



In all things for September 2024

St Damian's RC Science College

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Dear Parents and Carers

A warm welcome to my September newsletter. As I write this, I have to say that I have been delighted with the return of our students. Their attitude towards their learning has been great to see and the standard of their uniform shows that they are extremely proud to be ambassadors for the St Damian's community. Long may this continue! We start the year with great hopes and enthusiasm as we continue to work together as a strong, united, catholic learning community. I hope that you enjoy reading ...



Catholic Life of the School

As a fiercely proud catholic school who achieved an outstanding Catholic Inspection last year, it is great to report that our faith and formation activities are continuing with great variety and depth again this year. Below are these for your perusal.

- ✓ *Welcome Back.* We are delighted to have welcomed all years back. Each year were greeted by their HOY with a special liturgy during assembly. Students actively participated in these meaningful moments, showing reverence and respect throughout. During staff INSET day we began with a reflective staff liturgy, focusing on the role we play in the lives of our students, reminding us of the deep impact we have on the children we teach every day, highlighting the importance of our presence, words, and actions in shaping their futures.
- ✓ *Caritas Ambassadors.* This proactive charitable group have already held their first meeting of the year, diving straight into planning their first event—the MacMillan Coffee Morning. They've been encouraging staff to contribute by donating cakes and raffle prizes, reminding students of the importance of this worthwhile cause. We look forward to a successful event, supporting the incredible work of MacMillan Cancer Support.
- ✓ *Live Simply Project.* The Yr10 Live Simply group has been hard at work organizing their next project. They are preparing to plant bulbs for springtime flowers and getting our greenhouse ready for winter. This ongoing initiative invites all students to engage in stewardship activities, caring for our school environment and taking action to preserve the beauty of creation.
- ✓ *GIFT Team Applications.* Over the last few weeks, we've received a fantastic response to the GIFT team applications. The successful students, who will be Ambassadors for Christ in our school community, will soon be awarded their purple ties. These students will take on the vital role of supporting and leading the religious life of the school, ensuring that faith continues to be at the heart of everything we do.
- ✓ *Yr10 Visit to Blessed Carlo Acutis Relic.* On Monday, 23rd September 2024, a group of Yr10 students attended a special event at the Shrewsbury Diocese, visiting the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis during the Diocesan Schools Event. This unique, spiritually enriching experience offered students a chance to connect with a modern-day figure of deep faith. Blessed Carlo, known for his devotion to the Eucharist and his innovative use of technology, is an inspiring role model for young people. His



St. Damian's RC Science College

life and example resonate deeply with the challenges and opportunities our students face today. Mrs Gerschler was moved close to tears with pride by witnessing the students' reverence and seeing them have space to grow in their own faith. This was an incredible and unique experience that didn't disappoint.



✓ *Whole Staff Mass.* On Wednesday, 25th September, staff celebrated Mass with Fr Jude. This was a special moment for us to come together in faith. The Mass focused on the importance of what we are about to experience, why the Eucharist is central to Catholic life, and allowing us to reflect on our individual journeys in following God's plan for us. Fr Jude's homily reminded us of our vocation as educators, encouraging us to be brave and faithful in shaping the lives of the young people entrusted to our care.



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- ✓ *Student Mass.* Yrs8, 9 and 10 will have the opportunity to celebrate Mass with Father Jude during the week beginning 14th October. These Welcome Masses allow all to celebrate the start of the Year and offer up their hopes and dreams for the coming year.

A massive thanks to Mrs Gerschler and the RE team for providing the above.

Safeguarding Updates

For all parents, especially those parents of new children in Yr7, it is important that you understand that safeguarding is our *number one* priority. We have an excellent safeguarding team, an experienced Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL], strong pastoral structures and a proactive attendance team. Collectively, these ensure safeguarding is very robust. Each month I will highlight events/activities that complement these.

