughter is making excellent progress, her teachers show that they know a lot about her. We are so pleased with her and the lovely staff, a credit to the school’
- ❖ ‘Fantastic school, teachers and well behaved pupils. All a credit to the school’
- ❖ ‘Our son is really happy and settled in school. A great reflection on the staff and leadership of the school’
- ❖ ‘Keep doing what you’re doing, it’s working brilliantly !

Holocaust Survivor

On Thursday 26th February Joanna Millan visited St. Damian’s to share her experiences of this horrific event and to also tell them about her experiences in post war Britain. It was a sobering event for all concerned and gave a context to the events Year 9 had been studying. They were complimented for their incisive and sensitive questioning and respectful attitude. This is the second time Joanna has visited and hopefully this is now a yearly event.

Literacy Awareness Week and World Book Day

To promote Literacy at St Damian’s we held various events through the week. Year 7 took part in a Spelling Bee. They were given various spellings over the course of the week to learn. The lucky winner was Isobel Adams. The pupil Learning Forum raised awareness of excellent presentation through delivering assemblies to all year groups.



Our resident author - Ms Allen ran various poetry workshops with Year 10 and Year 8. This was a great success and the pupils really enjoyed the experience and it gave them an insight into how to access poetry.

To celebrate Literacy Awareness Week at school and World Book Day, Mike Garry joined us to inspire our students with his amazing poetry. This is the second time Mike has joined us at St Damian’s and through his workshops we aim to produce some amazing work in our English lessons, for Year 8 and 9. The feedback from both the pupils and staff has been amazing. He really is an inspiration and it has been a privilege to have him in school.

In Year 7 and 8 we run the Accelerated Reader Programme. This programme is aimed to improve reading levels and also to engage pupils in reading. To celebrate our reading “millionaires” we went to the Harry Potter Studios in Watford. Again, the pupils really enjoyed the experience and they explained that they were glad they had read a million words!!!

Year 7 Poetry

As part of the Year 7 Poetry unit, P.C. Joe Watts visited three classes with Bobby, the springer spaniel. P.C. Watts is an annual visitor to the school and was once again impressed with the behaviour, attitude to learning and the intelligent questions asked by the students. Students have been learning about the theme of working animals in Heaney’s poetry. They were able to see Bobby in action finding hidden cash, firearms and drugs and learn about the valuable role he plays in catching criminals.



Year 9 Retreat to Castlerigg



45 Year 9’s accompanied Mr O’Loughlin, Mr Burtles, Miss O’Brien and Miss Tomkow to Castlerigg Manor for a weekend retreat at the beginning of March. There they climbed mountains, both physically and metaphorically, reflected on their experiences, attended and planned Mass, sang and had fun. Every single student embraced the experience and even the snow on the way back couldn’t affect morale! A wonderful retreat where behaviour was outstanding.



In the second week of March all students had the chance to receive reconciliation with Fr. Simon. As a year group, they will be in the hall for a half hour session on the importance of this Sacrament, with individual reconciliation taking place throughout the day.

Charity at St Damian's

The charity for this half term is Mary's Meals and their "backpack project". This focusses on collecting stationary and equipment to be sent to schools and families in Africa, thus allowing students to be given the gift of education. All forms will be producing a backpack, which will be collected in by Mr O'Loughlin and passed to Fr. Simon. As always, St. Damian's leads the way with charity and the RE department are proud of the efforts so far of our students, with hopefully more to come!

British Science Week: Solar Eclipse

This week saw the start of a ten day celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths – featuring fascinating, entertaining and engaging events and activities for pupils. This year, Science week coincided with a momentous event - the Solar Eclipse! Pupils in Years 7 - 9 were engaged in practical Science lessons in preparation for Friday's Solar Eclipse. The weather was perfect for a selection of pupils to use the viewers they had made in Science to safely view the Eclipse.



Cyber Bullying - We were lucky enough to welcome Danny Dearden to St Damian's. He was inspirational in his performance for our pupils. As well as 'wowing' them with his singing performance he gave a clear and positive message about the dangers of cyber bullying. He talked to pupils about how it is wrong and harmful, and unless we make a stand, a friend or even ourselves, this type of bullying and victimisation will not stop. Staff commented on Danny's visit and said 'this was a brilliant initiative to get the message of cyber bullying across to our pupils. Danny was brilliant!'



