



In all things faithful

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**Headteacher**

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September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers of Yr 11 Students

I write this letter early in the academic year as I believe that this academic year is arguably one of the most important years of your child's education. Your child will be sitting their GCSE exams in a few months' time, and these are the gateway to post 16 opportunities which will largely determine what your child can and can't do in the future. The following are some key points for your perusal. I will communicate these as and when needed in my monthly newsletters and Mrs Forde and I will ensure they are positively communicated in weekly assemblies.

### **The Academic Potential of this Year Group**

Firstly, let me start with positive news. This current Yr11 cohort, *'the class of 2025'* has a real chance to achieve outstanding GCSE exams and in fact have the potential to smash all previous records that the school has achieved in terms of academic outcomes. In essence, if they work hard and show a real positive attitude to their learning then they have the ability to achieve great grades next summer. As parents, I ask that you pass this message on and support them in this endeavour.

### **GCSE Outcomes August 2024**

Yet again, the students at St Damian's received great GCSE outcomes. These outcomes do not happen by chance but through a combination of hard work, a positive attitude to learning coupled with quality teaching, exceptional pastoral care and high expectations, but do not under-estimate the importance of your support at home. These great outcomes ensure that our students have the best possible choices post-16, which are the foundation for post 18.

### **Attendance [and punctuality]**

It is vital that your child makes every effort to attend school. There is no doubt that there is a strong correlation between attendance and GCSE attainment. I ask that parents do everything possible to ensure that their child attends school regularly. 100% attendance must be the aim of every child. It is a myth that your child will 'catch-up' if they miss school. Additionally, the expectation is that your child attends school on time. Poor time keeping is often a sign of low expectations towards their studies. Good attendance and punctuality are a pre-requisite for being invited to the Prom.

### **Working Hard From The Outset**

There is no substitute for hard work. Achieving great grades will be determined by how hard your child works. GCSEs are not easy and there is a lot of content that needs to be covered. Your child should be working at home for between 2-3 hours each night. It is also important that they start working hard straight away and don't leave it too late. This causes unnecessary and avoidable stress.

### **Revision**

All students must start the year with a clear understanding that revision must be embraced. Initially, this revision should prepare them for ongoing assessments in subject areas, but also their Mock exams in December. Although all students may revise differently, I include some tips below.

- ✓ Have a quiet place to study with no distractions such as your phone
- ✓ Have a structured revision timetable including dedicated revision time at weekends
- ✓ Do not make copious notes: use key words, concepts and spider diagrams

- ✓ Test yourself regularly to ensure that you have remembered the subject content
- ✓ Complete past exam questions and papers. This should build your confidence over time

As always, please ask your teacher for advice – they are there to help and support you.

### Intervention in School

Every year, we have a structured intervention plan for students in school. At the time of writing, this has not been finalised. I will share these details with parents [and students] when the details are known.

NB. Our Literacy Hub will be open every day before and after school to support quiet revision.

### Support

We recognise that the next few months can be very stressful for Yr11 students. As a parent whose 2 children have been through GCSE exams, I know that this can be difficult for them. We have a graduated approach to supporting our children. The form tutor should be the first point of call if there is an issue. Mrs Forde, as HOY 11, is always available to offer support. If you need to speak to her, please contact her at school and she will be more than willing to help. We have two student support officers who are available to offer 1 - 1 support during lunch time drop-in sessions. Support is offered around anxiety, resilience, wellbeing, exam stress and goal setting. They are also able to sign post on to external agencies for a more tailored approach if required. Additionally, at the right time, staff will also be mentoring targeted students. Finally, I am **always available** to meet you in person if there are any concerns. Please contact Mrs Biggs at school if you would like an appointment to speak to me. Working together is the best way for your child to achieve their full potential.

### Key Dates

- *Parental Information Evening.* This will take place on **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September**. I ask that parents make every effort to attend this as I will be imparting important information, and it will be an excellent opportunity to ask questions and/or clarify key issues.
- *Formal Parents' Evenings.* This will take place on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November**. This is a great opportunity to meet your child's subject teachers prior to their Mock exams. There will also be another parents' evening later in the academic year.
- *Mock exams.* These will take place over a 2week period, from **2<sup>nd</sup> December until the 13<sup>th</sup> December**. These will be linear and cover all the content your child has been learning since Yr10. It is vital that they are revising in preparation for these.

### Work Experience Week July 2024

Mr Healey, the lead for our careers provision, was very pleased with the work experience week last July. He said *"Our Yr10 work experience was a great success, with our students demonstrating the skills needed to be successful in the world of work. We hope you found your placement beneficial, created good working relationships and developed attributes that they will carry forward into their chosen careers. Well done"*. Work experience is about building confidence, resilience and raising aspirations for our great children. I hope that this experience will motivate them to achieve their potential.

### Prom

This is a great evening and a tradition that celebrates 5 years at St Damian's and is a highlight of the Yr11 calendar. It really is an evening that encapsulates all that is great about St Damian's. However, both students and parents must understand that the Prom is by invitation only and is **not an entitlement**. To get an invite to the Prom is simple. Students must have good behaviour, good attendance and good punctuality. Furthermore, any student who has been suspended twice during year 11 will have their invitation withdrawn. In the past few years, several students were very disappointed

that they couldn't attend the Prom as their invitation was withdrawn. As parents, I ask that you are clear about this message. This message will be conveyed regularly throughout the year in Yr11 assemblies.

### **A Personal Message from Mrs Forde, HOY 11**

I hope all students had a restful summer, following a busy and successful end to Yr10. I am very proud to be HOY 11 and look forward to seeing our students' hard work and dedication further develop over the course of the next few months, as they work towards their GCSEs. I know they have the ability to achieve very well. If any issues arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at school and we will work together to resolve any challenges. I wish Yr11 a positive start to the new school year.

### **A Great Example of Achievement**

During the summer break I received an email from the proud mother of an ex-pupil, Frank Duffy. It read as follows:

*"I just wanted to let you know that Frank Duffy (leaver 2022) has secured a place at Oxford university to study History & politics, achieving A\* in history, As in politics & English literature, A in EPQ & A\* in French as an independent candidate. I also wanted to thank everyone at St. Damian's for supporting him throughout this journey, without his amazing GCSEs results & the work ethic instilled in him whilst at St. Damian's, he wouldn't have been able to achieve this.*

*Please thank his teachers for us 😊. Pauline Duffy".*

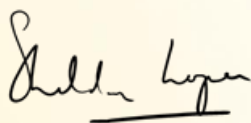
Frank is a great example of a student who worked hard, believed he would achieve and had high aspirations. On behalf of St Damian's, I wish him nothing but the best studying at Oxford University.

### **Finally**

My staff and I will be working hard and are focused on ensuring that your child achieves their potential next summer. I can state, without any hesitation, that the St Damian's staff genuinely love your children and want them to succeed. All of them deserve the best start in life and over the next few months we will do everything we can to ensure that this happens. I ask that parents support our rules, our high expectations and that you encourage and support your child to study at home.

**Good luck this year to the class of 2025!**

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue  
Headteacher