



St Mary's Catholic
College

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Visit our website at:
www.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk

ST MARY'S NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER

FIRST CLASS PERFORMANCE

This year's GCSE and A-level performance tables showed St Mary's achieved record results in summer 2009 at both GCSE and A-level, however, the on-going journey towards excellence for all students goes on!

At GCSE students achieved a record breaking 80% 5+ A*-C which is another substantial increase on the record set the previous year and a contextual value added (CVA) score (including English and Maths) of 1021.2.

This latter figure shows the outstanding progress made by students of all abilities, from Key Stage 2 to GCSE, during their time at St Mary's.

The performance tables highlighted how A-level results had also showed further improvement as the students smashed through the 800 points barrier with a record 835 points per student. This is the third consecutive year in a row this indicator has increased. The other key indicator showing the point score per exam entry increased to another record,

of 199 points, but fell tantalizingly short of 200 points per entry mark.

Parents and students can rest assured that everyone at St Mary's realises how important it is to continue our current rate of achievement and improvement. The above results will be viewed by many in education as outstanding and our challenge is to move from this first class level to a world class level of education for all the students who attend our College. The ingredients for even higher levels of success next year have already been introduced!

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THE GREAT FREEZE

It has been a very odd start to 2010 with lots of time and energy being devoted to closing the College on Tuesday 5 January 2010, partially re-opening it on the Thursday and then managing a phased return for all students over the last few days. I hope the information to parents, via our website, was useful and kept you fully informed. Our ICT network manager and technicians report unprecedented numbers of hits at around 3:30 p.m. daily as people logged on to the site. Our biggest issue was the treacherous nature of the

site and trying to keep all students safe. A special thank you to all parents for your support over the past week as your daily routine was disrupted, to staff for getting into St Mary's and giving up extra time to supervise the students and prepare on-line lessons but maybe an extra special mention should go to the premises staff who must have shifted tones of snow and ice off the playgrounds! Let's pray for some better weather.



BUILDING SCHOOLS for the FUTURE (BSF) UPDATE

As described in our last newsletter plans for the two consortia bidding for the BSF programme have been working hard to develop their plans for the St Mary's site and what the new buildings will look like. The plans are based on five learning houses for the main school plus a Sixth Form Learning House:

- Mathematics, ICT & Business
- RE, History & Geography
- English & Modern Foreign Language (and possibly Learning Support)
- Science and Technology or PE
- Art, Performing Arts and Technology or PE

When the five learning houses are up and running they will each house two forms from each year group in Years 7-11. There is still a lot of detail to be worked out and the

plans are also commercially sensitive and currently confidential. However, we hope to hold an evening for parents next half-term to discuss what provision parents would like to see in the new buildings, for their children, and another evening later on in the Summer Term when we hope that we will be able to share the plans and models of the new school.



CONSULTATION ON HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

“.....all students with attendance below 80% - (termed persistent absence)...”

It is somewhat ironic that after having to close the college last week due to the weather conditions the issue of reducing term time holidays will be discussed by the Governors at their February 2010 Meeting. The current regulations allow a Headteacher to authorise upto ten days of holiday during term time in exceptional circumstances.

The current situation at St Mary's is that whilst term time holidays are discouraged up to ten days of holidays are authorised during term time even though the reasons often fall outside "exceptional circumstances". Most holidays tend to be taken by families during term time due to convenience reasons - fits with work pattern of the parents or most often because holiday costs are lower during term time. Over the past few years we have introduced a two week October half term holiday to allow families to get away at a

cheaper time of the year. There is potentially a mixed message in discouraging holidays and then being prepared to authorise them.

Over recent years the Department for Children, Schools & Families has looked in much more detail at attendance and now collects the names of all students with attendance below 80% (termed persistent absence). A number of students who have taken term time holiday and then been absent for a week or so through illness/medical appointments fall into this persistent absence category.



I will be putting a number of proposals to Governors for implementation from September 2010 and would like to give a parents' perspective alongside the educational perspective. The educational perspective is very simple - the higher a student's attendance the better they do at school.

Please would you write to me with any comments on the proposals below by 1st February 2010. Thank you.

- St Mary's should stop authorizing term time holidays apart from in wholly exceptional circumstances from September 2010.
- Sixth Form students who take term time holidays that have not been authorised will forfeit their place at St Mary's. Please note AS and A-level courses are only 30 weeks in length and to lose any time has a massive impact on students' progress.



... the higher a student's attendance the better they do at school.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL


NOTICE TO ALL PARENTS AND VISITORS

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE
would like to remind all its parents and visitors that this is a

ZERO TOLERANCE ZONE

Inappropriate language, threats or acts of aggression towards staff will not be tolerated on these premises.

Anyone behaving in such a way will be asked to leave and their behaviour may be reported to the police



ZERO TOLERANCE

The College has recently adopted a Zero Tolerance Policy. Copies of the policy are available from the College's website (go to Documents > Policies) or by contacting Mrs Crocombe. Fortunately over the past ten years there have been very few unpleasant incidents involving staff and parents or visitors that would have required the policy to be used.

CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT VISAS - NOTICE TO PARENTS

Please will you contact the College immediately if there are changes to your employment circumstances that may impact on your visa.

JUMP FOR JOY! THE ADVENT FESTIVAL

Every year is the same! On top of already heavy workloads, writing scripts and rehearsing students for our Advent celebration can produce a fraught November - and never more so than at the rehearsal the Friday before! The possibility of actually producing a coherent evening of reflection and entertainment seemed remote. But every year is the same! Staff and students pull out all the stops and something a bit magical comes together.

The singing was beautiful, particularly the ethereal 'Cantilena'. The dancing routine for 'Jump' was electric and the exuberance of the students was tangible. By the end, the audience were almost out of their seats. It is hoped that they were also thoughtful, provoked by the big themes of presence, change and the needs of our world. The piece of drama on 'Streetlife' was especially hard-hitting but also delivered its message with some wit. We are blessed with very talented staff and students. The Advent Festival was a wonderful showcase for all that talent.

ATTENTION ALL PARENTS... Spire Fylde Coast Hospital (next door to the College) has introduced legalized clamping and ticketing on their site. To avoid being clamped please do not use their grounds as a drop off point for students

ADVENT - THE TIME OF GENEROUS GIVING

St Mary's students rediscovered the joy of giving this Christmas. Each Advent every form group in the college is issued with two gift tags. Their task is to raise money and buy gifts for both a child and a pensioner from the local area who may not otherwise receive gifts this Christmas. Three weeks of fundraising followed including sponsored events, auction of promises, candy cane sales and an 'own clothes' day culminating in the presentation of ninety-nine gifts. The college chapel was bursting with dolls, bears, baby clothes, games, racing sets, luxury food hampers, hats, gloves and toiletries. In total the students raised a whopping £2,700.

Surplus funds were used to purchase the following from CAFOD: business start-up kit, chickens, an emergency kit, a football, mother and baby care, support for a child in need, vegetable garden, books to teach people to read and water for two families.

The organisations who received the gifts were overwhelmed and spoke of how elderly residents had cried when receiving the gifts and children who would receive a gift from Santa after all! Thank you for your huge generosity at a time when we know many families are financially stretched and struggling to make ends meet. Our Caring Community should be very proud of all their efforts.

GAPLAINS' AFRICAN ADVENTURE

Some thoughts from Gaplain Chris about Nigeria ...

I cannot believe that it has been a month since we returned from Nigeria. Everything still seems so fresh and recent - except the heat. I can't remember what it feels like to be hot now!

Looking back on our time out in Nigeria, I have so many vivid memories, so when I am asked, 'How was it?' I reply, 'How long do you have?' There isn't really one thing that I can single out as being the best moment. Our time spent in Nigeria was so diverse and we had so many amazing moments: from our time in Ajegunie in Lagos in the secondary and primary schools, and learning crafts in the women's centre, to spending time with the CAFOD team and their partners in Jos, and then visits Fr Leo Bauchi. We were just so fortunate to see and do all of the things that we did.

The visit to Nigeria was certainly eye-opening and inspiring. I hope that I will be able to help people understand everything about our trip - but be patient as we have a lot to say!

'WHOSE WORLD IS IT ANYWAY?'

On Thursday 4 February at 7:00 p.m. we will be having a faith and justice liturgy at St John Vianney's led by students from Years 8 and 9. The liturgy will ask us to reflect on the Environment and God's Creation and should last no longer than 45 minutes. Everyone is welcome. There will be refreshments available after the liturgy.

SPORTING ROUND UP

Badminton - Congratulations to the U14's and U16's boys' and girls' teams who recently competed in the Blackpool Schools' Badminton Leagues. All pupils played well, but special congratulations goes to the U14 boys' team (Josh Mason, Nick Rodaway, Liam Kerigan and Michael Riley) who beat both Palatine and St George's and drew with Highfield. Well done!

Basketball - The Year 11 boys are through to the semi finals of the Blackpool Schools' League beating both Palatine and St George's comfortably. They will play Montgomery in the semi final. Good luck to them!

Football - Pleasingly Years 8, 9 and 11 boys and the U14s and U16s girls' football teams are still in the Lancashire Cup. The U16s Girls' 3rd Round Lancashire Cup is against Our Lady's on 18 January 2010. Good luck to all teams.

Extra curricular to February half-term

Badminton Club - Every Friday 3:10 p.m. to 4:10 p.m. (beginning 29 January) - All years welcome.

Boys' Rugby League - Every Tuesday 3:10 p.m. to 4:10 p.m. - All years welcome. Nick Settle from Blackpool Panthers is very kindly coming down to help with training and has also donated two children's season tickets for the Panthers for those pupils that have shown great commitment to school rugby league. Make sure you keep training boys!

Girls' Hockey - Every Monday 3:10 p.m. to 4:10 p.m. - All years welcome.

Boys' Hockey - Every Thursday 3:10 p.m. to 4:10 p.m. - All years welcome.

Basketball - Every Thursday 3:10 p.m. to 4:10 p.m. - Years 8 and 9.

Why not come along and get involved? Make it your New Year's resolution to lead a healthy and active life.

Other Dates and Information

Any girls interested in playing basketball please see either Miss Porter or Mrs Roberts for information about training and the Blackpool Schools' League.

27 January 2010 - Blackpool Schools' Indoor Athletics Competition at Blackpool sports Centre 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for Years 7 and 8.

24 March 2010 - Rock n River Trip for the Sixth Form BTEC National Group.

TBC - Year 11 Boys' Football Lancashire Cup 3rd Round against Corpus Christi.

Blackpool and Fylde Athletics Club - Training every Thursday at Blackpool Sports Centre 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. Cost is £2:00 per session for Years 7-9. Please contact Garry Roylance on 0781 137 8863 if you are interested.