



In all things faithful

February 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to my latest newsletter on all things St Damian's. Despite February being a short month, you will see from reading below that it has in fact been a real busy few weeks. Furthermore, at the time of writing Covid restrictions are going to change and, hopefully, a sense of normality will return. However, we must not become complacent, and we must remember in our prayers all those who have lost friends or loved ones over the past few years.

### St Damian's Feast Day

I am proud to say we celebrated our feast day on the 4th February 2022. Our theme this year was "*Being a Global Neighbour and Celebrating Diversity 2022*". This theme was chosen to reflect Pope Francis' Encyclical "*Fratelli tutti*", being a global neighbour and putting human dignity at the heart of what we do. The activities of the day ensured pupils reflected on these messages. These activities included presentations from the Jewish and Islamic communities, a Band discussing Mental Health, a workshop with King David High School and a Spirited Art Project. Presentations included '*life in a single parent household*' and '*Living with my disability*' all contributing to what makes each of us unique. '*The St Damian's Way*' was at the heart of the day and the positivity and sense of belonging was palpable around the school. A massive thanks to the RE team for the planning and allowing both pupils and staff the opportunity to celebrate our feast day! Pupils and staff fully embraced the day!

### Covid and Face Coverings Update

This half term has seen pupils wearing masks in communal areas to reduce the spread of infection. I have been informed that the local levels of infection are reducing and therefore, in line with national guidelines, pupils are no longer required to wear face coverings. This will take place with immediate effect. However, if pupils want to wear them, we will not discourage them.

### Yr11 Update

- On Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February Year 11 pupils sat another Mock exam in English and Maths. Overall, they were very encouraging but it is obvious that some pupils are not working hard enough at home, and this will have consequences for their futures.
- On 9<sup>th</sup> February, Mrs Henshaw uploaded a letter outlining the release of advance information by the exam boards. The advance information allows pupils to know the focus of the exam content that will be assessed and then plan and prioritise their revision accordingly. Full details are on the website: <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/exams>.
- Intervention will continue to take place after half term. Pupils must attend each week to ensure that they get maximum benefit. Intervention gives pupils a structured approach to learning content and developing key examination skills. Well done to those pupils who attended intervention during the half term break!
- From experience, my key message is that there is **no substitute for hard work**. This will be the single biggest factor in determining pupils' grades this summer. As parents, I ask that you ensure your child is doing at least 2 hours revision every night.

I am delighted to inform you that the Prom has been booked at The San Rocco in Ashton for Friday 1st July. This is a great evening that celebrates your child's time at St Damian's and is one of the great traditions of St Damian's. Further details will follow in due course. However, it is important that both parents and pupils know that this evening is by **invitation only**; it is not an entitlement. Sadly, a few pupils have had warning letters that their places are at risk. Any pupil who misbehaves repeatedly in school will not be invited to the Prom. I will personally correspond with parents if this is the case.

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### Headteacher

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St. Damian's RC Science College

**Yr9 Update**

- **Options:** The launch assembly will take place on *Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March*. This will be followed by subject leaders' presentations so that pupils get an understanding of the range of courses available at KS4. Then Parents are invited to a face-to-face Options Evening & Marketplace on *Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March at 6.30pm*. Pathway forms and an options booklet will be issued to pupils at the start of Options evening. The deadline for the submission of Options forms is *Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022*.
- **Apprenticeships Talk:** During National Apprenticeships Week, Yr9 pupils attended a lecture given by Mr Artley from Seta Training. Pupils learned about the range of apprenticeships available at age 16 & 18 including higher level degree apprenticeships. Many companies in a range of employment sectors now offer apprenticeships where apprentices get paid whilst acquiring invaluable workplace skills and training. If successful, apprentices then go on to take on promoted positions.

**Yr8 Parents' Evening [9<sup>th</sup> February]**

Thanks for all the feedback given on the Parental questionnaires. I am delighted to report that out of 99 responses, 98 would recommend the school and 1 would not. Unfortunately, the parent who would not recommend the school did not include their name so I can't address the issues they raised, but they did agree that that their child 'does well at the school'. Below I share a selection of the many positive comments from parents.

