



May 2024

In all things faithful

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Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to my May newsletter. Again, it showcases an outstanding holistic education with excellent 'good news' and a range of extra-curricular activities. I hope that enjoy reading this.

### Catholic Life

As you are aware, St Damian's was due a Catholic inspection this academic year and the inspectors arrived on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May. The last time we were inspected was in 2016 where we achieved *outstanding* across all categories. Since then, the framework on which we are inspected, has become more robust and the process is much more rigorous. During the 2 days of the inspection, I was very proud of how the St Damian's community rose to the occasion and greatly impressed all of the inspectors. I was particularly impressed with Mrs Gerschler and her RE team where the most scrutiny was. After the lead inspector gave his feedback at the end of the second day, he said that it was "*a genuine pleasure to be here*". That was lovely to hear and this is a reflection on a strong, united catholic community where values are strong. The report has to go through a number of quality assurance procedures but I will share this with parents as soon as I possibly can.



### Safeguarding and Unite

As you may be aware there have been several high-profile cases of serious incidents within schools. Safeguarding at St Damian's is my number one priority. I take this responsibility very seriously. We have a unique school procedure called UNITE which puts the school into a lockdown situation if it were ever needed. Recently, we had an announced practise for this procedure to replicate a real-life situation. I am delighted to report that it went extremely well. Within minutes all children were accounted for, they were very mature and remained calm throughout. Mrs Brophy followed this up with assemblies explaining to the students the UNITE system and other measures we have in place to keep everyone safe. Finally, to reassure parents we will always act in the best interest of your child, and the probability of a real-life lockdown is small. Nonetheless, it is proper to be proactive and plan for all/any eventualities.

### Mental Health Awareness Week



We were proud to support the Mental Health Foundation during Mental Health Awareness week earlier in May. This year's theme was '*Empower half hour*' encouraging everyone to move more for our mental health; just gentle forms of movement and stretching especially when working on computers. We always encourage everyone to partake in physical activity to help create a school community with good mental health for all, ultimately making us happier and healthier.

### Yr11 Update

Yr11 students are now more than half-way through their exams. Their maturity has been remarkable. However, it is important that this maturity, their work rate and focus continue until they finish their last exam. This means that they should be working throughout the May break, including attending the many extra revision sessions during the May break and on Saturdays. Below is the revision timetable for next week. Your child will have been told to attend if applicable.



Date	Time	Teacher	Subject
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9:30am – 12:30pm	EML PMN	Maths Maths
	10:00am – 2:00pm	BWN SSN	Maths Higher Spanish
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	10:00am – 2:00pm	SSN	Foundation Spanish
	9:30am – 12:00	DWN	Maths
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> May	9:30am – 11:30am	ABM, NRN, MJE	Biology, Chemistry & Combined Science
	12 noon – 2:00pm	ABM, NRN	
Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> May	All Day	AMH	History

As well as the extra May break revision, there several Saturday sessions to support with their Maths. These are on **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> June from 9.30am-12.30pm**. Your child has been informed about these times by their teacher. All students can attend. Please encourage your child to attend these sessions as they have been very effective. Students are expected to attend school in full uniform right up to **11<sup>th</sup> June** and then thereafter for their exams and any extra revision sessions put on by staff.

Today [Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May] Yr11 students had their end of St Damian's liturgy and also a 'special' uplifting assembly that focused on their 5 years at St Damian's. Tears were much in evidence by both staff and students. The staff are extremely proud of them all!

### General Updates

- *Exclusions:* The behaviour of students at St Damian's is exceptional. However, for the avoidance of doubt, if and when a student repeatedly undermines our fair rules, they will put their place at St Damian's at risk. And a reminder that if a child **brings a 'weapon' or drugs** into St Damian's then they are likely to permanently excluded.
- *Health & Safety Audit:* I am pleased to report we have recently undergone a very successful health and safety audit from the local authority Health & Safety Officer. The audit process was thorough, covering all aspects of health and safety protocols, procedures, risk assessments, lesson plans and documentation. This successful audit reflects our dedication to maintaining a secure, safe and healthy environment. I want to extend my gratitude to everyone involved for their contribution to this successful audit.



- *Trips.* Following on from our highly successful trip to Barcelona, we are now in the process of organising a retreat to Castlerigg next January and a trip to London for next Easter. Watch this space for further details! These are excellent enrichment opportunities for our children.

