



In all things faithful

December 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

A very warm welcome to my last newsletter of 2024. Hasn't the year flown past! It has been another very successful year and I can't express how proud I am of this community. Our students really are the 'best' and deserve an authentic outstanding Catholic education. I can say, with absolute conviction, that this is what they receive. This would not be possible without the dedication and professionalism of the great staff who work here. They are simply brilliant. And a massive thanks for the parental support. Feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Students, staff and parents working together ensures that St Damian's has a strong future as we look forward to 2025.

The Catholic Life of the School

Although we've only been in December for a few weeks, as the festive season draws near, our school community has been immersed in a series of events and activities that truly capture the spirit of Advent and Christmas. These initiatives allowed us to reflect on the values of faith, hope and love while coming together to celebrate, give back, and prepare for the joyous season ahead. Read about these events below.

- ✓ *Travelling Nativity.* Led by our talented Yr7 GIFT team, this brought a sense of unity and reflection to Yr7 forms as each form welcomed the Nativity scene, creating a special space at the front of their rooms. These displays served as a visual reminder of the journey to Bethlehem and the humble beginnings of Jesus Christ. Form tutors led thoughtful reflections, inviting students to pause and consider the deeper meaning of the Christmas story. This initiative was more than a tradition—it became a symbol of hope, faith, and the beauty of sharing a common purpose.



achievement points were awarded for every donation, fostering a spirit of friendly competition while making a meaningful difference.

- ✓ On 17th December, our **Caritas Ambassadors**, along with Mrs. Gerschler, proudly delivered the donations to the food bank. Their visit was a testament to the generosity of our school community, ensuring that struggling families have access to basic necessities this Christmas. In addition to our act of kindness the Minibus company drove the group there and back for free, demonstrating the strength of our community. Secondly, the *BEE THERE* appeal is where forms worked together to contribute funds that will be used to purchase essential items for families and individuals supported by Caritas. Certificates



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were awarded to recognise each form's efforts, and the campaign reminded everyone of the joy found in giving. This appeal exemplified how small contributions from many can result in a significant impact.

- ✓ *Parishioners' Christmas Lunch.* This is a day everyone looks forward to and it didn't disappoint. Our Caritas Ambassadors, GIFT team, Drama Club and Choir hosted local parishioners for a special Christmas celebration. The event began with refreshments and a reflective Advent service, where students shared carols and readings in the Chapel and Hall. Following the service, guests were treated to a traditional fish and chips dinner in the dining room, served with smiles by our wonderful students! The event provided an opportunity to strengthen the bond between our school and the wider community. Parishioners left uplifted by the spirit of Christmas.



- ✓ *Year Group Liturgies and ASPIRE Assemblies.* The Advent liturgies allowed students to spiritually prepare for Christmas. These reflective gatherings, filled with prayers, scripture readings, and moments of quiet contemplation, reminded us of the true meaning of the season. The ASPIRE assemblies complemented the liturgies by celebrating the achievements of our students. Efforts were recognised with regards to 100% attendance, high achievement points, sustained

high levels of effort and outstanding levels of progress and achievements. Remember the St Damian's mantra: *Believe to Achieve!* Well done to all students who have had a great Autumn term! Together, these events enhanced the Advent journey for students and staff alike.



- ✓ *Carol Concert.* This is the pinnacle of the Advent season at St Damian's. It was a resounding success. Students worked tirelessly to deliver a production that was both heartwarming and inspiring. The rewritten program highlighted the themes of joy, peace, and love through a mix of carols, drama, and readings that captivated the audience. Families, staff, and the whole community were reminded of the beauty of this holy season.



