



June 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Headteacher**  
Mr S Logue BA (Hons), MEd., NPQH, NPQEL

A very warm welcome to my penultimate newsletter of the year. As always, I hope that you enjoy reading as at the time of writing there are only a few weeks before the end of another academic year. As the old saying goes. *'time flies when you're having fun'*.

**Catholic Life of the School**

I hope that you enjoyed reading the fantastic CIS inspection report that was published a few weeks ago. It is a true reflection of our great community with many great comments about the students, staff and the school in general. Although this is a great outcome for the whole school community, I must make a special mention for our fantastic RE department led by Mrs Gerschler. Her leadership, not only over the 2 days, but since she became Subject Leader of RE, has been incredible.

But, in true St Damian's style, we move on now and are relentlessly focused on future opportunities. Below are a range of liturgical and prayer opportunities that were delivered in June.

- *The Laudato Si Centre at Wardley Hall.* Our Yr10 GIFT team visited the The Laudato Si Centre as part of their preparation to achieve the Live Simply CAFOD award. This award recognises initiatives that promote simplicity, sustainability, and solidarity within the community.



Students actively engaged in stewardship and care for the environment, by weeding the garden, planting pumpkins and learning how to forage properly, reflecting the principles of Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si'. The activities fostered a deeper connection with nature and a commitment to environmental conservation. The students also took part in reflection in the woodland, putting their own alter together and writing prayers for the world.



- *June Focus - Sacred Heart of Jesus.* All GIFT teams are enthusiastically participating in a creative art project for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This project is an opportunity for students to express their faith through art, deepening their spiritual connection and understanding of this significant feast day. Through their artistic creations, the students are not only exploring their personal faith journeys but also sharing these expressions with the wider school community.

- *Yr6 Welcome Service.* This marks a significant milestone as new students take their first steps into our vibrant community. This special event provides an opportunity for them to join in prayer as a Year group for the first time. Our new students will be inspired by heartfelt words from our Head Boy and Head Girl and current Yr7 students, who will share their wonderful experiences at St Damian's, allowing them a glimpse into the 'St Damian's Way'. Each form will contribute to the service by writing a Bidding Prayer, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose from the very beginning. The students will sing our school hymn for the first time. Yr6 parents are welcome to join this service.

St. Damian's RC Science College

- **Mystery Play Workshop.** Yr7 will have the exciting opportunity to participate in a Mystery Play workshop, where they will bring a Bible story to life in a modern-day setting. The workshop aims to support their English curriculum as well as deepen their understanding of the Scriptures. In this workshop, students will explore a chosen Bible story, analysing its themes, characters, and messages. Guided by Mrs Allmand, they will then adapt the traditional account to a contemporary context, reimagining the story in a way that resonates with today's world. The workshop will culminate in a performance, where they will have the chance to showcase their hard work and creativity to the rest of the GIFT teams.

**Future Plans**

- **Pope Francis Year of Prayer 2024.** In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year 'Pilgrims of Hope', Pope Francis has designated 2024 as a Year of Prayer. He invites all the faithful to join in a great 'symphony' of prayer, aiming to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to Him, and to adore Him. In response to this, our GIFT teams are diligently working on creating a variety of resources to support and inspire our community in this spiritual journey. Ideas have included, Prayer Guides and Reflection Booklets designed to deepen the schools engagement with prayer; Interactive Prayer Stations round the school which will have visual and tactile elements that invite students and staff to pause, pray, and reflect on their relationship with God and workshops and retreats in school that will cover various forms of prayer, such as contemplative prayer, the Rosary, and Lectio Divina.



- **End of Year Liturgy.** - As we approach the end of the school year, we are planning a special liturgy to celebrate and recognise the rich Catholic nature of our community, as highlighted in the recent CIS report. The central theme of the liturgy will be 'Celebrating Our Catholic Identity', focusing on 'The St Damian's Way' that defines our community as well as looking forward to summer with our loved ones.



- **Retreats.** These offer students a meaningful opportunity to deepen their faith, reflect on their spiritual journey, and strengthen their sense of community. Next year we are planning to offer more opportunities for students to attend a retreat either outside of school or within our school environment. After the success of the Yr7 retreat earlier in the year, we have already planned a retreat for January 2025 to Castlerigg Manor.

Finally, a great picture of the RE team having afternoon team to celebrate their achievements. Well done!



**Attendance**

In this letter I must highlight the issue of attendance. For clarity, good attendance is fundamental to the success of your child at school. I will condense this into 3 broad areas for your perusal.

