

December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer,

I attach the half termly newsletter for your perusal. As you can see, it has been another busy, yet highly successful term at St Damian's. In addition to the newsletter I would like to share the following information;

### **Year of Mercy**

As you will be aware, Pope Francis has announced that this year will be a special '*Year of Mercy*' where all people of good come together for a year and thank God for his mercy and to show mercy to one another. St Damian's will, in conjunction with the Diocese of Salford, participate in this. Further details will follow in due course.

### **Confidence in the Community**

Yet again St Damian's is inundated with preferences from the current Year 6 pupils/parents. A record **243** have put St Damian's down as their **first choice** for only 150 places. This reflects the confidence of the Community that views, quite rightly, that St Damian's provides a first class education. As Headteacher I have always said that our best advertisement is our pupils and staff. The feedback from the Open Evening was overwhelmingly positive; the comments I received were unanimous in praising both the staff and pupils of the school. This is down to doing simple things right: high expectations, care for the pupils, great relationships between pupils and staff and fantastic support from parents.

### **Standards and Expectations**

Can I remind parents, as I always do, that my staff, the school governors, my Leadership and I expect the highest standards of behaviour from all pupils at St Damian's. This in turn raises standards and outcomes for your children. Indeed this is reflected in St Damian's having the **highest** percentage of pupils leaving secondary school in Tameside with the **Gold Standard 5A\*- C**.

Can I also reiterate that;

- Natural looking hair is expected. Dyed hair or hair that is too short/shaved is not acceptable
- No mobile phones are permitted in school. If pupils are caught these will be taken off your child and held at reception ready for parents to collect. Refusal to hand over a mobile phone is likely to result in an exclusion
- As Headteacher, I have the authority to sanction any pupil that misbehaves 'out of school hours' and brings the school into disrepute. For example **A]** Behaviour on the buses. If any pupil misbehaves on the bus I can take action and I have done in the past. **B]** Cyber bullying at weekends. Again, I have the authority to sanction pupils for this and have done so in the past.

It is simply not fair for a small minority of pupils to flaunt simple, well established rules. Pupils who repeatedly misbehave or disrupt the education of others will not be tolerated and their place at St Damian's will be at serious risk. Please could I ask parents to reaffirm this with your children.

I am, as usual, delighted that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is excellent and they truly are great ambassadors for the St Damian's Community. Every external visitor comments upon their great behaviour and how calm the school is. Please pass this on to your children too, I am so proud of them!

### Raise online

I am delighted to announce that St Damian's Raise online, a document provided to every school by the Government, again shows that pupil outcomes, as measured by GCSE outcomes is overwhelmingly positive. For example

- *5 A\*-C* we achieved **79%** [National Average was **56%**] [Highest in Tameside 2015]
- *Attainment in RE* was **83%**, a record outcome with 35% A\*/A
- *Expected Levels of Progression* in English was **80%** [National Average was **69%**]
- *Expected Levels of Progression* in Maths was **86%** [National Average was **66%**]
- Our *Ebacc qualification* was **37%** [National Average was **24%**]

This shows that St Damian's is providing a high level of education for our children. However, my staff, Leadership Team, Governors and I will not become complacent as we continuously strive to provide the best education to rival any school!

### Year Groups

**Year 11** have only a short time left at school. Most Controlled Assessments should now be completed. The next term and a half is arguably one of the most important times for your child's education: GCSE outcomes will determine what they do in the future. As Headteacher, I do not expect that everyone can get an A\*, but I do expect that **everyone can do their best**, regardless of ability. The fantastic staff at St Damian's instil in the pupils a sense of belief: indeed our mantra is '*believe to achieve*'. I ask that parents support the school by ensuring your child is working at home: a minimum of 2 hours each evening and that you support any extra revision sessions after school and/or during the official school holidays. That way your child has the best opportunity to achieve their full potential. Remember that it is having a positive **ATTITUDE**, rather than **ABILITY** that will ensure your child achieves their best.

**Year 10** are now a term into their GCSE's and I can report that they are doing extremely well. Early indications, for example in Modern Foreign Languages and ICT Controlled Assessment, show that pupils really want to achieve their best. Again, I ask parents to ensure they support the school by ensuring appropriate time for homework and/or revision at home. Next term, Year 10 pupils will be applying to become prefects and their positive attitudes to work is a crucial factor for me in deciding who will become a prefect.

**Year 9** pupils in the next term will be choosing their options for Key Stage Four. Further details will follow in due course but it is important that you have conversations with your child about their future careers and aspirations. Some of our Year 9 pupils are spearheading the St Damian's Food Fight, to collect food for the most vulnerable in our community. This is particularly pertinent at this time of the year and reflects our ethos of helping the most vulnerable in society

**Year 8** have enjoyed many extracurricular trips from the English and Expressive Arts departments which they have really enjoyed. The awards assembly was held last Thursday and many pupils received certificates from different subjects for their fantastic effort and progress. Selection boxes were raffled off for pupils who have received 0 behaviour points, it was amazing!

**Year 7** have made a successful transition into secondary school and are beginning to form new and positive relationships with both staff and peers alike. They have all made a fantastic contribution to the wider life of the school; pupil Chaplains, sports teams, the choir, film and games club and the

Justice league, where pupils regularly lead worship in assembly. Well done year 7! I hope that this love of the school continues.

In general, we have the highest ambitions for your children and we have a culture where learning is limitless and the pupils can **AND DO** achieve beyond their expectations.

### **Attendance**

St Damian's has a fantastic attendance record and this simply shows that your child wants to be here as they feel valued, safe and cared for. That is one of the many strengths of the school. Can I ask that you do not take your children out of school during school term time. I will not grant permission for this unless it is truly exceptional and this means in very rare cases.

### **Social Media**

Finally, I ask that you please be extra vigilant when your children are using Social Media and their phones. We constantly educate our pupils in the 'dangers' of social media but it is important that, as parents, you also know what your child is doing, for example on social media.

My staff and I wish you a happy, peaceful and holy Christmas. The special community that is *St Damian's* looks forward to another highly successful year in 2016!!!

Thank you for your continued support!

Kind regards

Mr Logue  
Headteacher