



25th October 2024

Fortnightly Bulletin

St Mary's Catholic School



Dates for the Diary

Autumn Half Term 2 Return

Monday 4th November 2024
8.40 am

6th Form Open Evening

14th November 2024

6.30 - 8.30pm

Presentation Evening

14th November 2024

7-8pm

INSET DAY

22nd November 2024



Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to thank all of our Y7 parents who supported their children in being able to attend our Y7 Dedication Mass with Bishop Paul MacAleenan last Thursday evening. The feedback from visiting families was phenomenal. Comments about the prayerful celebration of Mass and the wonderful music and the hymns that were sung so well by our Y7 choir make me very proud to be the Headteacher of St Mary's. As parents, your commitment to our school community says more than I can articulate. We are blessed to have such wonderful families. Photographs from the evening are in this newsletter along with a whole host of other important events we have celebrated over the last two weeks.

This edition has articles from a wealth of different events such as the Meninadanca Charity Workshop who visited us from Brazil, our sporting events and fixtures, in addition to the photos from

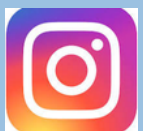
Cultural Heritage day yesterday celebrating the 60+ countries our school population represent. It was a colourful and wonderful day of celebrating the diversity our rich tapestry of a Catholic school brings.

As a reminder: If you are applying for a Y7 place for next year, September 2025, please remember you must submit all the necessary documentation and evidence before 31st October. Do remember that the school is completely closed over the half term break from Monday 28th October 2024 until Friday 1st November 2024, which means that you will be unable to hand-deliver your applications to obtain a receipt during this period. However, applications sent to the school via the online and postal service will not be affected by the school half-term closure.

I wish everyone a restful, relaxing and enjoyable October half term break and look forward to seeing all our students back in school, ready to learn, on Monday, 4 November 2024, at 8:40 am.

God Bless,

Miss Deirdre McHugh



Inter House Cross Country Competition.

All students from years 7-11 participated in the Inter House Cross Country Competition.

The students represented their House with real effort and determination. It was fantastic to observe the students participating in the 'St Mary's Way', with many students supporting their peers with lots of encouragement and excitement.

Students had the option of running either the 3 or 4 kilometre course, depending on their current fitness levels. It was amazing to witness so many students opt to run the 4K course so they could gain extra points for their House!

A number of our Sixth Form students were tasked with being course marshalls throughout the competition. They used this opportunity to provide our students with lots of praise and encouragement.

Well done to all involved.

Mr Eddleston



Junior Inter House Mascot Competition

Students in years 7-8 were set the challenge of designing a St Mary's mascot as one of their Art homework's. There were lots of excellent designs with students incorporating the school colours and uniform into their designs. The entries were judged by our Senior Prefects and I, with the best designs being awarded positive house points.

The winning design belongs to Ivy in 7T who is pictured below. Her winning design will now be created as a graphic design and used on Inter House-related messaging to students.

Well done year 7 & 8.

Mr Eddleston



Introducing...

Mr Ockendon

My name is William Ockendon, and I have been very pleased to join the English department at St Mary's Catholic School as an English teacher. I have always been passionate about words, literature and writing and began my career as a newspaper journalist, before stints in publishing and teaching English as a foreign language overseas and in London. I decided to go into secondary school teaching 11 years ago and have since worked at schools in Buckinghamshire, London and Hertfordshire, undertaking a range of Teaching and Learning roles along the way including responsibilities for Gifted and Talented pupils, Disadvantaged pupils and whole school Literacy. I have found teaching to be one of the most rewarding jobs a person can do.

This is my first time at a Catholic school and I was excited to join an establishment that has clear values at the heart of it, as well as a unifying identity that binds together the school community as a whole. I have found the staff and children welcoming and friendly and I am very glad to join them in this school which has such a long and interesting history.

Outside of my professional life, I have quite wide-ranging hobbies and interests, including nature and wildlife, history, playing rugby (now stopped due to a concerning concussion five years ago), literature, music, tending an allotment and making my own cider. Now that I have two small children, most of these hobbies are on hold for the time being!



Ms Bjelajac

I chose teaching as a profession because I love the impact one can have on individual young people, especially in science. Of course, it's a great responsibility, but at the same time, I cannot imagine devoting my life to anything else, particularly since I love being around young people, which is likely the second reason I want to be a teacher. In my view, teaching is more of a mission than a job, especially in the uncertain times we live in nowadays.

Additionally, teaching is the best job ever because you can laugh every day; young people make you laugh, and in return, we make a much greater impact on their lives. What we say or do one day may have a profound impact on a young person. I studied Biological Science, selective breeding, and genetics at the University of Belgrade before completing my PGCE at the University of East London. I entered the teaching profession later than the average teacher, but it has always been my passion.

My other interests include art, reading, skiing, and traveling. My family is originally from Serbia and Slovenia, which explains my love for skiing and traveling. However, I have spent all my adult life in England, which is now my home. I am excited to be part of St Mary's and look forward to working with the whole St Mary's community. I am eager to contribute to the Science Department, helping our students gain and develop scientific knowledge and critical thinking skills, which will lead to better academic outcomes.



Headteachers's Tea



Students from across the school who, over the last half term, who achieved the highest number of positive house points in their year group or demonstrated excellent service to the school, were invited to attend Headteacher's Tea this week.

This event was organised as a mark of the school's appreciation for the hard work students had demonstrated in class, as well as consistently positive acts within the school community.

During the sit down with our interim Headteacher, Miss McHugh—the students enjoying cake and hot chocolate!

Congratulations to all those invited!