1. Firstly, there is a very **strong correlation between outcomes and attendance.** In essence, students who attend school, learn more, there are no gaps in their knowledge and they can connect learning to previous lessons. Furthermore, it is a myth that students 'catch-up' on work missed. In the majority of cases, it just doesn't happen. GCSE outcomes open up better opportunities post - 16 for your child.
2. Secondly, the important aspect of **social development.** Being in school, amongst peers and friends, is the best way to develop socially and personally. Furthermore, students can readily access support in school from our fantastic student support officers, teachers and their peers.

- 3. Thirdly, for **safeguarding purposes**. If your child is in school, they are being safeguarded. If they are not at school, you have little control over what they are doing

Attendance at St Damian's has always been above the National Average and continues to be so. This is a reflection that our great students want to be here, in a safe, positive learning environment. However, attendance is still not what it was pre-Covid. This year we have seen an increase in term time holidays. I appreciate the cost of a holiday in term time can be expensive for families however, taking your child out of school during term time has a negative impact on their learning.

I have attached a letter from the Local Authority regarding a new framework for Penalty Notices for school absence. I ask that you read this. This letter can be found here. <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/general-letters>

### Staff Profiles

Because attendance is such an important issue, in this newsletter I have focused the staff profile on our fantastic attendance team.



#### Mrs Greenhalgh- Attendance Officer

As a former pupil myself and having two grown up boys who also both attended St Damian's I have always had the privilege of being part of the St Damian's community. My journey as a member of staff began in 2005 working as a receptionist in the old school building. In 2013 I was appointed as Data Analyst and in 2017 I had the opportunity to apply for my current role as Attendance Officer. I am committed to my role and love coming to work each day. No two days are the same. I enjoy working with families to remove barriers to school attendance and find my role rewarding. I aim to support all students to attend school to obtain a great education and support in their social development for the future. Outside of work I enjoy countryside walks with my two dogs Jessie and Millie, TV dramas, yoga and spending time with my family.

#### Miss Mistry – Reprographics & Attendance Officer

I attended Ashton Sixth Form College where I studied Business Studies. I graduated from the University of Salford in 2005 with a BSc in Business Studies with Human Resources. April 2024 marked 10 years at St Damian's for me and I have loved every minute of it. My background is in Human Resources within the education sector, having worked for Ofsted (recruiting HMI's) and Tameside Council (recruiting supply teachers). I have always wanted to work with children but didn't know in what capacity. I did 2 summers in California working in a summer camp as a camp counsellor, and loved it. I started at St Damian's as the receptionist, then moved to reprographics and then about 5 years ago started shadowing in attendance, I have learnt so much about this role, safeguarding 840 pupils, learning new laws and legislation which I have immensely enjoyed. I'm still learning now. For me St Damian's is not just a workplace, it's a community/family. I particularly enjoy events such as Macmillan Coffee Mornings, Santa Dash, Share Days and I loved the recent Disco, which I volunteered for. In my spare time, I enjoy beach walks in Filey during the holidays, going to the theatre, I LOVE musicals and trying new and tasty food. Remember every school day matters!

### The Elizabeth Jones MBE Literacy Hub



The Literacy Hub, named after our previous Chair of Governors, the late Mrs Elizabeth Jones MBE, has been up and running for the past two years. It is a great space for students to research, study and read. There is a wide variety of books to help students with their GCSEs, coursework and homework. It



is also equipped with iPads for research purposes. Students are also encouraged to borrow books for their own 'reading for pleasure' purposes. It is extensively used before school, lunchtime and after school. A selection of KS3 boys also come in to compete in games of chess and practise their strategic and competitive skills. Freya Long, a Yr7 student, said "The staff in the hub are very welcoming. I find it easy to take books out for reading at home. I enjoy visiting The Literacy Hub at lunch and after school. The Literacy Hub is my favourite place in school!" We are proud to have this fantastic resource in our school. Remember that being able to read is the foundation to both learning and accessing our academic curriculum.

### Curriculum Updates

- Year 10 Spoken Language Endorsement - This term Yr 10 have prepared and delivered a talk on an issue or topic of their choice. Not only is this a compulsory component of their English Language GCSE but, it is also an essential life skill. The English Faculty have been extremely impressed by the quality of their preparations and the standards achieved across all classes. We have also been very engaged by the range of issues and topics discussed. For example, the impact of social media on young people; the impact of technology and artificial intelligence; phobias; dreams and why culture is an important part of a person's identity? It is heartening to hear our children express their ideas and opinions so confidently and eloquently. Well done Year 10! We are very proud.
- *Junior Mathematical Challenge update.* Nearly 100 children from Yrs7 & 8 took part in this challenge, which is taken by high ability students from across the UK. This involved a 1 hour assessment where students answered 25 questions that required a high level of analytical skills. Nationally, 8%, 16% and 25% of entrants achieve Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards, respectively. I am delighted to announce that 57 students achieved awards, 5 Gold, 20 Silver and 32 Bronze Awards. These are our best results yet! A special mention goes to Michael Kelly and Sonia Patel in Yr8, and Sebastian Jaswian in Yr7, who did so well that they qualified for the 'Kangaroo' follow-on round. Previously, we have only ever had one student qualify for this, so this is incredible. Watch this space. Huge congratulations to all students and a special mention to Mr Willerton who has made this possible.



