



In all things faithful

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Headteacher

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Dear Parent/Carer,

General Update

A warm welcome to the last weekly newsletter of this half term. It has been a strange term for both pupils and staff. To see an over-subscribed, high energy, happy school, bustling with children and staff empty, really is strange and is a reminder of how surreal everywhere is at the minute. It really is sad. I am so sorry that your children are missing out on being **in** school. Although, parental views on our remote learning are largely positive [further details below], it is a poor substitute for being in school where they can socialise and feel safe, as well as engage in quality face to face teaching. I am praying that the pupils can return as quickly as possible next half term and I eagerly await their return. Over the half term break I ask that you minimise screen time for your children. I also have two children who are on their screens all day accessing remote learning and the half term break is a time to put screens down and do something else, get some fresh air, do some exercise, read a book.

Ash Wednesday and Lent

Over the half term holidays we encourage pupils to remember that Wednesday 17th February is Ash Wednesday. Like most events at the moment, we may observe Ash Wednesday a little differently this year but encourage pupils to take part via the broadcast from their local parish or via the Catholic Ashton Facebook link. Giving something up for Lent - The Lent Charity appeal this year, like Christmas, will be The St Damian's Food Bank. Many of us try to give up something we enjoy at Lent so the money we save, not buying that bottle of wine or extra chocolate bar, could be donated to the food bank. As a community at Christmas, we were overwhelmed by the support for this great cause, helping people within our own community during these challenging times. Please see SIMS pay if you would like to contribute.

- [Lent Liturgy](#). Our Year 7 pupils are going to be sharing our Lent Liturgy message from CAFOD explaining the meaning and importance of Lent to young people. It also links with this year's CAFOD campaign – 'Walk for Water'. For more details see this website. [Walk for Water | CAFOD](#)
- [Lent Form Times](#). During form time in Lent pupils and staff will use the 2021 online Lent calendar made by CAFOD. It offers the chance to reflect and pray on the meaning of Lent in the modern world. A version for families at home can be found at <https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Lent-Calendar>.
- [The Stations of the Cross](#). In form time, the pupils will reflect on The Stations of the Cross. Mrs Allmand has created a reflection that has been shared with form teachers to help us to prepare spiritually during this holy time.

Safeguarding Update

Although Children's Mental Health was last week, it does not mean that St Damian's will not continue to support our children and Mental Health will always be high on our agenda. We will constantly promote positive well-being of our children. A mantra at St Damian's is '*happy children achieve their potential*'. In the news, there is constant reference to the impact of the global pandemic on children's well-being. Sadly, it is a fact that many families are experiencing challenging times and some children are being exposed to unusual behaviours in the home. Please be aware that Tameside Council do have dedicated support for families: some websites are listed below for your perusal. I urge families to seek external support if required, so that we protect our pupils and give them best start in life.

St. Damian's RC Science College



Parenting advice <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/Parenting-Helpline-Poster.jpg>

Domestic violence <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/domesticabuse>

Drug and alcohol support <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/substanceproblems>

Having said all that, as a Community, we must continue to stay positive and optimistic about the future. St Damian's is, and always will be, a place of **hope** for our children and, indeed, our staff. We must promote the positives and develop resilience so that when this terrible pandemic is 'over' we can continue to grow and flourish as before.

On that note, parents can ask for guidance and help from Tameside. They will be provided with the opportunity to speak about issues that are worrying them at home such as finances, family or health. Use this website as a starting point;

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/Early-Help/Parent-Carer/The-early-help-assessment>

Another example of a member of our community going the extra mile...

I was contacted by Pure Innovations who promote independent lifestyles for people with a disability and disadvantaged groups. They asked me to thank Jasmin Goodall, a Year 9 pupil who has been volunteering at some of their events. Jasmin designed some posters about Covid and the precautions we need to take. The posters have really captured everyone's attention; they are eye catching, colourful and highlight key messages. Well done Jasmin! You have obviously made a tremendous impression on all at Pure Innovations.

