



# Newsletter



**Number 31 - October 2014**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new Academic Year. I am delighted to report that our new Year 7 students have been welcomed into the St Damian's community and are settling in well. They are finding their way around and are getting used to the bigger school environment, helped by our older pupils.

## GCSE Results

For the third successive year St Damian's has achieved good academic outcomes for pupils. This year 64% of our pupils achieved at least five A\*- C grades, including English and Maths. This follows on from our really positive Ofsted report in March 2014 that not only recognised the hard work of staff and governors, but also externally validated that our vision, to become an *outstanding Catholic school* in everything we do, was achievable.



Behind this headline was the outstanding achievement in English, where a record 83% of pupils achieved at least a Grade 'C' with many of these achieving beyond what they were expected to achieve. GCSE Maths results were also above the National Average. On a personal level, many pupils achieved fantastic results, with three achieving an amazing total of 29 A – A\*s between them! Furthermore, results in the school of the current Year 11 in the following range of subjects; Core Science, Biology, Performing Arts and ICT, all indicate that next year St Damian's is on track to produce results that will surpass all records currently set.

## Year 11 Mocks

Year 11 will sit Mock GCSE Examinations in every subject between the 1st and the 12th of December. With 7 weeks to go it is vital that Year 11 pupils begin their revision, using subject specific revision resources (available in school) in addition to their own learning. The Mock GCSE results are very important in giving an accurate indication of how pupils will perform in their GCSE's in May.

The College open days / evenings have begun and run throughout October and November. Please check your Year 11 Pupil Bulletin (also available on St Damian's website) for the dates of Post-16 College open days and Year 11 Subject information.

I have met many parents of Year 11 to discuss progress and the forthcoming GCSE examinations, if you would like to make an appointment to see me please contact Mrs J Biggs 0161 331 4752 to arrange a mutually convenient time.

## Open Evening

The school held its Open Evening on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and we were delighted to welcome all those who attended. This year we attracted a record crowd. Visitors were thrilled with everything from hydrogen bombs in the science department to the Year 10 drama group presenting their first scripted exam piece, an old fashioned melodrama, 'Foiled Again'. The audience were encouraged to boo, hiss, clap, cheer and laugh at the wicked villain. Visitors were able to have drinks and snacks served by the pupil chaplains in the Fair Trade Café where all proceeds will go to Cafod and we are delighted to report that the sale of keyrings and little trinkets raised £68 for Francis House. By the end of the evening many left with hats made in the Art department and the last crumbs of cupcakes made with Mrs Brophy in technology.

Parents are also invited to visit the school during the 'working day' to get a true feel of the calm and purposeful environment that is St Damian's. Visits are on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October in the morning and can be arranged at an alternative time if this is inconvenient. This applies to parents of pupils in the school as well !

## Primary School Visits

I am currently in the process of visiting our feeder primary schools to meet with parents and pupils. Parents have to face the very difficult decision of choosing a suitable secondary school for their child and the purpose of these meetings is to answer any questions and alleviate any concerns you may have.



**Behaviour, Uniform and Hair** - The behaviour at St Damian's by the vast majority of pupils is outstanding and I'm very proud of them. All pupils know and accept the high standards of behaviour, uniform and hair. Thank you to all the parents who support the school in ensuring these high standards are maintained. May I remind parents that extremely short hair, 'lines in hair' or unnatural looking hair is not permitted. This has not changed in the past two years.

Please ensure your child is in the correct uniform each day, any student not in full school uniform will be referred to their head of year and could be placed in seclusion.

**Attendance and Punctuality**

We would like to thank you all for your continued support in ensuring your child attends school regularly and punctually.

Our whole school attendance target for 2014/2015 is 97% and 3 weeks out of 4 this half term we have achieved 97%. We hope this continues. Please ensure that your child arrives to school by 8.50am as the school gates close at 9.00am, after that time your child will be recorded as late.

**Days off school add up to lost learning**

175 Non School Days a Year 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments					
190 School Days in each year	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence A term missed	35 days absence	47 days absence
190 days for your child's education	180 Days of Education	171 Days of Education	161 Days of Education	152 Days of Education	143 Days of Education
100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
<b>Good</b>		<b>Worrying</b>		<b>Serious Concern</b>	
Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.		Less Chance of success. Makes it harder to make progress.		Not fair on your child. Court action!	

