

Aspire to be More

Dear all,

We are now at the end of a half term which has been totally built on remote learning. I thought it was more important than ever to celebrate the fantastic achievements that are still going on within our community despite us not being able to be together. Students and staff have adapted incredibly well to the new ways of working and there is lots of fantastic learning and engagement going on throughout school. The pandemic has at least allowed us to focus on what truly matters; showing kindness towards, and caring for, others. One of the many ways in which our school community has done this is through our donations to the foodbank. We are hugely grateful for the contributions that were donated by students and families, and we are incredibly proud of knowing that our collective kindness has helped other families in need.

During the last year we have all learnt new skills, change the way we work, learn, play and shown a great deal of resilience. We continue to pray for those who have been affected by the pandemic or lost loved ones and look forward to the time we can come together as a community.

I hope that we will be able to have some students back after half-term as they will make more progress back in school. The return to school will no doubt be accompanied by new guidance and lateral flow testing which I will inform you about as soon as I have the details.

During half term we celebrate Ash Wednesday which marks the beginning of Lent and is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. Lent is 40-days marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and ultimately celebration. Within school we will be supporting the Alice Charity with our lantern charitable work, and an Act of Worship either remote or face-to-face will mark this liturgical season.

Have a good half term and stay safe.

We look forward to seeing all students back in school as soon as we are able to.

Mr Rayner
Headteacher

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Catholic Life

At St Thomas More, Christ is at the centre of everything that we do in order to ensure that we are living out our Mission Statement as a Catholic school. The pandemic has meant that plans have had to sometimes be changed and as a result, the Spirituality team and R.E Department have had to think differently about how we do things in school.

Acts of Worship and assemblies are recorded each week and the Fifteen Minutes of Faith collective worship programme remains a pivotal part of our Morning Mission form time. Services, such as the whole school Advent celebration were led on Teams, as were the Year 7 Retreat days and MAC liturgies, which involved all of Year 5. This meant that although we cannot be together in person, we could still be together spiritually.

Every Advent we look forward to celebrating with the community and enjoy welcoming visitors from local care homes into school. Our wonderful Youth Chaplaincy Team hold a Christmas party in our school hall each year and we usually enjoy games, food and spiritual reflection. We are proud to say that this was still held over Zoom, and in addition, students in key stage 3 sent out letters and cards to spread a little joy at Christmas time!



Other fantastic examples of faith in action include the amazing contributions that were received for the local foodbank. Over 165kg of food was donated and a similar amount given to the Port Vale Community Hub for Christmas parcels. This was a record-breaking number of donations and we thank you for your support. More recently, Mrs Britton has led the Buddy Bag Foundation across the school, a charity that provides children entering emergency accommodation with

Buddy Bags to restore a sense of safety and security in their lives. These toys, toiletries and belongings will make such a difference to children in need. The pandemic has highlighted how strong we are as a school community and school family. We pride ourselves on helping and supporting others and living out our faith. We are proud of all of our students and thank, in particular, our Youth Chaplaincy Team for their dedication and commitment.

Our Lay Chaplain, Megan McNicholl and Catholic Life lead, Mrs Rowley, are always here if anyone needs to talk.

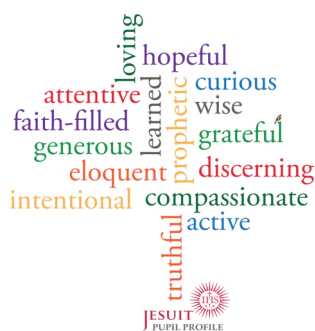
RE at STMCA

In RE we have introduced new units to study, based on what students say they love and want to learn MORE about...

Philosophy, Peace and Conflict!



In the Autumn, Year 7s had the opportunity to explore the Church, finding out about the key features of a Catholic Church and where we find Jesus in the Mass! Our Parish Priest, Fr David Newell, led the session, answering lots of fantastic questions, such as *'what is the meaning behind the 'Stations of the Cross'?*



Catholic Reflection Sessions

This year, we have introduced Catholic Reflection sessions into our RE and Catholic Life scheme of work, allowing students in Year 7 to further explore the stories of the Bible, and the Gospel Values and Virtues with our Lay Chaplain every fortnight!

Extra Curricular Clubs



English Update

English Language Masterclasses: Live!

Twenty students in Year 11 attended a series of online English Language Masterclasses delivered through the English Excellence Project on a Saturday morning. Pupils were commended for their engagement in these sessions and four of our learners received Amazon vouchers for submitting outstanding pieces of work.

Moreover, a separate cohort of students participated in an afterschool Masterclass delivered by Caroline Davies, Senior Examiner for AQA. Caroline, who works with schools across the country, applauded our pupils' dedication to their studies and their mature approach towards learning.



Stoke It Up!