- ✓ *Christmas Jumper Day.* An annual tradition but this year it received a creative twist, rebranded as Christmas Cosy Day by our Caritas Ambassadors. Staff and students wore cozy, lounge-inspired outfits that reflected the warmth and comfort of the season. A £1.50 donation supported the school's charitable endeavours. Alongside this there was an extended lunch period that allowed everyone to come together for a festive Christmas dinner, with the tuck shop adding extra cheer. To end the day on a high note, Period 5 was dedicated to "Festive Fun," where each teacher planned unique and enjoyable activities to celebrate the season.
- ✓ *End of term Liturgy.* To end the term, staff gathered in the hall for a sacred Advent liturgy. This reflective service provided a moment of peace, gratitude, and spiritual renewal before the Christmas break.

It was a fitting conclusion to a term filled with faith, service, and celebration, reinforcing our shared mission to live out the Gospel values in all that we do. As we look back on this Advent season, we are overwhelmed by the generosity, creativity, and faith that have been displayed by our school community and reminded us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Yr11 Update

It has been a really busy [and stressful] time for our Yr11's doing their Mock exams. May I say, on behalf of the staff, that, on the whole, their behaviour and attitudes have been amazing. They rose to the challenge, and I hope that they get the results they deserve. Below are some updates for your perusal.

- *Mock Results.* These will be given out to students on **Friday 17th January at 2.30.** I ask that parents follow up with their children what they achieved in their exams.
- *Attendance.* Attendance is key to success in their forthcoming exams, and we ask all parents to support good regular attendance. If your child has a minor ailment, they should still come to school, where possible, and we will support. Letters have been sent out to individual students who are at risk of serious underachievement due to poor attendance.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 – 8.50am			MFL	RE- X Band History/Geography – Y band	Option Subjects
3.10 - 4:10pm	RE- Y Band History/Geography	Maths	MFL	English	Science

- *Intervention.* A planned and comprehensive program of revision will commence after the Christmas break. I ask that parents support this initiative. It is an excellent opportunity for your child. See the table below. There will also be additional intervention during the breaks and on the Saturdays before the exams. This will be communicated in due course.
- *Parents' Evening.* An 'extra' parents' evening is taking place on **Wednesday 26th March 4 - 7pm.** This will be the final opportunity for you to meet with subject teachers before the GCSEs and gain up to date information on the areas for development for your child.
- *Literacy Hub.* This is available for Yr11 for quiet study and homework completion. Revision guides are available on request from the school library and the set texts for Literature are available on our digital library SORA. I ask that if your child is not in a formal intervention class that they make use of this resource.
- *Remember.* There is **no substitute** for hard work. All students should now be in an established routine at home. We recommend that pupils should be completing between 2 and 3 hours of independent study each evening, using revision guides, past papers, etc. This will help ease stress in the long term in the lead up to the GCSEs in May.

Finally, Yr11 students must have a well-deserved rest over the Christmas break, ready to start working hard at the start of January towards their exams in May/June.

English Faculty Praise Board

In recognition of the tremendous independent homework and revision completed by some of our amazing students, we have launched our *Praise Board*. Students from each year will be nominated by their teachers on a half-termly basis for their sustained commitment to independent learning and earn their place as a star pupil or runner up.



We are tremendously proud of the high standard of independent work completed and are keen to reward and recognise their efforts. The winners for this half term are: *Yr7 Star Pupil Elise Foronda*, runners up Iris Kearns and Eliza Booth; *Yr8 Star Pupil Aayat Ahmad*, runners up Max Hook and Viviana Sachmata; *Yr9 Star Pupil Ollie Calnun*, runners up Jake Swain and Ellie Smyth; *Yr10 Star Pupil Finlay O'Hara* and runners up Saaed Adnan and Bruno Szpurka; *Yr11 Star Pupil Poppy McAlpin-Dudley* and runners up Sophie Stevenson and James Beaumont. Superb commitment to independent learning. A massive well done!

