

## Chaplaincy News



Along with people around the world, the school marked Holocaust Memorial Day last week. Each year the Holocaust Memorial Trust runs an education programme for hundreds of sixth form students, which includes a visit to Auschwitz. The three St Mary's students who attended this year, Jeyda, Ruby and Josh, wrote a sensitive and moving assembly which they presented very successfully to each year group in the school. Many thanks to these three students, and to Miss Barrett, who organises the programme for the school and supported the students.

This week, Mrs Brahms has been leading assemblies on the theme of 'answering the call', which has included some powerful Ignatian meditation where pupils have imagined themselves being present when Christ called Peter and Andrew, James and John to be the first apostles.

Lent is now fast approaching, with Ash Wednesday falling on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February. The school will be making a big effort to support CAFOD as part of our Lenten observance this year, with the Big Lent Walk available for everyone to take part in and support. Mrs Brahms is also very bravely planning to walk 100km of the Camino pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. More details of how to support will follow.

Deacon Paul



## Lent

Lent begins 14<sup>th</sup> February (Ash Wednesday) this year and we have lots of exciting plans to celebrate it in school. Lent is the forty day period which leads up to Easter. It's a time for Christians to pray more, to fast and to give charity.

The day before is **Shrove Tuesday**, more commonly known as Pancake Tuesday. Pupils in Key Stage 3 will be invited to take part in pancake races – each form will be asked to provide a team of five pupils to participate. There will be a Champions Breakfast with Mrs. Brahms on the Friday morning to celebrate the winning team from each year group.

On **Ash Wednesday** all pupils will attend a service in school. The focus of this service will be about love, as Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's day this year.

Throughout Lent, all pupils and their families are invited to take part in the **CAFOD Big Lent Walk** which aims to raise funds for the charity CAFOD, which works with people in developing countries. Pupils are asked to pledge a number of kilometres that they will walk during Lent and to ask for sponsorship for family and friends. They can be sponsored through this link: <https://schools.walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/st-marys-astley-community-fundraising> Our target is to walk 500km as a school and to raise £1000. Keep an eye on the web page for updates.

As well as time to pray in forms, as we always do, pupils will be invited to attend extra opportunities for prayer during their free time. Please keep our school community in your prayers during Lent.

Dear Parents,

Over the past fortnight, as part of our behaviour curriculum rooted in the principles 'Ready, Respectful and Safe,' we have had a renewed focus on corridor and yard behaviours, to ensure all pupil behaviour meets St Mary's expectations.

Our expectations are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct but we have been ever more explicit about these. We expect everyone to: walk sensibly along corridors, respecting each others' space and following the one way systems. There is no place for jostling; horse-play or not respecting others. Individuals have been recognised for their positive contributions.

Attendance and punctuality continue to be a key focus in school as well as nationally. Please ensure your child does not miss out on form time as they are missing valuable life lessons and key important messages to enable them to flourish in school. The school's attendance target is 97%. If you need any further support with attendance, please do not hesitate to ask.

“ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me to be a safe, happy, proud, loving person who flourishes in life. ”



## My VOICE MATTERS

### TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Are you a parent or carer who wants to talk to your child about mental health?

This Children's Mental Health Week we want all children and young people, whoever they are, and wherever they are in the world, to be able to say – and believe – "My Voice Matters".

We visited primary and secondary schools to ask students what they wanted from the week – to help shape the activities we create for schools, the messaging we give to teachers, the tips we give to other children, and the advice we give to parents, carers and families.



#### LOOKING FOR FREE PRACTICAL ADVICE TO HELP YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD?

Parenting Smart, Place2Be's site for parents and carers, is full of expert advice and tips on supporting primary-age children, and managing their behaviour. and act on their views.