St Thomas More Catholic Academy, along with several other schools across Stoke on Trent, have also joined The English Excellence Partnership in a new challenge for Year 7, in order to raise the profile of reading. Our Year 7 students have taken on the substantial task of reading 1 billion words in the first two terms of the academic year. This has worked brilliantly with encouraging students to read as much as possible in their free time, as well as in their classes, in an attempt

to help close any gaps from the lockdown during the previous summer term. Students have loved this challenge and it has been wonderful to see how competitive the students are, as well as seeing them fall in love with reading again.

Treasure Island

This year our fantastic Year 7s have taken part in a new initiative raised by The English Excellence Partnership in order to improve efforts in working collaboratively with our feeder schools. The students started to read Treasure Island in Year 6, focussing on KS2 Pedagogy and curriculum. They then completed the novel in

Year 7, building on skills needed for KS3. The students have loved this scheme of work and felt both engaged and challenged. Although the students were not able to enjoy their annual Christmas trip to The New Vic Theatre, the students were able to virtually watch a National Theatre production of Treasure Island performed on stage.



The Theatre comes to STMCA

The closure of theatres has not stopped the staff at STMCA! Within the English Department, we pride ourselves on the wide range of enrichment activities which we offer to our students. However, this year we have had to think slightly out of the box.

To enhance their study of *Treasure Island*, Year 7 were treated to an imaginative on-screen adaptation of the text, through The National Theatre: At Home. Robert Louis Stevenson's story of murder, money and mutiny was brought to life for students, consolidating their understanding of this literary classic.



All students in Year 10 were treated to the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Students were enthralled with Shakespeare's most famous story of love at first sight, and this sensational performance will undoubtedly enhance their understanding of the key themes.

Finally, our A-Level learners experienced a live performance of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Hamlet*. Students were engrossed in this searing tragedy of a young student, tormented by his father's death, and this thought provoking performance prompted questions surrounding life and death.



Maths

Timestable Rockstars!

Results from Maths Week England

Highest Scoring Band

1st Place: 8Y1

2nd Place: 8Y3

3rd Place: 7Y1

Most Valuable Player: Amaad Yr 8



Next Competition



In School Prizes

- Top pupil using points score
- Most improved pupil/ best effort per school

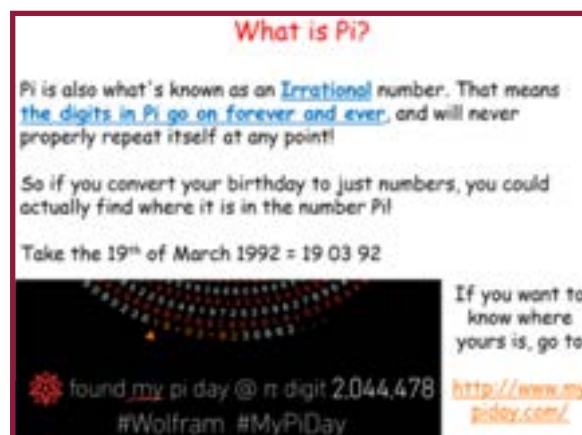
Stoke City Wide Prizes

- Top 10 Pupils using points score
- Top 5 Classes will have highest number of correct answers per pupil
- Top 3 schools -average score per user
- Best dressed

Pi Day: 14th March 2021

Students are set Pi related questions, facts and general usage of pi as starters.

Pi competition – students are shown where the number came from, and some of the cool applications it is having in life today.





Maths

Congratulations to these students and well done to all students embracing online learning! Students have adapted brilliantly to online learning with lots of questions being answered on Hegarty throughout the school. Here are the Hegarty Heroes for each year so far this half term.

Whole School Hegarty Heroes
1. Shaina (Year 8) - 1579
2. Noorin (Year 8) – 446
3. Dominik (Year 7) - 381

Y7 Hegarty Heroes
Dominik (381)
Miryam (282)
Olivia (224)
Angel (130)
Sean (120)

Y8 Hegarty Heroes (Questions Answered)
Shaina (1579)
Noorin (446)
Zhwan (373)
Prince (305)
Cameron (247)

Y9 Hegarty Heroes (Questions Answered)
Lakieshia (302)
Mujahidah (189)
Emily (157)
Adam (134)
Raman (134)

Y10 Hegarty Heroes
Katie (162)
Maddison (161)
Sanie-Marthy (152)
Issabel (144)
Diogo (128)

Y11 Hegarty Heroes
Elizabeth (258)
Abdul (238)
Jorja (211)
Bartlomiej (194)
Oliver (171)

Numeracy



Year 7-9

Students complete Numeracy Ninjas during form time to test both their numerical skill, and time management. Each year group currently has a different set of questions, over the 3 years, with a wide variety of numeracy skills tested and, over time, their scores should improve, allowing them to achieve higher coloured belts in their Ninja programme.

Y10- 11

Year 10/11 complete real-life application questions as well as GCSE style questions

Medpath

Last month our Year 10 and 11 aspiring healthcare students commenced the Medpath programme.

All students have completed an introductory session and two problem-based learning where they have reviewed cases, for example on spinal cord injury and asthma. Each case study has provided our students with an insight into the problem based learning sessions undertaken by students at medical school and have allowed our students to assess patients to determine the treatment for each one.