- ✓ Well done, you're all doing a fantastic job!
- ✓ My daughter is so happy here and so am I! All staff are very helpful and caring
- ✓ We're delighted with how much our child has settled into St Damian's and the challenge all teachers get across the board. Thank you for all your hard work
- ✓ Excellent school, excellent teachers, highly recommend
- ✓ Thank you to all teachers for a fantastic parents evening. As always, we are incredibly grateful for the wonderful learning and support offered by everybody at St Damian's
- ✓ I always feel like the staff care about my child and his achievements and I always feel a sense of pride from the staff when the children have performed well, thank you
- ✓ I couldn't be happier as a parent knowing I send my children into a safe environment where learning is fun
- ✓ Staff are positive, happy and friendly. It really helps to have fantastic rapport. Congratulations on being AMAZING

**Curriculum Enrichment, Holistic Education and Personal Development**

This past month has seen a range of different **Personal Development** enrichment opportunities at St Damian's. Below I highlight these, all with the aim of ensuring that your child gets a truly *holistic* education.

➤ **Pupil Voice Feedback Assemblies**

Ms Joyce delivered assemblies to Yr7-Yr10 sharing with them the results of their 'Pupil Voice'. Pupils have been extremely positive about the quality of their education and the pastoral support provided. Ensuring your child is happy, safe and able to learn has always been the priority at St. Damian's but it is nice to see that your children recognise this!

➤ **Pastoral Themes**

Pastoral themes are topics covered each week during Form Time. Each half term there is a different focus, but the themes have been selected to promote Fundamental British Values. Since January, pupils have been exploring the theme of '*Personal Happiness*' which incorporates helping pupils build resilience and develop ways to improve their mental health. The pupil responses have been interesting. For example, Form 8SSN's response on 'what made them happy' was '**Family & Friends**'. It's great to see that in a world of technology and social media, it's people that still make the difference! The 2 previous pastoral themes were '*Being Independent: Learning and Conduct*' and '*Community: A sense of belonging*'.

➤ **Safer Internet Day 8<sup>th</sup> February**

Yr8 recently attended a webinar from the Cybercrime unit at Greater Manchester Police. Pupils were given comprehensive advice on how to stay safe online which included high security password protection, privacy settings and protecting personal information. They also explored different types of cybercrime including sexting, cyber bullying, hate crime, misuse of social media and hacking, the laws in place and the consequences if the law is broken. The talk also highlighted how pupils could pursue future careers in computer-coding and consider an apprenticeship at different levels of entry in the cybercrime unit.



To further promote safe use of the internet, Form Tutors led a discussion on online relationships and pupils were given information about the 'Report Harmful Content' website which guides young people around reporting serious issues and having them removed from social media platforms.

I would also like to share the following links with further information regarding online safety and being responsible online. Remember that it's not OK to accept or give abuse online. <https://www.bt.com/drawtheline> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2Hc8bxf0k>

I urge parents to actively be involved in your child's online life. The following website link supports parents with the ever changing world of Technology and provides guidance and tips to help you support your child: [Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

➤ **Children's Mental Health Week [7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> February]**

Sadly, the mental health of children today is a concern. St Damian's pupils are not immune to mental health issues and in fact, we have a significant number of pupils with a range of issues and this number is increasing. That's why St Damian's fully embraced *Children's Mental Health* week. This year the theme was 'growing together' with a focus on how children grow and support each other. At St Damian's pupils were given positive affirmations, signposted to different support mechanisms through a poster campaign, given information on how to report disrespectful social media activities and strategies to promote their well-being. We finished the week by celebrating with each child being given a bar of chocolate.