[PARENTINGSMART.ORG.UK](https://www.parentingsmart.org.uk)



#### Here's what children and young people told us they need from you:

- 1 We don't need to have 'one-off conversations about our mental health' – sometimes a chat on a journey or at bedtime is enough.
- 2 I need to know it's okay to talk to you about any and all of my feelings. Please hear what I have to say, without interrupting me.
- 3 Please listen to me carefully and acknowledge how I am feeling – It might seem silly to you but what I am going through is important to me.
- 4 Playing with pets can make me feel better. Same with playing football, basketball or whatever type of sport I am into.
- 5 Don't compare my experiences to your own when you were a child.
- 6 Sometimes I just need you to listen and hear what I'm saying – I don't always need answers (or lectures)
- 7 Please don't worry about trying to fix things for me – I often just need to know you are there for me and understand what I am going through.
- 8 If you are open with me about your feelings, this can help me to be more open about mine.
- 9 Sometimes I don't want to talk. Please trust that I will come to you (or another grown-up or someone my own age) when I'm ready. Sometimes it's easier for me to talk to someone nearer my own age – my siblings, cousins, friends, younger teachers at school - because they 'get it'.
- 10 Sometimes a hug is all it takes to make me feel supported.



#### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU? CREATIVE VIDEO ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

These wellbeing activities can help children and young people think about and share what matters to them.

For primary children: [bit.ly/3pzcgi8](https://www.place2be.org.uk/resources/3pzcgi8)

For secondary children: [bit.ly/3l8d2wk](https://www.place2be.org.uk/resources/3l8d2wk)

[CHILDRENSMENTALHEALTHWEEK.ORG.UK](https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk)

## Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Children's mental health week takes place from 5th – 11th February and the theme this year is 'My Voice Matters' which links in with our school idea of 'Together We Can'.

My voice matters is about empowering young adults by providing them with opportunities to express themselves.

In school and sixth form next week we will be exploring mental health in form and curriculum for life lessons to ensure students know where they can find support.

Please also find attached some top tips for parents/carers from Place2be around talking to your child about their mental health.

## My VOICE MATTERS



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

Some ways to start a conversation with your child about mental health could be...

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAY

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT TODAY?

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRESS / WORRY IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW?

WHAT'S YOUR ONLINE LIFE LIKE?

WHO WOULD YOU TALK TO IF YOU WERE FEELING WORRIED ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP YOU?

[CHILDRENSMENTALHEALTHWEEK.ORG.UK](https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk)

## Help for All

St Mary's does not wish for any student to be disadvantaged as a result of financial issues. We recognise that the current cost of living crisis is difficult for ALL. We believe that the best thing for all children is a quality education and we will do what we can to help.



Please use this link to find out whether you are eligible for free school meals: <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Benefit-Grants/Free-school-meals.aspx> Should your child get free schools meals then the school gets extra financial assistance and can help with the cost of uniform, trips and music tuition.

In addition we have our weekly school foodbank up and running for all of our community to access whether or not your child is on free school meals. Parents can collect essential store cupboard items from 3:00pm-4:00pm every Tuesday in term time. To access the provision we ask that parents report to Student Services and bring your own carrier bag.

Through our Family and Pastoral Liaison officer we also have links with a range of organisations that can help with household items should you be struggling to afford them. Please use [timetotalk@st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk](mailto:timetotalk@st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk) to discuss needs even if they aren't mentioned here.

In case of emergencies, please always ring 999.

## Foundation Governor Vacancy

The school currently has a vacancy for a foundation governor and we would like to bring this to the attention of any parents who are practising Catholics. The information below provides more information about this very rewarding role which helps to drive the strategic direction of the school, as well as drive high standards in education and personal development for our children. Please do consider the role. We are keen to increase diversity within all aspects of our school community, and would particularly welcome applicants from ethnic minority groups and those with particular skills in finance and business.



### Foundation Governor Vacancy

St Mary's Catholic High School currently has a vacancy for a Foundation Governor.

To apply to become a foundation governor you need to: -

- Be a Catholic who attends Sunday Mass regularly and gives true witness to the teachings of the Church.
- Be prepared to work with discretion as a member of the full governing body and attend training events to help build up a body of knowledge and expertise.
- Bring a wider skill set to enhance the Governing Body in undertaking its collective duties to lead the school and meet the contemporary requirements of the Department for Education and Ofsted.

We are keen to increase diversity within all aspects of our school community, and would particularly welcome applicants from ethnic minority groups. We are also keen to expand on skills within our Governing Body and as such are actively seeking to recruit suitable candidates with a background in finance and business.

For further information on the role of a Foundation Governor please check out the Archdiocese website [www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/schools](http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/schools) we have also provided a FAQ sheet for your information.

If you are interested in becoming a Foundation Governor, please contact the school marked for the attention of the Clerk to Governors via email [enquiries@st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk) or by telephoning 01942 884144. We will then arrange for you to be sent a nomination form.

In the event of multiple applicants, the Chair alongside a member of the clergy will shortlist and assess the skills offered.

#### St. Marys Catholic High School & Sixth Form College

Manchester Road, Astley, M29 7EE

Tel - 01942 884144

Email - [enquiries@admin.st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@admin.st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk)

[www.st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk](http://www.st-maryshigh.wigan.sch.uk)





**Archdiocese of Liverpool  
Becoming a Foundation Governor  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who can become a Foundation Governor?**

Any practising Catholic over the age of 18 can become a Foundation Governor.

**How do I apply to become a Foundation Governor?**

Historically, Foundation Governor appointments in primary schools have been made following nomination of the parish priest and in secondary schools by nomination of the chair of the governing body in consultation with the dean/parish priest. This will continue in future but recruitment will not be restricted only to those so nominated. The opportunity to serve as a Foundation Governor, whether approached individually or self-motivated to apply, exists and all potential applicants are required to complete an application form. The form and further information on the application process is available on the Archdiocese website via the following link:

<http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/schools/Foundation-Governors>

**How do I prove I'm a practising Catholic?**

You will, as part of the application process, need to provide contact details for the Priest of the parish or chaplaincy in which you regularly worship in order that the Episcopal Vicar may take up a reference verifying your Catholic practice.

**What is the role of the Governing Body?**

A governing board has three core functions for its school, as set out in the 2014 Department for Education's Governors' Handbook:

- Setting the strategic direction.
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school.
- Ensuring financial health, probity and value for money.
- Know and implement the Bishop's policies on education, including Religious education
- Understand and promote the distinctive nature of Catholic education.

**What is the role of a Foundation Governor?**

- Act for the good of Catholic education as a whole within the archdiocese and secure the long-term future of Catholic education.

**What is the time commitment?**

The average Foundation Governor role will attend four full governor meetings per year and serve on at least one committee. You will also be encouraged to attend free training sessions.

**What are safeguarding checks?**

As a requirement of the appointment process, all governors, regardless of category, will be required to consent to the carrying out of any appropriate checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks in respect of eligibility/suitability to be appointed as a school governor.

**Is training and support available for Foundation Governors?**

The Archdiocese delivers a variety of training courses for Governors at Catholic schools. Information on forthcoming courses, along with a booking form, is available on our website at

<http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/schools/Governor-Training>

### Key Stage 3 News

**Year 9's** have been attending a week of presentations from different subject areas to help them with the options process, their behaviour and conduct has been exemplary.

This week we have also been busy meeting with students to listen to their voice on all things rewards so as a school we can move to be one where all students feel that they have been recognised for their academic and personal achievements.

### Key Stage 4 News

**Year 11** have had an exciting day of taster lessons. They have been in the Sixth Form today experiencing the common room, the study room, a range of lessons delivered by our Post 16 specialist team and of course the Coffee Stop! Feedback has been really positive and we can't wait to see them for their interviews on either the 12th or 13th February (watch your emails for information).

A reminder that our next set of mocks are on their way and students should be asking as many questions of their subject specialists as they can.

**Year 10** are busy looking at their Work Experience at the moment and their Careers interviews are starting up as well. Parents will get notification when the interviews have taken place so that you can have those valuable conversations at home.

Thursday next week sees the **Year 10 Parents' Evening**. This runs from 4.30-7.00pm and we strongly encourage students to attend with their parents. Make sure to ask staff questions about what is going well as well as what the steps are that can be taken for further improvements.

### Key Stage 5 News

#### Sixth Form Taster Day

Year 11 students have spent the day in the sixth form to sample life in college.

They chose five of the thirty subjects we offer to try and had the opportunity to spend the day as a sixth form student and use all the facilities.

The students were excellent, stepping up to the demands of college learning and interacting in all their lessons. This will be a really helpful experience for them as they decide on the correct courses to ensure success in our sixth form next year.

#### St. Mary's Sixth Form celebrate the best results in the local area!

The Department of Education have published performance data for all sixth form colleges based on last summer's results. We are very proud to see us at the top of this in some of the **key measures** for our results. It is these results that give our sixth form students the best possible options on the successful completion of their studies with us.

Further information can be found here [All schools and colleges in Wigan - Compare school and college performance data in England - GOV.UK \(compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/all-schools-and-colleges-in-wigan-compare-school-and-college-performance-data-in-england)

## Co-Curricular Information

The new Spring co-curricular programme is up and running and students are attending well. We are excited that we also have a new club:

**KS3 Movie Club (Years 7, 8 and 9)**

**When: Every Tuesday 3pm-4pm**

**Where: G2**

**Info: Bring your own snacks**

**Next show: 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024**

**Next film: Guardians of the Galaxy**



In sports news, the Key Stage 3 Girls Rugby team took part in a festival this week and won 2 games and drew 1! This is great progress since their last competition. The Key Stage 4 Girls Rugby team also have a festival in 2 weeks' time.

The Year 10 Rugby team have a fixture against Saint Peter and Paul Catholic High School in Widnes this week and the Year 11 Football final has been scheduled for Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February.

Congratulation to all involved and we wish everyone luck in their upcoming matches.

The new Cheerleading club is also up and running and numbers have increased since the first week which is great to see!

A massive well done to two of our Year 9 students, Francesca and Miley who represented Greater Manchester in their match against Lancashire in the Schools' County Cup. St Mary's were the only school with **two** players part of the team! Greater Manchester won the game 3-1; they are unbeaten and are currently only two games away from securing a place in the semi-final!





### Year 11 Drama Examinations

Our Year 11 Drama students have just completed Component 3, Texts in Practice of their GCSE examination. This constitutes 20% of their overall grade. This process includes two live performances of a chosen text to the examiner. The students' commitment to their work over the past few months has been absolutely outstanding. They have been rehearsing during lunch times and after school, where they are given the opportunity to develop their work. The behaviour and focus during the exam was exemplary and they were a real credit to the school. Students supported each other in the arrangement of set and lighting cues, giving them an insight into the industry working as a theatre company. Thank you to Mr Johnson for supporting with lighting and tech during the examination.



### Chinese New Year Celebrations

St Mary's was proud to host Chinese New Year with the Confucius classroom on Tuesday. The event took part after school with a fantastic attendance of both staff and students. The Mandarin department planned lots of activities with guest appearances that included a Kung Fu masterclass, all in preparation for the upcoming Chinese New Year celebrations.

All of our students were a credit to our school community, and a special mention to our fantastic volunteers who were exemplary in leading activities. Our staff became waiters as they served Chinese delicacies for everyone to enjoy. We are already looking forward to next year's celebrations.

We are planning more events with the Confucius department and this will be communicated soon. Please remember we also have our lunch club activities Wednesday- Friday, and students should feel free to join!



“ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me to be a safe, happy, proud, loving person who flourishes in life. ”



Young minds are the UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health.

They are calling on Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to #FundTheHubs by announcing a national roll out of early mental health support hubs in the Spring Budget on 6 March and they have written [an open letter](#) to him.

The letter has been co-signed by charities and celebrities and they would like to ask for your support by adding your name to the letter via this link: [an open letter](#)

Further information about this campaign and the Young minds organisation can be found at: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

## Stop ignoring the mental health emergency: it's time to #FundTheHubs

We're demanding the Government commits to #FundTheHubs, with a national roll out in Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's Spring Budget.

Now is an opportune moment for us to work together as a coalition to ensure that early support hubs are fully funded in 2024.

Join young people and celebrities by sharing and adding your name to our open letter.

**We are louder together.**

[Add your name >](#)

