Headteacher’s Newsletter: Advent Term

Dear Parents, Carers and Friends of St Paul’s,

As we reach the end of the Advent Term it is my pleasure to share with you some of our events. From 3rd September, St Paul’s Catholic family community became an even larger family community when we joined 21 other schools in Leicester/Leicestershire as a member of The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Staff from our schools have already greatly benefitted from the many opportunities for collaboration across the Trust. We are excited about the first CMAT Teaching and Learning conference which is being hosted at St Paul’s on our January Inset day.

Celebrating Exam Results
We were delighted to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our ‘Class of 2018’ students from Year 11 and 13 at our Upper School Awards Evening in September. As you know, nationally this cohort of students were the first to take entirely new, more challenging examinations at GCSE and A level. Their achievements therefore were even more significant.

Our guest speaker, Andy Cowell, inspired our students, parents and staff with his keynote speech about the ‘bumps and challenges along the way’ from his studies at school and university, leadership of the team that developed the award winning Formula One engines, to his current role as Managing Director of Mercedes AMG-HPP. Along the way Andy has worked with Michael Schumacher and Lewis Hamilton, as well as being awarded the prestigious James Clayton Prize for exceptional contributions to mechanical engineering and related Science, technology and invention. He shared that one of his key drivers has been to respond to anyone telling him ‘That can’t be done’ with the reply ‘Yes it can’ and then making sure he proved them wrong! This in itself is a great message for our students to remember as they continue their studies in the Sixth Form and University.

Reflection
Our school community was very saddened by the tragic death of one of our Year 12 students, Allen Joseph, who is a great loss to his family and the community of St Pauls. We are proud of Allen’s achievements in his short life and the impact his caring, respectful and hardworking nature has had on his teachers and friends. We are also proud of the way our sixth form students have supported each other and Allen’s family in their loss, with such dignity. We continue to hold Allen’s parents and his little sister in our prayers.
Commemoration of Centenary
I am sure that you will have been moved by the many tributes across the country to the fallen men and women of the First World War to mark the Centenary. St Paul’s staff and students entered into the spirit of commemoration with a special project to recreate the poppies that bloomed in the waste land of the western front. The aim was to bring History to life through collaboration with the History and Design Technology teams, while raising money for the Royal British Legion. Staff and students, led by cadets who wore their uniform with great pride, honoured the 3 minutes’ silence with great dignity and respect.

Catholic Life of our School
Sixth Form Theology students from Year 12 travelled to The Beckett School in Nottingham to take part in talks on our newest Saint and Champion of the poor, St Oscar Romero. The Archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador, St Oscar Romero was shot on the 24th March 1980 as he was celebrating Mass. This happened because he had spoken out about the rights of the poor and those being murdered by corrupt members of the government. Pope Francis recently canonised Romero as a Saint to a packed St Peter’s Square at the Vatican in Rome, wearing a vestment that Romero had worn when he was shot.

Bishop Patrick visited El Salvador last year and invited Claire Dixon from Cafod and Ciara Hogan, Cafod volunteer at the Briars last year, to speak to sixth form students from schools in the diocese. Our students learnt about the life of Romero from Claire who had met him and about the impact that Cafod partners have on improving the lives of the poor from Ciara, who had recently visited El Salvador. Our students were struck by the remarkable life of St Oscar and were inspired to commit to the church’s preferential option for the poor.

Year 7 students chose St Bernadette to be the Patron Saint of their year group. St Bernadette received visions of Our Lady in Lourdes, France in 1858. Because Bernadette was poor and therefore had little education, people ridiculed her and refused to believe her. Bernadette continued to bravely stand up for her belief. Eventually Our Lady revealed herself to Bernadette as ‘The Immaculate Conception.’, a dogma too difficult for Bernadette to understand. As a result the parish priest believed Bernadette and instigated the building of a shrine. Today thousands of people visit Lourdes as pilgrims. May our Year 7 students reflect their patron saint, Bernadette in their determination and courage.

Science update
On Monday 29th October, we were very privileged to secure a visit from Dr Suzie Imber, an Associate Professor of Space Science at the University of Leicester, and also an ardent mountaineer, rower, rock climber and runner. Dr Imber was the winner of the BBC2 programme ‘Astronauts: Do You Have What it Takes?’ Having just returned from the launch
of the BepiColombo Mission to Mercury in French Guiana we were exceptionally fortunate that Dr Imber made time to come to St Paul’s to inspire our students. A number of Year 10 and Sixth Form students thoroughly enjoyed her visit, most particularly the girls who were motivated and enthused by her. Here is what one of the year 10s had to say about the visit.

‘I found the talk by Dr Suzie Imber a very enriching experience. She helped to clarify the fact that science isn’t all lab work and essays, but science opens a gateway for all sorts of interests and hobbies. For example Dr Imber enjoys mountain climbing as a hobby, and so to incorporate that into her work, she climbs mountains for field research. She also talked about all the other things she did such as work for NASA and finding new mountains in South America, on a super computer...’

We are very much hoping that Dr Imber can join us again so that even more of our students can be inspired by her experience.

Many Year 7 students benefited from taking part in Positive Power workshops on Tuesday 27th November. The 2 hour ‘hands on’ sessions were delivered by Learn by Design and sponsored by E.on. Students were introduced to a wide range of amazing opportunities to explore different concepts in Science and Engineering, like, for example, being challenged to build electric cars which had to be charged to travel 6 metres.

Snowcase
Our annual Christmas extravaganza this year was, as always, widely supported by all; parents, teachers, students and our valued school Governing Body. We would sincerely like to thank all for their support and participation in making this event a success year after year.

2018 surpassed all others in the variety of performances: the orchestral arrangements of well-known songs such as 'I dreamed a dream', the variety of genres of dance from the jive to contemporary dance and the 'piano mash up' performed by two of our talented artists in Year 10. On top of the variety of genres, this year saw performances which showed huge amounts of cultural diversity: the drama routine entitled 'Day of the Dead' marking the traditional Mexican celebration, and the duet of dancers who performed the 'Afrobeat' routine really reflected the diversity of the community at St. Paul's. There were so many acts which demonstrated real talent and hard work – a fitting testament to the commitment of our dance and drama department as we see the development of the students' skills.

A huge well done to all involved!
Leicester Catholic School's Menphys Concert
On the 7th December, St. Paul's School Choir travelled to De-Montfort Hall to perform 'When the Son of God was born' by Sally Deford in Leicester Catholic School's annual charity Menphys concert. The students wore their uniform proudly and sang beautifully on the night demonstrating their genuine enjoyment at taking part in this important concert year. We look forward with huge anticipation to enjoying the concert next year.

We are the Champions!
There is so much to celebrate about the sporting prowess of our students and the support they have received from our very committed PE Team.
First of all, our year 8 boys’ football team have beaten Charlton Le Willow from Nottingham, with a very impressive score of 7 nil! They have now made it through to the last 16 of the National Cup (out of 610 teams) and we wish them every success. While we are delighted with their truly remarkable achievement we are equally proud that the played with great sportsmanship and respect.

A gifted Year 9 student, Chad, competed in the year 7-9 ELITE boys trampoline - representing the school at the East Midlands Regional Competition. He was awarded 1st place and now has qualified to progress to Zonals where he will represent the school and compete again. This competition will have competitors from Wales, West Midlands and East Midlands to vie for a place to National Finals.

Full details of our many sporting achievements can be found under Student Life, on our school website.

Fond Farewell...
Mr Jones, our Head of Music leaves us to teach at a school in Lincolnshire. Since joining us in September 2016, Mr Jones has worked with the Dance and Drama departments on our school productions ‘The Magician of Australia’ and ‘Nanny McPoppinz’, in addition to our annual Awards Evenings, Catholic Schools’ Menphys Concert and our Carol Service. We thank Mr Jones for his support and wish him success in his new role.

...And Warm Welcomes
We have a number of new staff joining us in January. Mrs Bodycote, Miss Naqvi, Miss Cunningham and Mrs McDonagh will be working with our support staff team and we welcome them to our school community.
Key Reminders

As ever, thank you very much to all parents who observe our important requests not to drive on to the school site before 3.30pm if picking students up in the afternoon. Those who still do (and I’m sorry to say that there are some) create difficulties for the buses to move freely up and down the drive and compromise safety of staff and students as a result.

I would respectfully remind all parents and carers of the schools’ uniform expectations which, as ever, are clearly laid out on the school website.

Thank you to all those parents that have supported the school’s safer cycling policy. We have been liaising with other headteachers in the city to develop a city wide safer cycling programme for all secondary schools. Any parent who would like their child to cycle to school in addition to wearing a helmet, must ensure they have completed a cycling proficiency course. Please contact your child’s form tutor in the first instance if you would like school to organise this training for your child.

And finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our parents/carers for your support and to wish you and your family a very blessed and happy Christmas and good health in the New Year.

God bless,

Mrs Gillespie
Headteacher