Remember that mental health is as important as physical health. As a parent, if your child asks for help or shows signs of needing help, please listen to them. The mantra we should adopt is 'it could happen to my child'. Further help and guidance can be found at: [Parents and Carers - Children's Mental Health Week \(childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk\)](#)

➤ **Yr7-9 Aspirations Talks**

On the final day of National Apprenticeships Week, several pupils in Yrs 7 - 9 attended Aspirations Talks given by Mr Lee Mason, our Enterprise Adviser. Mr Mason is a successful business entrepreneur from Tameside. He shared information on the skills needed for the workplace with a focus on resilience, self-confidence, attitude, accountability, teamwork and goal setting for future success. These talks were well received by pupils and have helped reinforce that with an open mind and the right attitude, what you can achieve is limitless.

➤ **Yr10 Work Experience**

I am delighted to report that 120 pupils in Yr10 have now registered their work experience placements on the ConnectEd app. Yr10 Work Experience Week is taking place 11<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022. It is now vital that the remaining pupils speak to friends and family and organise their placement as quickly as possible. Once placements are registered on the app, they go through a process of approval. Approval is subject to health and safety checks. Work experience provides pupils with a valuable opportunity to develop employability skills which will make them attractive to future employers.

➤ **Student Council**

In the next few weeks, for the first time in the history of St. Damian's we are launching our very own Student Council. As a student body, it will collectively represent our diverse and inclusive community. All year groups will have representatives once fully established. Pupils will have a forum to provide us with feedback regarding what makes St. Damian's a great school and how they would like to develop it further. We look forward to listening to our pupils' opinions and putting their ideas into action.

➤ **Extra-Curricular Opportunities and Pupil Leadership**

During Covid we have had to curtail extra-curricular opportunities for our pupils. There are still some 'restrictions' but I hope that over time we can again increase our extra-curricular provision. There are many lunchtime opportunities such as the Debate Club, Eco Club, Musical Theatre and Band. In PE there is a Yr7 Social Football after school each Monday as well as a comprehensive lunchtime activity list that is displayed in each form room and on the website. Furthermore, St Damian's provides many opportunities to participate fully in the school life. This includes Form Captains, Eco Warriors, Bully Busters, Liturgical leaders, STEM leaders, Peer readers, Sports Leaders and Prefects. As well as helping pupils grow in confidence and develop resilience, contributing to school life enables them to fully embrace the spirit of St Damian's and enjoy their school experience.

➤ **Yr9 Visit to the University of Salford**

Thirty Yr9 pupils spent a day at the University of Salford on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Pupils attended a workshop which explored the different pathways into higher education and the wide range of courses available. Pupils were surprised when they were told nationally that there were 35,000 different courses to choose from. Pupils also did a tour of the University campus and were able to ask questions and find out about degree courses, societies and finance. Pupils also took part in a higher education quiz in teams. The visit clearly had an impact on many of our pupils. One Yr9 pupil commented 'It has made me want to take school seriously', another said 'I want to work harder', another said 'I want to go to university so I can get a better job'.

➤ **Speaking Out Could Save a Life**

Sadly, we are increasingly dealing with the consequences of violent youth crime on our doorstep. Greater Manchester Violent Crime Unit have put together a powerful video to encourage young people and parents to step forward and report their concerns. All pupils have been shown this video ([#speakingoutcouldsavealife - YouTube](#)) in their year group assemblies and have been encouraged to follow the advice. If you are concerned about your child or their friends you can report it to the police on 101 or [www.gmp.police.uk](http://www.gmp.police.uk) or, in an emergency, call 999.

**New Parent Service from Tameside**

Tameside have created a parenting helpline which is aimed to support the wide variety of issues that children and teenagers present with. We all need a little extra help from time to time and this service aims to get parenting coordinators to respond to your questions and offer support and guidance. Simply email issues/concerns to [parentingreferrals@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:parentingreferrals@tameside.gov.uk) and they will aim to respond within 48 hours. I encourage parents to use this service.