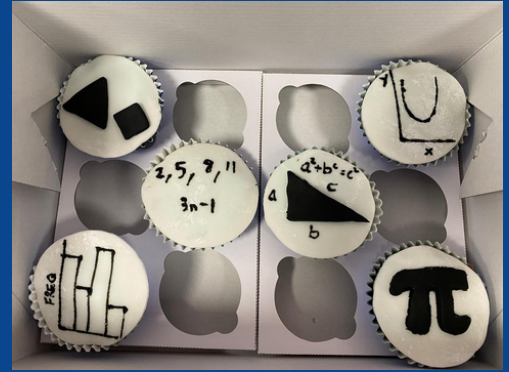
Mr Eddleston

House Coordinator

Busy Times in Maths!

There were more than 60 entries in Year 7 Bake with Maths competition. We have been overwhelmed by the efforts of the students and the generosity of your families. What a fantastic start of the year and what a dedication to your new school family! Thank you!

It wasn't easy, but the Maths team managed to choose 12 winners in 3 categories - Design, Taste and Original idea. Congratulations to Harrison V., Meadow H., Chiara and Carla C., Lottie H., Bryan B., Noah S., Rhalou C., Ivy D., Juliana D.L., Jasmine K., Agoziem C., Isaac H.!



Maths Challenge

SMCS entered 30 students in the 1st round of Senior Maths Challenge this October. This is a 90 minute, 25 multiple choice question challenge aimed at students in year 13 or below.

The stimulating problems for both beginners and experienced problem-solvers are designed to make students think outside of the usual curriculum. Our year 11 and year 12 students, despite being the youngest participants, won 12 bronze and 6 silver certificates.

Congratulations to Austin G., Liam G., Daniel H., Jayden L., Barnaby W., Ruby C., and Marie S. who have the highest marks!

The Maths Department was also fortunate to be able to offer another opportunity for our KS3 students to apply their maths skills and to compete against students and classes in our school and others in England. Year 7, 8 and 9 participated in Southeast England SumDog Maths Contest. The class with highest results overall and a daily winner on 5th October is 7R1. Congratulations and well done! To the rest of the classes - keep the competitive spirit alive and prepare for the next contest in December!

Cultural Day

The theme for Black History Month this year is 'Reclaiming Narratives', to celebrate the rich history, culture and stories of individuals of Black heritage. Being a Catholic community, we value the dignity of the whole person, rooted in Christian belief that every person is created 'in the image and likeness of God' (Genesis 1:27).

Therefore, to celebrate the rich and varied cultures within our school community, we held a Cultural Heritage Day. All students and staff were invited to come to school wearing their traditional national, regional or cultural clothing. It was a fabulous day to celebrating our rich and diverse community.



'Girl Dance' – Powerful Change through Pink Houses in Brazil

On the 11th of October, St Mary's welcomed 3 very special guests from Brazil who delivered a moving dance performance titled 'Stones and Flowers', charting the personal journey of hundreds of vulnerable girls along the 2790 miles of Brazil's BR-116 highway. Moany, and sisters Maluiza and Rany, danced through the carefree childhood that is turned into isolation, exploitation and abuse, but finally redeemed through the powerful intervention of project workers at the Pink Houses organised by the Meninadanca Charity ([Your paragraph text](#)).

The girls were accompanied by the founder of the charity, author and journalist Matt Roper, and by Keyla, one of the Pink House coordinators from Candido Sales in Brazil. Matt spoke to the year 10 and year 12 students about the chance encounter with a girl that started the whole project and Keyla shared the powerful way in which their work was empowering young girls to escape sexual exploitation, find justice and have a new vision for their futures. After the presentations, some of our year 12 students joined Moany, Maluiza and Rany in the canteen and bonded over their shared love for dance, K-Pop culture and music, a great way to build solidarity and friendships!

The Chaplaincy team looks forward to continuing our support for the Meninadanca Charity through the year ahead.

Daniel D'Cruz, Senior Leader: Catholic Life and Mission

Reminder for Parents

Please send medical appointments for students via info-mail@stmarys.net at least 48 hours in advance. It is essential that you must also provide proof of appointment in order for the Head of Year to authorise the absence. Thank you for your help with this matter.



Icanyoucantoo – 6th Form participants visit to Canary Wharf – Sam M Y12

Nilesh first came to our school last summer, while my classmates and I were still in Year 11, I was curious and unsure about the assembly we were heading into. However, by the end of it, after hearing Nilesh speak, I felt excited, passionate, and hopeful about joining the program. Nilesh completely shifted my perspective on my future career. He gave me a clearer sense of direction and structure regarding what I might want to do, and explained how the program could support me in achieving those goals. As he said during the presentation, "It can change your life if you let it." That message really resonated with me and played a major role in my decision to stay on at St. Mary's Sixth Form, as it offered such a unique opportunity that no other school could provide.

As I exited Canary Wharf station, a huge wave of excitement filled me, and this feeling carried on throughout the evening. This excitement was mixed with nervousness and curiosity as I met new people and listened to potentially career-changing advice. I was stepping outside of my comfort zone, but it was a thrilling and entirely new experience. The walk from the station to Ernst & Young's offices left me feeling inspired, seeing the real world around me and hoping that one day, this could be my reality. The view from the offices was breathtaking, and on my way home, I knew I had made the right choice in applying.



Nilesh emphasized that we must focus and prioritize our A-levels and studies, as they are ultimately the most important. He mentioned that for the majority of us doing three A-levels, we should view the 'I Can You Can Too' programme as a fourth A-level. This is because, while it will educate us about the real world, it will also open many doors and provide valuable workplace experience—something A-levels alone cannot do.

Nilesh and the guest speakers also taught us the importance of being proactive, taking initiative, and saying yes to opportunities, as these qualities are crucial for success in the workplace.