On Monday morning we did the draw for places for the London trip in 2025 and 40 pupils were lucky enough to be drawn out of the hat – roll on Easter 2025!

• *Recycling at St Damian's.* A big thank you to our amazing teachers for donating recyclable materials for the current Yr8 Art project. Students are exploring storytelling and creating puppets inspired by The National Theatre's 'War Horse' with a focus on sustainability and creative careers. They kicked off this week by crafting simple newspaper puppets and bringing them to life in mini performances.



## Update on Reading Groups

As you know, there are many reading groups across all year groups in school. Below is a brief synopsis of how they are getting on.

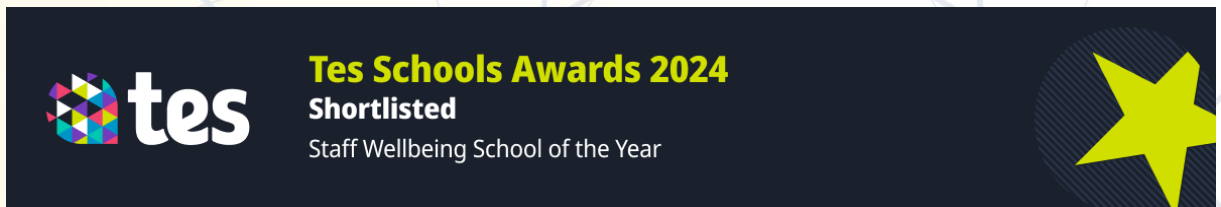
- *My group.* We continue to read 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' and are near the end of the book. The students are enjoying this book, asking many questions, and it has built up their confidence. Furthermore, they have learnt new vocabulary which will help them with their reading and comprehension.
- *Ms Joyce's Group.* This group has had the pleasure of reading 2 books. The first book 'A.N.T.I.D.O.T.E' prompted interesting discussions around how technology has developed in the past 20 years and how it will change in the future. The second book was a short humorous story called 'Desirable' where we learned that being the most popular boy in school may not be as good as you had anticipated. Pupils have just started their 3<sup>rd</sup> book called 'Runaway Robot' which promises to be a heart warning adventure about two best friends. However, the best part about our Friday morning reading sessions is always sharing our plans for the weekend 😊
- *Mrs Kelly's Group.* As a treat for finishing Jane Eyre, Mrs Kelly's reading group were treated to the movie. It was interesting to see the differences between the film and the book. Mrs Kelly is looking forward to their next book which is 'The Final Year' by Matt Goodfellow!
- *Mrs Heenan's Group.* This group have read 'Abomination' by Robert Swindells and loved all the twists and turns in the story. They are now reading 'Desirable' by Frank Cottrell Boyce, a comic tale about an unpopular boy at school, who suddenly becomes popular due to his grandad's 'magic' aftershave. The pupils are thoroughly enjoying this story. It's a lovely way to start the school day.
- *Mrs Brophy's Group.* After successfully reading 'The Firework Maker's Daughter' this group have moved onto the classic 'Treasure Island' by Robert Louis Stevenson. Each session the group concentrates on the chosen vocabulary and looking at the etymology of the words. Time is also spent thinking of synonyms that could be used to replace original choice of words and as a group we are pretty confident that we could rewrite the story to great effect using our own terminology! During our reading sessions we often take a pause to discuss how characters might be feeling and try to guess the next stage of the plot before reading on! Mrs Brophy said "Thursday mornings are the highlight of my week, it's an opportunity to work closely with a small number of our students and watch their confidence grow not only in asking and answering questions but also in their eagerness to read aloud!"
- *Mrs Walker's Group.* Her Yr10 group are now on their third book of the year. Currently, reading 'Becoming Muhammad Ali', this depicts Ali's childhood and how he faced poverty and racism to become a legend, both inside and outside of the boxing ring. The group also watched a short video about him to further bring his character and achievements to life. As an English teacher, I think it is one of the most original and moving children's book I have read.
- *Miss Bury's Group.* Her "wonderful" Y7 group, as Miss Bury referred to them, have been reading 'Lord of the Flies'. They are close to the end and the students have been predicting what is going to happen. There has been a lot of words and phrases they have not understood, therefore we have had lots of discussion and grown their vocabulary.
- *Ms Toole's Group.* I absolutely love my Year 7 reading group. We have just finished "I am The Minotaur" by Anthony McGowan. They have been so engaged with this book and learning about different scenarios that could affect them. We have also been using dictionaries to help with independent study of difficult words. We are now going to read the follow up to this book which they are really looking forward to.