### Detentions

Standards of behaviour at St Damian's are exceptional. However, there are times when a small number of pupils don't adhere to our simple rules. The detention system is an integral part of our behaviour and learning ethos system. Staff only give detentions when necessary. It is therefore important that both students and parents/carers respect that once given, the detention must be attended. However, I understand that you may need to make arrangements to ensure your child's safety and for this reason my staff will ensure:

- ✓ 24 hours verbal notice is given
- ✓ A text will be sent the evening prior and again on the day of the issued detention

NB: As Headteacher however, I reserve the right to issue a detention on the day and I will endeavour to inform parents if this is the case.

### Pastoral Themes

Each half term our students are educated on a particular 'theme'. These themes are closely aligned with our Mission Statement, Protected Characteristics and Fundamental British Values. Previous themes have included Tolerance, Aspiration and Responsibility.

This half term the theme has been on 'Service'. This ensures pupils understand the value of supporting others and our community. Mrs Forde, Head of Yr10 always informs me of how proud she is of her year group. After a recent assembly where students presented their work on the pastoral theme of 'Staying Healthy', she said *"It was great to see them ALL involved! You could see a lot of hard work had gone in to preparing this."* 😊



### Trip to Costa Brava



During the May half term break a group of students accompanied by Mr Healey, Miss Smith, Mrs Lowe and Mr Lowe, visited the Costa Brava in Spain for a sports trip. The St. Damian's contingent represented both themselves and our school brilliantly. Two football teams and a netball team travelled to Lloret De Mar to take part in 2 days of

sports coaching and a tournament. The netball team finished 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 12 teams, football A team finished 4<sup>th</sup> out of 14 teams and the B team scored a last-minute winner in the final game of the tournament. Well done to all participants! The values promoted at St. Damian's were evident throughout the trip, student conduct was excellent. Students also had great day at a local waterpark and explored the coastline. Mr Healey, who led the trip, said *"It was a pleasure to be able to share experiences and create lasting memories with wonderful staff and fantastic students whilst also demonstrating the St. Damian's way both athletically and socially"*.



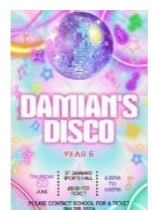
**Follow Up Trip Competition...** Miss Smith is running a competition for the students who went on the Costa Brava trip to write a short diary entry about what they did and their opinions of the trip. Entries should be around 50 words **in Spanish** and accompanied by the English translation. The winning entry will be published in next month's newsletter and will win a prize! All entries need to be sent to Miss Smith via Teams by Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June. ¡Buena suerte! (Good luck! 😊)

### London Calling!

After the success of Barcelona 2024 during the Easter half term, we have been overwhelmed with applications to attend our next Easter trip in 2025! Next year this will be London 2025. I gathered all the excited students from Yrs7, 8 and 9 in the hall to pick the lucky names out of a hat. The successful students have been informed and the itinerary is well on its way. This is a very busy trip and includes spending time in Covent Garden watching the street performers, visiting famous landmarks including the London Eye, Natural History Museum and a cruise on the River Thames. We have booked The Lion King in the West End and will be dining out in 3 London restaurants during our stay. This trip will make amazing memories that will last a lifetime for the students. I am one of the lucky staff members who will be accompanying the students on this trip, and I can't wait!

### School Disco

On Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June we held our inaugural school disco! Yr6 pupils who will be joining us in September were invited between 4:30pm – 6:00pm and then Yrs 7, 8 & 9 partied between 6:30pm – 8:30pm. Pupils enjoyed a Taylor Swift tribute band who played all Taylor's top hits and this was followed by the fantastic Denis the DJ who somehow managed to get everyone on the dance floor. It really was a truly memorable night that has set a precedent for next year!! All monies raised will go to our chosen charities.





**Yr10 'Fun' in the Sun Afternoon**

Yr10 are invited to an afternoon of fun on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July, from 1.30pm till 3.10pm, before heading off on their work experience and a well-deserved summer holiday. We are asking for a donation of £3.00. Pupils will be able to wear their own clothes and be able to purchase refreshments; the ice-cream van will also be here 😊. All proceeds will go towards our Share Day nominated charities.