**Dinner Money Account Top-up**

A reminder to regularly check your child's dinner money account and top up when the balance is low as the kitchen do not permit negative balances. You can do this via SIMS Pay360 or a PayPoint Card. Please e-mail [parentaccess@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:parentaccess@stdamians.co.uk) if you have any issues with SIMS Pay360 or require a PayPoint Card. Please note that we do not recommend using "Facebook" as a log in method.

**Fundraising**

As you know we were proud to raise over £7,000 for Macmillan last year. There is a short video to say thanks to us from Macmillan. When I watched the video I had a tear in my eye as I thought about what some of my great colleagues have endured. [Click here to watch](#). I would like to again thank the generosity of pupils and parents who made this possible.

**Reading Groups and Literacy**

At St Damian's, Literacy is a whole school priority. One aspect of improving literacy is focused reading groups. Mrs Kelly is reading 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', Miss Holland is reading 'The Book Thief', Miss Stoneley is reading 'Treasure Island', Miss Guilfoyle is reading 'Abomination' and I am reading 'Who let the Gods out'. These reading groups expose pupils to focused reading, allows pupils to acquire new vocabulary and builds their confidence. Please could you support this work at home by continuing to encourage your child to read widely and as often as possible. All the research shows that reading is the best strategy for language acquisition. As Dr Seuss states: "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go"

**Parental Information Evenings**

As part of our strategy to re-engage with parents post-Covid we are holding a series of evenings to share important information so that you can fully support your child in school. These evenings will be tailored to meet the needs of your child's year group. In the next half term these are as follows: Yr10 on the Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm and Yr8 on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm. These evenings will operate as a carousel where parents will attend pertinent workshops. I ask that you put these dates in your diary and strongly make every effort to attend.

**Important Dates for your Diary**

Please take a note of these important dates. It is my intention that all meetings will now be taking place face-to-face but this may change if national guidelines change.

- 28<sup>th</sup> February - 4<sup>th</sup> March: National Careers Week
- 2<sup>nd</sup> March: Yr7 Parents Evening [4pm-7pm]
- 9<sup>th</sup> March: Yr10 Information Evening [Starts 6pm]
- 16<sup>th</sup> March: Yr9 Options Evening [Starts 6.30pm]
- 18<sup>th</sup> March: INSET day. School closed for pupils

- 24<sup>th</sup> March: Yr8 Information Evening [Starts 6pm]
- 8<sup>th</sup> April: School closes for the Easter break

**Email from Parent**

Below is an email that I received the day after Year 8 Parents' Evening. I have spoken to the parent for their permission to share with you and have removed any reference to names. I share it as I am extremely proud that one of our many great pupils is recognised in this manner. As a fiercely proud Catholic school, part of the *St Damian's Way* is to instil values in our great pupils!

*Good Morning,*

*I am parent of a year 8 child and I attended the parents evening last night. Unfortunately, my son wasn't able to attend with me due to an appointment. Therefore, it proved a little challenging when identifying teachers as this is my first time at a parents evening at St Damian's.*

*However, the purpose of my email is to pass on praise for a pupil who was assisting last night, his name is XX. XX really stood out from his peers last night, he could see I was confused and he approached me to offer assistance, asking which department and teacher I needed and proceeded to escort me there. He is an absolute credit to St Damian's, his manners were impeccable, his uniform was pristine and the assistance he offered last night made a huge difference.*

*I understand good morals, behaviour and acts of kindness don't go unrecognised at St. Damian's, therefore I trust that this wonderful young man will be rewarded in the appropriate way.*

*Kind Regards*

*Parents name*

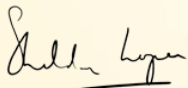
Just to update you. I have 'recognised' and 'rewarded' this 'wonderful young man'.

**Finally...**

Can I, on behalf of my staff, please ask you to pass on our thanks to **our great pupils, your children**. Since September [and before] their education has been consistently disrupted but they have proved to be resilient. For this they deserve credit!

As always, thanks for your support!

Yours sincerely



Mr S Logue  
Headteacher