KS4 Drama Trip



Our Yr11 and Yr10 Drama students recently attended a performance of *Blood Brothers* at the Palace Theatre in Manchester, and the experience was truly unforgettable. The play provided an incredible opportunity for the students to engage with key themes, characters, and dramatic techniques that will be directly relevant to their GCSE Drama exams. Their behaviour throughout the trip was exemplary, and they showed a great deal of respect for the performance, fully immersing themselves in the

experience. This outing not only enhanced their understanding of the play but also deepened their appreciation of theatre as a medium for exploring complex issues, providing them with valuable insights that will aid in their exam preparation. I look forward to great GCSE outcomes. Thanks to the staff that made the trip possible, Mr McArdle, Ms Brookes and Mrs Mattison.

Awards

- In mid-November we were honoured to be shortlisted at *Educate Awards*, Liverpool for the Community Partnership Award. Sadly, we didn't win but we were proud to be recognised as a 'finalist'.



In early December we travelled to London for the *Education Today* awards. We were delighted to win the Community Champion Award. This is just recognition for the work we do for the local community.

Both of these awards are testament to the great students and great staff and recognises the work our school does in supporting our local community. Achieving these accolades is the recognition of the work we do in raising awareness on homelessness issues, poverty and mental health. Also, how we collaborate with other community groups in fostering interfaith tolerance and respect, especially through our

Diversity Panels. We are very proud of all our pupils and the outstanding contribution and compassion they show towards our wider community; none of which could be achieved without the support of our caring families and dedicated staff. As Headteacher, I am extremely proud of this great school and the work that we do as a community. Long may this continue!

St Damian's supporting other schools... an international dimension!

On the last ASPIRE Day, Mr Frank Davis, an avid Celtic football fan, attended school and delivered a presentation to Yrs7-10 on his trip to Malawi, a country in Africa. He was a member of a group of 12 Celtic fans working with the charity 'Classrooms For Malawi' to help improve Masalani Community School. The presentation highlighted the fact that there are many millions of children around the world who do not have access to free or appropriate education.



We had a non-uniform day and raised £500 for the Celtic FC Foundation 'Building schools in Africa'. This money has been spent on buying books for the Masalani Community School, giving them an excellent boost and will help these children to secure a better life with better job prospects and a way out of poverty. Both charities believe that the way out of poverty is through good education. Reading, writing and understanding is the rock upon which good education is built. Frank and the Celtic Foundation would like to thank everyone at St Damian's for their attention at the presentation and for the very generous gift of £500 towards the books for Masalani Community School.

Art Club News: Christmas Crafts Success!



Yr7 and Yr8 students loved making their felt Christmas tree ornaments this term at Art Club! Spread across two weeks, the busy workshop was met with enthusiasm and creativity. While the first week was spent creating the initial structure, the second week was an opportunity to get into the festive spirit by adding decorations and lots of glitter. Students are enjoying Art Club so much that they are already asking how to become an Art Leader, however the role is only for



Yr9 students. So, if you have a creative Yr9 at home who would like to get involved in a leadership role, ask them to get in touch with Mrs Freeman. "Thank you for the Art Club, I loved it!" said Anais Parry.

Santa Dash



Despite the challenges posed by Storm Bert, our annual Santa Dash and Christmas Markets went ahead as planned, showcasing the resilience and festive spirit of our community. Our hardy Dashers braved the elements, with first place for the 3K run going to Angel Mawn [Year 8] and the 5K going to Mr Santana, and Finlay O'Hara earning the title of Best Dressed Santa for his creative costume. Father Christmas made it to his grotto, ensuring that everyone 'young and old' weren't disappointed, and the day was filled with joy and festive cheer. We enjoyed delicious food and warmed up with a comforting Baileys hot chocolate. It was heartwarming to see everyone come together,



enjoying the festivities and supporting such a **Great Claus** [Ho! Ho! Ho!]. We hope that our students and the local businesses who held market stalls also benefited from such a fantastic event. A huge thank you to everyone who participated, volunteered, and donated—we are thrilled to announce that we have raised an astonishing **£2,773.22**. We hope to see you there again next year!