**Share Day 2024**

As you all know, St Damian's Share Day is always one of the highlights of our calendar, and this year is no exception, we're transforming our school into the magical realm of St Damian's Disneyland! We aim to make this year's event extra special and create unforgettable memories for our amazing children here at St Damian's.



Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024, marks the launch of our Share Day Fundraising event! Each Form group will start with £10.00 and use their entrepreneurial skills to raise more funds for our nominated charities. Ask your child what their Form is planning, as there are already many exciting activities in the pipeline.

**Showing off our Students Talents**

Congratulations to the following St Damian's students who earlier this month represented Tameside Schools in the Greater Manchester Schools Athletics Championships at the Longford Park Stadium in Trafford. Bobby Burton, Max Ormston, Sebastian Stewart, Amelia Jones, Remy Aldridge, Roxy McHugh, Harriet Byrnes and Olivia Jones. Impressive performances on the day from all athletes, including 1 gold medal, 3 silver medals, 1 bronze medal and some personal best times. Bobby, Max, Roxy and Olivia have also been selected for the Greater Manchester team to compete at the Inter Counties Mason Trophy Match taking place in Stoke. Watch this space! Remember; if your child is taking part in an event, out of school, and you would like it included in the newsletter, please email me with the details and it would be great if you could include a picture.

**Another Win...**

I am delighted to report that our Yr7 girls football team recently won the 'Year 7 plate' competition. A tight game finished 1-1. St Damian's took the lead with a fine individual goal by Sadie Taylor. Laurus Rycroft equalised before the end of the game to take the game to penalties. Willow Cooney and Angel Mawn were both successful with their penalties and Maddie Groves once again stepped up and saved the final penalty to give St Damian's a 2-0 win. A great year for Yr7 football as this victory goes alongside the Year 7 Boys Tameside Cup win. Well done girls. And a well done to their manager, Miss Guilfoyle. It is great to see our Yr7 boys and girls doing so well. I look forward to their progress in Yr8.



**Ms Hughes, Year 7 Fruit Party**



On Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 7JHS held a fruit tasting party as part of their pastoral theme on 'Healthy Living'. The students thoroughly enjoyed sampling a range of fruit. The watermelon and the kiwi were the two biggest hits. The pomegranate seeds, however, were almost unanimously voted 'disgusting'. However, it is important that we educate our students on a balanced and healthy diet.



**Yr10 Work Experience Update** This important week is fast approaching and if you haven't already, Yr10 students should make contact with their workplace to introduce yourself. I ask that parents support your child in doing so. Please remember that you are not only representing yourself, you are also an ambassador of St. Damian's and the high expectations we have at school should be replicated in your place of work. For most, this will be your first opportunity to experience life in the workplace. Be proactive, friendly and inquisitive in order to maximise this worthwhile experience.

**Reading Groups** During this academic year, SLT, the SENDco, Assistant SENDco and the school librarian have held weekly reading groups with a range of different year groups and a range of different abilities. The purpose of the reading groups is to build resilience with reading; to examine new vocabulary; but ultimately to instil a love of reading! As we are nearing the end of the academic year, I would like to comment on the success of these reading groups at supporting a number of pupils to raise their reading age. Having a reading age the same as a child's chronological age, will allow them to access the curriculum and 'read to learn'. Reading to learn is fundamental in growing your child's knowledge and allowing them to fully comprehend what they read. This is not just a skill for school, but a skill for life, and an opportunity for me to remind parents that the best form of education is reading.

**Celebration Evening** On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June, we held our annual Celebration Evening. The theme for the evening was Advance, Achieve, Ambition. This is a night that showed-off the talents of your great children, our great students and all the fantastic things they have achieved throughout the year!

**Pre-Loved Uniform Sale** After the success of last year, Mrs Ormston has very kindly agreed to hold another pre-loved uniform sale. The sale will take place on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August between 12noon – 4:00pm at St Christopher's Church Hall, St Christopher's Road, Ashton Under Lyne OL6 9DP. Last years sale was a great success and the ideal opportunity for parents to stock up on school uniform that is in excellent condition and much cheaper that it would be elsewhere ! All monies raised are donated to our chosen charity.

**Important Dates** As we near the end of another successful year for our community I would like to remind you of a few dates.

- Sports Day, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- Share Day, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 23024
- End of Term, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 1:30pm

School re-opens for all pupils on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.

#### Finally ...

Last week, on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June, we celebrated National Teacher day. This was an opportunity to formally thank all the teachers in our school. Each teacher received a "Thanks for Bee-ing a Great Teacher" chocolate bar and thank-you note from our students. Small gestures like this can significantly impact someone's day, making them feel appreciated and respected. For the record, I have never worked with a more conscientious or hard-working team of professionals.

Here's to good weather over the next few weeks.