**Awards and Accolades**

As you know we have won a plethora of awards and accolades over the years. These reflect a confident, united and very strong community. We are extremely proud of these awards, and they reflect both our students and staff commitment, energy and passion to create a safe and healthy school community for everyone. But as well as being proud of these, they are also an *external validation* of what we are doing and achieving, keep us focused on key priorities and ensuring our pupils get an outstanding education. Not only to achieve the very best, but are also equipped to lead a fruitful and fulfilling life.

We are delighted to announce that we have been shortlisted in the category of **'Staff Wellbeing School of the Year'** at this years' TES awards that recognises the very best teachers and schools across the UK. Jon Severs, Editor of TES Magazine said, *"Congratulations to all the shortlisted entries - the standard was so high this year despite the challenges schools face. It is critical we celebrate excellence and share it widely so we can ensure that the fantastic work happening in education is properly recognised."* I am delighted that our unique wellbeing initiatives are being recognised. Staff wellbeing is a high priority of the leadership at St Damian's as 'happy staff deliver' a great education to our great children.



**Head Boy and Head Girl**



I would like to congratulate all the newly appointed prefects. The standard of applications was outstanding and selecting the students for the prestigious roles of Head Prefects was a difficult challenge. Miss Joyce and I were proud to announce that after a rigorous selection process and consultation with all staff, the Head Prefects for 2024–2025 were Elijah Brophy, Head Boy and Liliana Zagorska, Head Girl. The Deputy Head Boys were Labeeb Abedin, Luka Antnypillai and Nathan Matley and the Deputy Head Girls were Macy-Jo Callaghan, Caitlin Dyson and Ruby Morrell. All the prefects will now have an opportunity for servant leadership. There will be two further opportunities for pupils to become Prefects in October 2024 and January 2025.

**Goldsmiths Award**

The children are getting excited about travelling to London to attend this prestigious award. Looking at the quality of the previous winners, this competition will be very tough. However, the students are already 'winners' in my eyes by their achievements thus far. To prepare them for the London trip they presented to the Catholic School Inspectors last week and will also be presenting in school assemblies and in front of the Governing body. This will build their confidence and communication skills.



**London Calling!**

On the 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> of July 55 students will be taking part in a very busy two-day trip to London. Starting very early in the morning, the students will arrive in London by lunchtime. Visits include The Imperial War Museum, The Science Museum, The Florence Nightingale Museum and the Tower of London. Additionally, we have booked a cruise along the River



Thames and a visit to a burger bar for dinner. Many of the historical places will complement our GCSE History course and provide students with a real hands-on experience of History. There will be an additional briefing for parents on **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June at 4pm** where Mr McHugh will be available to answer any further questions. I strongly advise that parents attend that briefing. As always, we look forward to our superb students being outstanding ambassadors for St Damian's.

**Duke of Edinburgh**



On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May, a group of year 10 students embarked on a practise expedition for their Silver Duke of Edinburgh award. They didn't have to travel far! In fact, this year, we chose to host the students on our own school playing field. By 5:00pm the tents had been erected and students were huddled in groups under the shelter of the amphitheatre, cooking their first meal. Once fed, the students were given a quick refresher on basic compass skills and practised setting bearings on the

school orienteering course. During Friday and Saturday day, the students conducted walks in the local area, taking it in turns to read the OS maps and lead their team to the next destination. On the Saturday, spurred on by the glorious weather, the teams completed a 10km walk carrying a full 60 litre rucksack. It was an absolute pleasure to accompany the students on this experience over the past three days. Our students approached every activity with enthusiasm and zeal, whether it was pitching a tent



after a long day of school, learning CPR, applying bandages to each other's arms, going on a long hike, or playing games on the school field in the evening. A shout out to Mr. McCallion for bringing Kubb, a game which provoked some fierce competition! Thank you also to the PE department for allowing us to use the facilities, to the site staff, who were incredibly helpful with the set up and with managing access to the building, and lastly to Challenger Site Services who provided the school with the portaloos – they were greatly appreciated!