The family of Frazer Huish-Patel had a stall at the Santa Dash selling decorations. The money raised is going to The Christie which is a charity very close to their hearts at the moment. They had a fantastic time and although the stall got off to a slow start, they managed to raise £272.20, £100 was a donation and, £172.20 raised on the day. The family would like to say a big thank you to all for helping them to support Christie's.

School Choir Performance Our school choir recently had the privilege of performing at the Willow Wood Hospice "Festival of Lights" Christmas event. They showcased their incredible talent and represented St Damian's with pride. The students delivered a variety of group and solo performances, blending traditional Christmas songs with contemporary pieces.



Highlights included a moving rendition of O Holy Night, featuring stunning solos from Freya Long and Teaghan Gallery, which left the audience spellbound. The staff at the hospice were overwhelmed by the level of talent and professionalism displayed by our students. We are so proud of their efforts and the joy they brought to such a special event in our community. Thank you to the staff that made this possible, Mr McArdle, Mrs Gerschler and Mrs Mattison. Willow Wood hospice is one of our chosen charities and they were presented with a cheque for **£1,445**. Again, this shows the generosity of our community. Thank you!

Pastoral Theme

This half term, our students have been exploring the theme **Respect & Diversity**. Whilst many forms had very valid discussions with regards to what these terms meant and why they are relevant to today's society, I must mention the form group 8GBS, who produced and performed their own play in assembly to highlight the importance of celebrating diversity and treating each other with respect. At Christmas this message seems more pertinent than ever. Remember, that treating others with respect is the core value of our school.

An excellent example of the pastoral theme described above is from form 8GBS who recently prepared a heartwarming Christmas-themed assembly that focused on the importance of **Respect and Diversity**. The students performed a short version of the well-known story *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, using the tale of Rudolph's initial rejection and eventual acceptance to highlight the message that no one should be judged or treated differently based on their appearance. By linking the story to the values of inclusion and kindness, the students reminded everyone that respecting and embracing differences is essential, especially during the festive season. Miss Brookes and the students had a great time putting this assembly together, working collaboratively and supporting each other throughout the process. Their teamwork and enthusiasm shone through, making it a truly memorable and meaningful event for all. Well done to Miss Brooke's form and Miss Brooke!



Staff Profiles

In this newsletter I decided to profile 2 Food Technology teachers. They have been extremely busy over the past few weeks, with a focus on students completing their GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition Assessed Practical, which contributes to the final 50% of their GCSE exam.

- **Mrs Brophy.** I started St Damian's in 2004, I was interviewed on St George's day and clearly remember saying to the then headteacher, Mr Jackson when asked the question, 'what is the 5 year plan?' replying, 'I want to be here for about 3 years, I want to experience different schools!' and here I am 20 years later simply because St Damian's feels like home! I was appointed as second in Technology with the additional responsibility of being a Head of Year. After a year I became Head of Technology and now I am in my current position as Assistant Headteacher. I have always been intrigued by the function and purpose of food, this most basic commodity allows us to survive and perform as well has been an integral part of human socialisation, this passion led me to want to teach my subject to help children to understand how our bodies are nourished by nutrients as well as learning lifelong skills that will be used every day when cooking. I am proud to help children learn my subject and I hope that they continue to apply their knowledge and skills in adulthood! I hope to continue serving the St Damian's community in the future and pass on my expertise and love of food!

- Mrs D'Rozario.** I started St Damian's in 2014 as a newly qualified teacher. I was extremely lucky to secure my first teaching job at such a wonderful school in such a supportive department. With a degree in Textile Design from The University of Leeds, I went on to complete a PGCE in Design Technology, specialising in DT and Food Technology at Manchester Metropolitan University. Since working here, I have had the opportunity to take on roles such as Head of Year, and most recently Head of Technology. Over the last 10 years, I have had the pleasure of watching our students flourish in Technology and the subject is constantly growing with many choosing to study Technology at KS4. It is always so rewarding to watch our students complete practical elements of the course, where they are so proud of what they have accomplished. I love that every day is different, and each student can make products that are personal to them. It really is a pleasure to work here, and I know how lucky I am!