- *Control your scroll.* This month we supported our children's mental health by following Stem4 #controlyourscroll. Many of you will be concerned about the amount of time your child spends online. Online activities are generally just between your child and their phone and as adults we can sometimes feel isolated and unaware of what our children are actually accessing. Stem4.org.uk have some fantastic user-friendly resources to help you and your child to learn how to take control of their phone use from 'controlling your content' to 'controlling what you post' to actually looking at how to 'fix' issues if you share too much information. I strongly urge you to speak to your child about their #controlyourscroll assembly and take a few minutes to look at this leaflet: <https://stem4.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/YMHD-2024-ControlYourScroll-Guide.pdf>. It is a great resource for parents which I encourage you to read so that you can help keep your child safe. It's amazing how young people respond if they think you know about what they are doing online!
- *Child exploitation.* This half term children have been learning about the dangers of exploitation through assemblies led by Mrs Brophy, our DSL. This has included child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, county lines, modern slavery and child financial exploitation (money mules). Parents must understand that **every** child is vulnerable to exploitation. If you notice that your child has new clothes, mobile phones, access to money, new friendship groups, increased levels of secrecy, relationships with older people or groups or emotional changes always challenge it and seek advice from our safeguarding team in school or the NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/nspcc-helpline/



- **SG briefing.** We have a half termly safeguarding briefing, and this half term Mrs Brophy has also led a CPD (continuing professional development) session with staff to encourage them to be vigilant to the signs of exploitation and staff are aware of reporting any concerns to the safeguarding team.

- **Fire Safety.** We warmly welcomed Mossley Firefighters to our community to deliver a safety talk to Yr7. The students were taught what to do in a fire emergency and keeping safe around fireworks. They were also educated on 'the day in the life of a firefighter' and one lucky student dressed up in full firefighting uniform. Students had the opportunity to ask questions, were shown around the Fire Engine and had an explanation on how all equipment is used to help in a fire emergency. To finish off the experience the firefighters sounded the sirens.



Attendance

In my last newsletter, I spoke about the importance of attendance. One of the reasons for good attendance is that students who attend school, as well as all the social aspects, are much more likely to achieve their potential. In fact, there is a strong correlation between **good attendance and good outcomes**. One of the most important outcomes for a child is to achieve Grade 4 or above in both English and Maths as this opens up many more opportunities for your child. In last year's GCSE outcomes, if the attendance was above 95%, 91% of our children achieved Grade 4+ in English and Maths compared to 51% if attendance was below 90%. This is a massive difference and shows how important attendance is in school. In summary, those children with good attendance achieve their potential.

Yr11 and Sixth Form Presentations



As part of educating children on post-16 opportunities and pathways, as well as raising aspirations of our children, the Yr11's are in the process of hearing from different colleges. These are fantastic opportunities for our students to gather as much information as they can about colleges and courses available to them when they leave St Damian's. Additionally, our ASPIRE day on the 21st October students will hear from a range of colleges and employers in their form groups and have the opportunity to ask questions. Information regarding college open days and events can be found on the Yr11 Careers Team page. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Mr Healey, our careers lead, at school. It is not uncommon for students to not know what they want to do when they leave school and that is OK. My advice is for children to maximise their grades as this will ensure they maximise their choices.

Information regarding college open days and events can be found on the Yr11 Careers Team page. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Mr Healey, our careers lead, at school. It is not uncommon for students to not know what they want to do when they leave school and that is OK. My advice is for children to maximise their grades as this will ensure they maximise their choices.



Curriculum Updates



Yr11 Food. The Food Preparation and Nutrition students have made an excellent start to Yr11 and demonstrated their commitment by staying after school to attend masterclasses. The masterclasses were fun yet focused, and it will be exciting to see what happens to the classic recipes when alternative ingredients and cooking methods are used! First up was making scones and soup so that they are ready to carry out scientific



experiments on the chemical and functional properties of ingredients for their non examined assessment, coursework. Mrs Brophy said "it's wonderful to work with such enthusiastic young people who want to achieve well".



- **Key Stage 4 Art.** Yr10 Art students have made a fantastic start to their GCSE. After gathering lots of ideas together, they have challenged themselves with a range of experimental drawing techniques. With only five minutes for each drawing, they have overcome fears about perfection and what a finished artwork looks like. Meanwhile, Yr11 students are beginning to explore highly personal and exciting ideas for a final piece, from the highly intricate hairstyles of ballroom dancers to the street art of New York City. Both year groups should be proud of themselves for the hard work they are putting in to achieve their potential.