**PSHE Update**

Our great children are growing up in an increasingly complex world which presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also increased challenges and risks. During a recent PSHE briefing, staff discussed the 'bigger questions' and addressed how we can provide students with the knowledge they need to live happy and healthy lives. Some topics discussed were resilience, healthy relationships, healthy mind/body (including cancer awareness) and finance education. Our PSHE provision is sensitive and age appropriate and students are signposted to relevant agencies. At all times, our Catholic faith and ethos underpin the discussions and various sensitive topics. Our staff are committed to ensuring that students are given the tools needed to become well-rounded, active citizens who live fulfilled lives. That is at the heart of the *St Damian's Way*.

**Yr10 Work Experience Update**

The Yr10 work experience week is fast approaching, 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> July and the overwhelming majority of our Yr10 students have sourced their own placement in a sector that interests them. There are 17 students who have not sourced their own placements as it stands, and they will be allocated a placement from Changing Education which we will arrange after half term. This is a fantastic opportunity to discover what life in the working world is like. Being enthusiastic and proactive will allow you to get the most out of your experience and help you set clear goals and targets as you move into Yr11.

**Staff Profiles**

In this newsletter I will share the profile of the PE staff as there is a summer of impending sports activities, including Sports Day and Tameside Athletics Championships.

- *Miss Guilfoyle, Head of PE.* I am an-ex pupil of St Damian's High School and after gaining excellent GCSE results, left to join Oldham 6<sup>th</sup> form to study A levels in PE, Biology and English Literature. I wanted to work with either children or animals but as a teenager I wanted to be a midwife or nurse. Waiting nervously for my 2<sup>nd</sup> interview at Leeds University, I stumbled across a question I was unable to answer, one which should have been easy to answer if nursing was the right vocation for me: 'why do you want to be a nurse?' Unable to answer, the interviewer gave me some advice that I thank her for to this day. She told me 'to go away, rethink, do things you enjoy, do things that make you happy and make you the best you can be. So, unsure what I wanted to do after my A-levels I took a year out before applying to The University of Chester to study PE/Sport Science and English Literature. I trained to be a lifeguard, completed several coaching courses and spent 5 months in Missouri, USA, working on a summer camp, coaching multiple sports and teaching rock climbing and caving to students. I played football and basketball at university and was a keen runner and swimmer. As part of the second-year work-based learning module, I returned to the USA but this time in a leadership role, tasked with training the new summer waterfront staff as the camps lifeguard instructor. In my third year of university, I worked at Tranmere Rovers FC as part of their junior girls coaching staff and knew then I was destined to work with young people in a sporting capacity. I then applied for a PGCE in Secondary PE. Before commencing this, I spent the summer coaching 'soccer' in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Boston, Maryland and Delaware. My first teaching job was at Saddleworth in Oldham, before joining St Damian's in 2004. I then had the opportunity to apply for the Head of PE; I was successful and have been here ever since! I consider myself lucky to say I am both a former pupil of St Damian's and a member of staff here too. I have been here through sad and turbulent times. Our PE facilities are amazing, allowing us to deliver lessons that will hopefully inspire the next generation of young people to embrace sport and physical activity in a positive way that shapes their lives for the better, as it has done for me.
- *Mr Burtles, Teacher of PE and Head of Year.* To come to work each day and be involved in developing young lives through sport is an absolute blessing! I have had the 9 to 5 job in factories and therefore, I consider each day at St Damian's an absolute pleasure! I am a Tameside lad, having attended Stamford High School and Tameside College of Technology. It was at college that my love for sport developed. I have always been an avid fan of football and cricket both playing and supporting. After college I attended St Martins University College, Lancaster, and did a Sports Science degree. After this I took a year out doing all sorts of jobs, including rolling Swiss Rolls and delivering bleach to restaurants. It was during this time that I decided to pursue a teaching career. I enrolled at Edge Hill College for a PGCE and haven't looked back since. I have been lucky enough through sport to travel across the USA delivering football workshops. It was during the Spring of 1999 that my Grandma saw an advert in the MEN for a job at St Damian's....and here we are today! St Damian's has given me fantastic personal and school success, through running 8 successful ski trips, delivering 100s of positive assemblies, winning multiple Tameside sporting titles and directly developing the young minds for the future. I love it!
- *Mr Healey, PE teacher.* I have been employed at St Damian's since September 2022. I feel very lucky that I get to do something I love for work every day. At college, I studied Psychology, Law, English Literature and PE. However, I have always had a love for PE and even joined a PE department from another school as part of my work experience. I gained my degree at what was then called Leeds Metropolitan University where I studied Physical Education with QTS. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, I played football, rugby and cricket and I still continue to play football. I am driven by a desire to make a positive difference in young people's lives, and I am passionate about the way sport and exercise can change young lives for the better.