Manchester Science Festival [Fri 12th Feb – Sun 21 Feb 2021]

The start of half term marks the start of the Manchester Science Festival 2021 with the opportunity for pupils to enjoy a programme of digital events. These include free online talks, exhibitions, debates and activities that explore our changing climate and ideas for a better world. Pupils will be able to hear from scientists and experts at the forefront of climate change discussing issues such as Climate Superheroes, Our Hydrogen Future, The Future of Fuel, the Ethical & Climate Costs of Food, the Road to Carbon Zero. Please click on the link to find more: <https://www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk/manchester-science-festival/whats-on>

I would encourage your child to participate. These activities are a great opportunity for your child to engage with leading scientists and to be well informed about future scientific developments. Additionally, keeping mentally active, helps maintain a positive mindset and is good for your child's well-being.

Remote Learning Survey and Parental Feedback

A massive thanks to the parents who took time to complete the survey on Remote Learning. I will put up a more detailed analysis of the responses for your perusal but for the purpose of this letter I will share responses on 2 key questions below; Firstly, 'how happy are you with the online learning' and secondly, 'was the right amount of work set'. I have put the responses in tabular format as it is easier to read.

- How happy are you with the online learning currently being delivered ? (1 lowest, 5 highest)

Year Group	Number of Parental Responses	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
7	55	37	12	5	1	
8	35	23	9	1	1	1
9	47	28	15	4		
10	42	25	10	7		
11	35	23	19	2		

- The responses below on the 'amount' of work set

My child is expected to complete too much work	16	9%
I am happy with the amount of work that my child is set	153	85%
My child is not being set enough work	7	4%

Some Positive Quotes

"I think the school is doing excellent. My daughter is on teams doing her work daily and I couldn't ask for more given the circumstances" [Year 11 parent]

"I think you as a whole have been given a huge task that nobody would ever have foreseen when you trained as teachers and anything you are doing is immense" [Year 10 parent]

"My daughter has been fully engaged with all her on line lessons and they are very well organised and presented professionally by all members of staff" [Year 9 parent]

"We like the fact that, they don't miss out in their education in this pandemic situation, they have dedicated teachers and school always check on them time to time" [Year 8 parent]

"I think the school has been fantastic in dealing with the current situation, from what xxx has told me the lessons are all planned, there's a lot a participation from all her class, the lessons are fun and inclusive, she is able to ask questions when she doesn't get something, can virtually put her hand up. Overall great" [Year 7 parent]

Some parental comments where there was a dis-satisfaction with our remote learning

"We have had to borrow a computer as ours has broken. If we hadn't he wouldn't be able to access any learning and in this year it would be detrimental to his future" [Year 11 parent]

"On occasion too much work has been set for the allocated time resulting in work having to be completed after school hours" [Year 10 parent]

"My child is not being set enough work" [Year 9 parent]

"I find XXXX is struggling she has no motivation and says nothing makes sense" [Year 8 parent]

"I don't think communication and the teaching is up to any standard that it should be at!" [Year 7 parent]

As you can see from the figures above, the responses from parents were overwhelmingly positive. Having read every comment from over 180 parents, it is obvious that you appreciate the work and dedication of the teachers. I accept that it is not an ideal situation but after a long hard half-term, under extremely challenging circumstances, I am delighted to read the plethora of positive parental responses. Frankly, I could have filled pages upon pages of genuinely positive and warm comments from parents. They were nice to read, and I will share these with all the staff. Parental support and feedback is vital and as Headteacher, I never take it for granted. It was obvious that parents wanted to convey their appreciation to the staff. Thanks

Period 5 live lessons after half-term

As I write these words, there has been no definitive date when pupils will return to schools or if it is a *phased* return. However, as a forward-thinking school, we need to start planning for a return of the pupils, in some form, from 8th March. Although not confirmed, we still need to plan. A change that the pupils will notice is that each day, some of the Period 5 lessons will **not be live** and teachers will be in school planning for their return. However, work will be set for the pupils. The table below shows the day where there will not be live lessons. For example, there will be no live English lessons P5 on a Wednesday.