- **GCSE Drama.** Miss Brookes has targeted GCSE Drama students for intervention, providing vital support with Component 2 of the course. These sessions focus on helping students develop their devising logs, which document the creative process behind their unique interpretations of set briefs. So far, we have had 100% attendance of all students attending these sessions. We're already seeing positive results and students are gaining valuable time to complete course work to allocated deadlines from the exam board. These sessions are a fantastic opportunity for students to maximise their potential and they are doing extremely well, working very hard and being resilient the entire time.
- **Study Clubs.** HOY study clubs have recommenced after school. Students are invited to attend this club once a week, if their HOY believes they would benefit from support with organisation, motivation or just a calm, purposeful environment. Establishing regular independent study routines is essential if your child is to maximise their potential. If you feel your child would benefit from attending a study club, then please contact your child's Head of Year. The study club timetable is below;

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Tuesday	Tuesday	Thursday	Tuesday	Tuesday

- **Reading Groups.** Each year we have a number of reading groups (8 to 10 pupils in each) running with all members of the SLT, the SENDCo and the school librarian. Ensuring that students can read is important so that they can access and understand our knowledge rich curriculum. So far, we have 5 reading groups up and running, in Yr8 - Yr10, with a further 3 Yr7 groups, once the NGRT test has been completed and Yr7 students' reading ages have been compiled. I look forward to telling you about the 8 different books that SLT/SENDCo/Librarian are reading with the students in the next newsletter. Additionally, our fantastic LSAs will also be running some targeted small group intervention to increase reading fluency, and some one-to-one reading with individual students.
- **Website.** We have invested a lot of time and effort into updating the Curriculum section of our website. On this site, you will find quick snapshots that offer an overview of each subject, as well as more detailed curriculum outlines under each individual subject. We encourage you to explore these resources to gain a better understanding of what your child will be learning throughout the school year. A recent addition is the **key questions** that will be covered throughout each topic. LINK <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/curriculum-information>



- **Art Leaders.** We are thrilled to announce that our new Yr9 Art Leaders have made a fantastic start to the school year. So far, they have been learning printmaking techniques and will share their skills with Years 7 and 8 in student-led workshops later this term. Congratulations Aaliyah, Joshua, Carmen, Ava, Junior, Jasmine, Millie, Evie, Leyton, Amelia and Oliwia. Keep up the great work!

Staff Profiles

Each newsletter I intend to share staff profiles so that parents understand why staff have chosen to work in a school. This month I have chosen to 'profile' the three new members of staff who started in September.

- ✓ *Miss Allison, Second in Languages.* My first month at St Damian's has been full of learning, for both the students and myself! This year marks my fourth academic year in Manchester, where I previously worked at Co-op Academy Failsworth as Deputy Head of Spanish. However, I am originally from the Northeast and began teaching via Teach First after completing my degree in Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies at Newcastle University. Whilst teaching was never my original plan, it was whilst living in Madrid that I found myself in my first teaching post and from then on, I knew I had found what I was meant to do. I love to come to work and know that I am making a difference to children's lives, providing them the support and care they need to thrive. St Damian's philosophy of teaching aligns so well with my own and I can already see that I will love working here thanks to the kindness of staff and students alike.
- ✓ *Miss Joseph, Spanish Teacher.* Although only starting, I have been warmly welcomed into the St Damians family. I completed my PGCE at Liverpool university and began my teaching career in Manchester. My passion for languages was nurtured in the classroom through dedicated and motivated teachers but came to life when I began inspiring my own students to be linguists. I hope to go on and motivate and inspire the students here at St Damians by giving them the knowledge and tools to achieve excellence. I feel privileged to be a member of staff here at St Damians and I am really excited for the future.
- ✓ *Mr Bridge, Technology Technician.* I recently joined St Damian's in my part-time role as Technology Technician, having retired from teaching in August of this year. Previously I had been Deputy Head Teacher at Oswaldtwistle School, which is a Pupil Referral Unit serving East Lancashire. Before this, I was Head of Technology at the Albion High School in Salford, and I started my teaching career at Counthill in Oldham. I was a late entrant into teaching having worked in the food industry in Trafford Park, where I learned many of the technical skills that underpinned my training as a technology teacher. I attended St Augustine's Grammar School in Wythenshawe and represented Manchester boys at football, winning the English school's trophy. I am still awaiting my call up from Old Trafford! After school I went to Warwick University and gained a degree in Law, but decided that a career in law was not for me. Although officially retired, I still feel that I have something to contribute and applied for this role. I feel genuinely privileged to be a small part of such an awe-inspiring school. Both staff and students have made me feel extremely welcome and I look forward to contributing to the ongoing success and achievement of all at St Damian's.



Parental Information Evenings

These evenings are a great opportunity to **a]** impart important information and **b]** allow parents to ask questions regarding any issues relevant to your child. So far, we have had several information evenings. Below are the key messages from the evenings that have taken place.

