

6th September 2024

Dear Families

I was delighted to welcome your children back to school on Wednesday morning. We started the term off with time with Form Tutors and a Collective Worship. I used this opportunity to share some of the key messages for the year ahead. I share these with you now in the attached document so that the whole community is aware of what we are focused on and how we will work to achieve our aims. The key aspect of Catholic Social Teaching that we will be focusing on during the Advent Term is Care for our Common Home and we will be exploring this in lots of detail.

Children have settled back to school extremely well. We have been very aware that many members of our community will have been very concerned by the images on television and social media of the riots and disturbances that occurred over the summer break. We are encouraging conversations regarding the situation and have been very clear that everyone in our community is made in God's image and we will do all we can to preserve their dignity. In essence, everyone belongs in our community regardless of our differences. The rich diversity of our community will be celebrated.

Our examination results at Key Stage 4 this year were our best ever results. I was delighted to see the improvements that have been made in standards across subjects. It seems the dip following Covid has been rectified and we have surpassed where we were in 2019. I am very grateful to all staff and parents for everything they did to help our students achieve the best that they possibly could. I was also delighted by individual achievements on A Level results days. It was fantastic meeting students receiving their results and seeing that they had secured their desired next steps. For the first year ever we had students going to Oxford, Cambridge and to study Medicine. In previous years we usually had a student doing one of the three but this year it was a full house! Congratulations to all students who received results in August. Further details of achievements can be found on our website.

One thing that is clear from both sets of results is that students who dedicate significant time to homework and independent study achieve higher results. The time spent reading around a topic and completing active revision tasks is an investment in the higher grades that will be achieved. Our experience is that many of our students do not appreciate just how much independent study is required to achieve the highest grades and that this must be started very early. This will be a significant focus over the next year. We have emphasised this to our Sixth Form students. They are expected to complete five hours of independent study per subject per week. I would be grateful if all parents, from Year 7 to 13 monitor what their children are doing for their homework and revision activities throughout the course of the year. We will be supporting students with ideas on what they can do to supplement their learning through independent study and revision.

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Parents can view homework tasks on ClassCharts and can see live updates and keep track of children's daily achievements and behaviour. There are apps for parents and students and ClassCharts can also be viewed on any web browser. Please make sure you and your children access your accounts regularly. New Year 7 parents will receive their ClassCharts codes within the next week.

Sunday 8th September is Education Sunday, one of the oldest days of special prayer in England and Wales. It provides an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks to all involved in making Catholic schools and universities places of enlightenment, as well as to look forward in anticipation of the year ahead. You can find prayers on our [website](#).

On Wednesday this week there was a meeting of the full Governing Board to discuss the strategic direction of our school. The discussion covered the following four areas:

- 1) St. Paul's as a Catholic School
- 2) St. Paul's as a School that Promotes Academic Excellence Through an Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach
- 3) St. Paul's as a School that promotes Dynamic Leadership at all Levels
- 4) St. Paul's as a School that Celebrates an Innovative and Dynamic Learning Environment

Next week we mark the start of the new academic year with a whole school Mass on Thursday morning. Later that day, Year 11 & 12 Drama students are off to MK Theatre to see a production of Heathers. On Friday Year 13 Theology students are visiting St Mary's University in Twickenham. Also, next week Years 7, 8 & 9 begin their Accelerated Reader Form Group Challenge. At St. Paul's we take reading very seriously and hope that children will enjoy all the exciting activities and challenges that we have planned. Then, next Friday we begin our Year 6 parent tours as part of our recruitment process for next September!

A reminder that whiteboard pens are part of essential school equipment for Years 8 to 11. These can be purchased from reception.

I will be writing to parents early next week to provide details about the election of parent governors later in September. Please do consider whether you would like to serve our school community in the crucial role of governor.

Finally, as I welcome so many new parents into the community of St. Paul's, I just wanted to remind everyone that all parents have open access to me as your Headteacher. You can email me at any time on jo-anne.hoarty@st-pauls.org.uk or phone reception if you prefer to speak to me. You are also welcome to ask for an appointment to meet with me at a mutually convenient time. I welcome the opportunity to meet with parents regularly and will also be holding drop-in sessions for parents in the coming months.

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I hope that you all have a lovely weekend.

Yours sincerely



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