Day	Subjects
Monday	RE, Technology, PE, Expressive Arts
Tuesday	Maths, MFL,
Wednesday	English
Thursday	Science, History & Geography
Friday	All lessons will be live

Year 11 Update

Most, though not all, Year 11 pupils have been working really hard to submit work as requested from their teachers, demonstrating a commitment to their learning. However, it is essential that this is their **own work**. On some occasions, it is obvious that some work has simply been 'googled'. This is not conducive to learning, either in the short or longer term. If your child is unable to complete a task they are encouraged to use the 'chat' facility and ask their teacher for support.

Year 10 and Prefects

When the Year 10 pupils return to school in the near future they will be asked to consider applying to become a prefect. This is a great honour for them as prefects are official ambassadors for the school community. Over time, prefects build confidence, develop team work and leadership skills. These are great skills to have for their futures. Thus far, engagement with remote learning has been really positive and many pupils have excelled. This level of independence and maturity will strongly support their Prefect applications when they return to school. However, some Year 10 pupils are not engaging with remote learning and this will have a negative impact if they are considering applying for a prefect role. And, more importantly, lack of engagement will have massive consequences on their learning, and ultimately their futures.

Year 9 Options

The Yr9 Options programme will start immediately after half term. An important letter from Mrs Henshaw has been put on the web-site giving details of the Yr9 Options presentation, the publication of the Options information booklet and the deadline for the return of Options choices. It is important that pupils take part in all planned events so that decisions on which GCSE and BTEC courses to take are well informed. In the meantime, pupils should log into the Careers programme 'Xello' <https://gmacs.co.uk/schools> and complete the activities set.

Year 8

This week was Year 8 Parents' Evening. Mr Fay has informed me that there has been a high up take in phone calls and the process has been overwhelmingly supportive and thankful for the time taken to share how the pupils are progressing. Can I take this opportunity to ask you to pass on our thanks to the Year 8 pupils for their mature, determined and resilient approach to remote learning. It has not always been easy, but the vast majority of pupils have made a seamless transition from learning in the classroom to learning behind a screen. Your children should be commended.

Year 7 Formal Assessments Week

This will take place w/c 15th March 2021. Pupils will be assessed on knowledge, skills and understanding from the Autumn and Spring terms, including the curriculum covered during remote learning. This is an excellent opportunity for pupils to consolidate their learning as well as allowing teachers to assess pupil learning. As I write, the plan for pupils' return to school has not yet been confirmed. If Year 7 pupils are in school the formal assessments will take place in classrooms but if at home, assessments will be set via Teams. Access arrangements will be put in place for pupils with special educational needs. After half-term,

a timetable for the week will be published and pupils will be given guidance on how to plan a revision timetable and how to revise effectively.

Chris McGarry

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that Mr Chris McGarry has passed away. Mr McGarry was on the Friends of St Damian's for a considerable number of years and he made a fantastic contribution to fund raising for the St Damian's community. He also served as a Governor and his three children, Tom, Emma and Jack were all students at St Damian's. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him and will you please join me in sending our deepest condolences to Chris's family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this very sad time.

Finally,

This half-term has shown that the Community of St Damian's continues to be strong. I am so proud that all major stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents and governors are united and determined to come out stronger Post-Covid, ensuring that we continue to be a high achieving caring Catholic community where pupils and staff thrive.

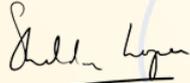
I will leave you with an email I received on Wednesday. This was sent through TEAMS to a teacher who forwarded it on to me. This was from a young girl in Year 7 ...

"St Damian's is the best school anyone could go to. Teachers here support me and set me on the right path. Staff are just lovely at the school".

It really made my day. 😊

This half-term take care and God bless!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher