

LOVE-RESPECT-FLOURISH

St. Mary's Catholic School Newsletter

Issue 5 - 6th October 2023



Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (Oct 4th)

Mr Johnston - Headteacher

This week we celebrated the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on Wednesday the 4th October.

At St. Mary's, and across our family of Trust schools, we used this as the opportunity to launch this year's St. Francis Award, which has four levels, representing all the students from Early Years through to Year 13. I spoke to Mr. Malone yesterday (Headteacher at St. Joseph's, Hertford) and he recalled introducing the St Francis Award to his Year 1s and Year 2s who were in awe that students aged 17 and 18 were completing the same award, based on the same values as they were!

It really is a lovely initiative and I look forward to recognising all the work towards these awards each half-term this year.

The Franciscan values of 'Caring for Creation', 'Compassion', 'Community' and 'Peacemaker' dovetail perfectly with our school values which (as a school dedicated to St. Mary within the St. Francis Trust) reflect the charisms of both of our patron saints. More details on the St. Francis Award are within these Headlines (pages 2-3) and I would encourage all students to participate!





St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust

The very best Catholic education now, and for generations to come







Chaplaincy teams from across the Trust schools joined together at St. Joseph's (BS) last week for Liturgy, and to prepare for the St. Francis Feast Day on 4th October. Thanks to Mr. Wright, Chaplain.



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 10th October 2023
Inter House Cross Country

Tuesday 10th October 2023
Year 13 Geography Fieldwork Trip

Thursday 12th October 2023
Harry Potter Book Day Event (after school)

Thursday 12th October 2023
Year 7 Welcome Evening Mass

**Monday-Friday
16th-20th October 2023**
Year 11 & Year 13 Mock Exams all week

**Wednesday-Friday
18th-20th October 2023**
Oxbridge Admission Tests

Franciscan Values



We celebrated St Francis of Assisi
Feast Day, on 4th October 2023

As patron saint of our School Trust we share
the values of St Francis of Assisi .

Chaplaincy Prayer

Lord, God our Father,
Thank you for our school community.
Just as you inspired St Francis of Assisi,
inspire us to **work together**
to spread your Word within our school
and across our family of schools.
Help us to create a community
where **love** shines through us.

Help us to embrace **God's creation**
by showing others how to love and care for
our environment as Stewards of the Earth.

Let the world grow as we follow Your path
Let us bring **peace and care** to one another
and listen to God's Good News.

May you guide us and our academy
today and always,
on a path of a shared mission.

St Francis pray for us.

Community

We build supportive and encouraging communities by celebrating achievements, recognising individuality, and keeping our Chaplaincy teams at the heart of school life.



Compassion

We show the love of Christ by working for the Common Good through supporting charities locally, within our diocese and internationally, both practically and through fundraising initiatives.



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Creation

As caretakers of God's creation, we recognise it is our responsibility to care for the world around us. We model behaviour that inspires students to take this from the classroom and into their lives.



Peacemakers

We show the love of God by offering forgiveness, supporting each other through mentoring and anti-bullying schemes, and give opportunities to reflect prayerfully on resilience, positive mental health and wellbeing.





Franciscan Values Award

THE KEY FRANCISCAN VALUES

Primary –each school to add own school badge in same place as SMCS badge



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

- Respect for individual dignity – In our interactions with others, our core values, our inclusive school, our school behaviour policy.
- Hospitality, courtesy, kindness – In our lunches together, our class cohesiveness, our school ethos and house saints system to foster.
- Friendship, openness – On our retreats, our class prayer opportunities, our wellbeing scheme, our Buddies to support children.
- Fostering loving relationship – Through our PSHCE curriculum, our Catholic life of the school and our call to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

SHARING COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

- Serving, caring for the poor and oppressed – Through our work for the Common Good, CAFOD family fast day, Catholic Children Society, Advent and Lent charity drives
- Concern for social justice issues – PSHCE curriculum learning, our Assembly focus, our Chaplaincy Team.
- Taking responsible social action – Our Eco-Council; Taking care of our environment.
- Offering unselfish service, altruism – Our wellbeing work, our work for the Common Good, our School Awards.

REVERENCE FOR CREATION

- Respect for all creatures – Our PSHCE through our curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities.
- Fostering a simple lifestyle, stewardship – Our RE and PSHCE curriculum, Our Eco council/ initiatives, our paper free school, CAFOD Family Fast Day.
- Human dignity and empowerment of people – Our school Awards, Feast Day, Guest Speakers, PSHCE curriculum, School Council.
- Concern for environmental issues – PSHCE, common good, our School Awards, our Eco friendly council/initiatives.

PEACEMAKING

- Healing and reconciliation – Our Liturgical calendar, Chaplaincy Lead reflections, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Year group and whole school liturgy.
- Conflict resolution – Rewards and Sanctions, restorative justice programme, peer mentoring, wellbeing scheme.
- Forgiveness – Rewards and Sanctions, RE curriculum, restorative justice programme, peer mentoring, wellbeing scheme, Pastoral support programmes.
- Care and understanding, to eliminate fears – Wellbeing Scheme, PSHCE curriculum, safeguarding education, safe space in schools for vulnerable children.

Franciscan Values Award

EYFS & KS1 – Infant Award - KINDNESS

Creating a caring community
To be a kind and loving friend to all.
Sharing compassion for others
To support those in need in my school and in the world.
Reverence for creation
To take care of God's creations
Peace making
To help and care for others.

KS2 – Junior Award - GRATITUDE

Creating a caring community
To create opportunities for all to respect, love and show kindness to all. To pray,
Sharing compassion for others
To pray and to take responsible action to support those in need within my school, home, Parish and my understanding of charity.
Reverence for creation
To understand with compassion and share concern while protecting God's creation.
Peace making
To support reconciliation and forgiveness in my own life and others.

KS3 – Intermediate - ZEST

Creating a caring community
To be inclusive to all members of the school community
Sharing compassion for others
To support those in need by contributing to the common good.
Reverence for creation
To understand and show commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.
Peace making
To lead by example in my behaviour and contribution.

KS4- KS5 – Senior- LEADERSHIP

Creating a caring community
To be a student ambassador for Anti- Bullying, a peer mentor or a member of the student council
Sharing compassion for others
To take an active leadership in leading the school community for the common good by acts of charity
Reverence for creation
To lead by example on speaking in Assemblies, Liturgies and being a testament to the Gospel Values
Peace making
To lead by contributing to the school's prayer life, I lead by being an ambassador of the Trust by my words and my actions.

Inter House Cross Country



Inter House Cross Country

Tuesday 10th October 2023

Year 7 to Year 11

The Inter House Cross Country Competition takes place on Tuesday 10th October 2023.

Please note: the timings of the Year Groups has been changed—see list below:

Period 1 – Year 9

Period 2 – Year 7

Period 3 – Year 11

Period 4 – Year 8

Period 5 – Year 10

Pupils are expected to run as every student's score contributes to their forms performance.
Students will all complete a 3km course for all year groups.

Kit

Pupils are to come to school in their PE kit, after the event they then have the option to change into their uniform if they wish.

Boys: Reversible rugby top, blue shorts, PE socks and football boots.

Girls: Skort or shorts, PE socks, house top and football boots.

If you are listed as needing an inhaler or an EPIPEN you must carry them with you during the race.



Black History Month



October is Black History Month, and our library displays highlight relevant reads.

Students can choose from **life stories**, such as those of Nelson Mandela, Matthew Henson or Olaudah Equiano, **history overviews** ('Black and British', 'Black History Matters', 'Musical Truth') or **historical fiction** ('How High the Moon', 'Two Sisters: A Story of Freedom').

These are great books to explore at any time of year, please encourage students to come and take a look.



Careers Carousel 2023

Student Report:

Veronica D, Amelia L
Year 12
Careers Ambassadors

We're delighted to share a recap of the recent School Careers Carousel, which happened today on 5th October, an event that left our students inspired and motivated to pursue their future careers



Diverse Career Exploration:

Our students had the chance to explore a wide range of careers, from healthcare and technology to arts and engineering. Each booth offered valuable insights into the skills and qualifications required for success in various professions such as Accountancy, the RAF, Royal Navy, Police, Hospitality, Solicitors and many more.

Networking Success:

Our students were proactive in building connections with professionals from different fields. These new contacts will undoubtedly prove invaluable as they continue their academic and career journeys.

Expert Career Guidance:

Our dedicated guest speakers were on hand to offer guidance and answer questions about educational paths, college choices, and future career planning. Many students left with a clearer understanding of their next steps or even inspired to join paths they had never considered before. Our speakers also shared their personal career journeys, providing students with real-world insights and motivation to chase their dreams.

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mrs. Knight (our Careers Counsellor) and the professionals, volunteers, and speakers who made the School Careers Carousel a resounding success. Together, we've helped our students take a step closer to their dream careers in St Mary's.



Careers Carousel 2023



Harry Potter Book Day ~ After School Event



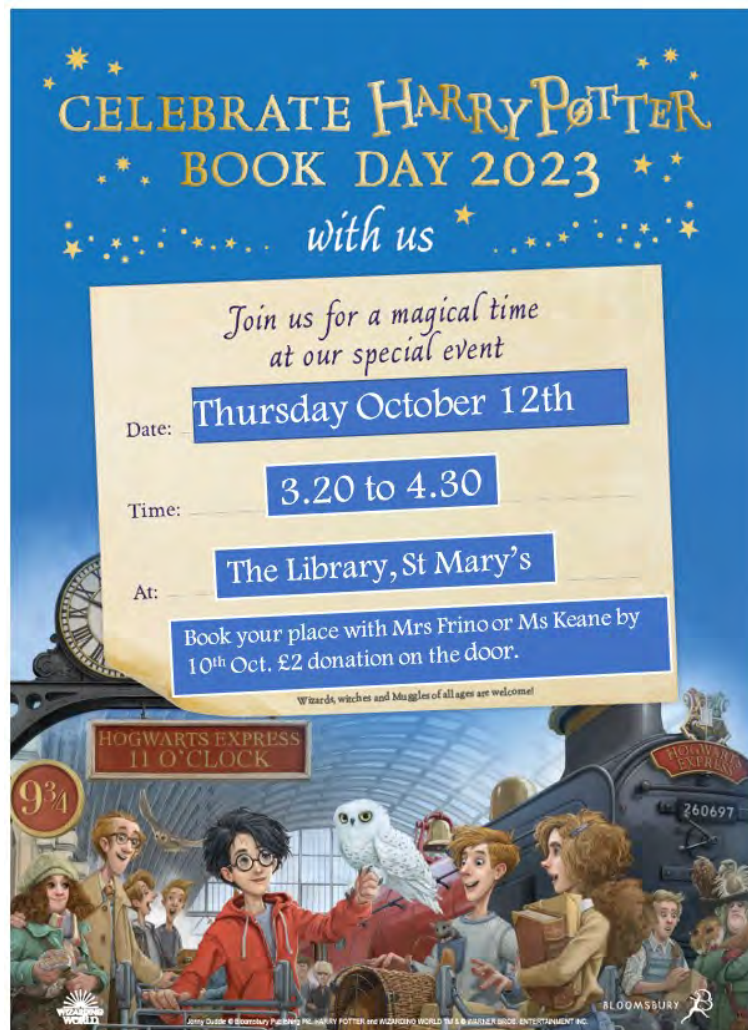
Harry Potter Book Day takes place on Thursday 12th October.

To join our special event after school, students should **sign up with Ms Keane or Mrs Frino**.

There will be a £2 contribution on the door for refreshments and prizes.

Students can dress as a character from Harry Potter if they would like (for the after-school event only, school uniform must be worn during the day).

It promises to be a magical event (only come if you can *solemnly swear you are up to no good!*).



Maths Bake Off Competition Winners!

These are the names of the students who won the Maths Bake Off Competition.

The winners will get their prizes in school assembly.
The names are as follows:



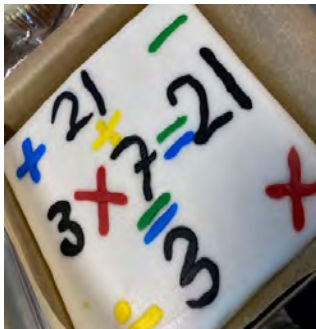
Year 7

Wiktor R
Edem D
Harrison W
Lucas B
Rianne M
Refus L
Borys W



Year 8

Grace J
Charlotte P



Introducing some of our new staff...

Welcome our new staff!

Mrs Hayden **Assistant Headteacher/Teacher of PE**

My name is Natasha Hayden and I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) here at St Mary's Catholic school. I have been a Physical Education teacher for 19 years and for the past decade I have been a Head of Year at a school in Harpenden. I am filled with immense excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to take on this new role that aligns with my passion for supporting children's wellbeing and growth.

I am proud of my skills in pointing students to appropriate interventions, ensuring that the young people I work with are able to adopt a positive mindset and flourish at school. This is achieved through their development of a range of personalised strategies that will provide them with the skills to manage difficult situations both at school and beyond.

As I introduce various interventions to our school community, building upon the staff's collective knowledge and expertise, it is my hope this will provide more extensive support to the students at SMCS and reduce the stigma of mental health issues.

Personally, I have been married for 11 wonderful years and have an 8-year-old daughter. I enjoy travelling and attending the theatre as well as keeping active.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first month at SMCS. I look forward to working closely with you all in the upcoming months and years. Together we can ensure that SMCS continues to provide a safe and enriching environment for all students to flourish academically, emotionally and socially.

"Always remember you matter, you're important and you are loved and you bring to this world things no one else can"



Mrs Marsh **Teacher of Science**



I have recently joined St. Mary's as a science teacher having thoroughly enjoyed completing my teacher training here.

Prior to my teaching career I was a specialist clinical dietitian working in many different NHS hospital settings in areas from intensive care feeding, to genetic conditions, transplant medicine and surgery. I worked predominantly with teenage patients and always thoroughly enjoyed working with this cohort – I am really enjoying now teaching students at St. Mary's and aim to bring my previous career into my science lessons to hopefully bring the subject to life.

Whilst I teach all of the science subjects in KS3 and KS4, my passion is biology and in particular human medical biology and ecology. I really feel that science has such an impact on everyone's life and I hope to make the subject as accessible to all, through getting to know my students and encouraging them to challenge me whilst supporting them with the curriculum.

In my spare time I love to cycle, rock climb and generally be outside in nature with my two young daughters and husband. I also love my garden, growing vegetables and our five chickens.

I have really enjoyed my first few weeks of the term, getting to know my classes and seeing some very friendly familiar faces. I have been made to feel so welcome and am really excited for the year ahead.

Music Clubs at St Mary's



Orchestra



Orchestra has restarted and the rehearsals are on Wednesdays after school until 4.00pm in M1.

All those who play instruments should attend, including those who play piano or drums.

Please can all previous members return, you are needed.

If you are a new pupil or have not been before, please see Mr Chapman or Mrs Cox
or just turn up. You are welcome!



Gospel Choir

Gospel Choir rehearses on Tuesday mornings from 8.35am in M1 during registration time.

It is a great way to start the day!
Feel free to come and try it out.

This was a very successful group last year and all previous singers are invited back. New pupils are very welcome too.

Just turn up on Tuesday morning to be registered.





Reporting Absence



C6a ST MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL REPORTING AN ABSENCE AND MAKING AN REQUEST

At St Mary's we believe in the fundamental right of the student to be educated to his or her full potential and to participate fully in the life of the school community. High attendance rates have been highlighted as a significant factor in maintaining the quality of education provided in schools and parents must work with the school to ensure their child attends every day the school is open.

Absence:

If you need to report your child absent please do notify the school using the Absence telephone line 01279 654 901 or by contacting the following email address: Attendance@stmarys.net before 9:00am

When reporting your child absent please state:

- Your name
- Your child's name and year group
- The reason for absence (this must be specific and not just state 'illness')
- A contact number for the person leaving the message

Requesting leave of absence:

Please book any medical appointments around the school day where possible. Parents must notify the school in advance of any pre-arranged absence or treatment. **This should be within 48 hours of the appointment made and a copy of the appointment record should also be shared with the school when requesting absence so that this can be authorised.** We ask parents to only request leave of absence for such appointments in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance by emailing info@stmarys.net

Without this evidence the absence will be unauthorised.

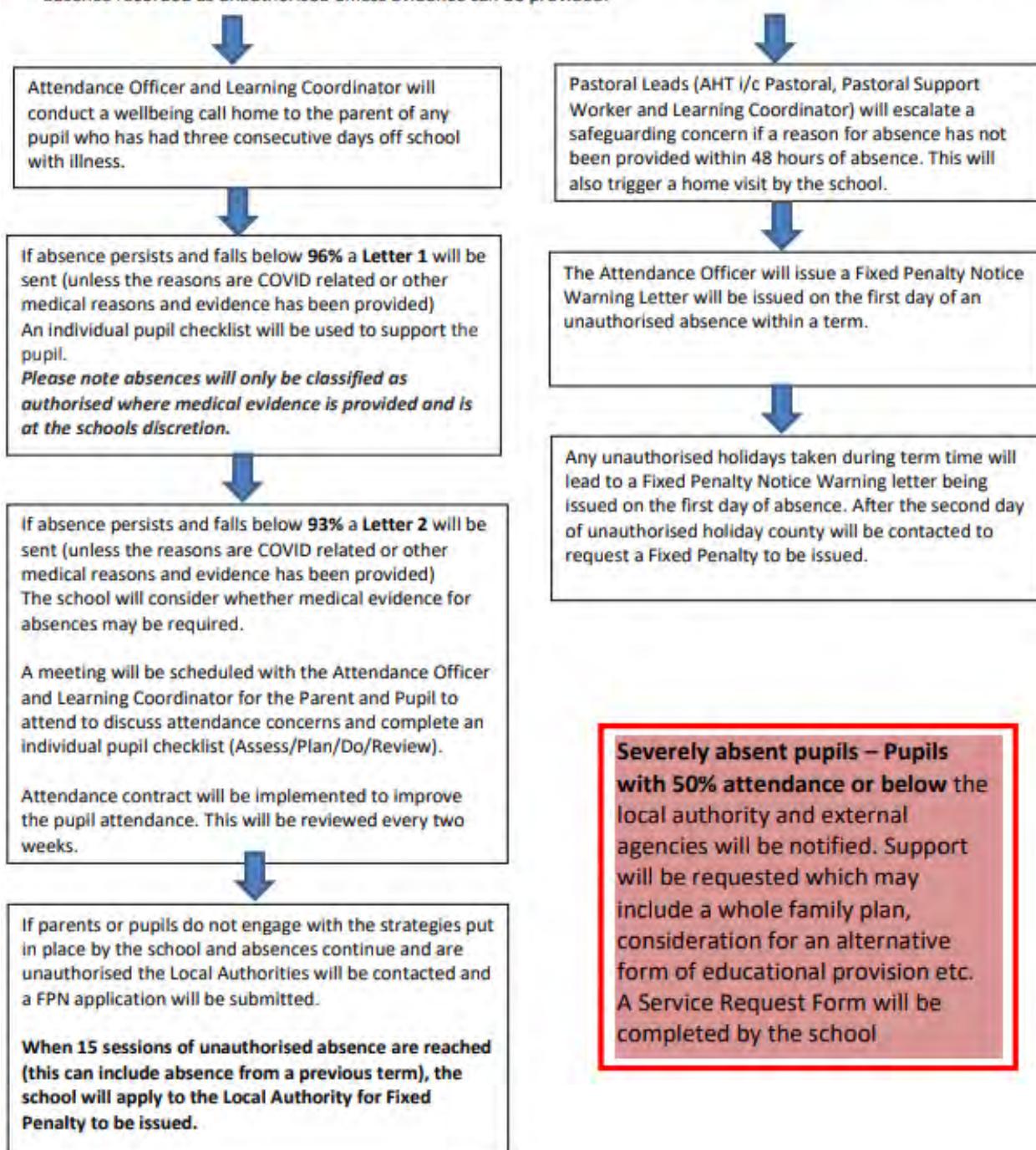
Applications for 'Leave of Absence' for other circumstances, e.g. Attending a family members graduation, attending a funeral, Dance and Music examinations etc. must be applied for in advance by requesting a 'Leave of Absence' form from HeadsPA@stmarys.net This application should be returned with supporting letter and evidence if required to the HeadsPA for authorisation.

Absence and Attendance Flow Chart

St Mary's Catholic School Notification of Absence and School Attendance Flow Chart

Daily monitoring of attendance led by the Attendance Officer and Learning Coordinator will involve checking for regular absence patterns and sending home truancy alert for pupils who are absent and no reason has been provided.

PUNCTUALITY: Students who arrive after the registers have closed at 8:55am and not before 9:30am will have their absence recorded as unauthorised unless evidence can be provided.





Penny Box Scheme at St Mary's

*Do you need
sanitary
items?*

Ask to see Miss Penny or come to
the Student Hub and ask for the
Penny Box.



Here at St Mary's we have our new 'Penny Box' scheme.

On the back of the toilet doors in the girls toilets there is a sign for students to alert them what to do in the event they require sanitary products.

Students can come to the Student Hub and get what they need without embarrassment.

Students can ask to see "Miss Penny" or ask for the "Penny Box".

The 'Penny Box' scheme provides free access to sanitary wear (tampons and pads) when it is required.

The sanitary products are available for girls to take home if they want to come and get a pack. We also have sanitary pad 'starter packs' for Year 7 and tampon 'starter packs' for Year 9+, as well as standard packs of pads.



**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH
2023**

Lord God

We thank you for the strength and wisdom that this month provides.
We lift up and thank you for the Black Leaders who have shaped our history.

We thank you for the opportunity to learn and reflect
particularly at this time, here and now.
We pray that the learning happening in schools, homes
and workplaces will be meaningful.
Allow us to be inspired by people who have become figures for change
and examples of courage.

We pray for open hearts and minds,
And spirits willing to learn and be transformed by you.

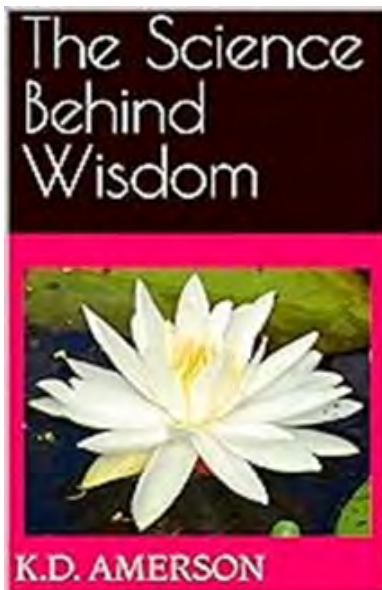
May this month be a time of curiosity and sharing,
Conversations and celebrations,
Challenge and encouragement.

Heavenly Father, help us to look past ourselves,
and consider the lives of others.

Let us look closer, and think bigger,
In Jesus' name, Amen



Student Critics Required!



My friend has recently written this book and would be delighted if you could review it.

It is a small book with only 55 pages. Her blog says:

'An accessible and logical pathway to improved cognitive function and inner peace that can easily be applied in every day life, The Science Behind Wisdom examines how mindfulness practices and breathing techniques enhance brain processing speed and our ability to problem solve. Focusing on modern psychology, neurology and the science underpinning ancient wisdom this pocket guide provides a practical, succinct, and easy to follow method that will help the reader find peace and improve well-being, whilst increasing their cognitive abilities.'

After reading it, there is a short questionnaire to complete and you will receive a special treat from me.

If you are interested, please call up to K8 for a copy of the book.

Ms Barnes
RE Department



We are hiring!



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Click Here For Latest Vacancy Information

<https://www.stmarys.net/vacancies>