Year 11

At the Yr11 evening it was a full house, providing parents with the following key messages:

- Attendance: There is a clear link between attendance and achievement. We ask for your support in promoting high levels of attendance from all Year 11 pupils.
- Preparation for exams: It is vital Yr11's are engaging with at least 2 hours of homework/revision per night. Preparing a timetable is beneficial and do not 'cram' revision into the last minute.
- Upcoming assessments: Yr11 formal assessments will take place from Monday 30th September and Mock exams this year are from 2nd December.

- Year 11 Prom: This is invitation only. Students must demonstrate good attendance, punctuality and behaviour record. If a student is suspended twice, their invitation will be withdrawn.

Year 9

Thanks to the parents who attended the Yr9 parental information evening. Attendance was much higher than when the students were in Yr8, but I ask that parents make every effort to attend these important evenings. The following were the key messages:

- Attendance: The key message was attendance is the clearest indicator of good outcomes and missing one day a fortnight can have a massive impact on reaching their potential
- Assessments: There are two formal assessment points: 13th January and 9th June. Preparation for assessments is crucial to prepare students for the rigour of KS4.
- Literacy: Reading, and the ability to understand, is crucial to accessing, and hence learning, our curriculum. We have a digital library, SORA, an incredible resource which students should use.
- Supporting Learning at Home: Mr Willerton shared a range of general and subject specific information which empowers parents to support learning at home and have powerful conversations about school
- Options: Mrs Kelly shared information about the options process including assemblies, Options Evening and recommendations. Date of Options Evening to be confirmed but it's likely to be at the end of March.

The dates of the remaining Parental Evenings are below;

- Yr10 parental evening 9th October at 6pm
- Yr8 parental evening 10th October at 6pm
- Yr7 parental evening 6th November at 6pm



Young Carers at St Damian's

A young carer is a young person who, without payment, provides help and support to a parent, sibling or other family member, who could not manage without their support. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. Young Carers take on practical and emotional tasks that normally would be undertaken by an adult. The tasks and level of caring undertaken by a young carer can vary, according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of care required and the structure of the family unit. A young person may engage in cooking, shopping, dressing or looking after younger siblings. At St Damian's we have 26

young carers and we provide extensive support to these children. Mrs Harrison, who leads on this support, can be contacted for more details.



SEND Update

- Study Clubs: These clubs are now 'up and running' each Tuesday and Wednesday until 4pm: parents and carers will have had a text message about these.
- Medical Needs: We need to be aware of any new, or changing, medical needs which your child may have. Accurate records and information for staff are dependent on parents and carers keeping us fully informed. If your child has an Individual Healthcare Plan, please ensure we have an accurate and up-to-date plan. Information about medical needs should be directed to Mrs Burrows, one of our dedicated Special Support Managers.

- **Contact.** For matters relating to SEND, please contact Mrs Walker for KS4 and Mrs Lowe for KS3. Pupils with SEND are at the heart of everything that we do at St Damian's, and all of our staff work tirelessly to support pupils' progress and well-being with the resources which we have.

Pupil Premium Update

At the heart of a great Catholic school is the progress of students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are vulnerable. We pride ourselves on ensuring we have high expectations of all students so that they leave St Damian's with 'great' GCSE outcomes which opens up a range of opportunities available. St Damian's strategy, which has proved successful, is our unique **CLEAR** strategy. This is as follows:

- **Careers education** is robust so post 16 choices are well considered and appropriate
- **Literacy skills** underpin our teaching/interactions so students can access the full curriculum
- **Educational progress** is monitored and supported by a developed knowledge rich curriculum
- **Attendance** is celebrated and the value of being in school appreciated
- **Resilience and mental health** are embraced as part of a holistic education

Girls PE Update

St Damian's Senior Netball team beat Mossley Hollins 41-10 in the first match of the season. It was an all-round superb team performance, but a special mention is well deserved for Amelie, Olivia, Millie, Kitti and Aoife. The match is the first of 3 pre-cup friendlies, and we hope to continue our winning streak next month.

St Damian's Yr10 and Yr11 Girls football teams kicked off their season with some superb team and individual efforts against Laurus Rycroft, Fairfield, Mossley Hollins, Denton and Hyde during their first mini tournament. This takes place ahead of their cup draw and is a great way for the team to bond as players and prepare for their first-round games. I wish them all the best this year and hopefully we will bring back a few trophies.