**Expressive Arts' Alton Towers Reward Trip**

After delivering many memorable performances during Celebration Evening, the Expressive Arts' participants were rewarded with a September trip to Alton Towers. Seventy pupils were fortunate enough to go on the trip to experience the face achingly wonderful 'Smiler'. The weather was great and everyone had a great time.



We are very proud of these talented pupils and the creative contribution they have made to the life of the College. Furthermore, they conducted themselves in an exemplary manner and were a true credit to the quality of pupils that we have at St. Damian's

**'Matilda' at St Stephen's**

Following on from the last term's successful performance of 'Matilda' for our primary pupils here at St Damian's, we were invited by St Stephen's RC Primary School to perform in their bijou hall for their pupils as part of their Literacy Week.

The performers were members of the Year 11 Performing Arts group. We arrived at St Stephen's to find that the stage was smaller than we were used too, but the group quickly adapted to these new and unexpected constraints.

It was utterly delightful to watch the enthralled expression of the cross-legged throng as they thrilled to the child friendly humour that is Roald Dahl's. The Year 11 P.A. group responded to their audience and continued to act and sing in a most captivating manner. This performance served not only as an examination piece for the performers, not only as



a wonderful way to foster excellent links with our wider community, but as a communal, blissful memory that has benefitted all those involved.

### **News from RE**



The Liturgy Group have been spearheading both the liturgical life of the school and its charity work. The number of students participating in this group is now over 30! The first focus this year has been on making our students aware of the plight of Christians around the world who are being persecuted. This follows on from last year's successful campaign about Christians in Somalia. This time the focus has shifted to Iraq. Although a difficult subject, members of the group have been moving forward by attending assemblies, asking students to write letters and protest, creating posters and generally increasing awareness. They have also attended assemblies to explain the importance of the St. Damian's Mission Statement and showing how this ties us all together.

Focus is building up to the "Wear a Hat/Wig" day for the charity Clic Sargent. This is a child cancer charity, a subject which is close to many people's hearts, both staff and students alike. Liturgy students will be writing a letter to parents informing them of the importance of this day and saying a little bit more about the charity. Some students have already held a coffee morning, selling cakes, with the proceeds going to this charity.

The Liturgy group were also on show at the recent Open Evening, where they were assisting parents and students to find out a little bit about the RE department, to create arts and craft and to sample some of the different religious and cultural foods on offer – they also ran the Fair Trade Café in the Piazza! Fabulous again!

44 Year 11 pupils and four staff will be heading off for another trip to the Briars, Crich for a weekend of relaxation and reflection. Please ensure the final payment of £80 is made and medical forms are returned! It is set to be a fantastic weekend – thanks in advance to the staff running the trip!

Share Day 2014 was the usual success raising £3,500 – another record! The form that raised the most money was 7B raising a massive £347! All monies have been distributed to our charities for last year: Caritas, Reuben's Retreat, Teenage Cancer Trust, Ronald McDonald House at RMCH and Macmillan Cancer Support.



### **Nativity**

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December we will be celebrating with our annual Carol Service. This is a fantastic opportunity to get in the 'spirit' of the season and we hope you can join us for a traditional nativity and our favorite carols led by our pupils and the pupils from our feeder primary schools. Further information will follow.

### **Gardening Club**

Our Gardening Club has started up again this term and we have had a bumper crop of lovely, juicy tomatoes and other delicious veg! As always the gang have been extremely energetic and raring to go. Our 'Pumpkin' (only 1 grew) is coming on a treat; hopefully it will be ready in time for Halloween! There is still time to bring in any Morrison's Vouchers as these are running until the end of October and any donations, as always, are gratefully received. Mrs Kelly our fish are looking lovely! Here's to a warm winter so our winter veg may thrive!



### **Dates for the Diary**

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October – Year 11 Retreat to The Briars, Crich

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October – Year 7 Welcome Mass

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October - Certificate Evening

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October – Break up for Half Term

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November – Students return to school