And on that note a massive well done to the Yr7 football team who have been crowned **Yr7 Tameside Champions!** A massive congratulations to the Yr7 football team who managed to overcome a good Audenshaw High School team on penalties.

The game was 1-1 after full time, with Kobie Kavanagh scoring the equaliser, but neither team could find a winner. Then Srajit Chandra, Trey-Amari Malcolm, Louie McCormick and Noah Wilkinson held their nerve and scored in a very tense penalty shoot-out. A special mention to Maddison Groves in nets, who saved a penalty! Well done for a great season, Mr Burtles was very proud of them. A thoroughly well-deserved team victory 🏆🏆🏆🏆



As well as the above the PE Dept have had many other fantastic sporting results so far this year. Firstly, in the Tameside Schools Netball Cup Tournament where the KS4 team were 3<sup>rd</sup> place after a dramatic semi-final against Alder. The Yr9 team met Mossley Hollins in an end-to-end final taking the runners-up spot this year and the newly formed Yr7 team took 3<sup>rd</sup> place behind Fairfield and Mossley Hollins. Our KS4 girls' team were runners up in the Tameside Schools Football Cup this year and Yr9 were runners up in the final against Longdendale and Yr7 won the Semi-final against Fairfield. Our boys' teams continue to perform well in the Greater Manchester Schools Catholic Football Cup with Yrs 7,10 and 11 reaching the quarter finals, the 9's through to the finals against either St James' or Our Lady's and the Yr8's facing St Monica in the semifinals.

We have a number of upcoming competitions to look forward in the Summer term including the;

- Boys 7 a side Development Football Competition Yr7 – 10 May / June
- Yr7 Quad kids Athletics Event
- Tameside School Track Relay Competition
- Tameside Schools Athletics Competition

Well Done to everyone involved and good luck for all upcoming competitions.

**Student Success Stories ...**

I am pleased to report that Eamonn Postlethwaite, a Yr7 student, has taken part in the 'Youth Tour' cycling race in the Isle of Man. He competed against a field including Irish, Scottish, English and Isle of Man riders, racing for two days. He came 3<sup>rd</sup> in both races and came 3<sup>rd</sup> overall. Well done Eamonn! We anticipate more success stories in the future!



Another student, Lucas Wall in Yr10, attends Police Cadets and they regularly work as volunteers alongside Greater Manchester Police. GMP hold crime prevention events where they request the assistance of these Cadets and Lucas has assisted on multiple occasions over weekends in Manchester. Lucas has been involved with GMP Neighbourhood Policing Teams in his capacity as a volunteer Police Cadet on a Crime Prevention initiative raising awareness around knife crime. Sgt Hall, Strategic Lead for Greater Manchester Police's Volunteer Police Cadets, stated 'the initiative was a real success and GMP are very proud of the support Lucas has given in his capacity as a Police Cadet helping raise awareness of this very serious issue'. A promising career awaits Lucas no doubt! Well done Lucas, making a real positive contribution to society.

PS. If your child participates in or completes any special activity outside school, please let me know and I'll be pleased to include it in my monthly newsletter.

**St Damian's Inaugural Disco!**

We're thrilled to unveil our first School Disco on Thursday 20th June 2024. Be prepared for a night of epic music and unforgettable moments starring DJ Dennis and an electrifying Taylor Swift tribute act. We are inviting our Yr6 students to the first disco session and then welcoming students in Yrs7, 8 & 9 to the second disco session which begins at 6.30pm. Tickets will go on sale very soon. All monies raised will go to charity.

**Finally...**

Last week a parent baked a cake to share with will the staff as a means to say thank you. Mrs Malacrino, who has a son in Yr7 has been grateful for the education and support shown to her son since starting in September. It was a delicious, and unexpected, 'gift', and went down very well with all the staff!



Have a great May break and see you back at the beginning of June.

Yours sincerely

Mr Logue  
Headteacher