London 2025

It doesn't seem that long ago that the names were drawn for the fantastic trip to London in 2025. Now that the new academic year has begun, we are on countdown to Easter, and it will be upon us in no time! We are in the process of finalising the itinerary where the students will be able to experience the rich history London has to offer and in visiting important landmarks, such as the Tower of London or for the football fans, Wembley stadium. We will be visiting the Natural History Museum to delve into the 4.6 billion years of planet earth and learn about how we can protect it for the future before we get our glad rags on and enjoy one of the best theatre shows the West End has to offer, 'The Lion King'. Alongside these great trips we will be eating out in 3 London restaurants around Covent Garden and the Southbank. I have been lucky enough to be nominated to go on this trip and I can't wait!!!!

Personal Development Updates

- **Form Captains.** Congratulations to all the newly elected Form Captains and Vice Captains. Taking on a student leadership role in school can have several benefits for your child such as building confidence, gaining experience with public speaking and learning to work with pupils outside of their friendship group. Personal development can really support student resilience and improve their personal aspirations. New Form Captains and Vice Captains are elected at the start of every new term, please encourage your child to get involved if they haven't already done so.
- **Choir.** Our ever-expanding choir, which currently has 70 enthusiastic members from Yr8 to Yr11, is gearing up for another exciting performance. After their incredible success at the recent Celebration Evening, where their performance was widely praised, the choir is now focusing on preparing for our upcoming performance evening on November 14th. Entitled the 'Expressive Arts Extravaganza' they are working on an arrangement of Keane's "Somewhere Only We Know," and their dedication in

rehearsals is already promising another memorable performance. Auditions for talented Yr7 students will be held, allowing the choir to grow even more. Mr McCardle is excited to see how these new voices blend with our seasoned performers and can't wait to showcase their hard work and passion within the school community. Watch this space for ticket sales!



- **Pastoral Themes.** Another aspect of our Personal Development programme is our half termly Pastoral theme, that is explored during form time. It is important that students are given time to reflect on issues and values that stretch beyond the academic curriculum content. This half term, we are asking pupils to consider the theme **'Aspiration'**. Knowing what your child's short, medium and long-term goals are, help us to get to know about your child and their interests. Whilst we appreciate, student aspirations may change over time, it is important that they start to consider what they want to achieve in life. Some of these aspirations may be personal goals, whilst others will be about their professional ambitions.

Behaviour

I am proud that the behaviour of St Damian's students is outstanding. Our standards and high expectations underpin all our success, and I am pleased with the overwhelming support of parents. However, there have been several reports of our students 'misbehaving' outside of school, in particular on the bus or in the local area. Although this has only involved a very small number of students, they still bring into disrepute the outstanding reputation of St Damian's. For clarity, students are expected to behave on the buses to the high standards expected in school and likewise, in the local area. I will sanction any student who does not uphold the values and expectations of the St Damian's community.

May I also remind parents that vaping is not allowed and any child who vapes in the school, or on the bus will be suspended and the vape will be confiscated. Vaping is highly addictive, likely to cause long term health implications, and many vapes are unregulated and may contain additional illegal or dangerous substances.

Pre-Loved Uniform Sale

This is our third year in a row selling 'pre-loved' uniform to our community. This not only helps our families with the cost of the uniform, but we also raise money for our chosen charities. In the first year we raised £322 and in our second year we raised £520. This summer it gives me great pleasure to tell you that we have raised an incredible £781 which will be donated to our chosen charities.



Mrs Ormston said "It's a privilege to organise the pre-loved uniform sale each year and it brings me so much joy seeing how many people it helps. If you've played a part in this, be it donating, or buying, then you can be very proud to have made such a difference. I couldn't do it without you. Thank you". A special thank you to Mrs Ormston who started this great initiative to help others. Her efforts and enthusiasm have ensured this has been a resounding success.

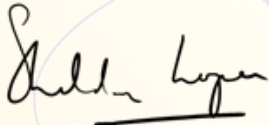
Dates for your Diary ...

- **Wednesday 9th October - Yr10 parental information evening.** All Yr10 parents should attend.
- **Thursday 10th October - Yr8 parental information evening.** All Yr8 parents should attend.
- **Monday 21st October - ASPIRE day** Timetable collapse for Careers & personal development enrichment
- **Wednesday 23rd October - Yr11 Certificate Evening.** To celebrate our outstanding GCSE results

Heads-up on a date for your diary! A night not to be missed is our *Performing Arts Extravaganza Evening* which will showcase the talents of this faculty. This is on **Thursday 14th November**. Further details will be released in due course.

Finally, what a **great start** to the year. The children have been brilliant and there's a real buzz about the school!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher