

November 2023

Dear parents/carers

Welcome to my November newsletter. Again, I am delighted that my staff are continuing to provide a holistic catholic education for our great children. I am impressed by their commitment and dedication to give at least a good education to our children.

Catholic Life of the school update

Mr Regan and the RE team continue to ensure that formation opportunities are becoming embedded at St Anne's.

- The charity *Christian's in Schools* is now working with St Anne's providing reflection/prayer sessions in our school chapel. This month the sessions focused on 'Who we think we are & what God thinks we have the potential to be'. Students are enjoying the sessions, and we thank Beth from *Christian's in Schools* for supporting us in this new initiative.
- A team of *Salford Diocesan youth chaplains* visited school on 15th of November to conduct a listening exercise with students from Yr8 and Yr9, focusing on four key questions: 1) What do you hope for in life? 2) How does faith fit into your hopes and dreams? 3) What makes it hard to engage with faith? 4) What would you like to see the church doing that would help you in your life? Students were honest about the challenges of living their faith and had plenty of suggestions for what the Church could do to support young people to grow in their faith!
- The list of students who would like to receive the *Sacrament of Confirmation* has been finalised and is being shared with local parishes. However, it's not too late, so if your child is in Yr8 – Yr11 and has been baptised and made their First Holy Communion and would like to get confirmed. If so, speak to Mr Regan or to your local parish priest.
- We were pleased to welcome *Fr Mark from St Winifred's*, Heaton Mersey, to school for the first time following his recent appointment to the area. We have already begun to make plans and hope that we will develop stronger links with both Fr Mark and the parish of St Winifred's this year. Last week he spoke to Yr10 classes about his vocation to the priesthood and religion and science.
- This year for our *Advent Appeal* the Caritas Ambassadors are raising money for '*The Wellspring*' in Stockport. Fund raising activities include a 'form race' where they compete to raise the most money, our Caritas Ambassadors are completing a sponsorship task which includes 20k advent step challenge, learn 100 words in Japanese and learn British Sign Language. We are currently collecting donations from staff for our advent calendar raffle, and we will also be having Friday cake sale throughout advent. Furthermore, we will have a secret Santa donation box for the homeless and we will be selling goods at the Christmas performance and if parents would also like to get involved they will be able to make a donation via parent pay. This year the schools target is to raise £1,000 and the Caritas Ambassadors are up for the challenge!

- We warmly welcomed the charity '*Good News for Everyone*'; formally known as the Gideons to St Anne's. They presented in an assembly and then distributed copies of the New Testament to Yr7 students. We are thankful for this gift of the Word of God.
- Finally, Yr11 are attending after school *RE intervention/revision* in large numbers as they prepare for their mocks. After analysis of the mocks data, the RE department will focus our intervention on key pupil groups.

Safeguarding and Mental Health

This half term the MHST team have delivered an exam stress workshop to a targeted group of Yr11 students to provide additional support as they approach their mock exams. Furthermore, our private counsellors, MHST worker and school nurse all continue to meet with students on a one-to-one level where specific mental health needs have been identified. Last week, we have completed a screener exercise for all of Yr7 to allow us to identify any mental health support needs, following which MHST will offer targeted group support for low mood and anxiety in response to identified need. Remember, that mental health can affect us all!

Last half term

In the last week before the half term break, 2 events showcased our confidence as a school community. The first was the Yr7 PROUD night. This was a fantastic night with students celebrating all their achievements in lessons since starting at St Anne's. The second event was our planned ASPIRE day. Our students were educated on a range of pertinent issues, such as the important of finance, the environment, equality, relationships and understanding mental health. Importantly, our Yr11 students stated that they felt more confident looking towards their choices after St Anne's as they had the opportunity to listen to a range of talks on post-16 courses, colleges and potential apprenticeships. I am hoping that this raises their aspirations as they strive to maximise their GCSE outcomes next May/June. The organisation behind these events was superb!

Curriculum update. A spotlight on Yr10

Yr10 is a crucial year for our students as they embark upon their KS4 studies. It is therefore right that we quality assure the provision of the curriculum. Our curriculum in Yr10 is constantly reviewed and updated. In our recent Ofsted inspection, inspectors were impressed with subject leaders demonstrating effective curriculum design. As part of our ongoing process to strive for outstanding in all we do, the focus of our first twilight session was modification of the curriculum which will ensure that our students are taught and assessed to a high standard. A substantial piece of this work was to ensure that your child will be taught the knowledge they need to know more and remember more. As part of keeping you informed of their progress the first parent report for Yr10 will be received in January.

T&L update

At St Anne's, we have continued to develop the '*Walk Thru*' instructional coaching program. Staff have been asked to select the foci they would like to further improve in their classroom practise to ensure teaching at St Anne's is effective, up-to-date and backed by research. Departmental curriculum reviews will continue to be ongoing, in which middle leaders will be asked to review their departments progress and what the next steps are required in their journey to be "*Outstanding in all we do.*" This is then analysed by the teaching and learning group to evidence base decisions and fed back to ensure we continue to make above expected progress. As a school we continually review all teaching and learning practices in school.

Attendance

The pastoral team were delighted to partake in a celebration rewards breakfast for all students who achieved 100% attendance in the first half term. Over 200 students were rewarded with a Full English breakfast and were joined by school leaders who celebrated this fantastic achievement with them. *[PS, the hash browns were especially popular with the students 😊!]* We will continue to celebrate excellent attendance through weekly assemblies and half termly breakfast rewards events.

Students with 90% attendance are missing the equivalent of ½ a day of school per week, or a total of four weeks of school missed over the year, equating to 100 hours of learning missed. Research shows that absence from school has a significant negative impact on achievement, with students who miss 17 school days in a year dropping a full GCSE grade in attainment. Students who attend school regularly and on time are able to achieve their full potential and have considerably more choice as to their next steps following St Anne's. Please contact your child's Head of Year to discuss any barriers to attendance so that your child can be effectively supported in achieving their outcomes.

St Anne's is proud to be a catholic community and an important aspect of that is to look after the vulnerable. Mrs Bowden, Teacher of Food Technology and Health & Social Studies, put in an application to Kellogg's to support funding a breakfast club. I am delighted to say we were successful and were awarded £1,000. This will provide some disadvantaged students with toast and/or cereal bars before school and help improve attendance by removing potential barriers. Watch this space as we aim to grow the Breakfast Club!

Staff profiles

In this newsletter I include the profile of 2 members of our Creative Arts department.

Mr Wroe, Art teacher. I have always enjoyed Art and found that it helped with my mental health, especially during my time at High School. I worked in a Design & Print company before studying 'Drawing & Image Making' as a degree at the University of Central Lancashire, specialising in the art style of 'Pointillism'. After graduating, I worked in a Digital Marketing Company creating brand logos, websites, advertisements and more for a range of clients; Ministry of Sound, Manchester United and Manchester Airport to name a few. I then became a teacher, and I could not have wished for a better school & community to immerse myself into. Being a part of the journey of St Anne's and the challenges that students overcome is what makes this job priceless, and I love being a part of it! I am always developing my practice, learning from experiences and very thankful to have the support from a strong team behind me. Lastly, I love to ski, I attend a local Muay Thai Kickboxing Gym, am involved in a Football Podcast which is on Spotify, going on walks and spending quality time with friends and family.

Mr Donnelly, Music teacher. I grew up in the seaside town of Llandudno, North Wales, where I initially worked as a toboggan operator at the local ski slope. I moved to Manchester where I studied professional musicianship at "BIMM Manchester". It was here that I worked within the music sector, but I was not getting job satisfaction and opted for a career in teaching. I initially started at St Anne's with a plan to stay for three months maternity cover back in 2019 but I am still here. I have seen the school go from strength to strength with the students as a focal point of what we do and I'm very proud of the journey we are currently on. Aside from music and school, I was raised as a Manchester City fan which wasn't as easy as it is today! You will more than likely find me wherever Manchester City are playing, whether it be at the Etihad or as far as away as Istanbul! Away from football, I'm currently spending my spare time walking my dog and spending time with my girlfriend as we prepare for our wedding in the summer!

New staff

As we seek to consolidate our good Ofsted judgement, we continue to recruit the best teachers. Over the past few weeks, I have appointed three experienced teachers; Miss Byrne in Science, Miss Weldon in Maths and Mrs Modral-Gibbons in Technology. I have no doubt that these three teachers will add depth and strength to students' experiences in the classroom. St Anne's will be further strengthened by their appointments.

Yr11 update

Firstly, the majority of Yr11 are working really hard and they should be congratulated. However, there are still a significant number of students who are not working to the best of their ability either in school or at home. This will be reflected in their grades next August which will have a massive bearing on their futures. I delivered an assembly a few weeks ago and I focused on the fact that **'there is no substitute for hard work'**. I ask parents to support me in ensuring your child is working hard at home.

- *Mocks*: These have started in earnest. It is imperative that parents are supporting their children and ensuring, as a minimum, their child is doing sufficient work at home [2-3 hours], a quiet space to study and to take an 'interest' in their studies. Please don't under-estimate the influence you can have on their motivation to achieve well.
- *Period 6 Intervention*: Over the past few weeks, Yr11 students have been attending Period 6 intervention. This has been postponed for the duration of the Mocks but will continue in January. Overall, I was really impressed with the attitudes of the students. Please pass on my gratitude!
- *Attendance*: Since September, the overall attendance of Yr11 students up to and including 28th November has been 91.7%. There are a significant number of students whose attendance is too low. There is a strong correlation between good attendance and good student achievement. It is paramount that students are attending school regularly.
- *Prom*. Remember that this is by invitation only and is dependent on factors such as attendance, punctuality, hard work and good behaviour. Sadly, four students have had their Prom invitation withdrawn at this time.
- *Colleges and raising aspirations*: We have invited several colleges in school since September speaking to Yr11 about their next pathway. Local colleges such as Aquinas, Stockport and Hazel Grove but also those further away such as Manchester and Xaverian. We are forging great links with these providers as well as more focused pathways such as North Reddish Football Club and The Growth Company. These providers have spoken to students in assemblies, at our careers fair and a few attended the Yr11 Parents' Evening. One of the aims of this is to ensure students are informed about next step choices as well as raising their aspirations!
- *GCSE Drama*. Students visited the Alhambra Theatre on 1st November to watch the final performance of Blood Brothers after a year of touring. This famous story of the Johnstone twins is a large part of GCSE Drama, and it was a great experience for students to be able to see the production live. Mrs Simmons said that the students were "superb" and members of the public commented on their excellent behaviour and impeccable manners.

Yr11 Parents' Evening

This was undoubtedly my most positive parents' evening yet. The turnout, although not my aspiration of 100%, was 76%; the highest it has been since I have been here. Many thanks to those who attended and there was a real positive energy in the room. The questionnaire returns were also overwhelmingly positive. 48 parents took the time and completed the questionnaire. This feedback is used to further improve St Anne's. I highlight some outcomes below for your perusal.

- *Is your child happy at school?* 16 strongly agreed, 27 agreed, 1 disagreed, 3 strongly disagreed and 1 didn't know. My response is that **I believe that happy children achieve so I was pleased the majority are happy at school.**
- *Is your child safe at school?* 17 strongly agreed, 29 agreed, 1 strongly disagreed and 1 didn't know. My response is **safety is our number one priority, so this response was great to read.**
- *School makes sure pupils are well behaved?* 17 strongly agreed, 28 agreed, 3 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed. My response is that **good behaviour is a pre-requisite for effective learning so again, it was pleasing to see that so many parents believe behaviour is good at St Anne's.**

The final question, *'would you recommend St Anne's to another parent?'* was overall positive. 41 would recommend and 7 wouldn't recommend.

One parent strongly disagreed with everything the school is doing, but unfortunately didn't put their name on it so I won't be able to follow up any concerns.

The returns **did not** highlight an area of the school where a significant number of parents had concerns. Comments included; *"not consistent staffing"*, *"improve communication"*, *"improve your safeguarding"* and *"you are doing well"*. These have all been noted and shared with staff. My favourite comment I read was the following;

"Keep on as you are. Leadership team, teachers, helpers, all staff and pupils should be so proud of the turnaround here the last few years. I am so grateful to all here, our school is GOOD!! On the rise to outstanding – I have no doubt. THANK YOU!!"

I loved reading this and all the staff are proud of St Anne's and its students. We are working very hard to ensure that ALL students get at least a 'good' education.

Reminder on some behaviour expectations

As a school community we have made massive strides over the recent past to ensure that behaviour, expectations and standards are high. This ensures that your child attends a safe, positive and welcoming environment. The mantra here is that 'happy children achieve'.

- *Vapes.* Statistics show there is a national issue with children vaping. Any child who brings a vape into school or uses a vape in school will be sanctioned, and likely suspended. This includes any child seen vaping when in their uniform, either on a bus or walking to and from school. It is illegal for any child under the age of 18 to vape. This is because of the serious health implications that high levels of nicotine can have on a child. Students are educated on the dangers of vaping, but your continued support is appreciated. I reserve the right to search a child if suspected of being in the possession of a vape. Click on this link for further support.

https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_Ecig_ParentTipsheet_508.pdf

- *Uniform.* The standard of uniform at St Anne's is good. This shows that they are proud to be here and are true ambassadors for our community. However, some students still arrive at school with uniform issues, for example, no ties or ripped tights. Can I remind parents that full uniform must be worn and jewellery is not allowed. Our rules are simple so there is no ambiguity and I hope you agree that our massively improved standards are because of our simple, transparent and enforced rules.
- *Phones.* These are NOT allowed in school at any time of the day. Students MUST not use their phones until they exit the green gate. If caught using them, which is rare, they will be confiscated, and parents will have to collect from reception. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Personal Development updates

- ✓ *Student Council.* Elections for this student group have just begun with Miss Waghorn and Mrs Simmons. Students will be in post by Christmas and in January will be visiting Stockport Council chambers as well as working with local councillors to improve opportunities for pupils. An excellent opportunity to be educated on the fundamental British values of the rule of law and democracy.
- ✓ *Prefects.* Staff are currently nominating Yr10 to be part of the new prefect team which will begin in January 2024. This is a great opportunity to develop their leadership skills such as team working and communication as well as building their confidence and resilience. Watch this space for the new prefect team and Head Boy and Girl in next month's letter.
- ✓ *Yr10 Work Experience.* We are excited to be working with *Positive Steps* to secure work experience placements in July 2024. Students have been signed up to their programme which allows us to link with local businesses. We also have our Business Breakfasts starting in December with a law firm and a creative marketing company speaking next month to Yr10 and Yr11 students about careers in these fields. It is important to educate students on possible future careers paths.
- ✓ *Antibullying Week.* As part of Antibullying week students took part in '*I Heard a Wispa*' where they nominated each other for always being kind, supportive and standing up for what is right. We awarded the best nominees with a Wispa and were thrilled to receive over 500 nominations. Remember, as a proud catholic community, we have a zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of bullying.
- ✓ *National Finance Week.* Yr7 and Yr8 students were fortunate to have a workshop from The Money Charity where they learnt about taxes and pensions, how these are calculated and the impact on personal finances long term. Mrs Baron, from The Money Charity, remarked on how engaged our students were and what amazing numeracy and maths skills they had! Understanding finance is an important life-skill.

Young carers update

Mr Woodhams, the Young Carers in schools support co-ordinator, delivered assemblies to Yr7-Yr 10. The focus was to raise awareness and create an understanding of the 'role' of Young Carers, highlighting the impact it has on their lives, especially education. St Anne's has many registered Young Carers but recognises that there may be more and we want to support and champion these young people. Mr Woodhams educated staff by delivering a whole staff training module on INSET day, focused on how we identify and support Young Carers. Additionally, we are fortunate enough to have Sarah Ball on Mondays in school as our '*Turn The Page*' counsellor who also works for Signpost. If you wish support from them, please contact Miss Rees at school.

Trip to Barcelona

Last half-term, 72 enthusiastic students and 7 dedicated staff embarked on a fantástica trip to Barcelona, visiting iconic spots like Camp Nou stadium, Parc Güell, Las Ramblas and the majestic Sagrada Família. Additionally, the group visited the charming town of Callea, where the group embraced leisurely walks to a local lighthouse and indulged in a shopping spree for souvenirs. The impeccable behaviour of the children left a lasting impression, with a local shop owner expressing their admiration, describing the group as the politest visitors he encountered. In the evenings, students savoured the flavours of Spanish cuisine, exploring new tastes and cultural traditions. However, the highlight of the evening activities emerged during a spirited karaoke session where the school anthem "*My Lighthouse... Mi faro*", echoed joyfully, creating lasting memories. The Barcelona trip was a thoroughly enriching and enjoyable experience, fostering cultural appreciation and fond memories for all involved. A thanks to all the staff who volunteered and gave up their time to accommodate the trip, especially Senora Todd for taking the lead.

Update on 'all things' History

To mark Black History Month this year, the University of Manchester hosted a special lecture for Secondary Schools on the subject of being 'Black and British'. The lecture was given by renowned historian David Olusoga. Throughout the history curriculum at St Annes, we refer to the work of historians and look at how they 'construct' History - we refer to their works as 'Scholarship'. David Olusoga's work is embedded into our curriculum and we use it in Yr7 when we study the Tudors and Yr8 when we look at the various colony soldiers that fought for Britain in WW1. David has fronted several television shows, and it was a real privilege to be able to hear him speak. On 6th November, the history department took 30 Yr9 students to hear David's lecture. The students had the opportunity to feel the vibe of a University campus and lecture theatre. One student, Michael Davis, asked a pertinent question, '*what parts of history that he had researched had shocked him?*'. David gave a full response and referenced the fact that Black soldiers had been removed from all of the photos showing the Allies liberating France in WW2! It was a fantastic and enriching experience for all involved. Thanks to the history department for providing these enrichment opportunities.

Careers provision at St Anne's

This continues to be a focus at St Anne's. In October I received a report from Mrs Walker, Partnership & Quality Lead for Greater Manchester. This report was very positive and Mrs Walker stated, "*Over the last academic year it's been fantastic to see how well Mrs Simmons has been able to provide an outstanding careers education to ensure that your students have access to comprehensive information, advice and guidance and exposure to the world of work*". Careers provision has many benefits including raising aspirations, challenging stereotypes and broadening students' horizons through work experience, meaningful encounters with employers and college providers. It also gives our students a goal to aim for post-16.

November Sports News

Yr7 girls played their first competitive football matches at Stockport Sport Village last week. Their attitude was fantastic, and we look forward to them representing the school in many more years to come. Our Yr10/11 basketball team finished top of their group in a recent Stockport tournament. Lola Sheehan deserves a special mention for showing the boys how the game should be played! After Christmas, PE are looking to appoint Sports Leaders in Yrs7-10. Students that consider themselves passionate about sport and would like to be more actively involved in the department should apply formally to Mr Andrews. More details to follow in assembly in January.

Building updates

Phase 1 of the sports hall has been completed with a full repaint to bring it up to better standards. Phase 2 is now complete with the floor being re-surfaced, which looks outstanding. The final stage will be a full replacement of the basketball equipment in the first week of the new year, ready for students' return in January. We have already been approached by two local Basketball Clubs asking for St Anne's to be their home venue. We look forward to welcoming teams of all age groups, putting St Anne's back at the centre of the local community. For avoidance of doubt, we are here to serve the local community, and are proud to do so!

Dates for December

The following are key dates for the busy month of December for your perusal.

- 19th Dec: *Christmas Concert*. Please support this.
- 20th Dec: *Rewards Breakfast*. Celebrations of good attendance
- 21st Dec: *Christmas Liturgies* and 'own clothes' day. School closes at 12:30pm
- 8th Jan: School returns for the start of the spring term

Finally...

A great news story to end this letter on. Alex McDonagh, a Yr11 student, completed his work experience with the Mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham. Alex joined the Mayor on his weekly BBC radio show and was the first person to ever get a shout out live on air! This can be heard on BBC iPlayer. Alex then accompanied Mr Burnham on his visits to local organisations including Dalton Nuclear institute and got to experience what life is like in politics as well as behind the scenes in business. Alex visited the Mayor's office where he was able to observe official meetings and other government roles. This experience was invaluable for Alex, and I hope has inspired him [and others] to achieve his goals. The Mayor's office fed back that Alex was, "*an absolute credit and delight today and the school should be proud*".

As always, your support is very much appreciated.

Mr Logue
Executive Headteacher