Young Carers

Recently, our Young Carers had the opportunity to attend an Indian cooking masterclass with Daksha Mistry who is the owner of *My Masala Guru*. Students were given the opportunity to taste different flavours of Indian cuisine. They then became chefs and cooked samosas for their parents, who were invited into school to sample their cooking. A big thanks to Mrs Harrison for organising this great event.

Careers Update

The deadline for Yr10 students to have sourced their own self-placement for work experience is 24th January 2025. Please ensure the Compass app and all relevant information has been input by that date.

If you have any questions regarding work experience or the setting up of your account, please contact Mr Healey, our Careers lead. Also, look out for some trips coming up in the new year aimed at enhancing students experience of careers and the pathways available to them.



PE Updates

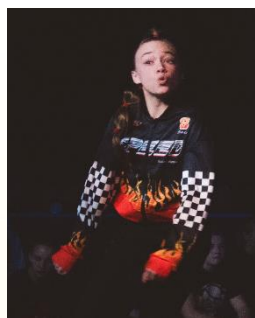
The talented St Damians Cross Country team were incredibly successful at this year's competition. They battled the bitter cold on a tough new course to secure some superb individual and team finishes. The boys Yr7-11 team faced tough competition and were placed 5th overall. Meanwhile, the girls' teams were dominant across the year groups with both the yr7 and Yr10/11 girls team coming 2nd and the Yr8/9 team finishing in 1st place. As always, our students' behaviour was impeccable and conducted themselves with true sportsmanship. They were true ambassadors of the 'St Damian's Way' throughout the competition. Well done to all those who participated.

Showcasing the Talents of our Students

Once again, below are examples of some of our students excelling at all they do ...

- Anastazja Bielecka, Yr8.** Well done to Anastazja who competed in the Global Dance Organisation in Crawley at the weekend. Anastazja and her team competed in two categories and won 4th place in both. This is a massive achievement. Her mum is very proud that her daughter represented Tameside in the most recognised street dance competition in the world.





- *Amelia Morris, Yr8.* and her street dance team Optimum, have been competing all season and qualified for the BDO World Championships. Amelia has shown such grit and determination to get to the final. She did amazing and finished 4th in the world championship. Well done Amelia!

- *Luke Schofield, Yr10.* Well done to Luke who has been given a scholarship at Blackpool FC. This is due to his effort, commitment, dedication and leadership he has shown whilst playing and training. His proud parents were told that he is a 'stand-out' player at the club, and they wanted to reward Luke with this scholarship before possibly becoming a professional footballer. This season he has been the Captain for the Blackpool under 15s team and was selected for trials for England. Feedback from the England trial has been really positive. Well done Luke in achieving these fantastic achievements! Good luck for the future! Continue to aim high and stay positive.



If any parent would like me to showcase their child, please email the school.

Finally...



The best performing schools in Greater Manchester - use our gadget to find out where your child's school ranks

I read an article a few weeks ago in the Manchester Evening News regarding the **top 20 schools in Great Manchester**. In the category of the top 20 schools for Grade 5 or above in English and Maths, St Damian's was rated the **11th best school in Greater Manchester**. WOW! Click [here](#). If you look at the names of the schools on the list, the top 7 schools are grammar schools. For St Damian's to be recognised and in such good company, really shows the high quality of teaching within the English and Maths departments. In fact, this high-quality teaching is replicated across the school. I am very proud of all the teachers who work tirelessly to ensure that your child leaves this school with the best possible opportunities for their future.

On behalf of the staff and governors at St Damian's, I wish you a peaceful, happy and holy Christmas. Here's to a great 2025 for the St Damian's community!

Kind regards

Mr Logue
Headteacher