Year 9 Options Evening - Year 9 Options Evening took place on Monday 9th March 2015. The aim of the evening was to get pupils and their parents to make 'informed choices' about subjects and to ensure that pupils plan a broad and balanced curriculum at KS4 which allows them to achieve the best grades possible at the end of Year 11. We talked about RE being at the core of our curriculum and being embedded as part of the broader experience of life in our Catholic community. We looked at the changes in English and Maths with the new grading system 1-9. Alongside these subjects, it was also mentioned that pupils will do

Science and PE as part of the Core Curriculum.

With regards to choices, we are offering a range of GCSE and Applied Learning Courses. These include GCSEs in Art & Design, Catering, Drama, Food Technology, Music, Performing Arts, Product Design and BTECs in Child, Play, Learning & Development, Construction, Sport, Travel & Tourism as well as Cambridge Nationals in ICT.

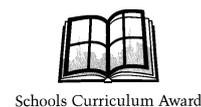
After the presentation, pupils had the opportunity to talk to Subject Leaders and Year 10 pupils about the course content and possible future careers connected with their subjects in the Options Marketplace. There is lots of support available from Form Tutors, Subject Leaders and the Careers officer. Options Forms must be handed into Form Tutors by Friday 27th March 2015



Chewing Gum - Please remember that chewing gum is not allowed on school premises and it is our collective social responsibility to keep our community and new school clean and tidy. There are plenty of bins around school to dispose of any gum/litter, please use them !

Persistent Absence

The Department for Education is changing the definition of persistent absence in school from 15% to 10% absenteeism. The department feel that lowering the threshold will ensure that schools will take action sooner to deal with absence. Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they



are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. From the beginning of the next academic year, 2015 to 2016, the government is reducing the persistent absence threshold of 10 per cent. The following table shows estimated cumulative absent session thresholds for 10 per cent, which will come into force as from September 2015.

	10 per cent
Half-term 1	7 or more sessions
Half-term 1-2 (autumn term)	14 or more sessions
Half-term 1-3	20 or more sessions
Half-term 1-4 (autumn term and spring term combined)	25 or more sessions
Half-term 1-5	31 or more sessions
Half-term 1-6 (full academic year)	38 or more sessions

***1 session equates to a ½ day**

Communication with Parents: To keep you up-to-date of events happening in school and other information in an instant you can follow us on:



Follow us on twitter [@St Damians RCSC](https://twitter.com/StDamiansRCSC)



Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Damians-RC-Science-College/229699983834312>



Our website <http://www.st-damians.tameside.sch.uk>

Holiday Dates 2015/2016

	<u>Close</u>	<u>Re Open</u>
<u>Academic Year Starts</u>		*Wednesday 2nd September 2015
Half term	Friday 23rd October 2015	Monday 2nd November 2015
INSET DAY	Friday 27th November 2015 (school closed)	
Christmas	Friday 18th December 2015	Monday 4th January 2016
Half term	Friday 12th February 2016	Monday 22nd February 2016
INSET DAY	Thursday 24th March 2016 (school closed)	
Good Friday	Friday 25 th March 2016 (school closed)	
Easter Monday	Monday 28 th March 2016 (school closed)	
Easter	Friday 1st April 2016	Monday 18th April 2016
Spring Bank Holiday	Monday 2nd May 2016 (school closed)	
Half term	Friday 27th May 2016	Monday 6th June 2016
Summer	Tuesday 19th July 2016	**

Dates for the Diary

Wednesday 1 st April 2015	School closes for Easter
Monday 20 th April 2015	Students return to school
w/c Monday 27 th April	Year 9 Exam Week
Monday 4 th May	Bank Holiday, school closed
w/c Tuesday 5 th May	Year 8 Exam Week
w/c Monday 11 th May	Year 10 Exam Week
Thursday 21 st May	Year 8 Parents Evening

Finally, a massive thank you from both my staff and I for your continued support and loyalty to St Damian's. We really do appreciate the overwhelming support from parents to ensure that your child achieves the outstanding education they deserve !