We are delighted to have been able to offer this programme again this year despite the challenges of the pandemic meaning that it is being delivered online rather than in school. The programme has been created by and is being run by medical students from Keele University Medical school.

In addition to the problem based learning sessions, students have been able to ask questions to current medicine students to gain an insight to life as a medical student and to glean best practise from current medical students own experiences of the application process for medical school. We hope to be able to offer the Year 9 Medpath programme to our Year 9 aspiring healthcare students later this year.

Music and Performing Arts

This year, life has been a little bit different in the Music and Performing Arts department including changes to our lessons, and also to our extracurricular life as a department; however, we won't let that stop us! Since the start of the year, students have adapted brilliantly to their 'new normal', both in accessing their adapted music lessons in the classroom and learning remotely via teams. Ms Milan, Miss Mooney and Mr Bruus are very proud of our fantastic students and their resilience throughout this time!

The Music and Performing Arts department has still been continuing some of their work, with students taking peripatetic lessons through ODM still receiving their lessons online. In the Spring term 2021, a selected group of students have been chosen to participate in a brilliant opportunity with Manchester Camerata called 'Create With Camerata'. The programme is a composition project with musicians from the renowned Manchester Camerata based around students writing lyrics, along with other schools to produce an album of songs based around the Roald Dahl book 'George's Marvellous Medicine'. The project should hopefully come together by around Easter time, and our students will be able to listen to their fantastic work and share their success with their fellow students, teachers and their families.

PE at STMCA

Extra-curricular clubs were on offer for our students in the first term, within their year group bubbles on different days after school. Here we have Mrs Staton leading her Netball club with year 7 girls. We do hope we can return to after school clubs in the near future.

On Monday (Y7 girls), Wednesday (Y7 boys) and Thursday nights (Y8 boys) after school, the Stoke City Community Team have been providing their extra-curricular football programme to our Y7 girls, Y7 boys and Y8 boys within each bubble; we thank them for their help and support with this.



Black belt success!!

Well done to Tom and Lewis for achieving their 1st Dan black belts. This was under the expert guidance of our Deputy Headteacher Mr Shufflebotham.

Our Y10 students have been working on their fitness levels when returning to school and have been able to participate in practical PE lessons again within their year group bubble. The fitness work with a ball proved to be a popular choice.



In the second half of the 1st term Y8 students were able to develop their rugby skills and make full use of our 3G facility. The students really enjoyed their attack versus defence 3 v 1 conditioned games here.



Transition from our MAC Primary Schools

Despite the pandemic, the strong collaboration continues with our MAC feeder primary schools. This ensures that students from St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy, Our Lady's Catholic Academy, St Gregory's Catholic Academy and St Augustine's Catholic Academy can seamlessly transition into St Thomas More Catholic Academy.

Primary school students have the opportunity to be immersed into a curriculum which is much broader and can enjoy the use of our extensive facilities, including a 3G, fantastic Science labs, a full dance studio, a gym full of various sports equipment, and an enormous IT suite, even before they start at St Thomas More Catholic Academy.

There is so much to share but, just as a flavour of some of the brilliant activities, here is a taste of what has taken place:

Fab in the Lab

Fortnightly (Tuesday 9.30-10.30), our dedicated Science team deliver educational and engaging sessions for students to expand their knowledge within science. Sessions have taken place at STMCA using the laboratories and have even continued remotely during national lockdown. These have included

Fireworks – making sparklers, flame tests for colours

Kitchen Science – acids and alkalis, making indicators with red cabbage

Strawberry Laces – investigating the properties of sweets, including testing the strength of strawberry laces



Our Own Footprint

The RE department have been exploring how Year 6 students are a disciple within our community. Using templates of feet silhouettes, they have discussed and then written about how they can make a difference to the school and the wider community. The students showed real aspiration to work as a team and were passionate about wanting to improve their community.

You may not know that our transition does not just reach Year 6, we are also working closely with our Year 4 students too! They have been exploring Lent and how the promises that we make during this time demonstrate our values of Faith, Excellence and Respect.

Students have also explored their own skills, ambitions and what their favourite things are and created a rock display reflecting all the areas they have discussed. The students enjoyed discovering more about themselves and creating a fabulous display.



Transition Sports

Throughout the year, the PE department have continued to show their competitive edge during various inter school competitions that we have held for the MAC feeder primary schools. These have included bench ball, football and multi-skill competitions. The students show great determination when competing and representing their schools and their enthusiasm was admirable. The students enjoyed the wide range of activities and showed their multitude talents. We can't wait to welcome them back soon.



The Hubb Foundation

During the Summer of 2020, we were proud to work with The Hubb Foundation, who brilliantly supported us by offering a range of activities for those students who were due to join us in September 2020. This gave some of our new Year 7 students the opportunity to become familiar with the school, make new friends and become confident in their new environment, as well as being able to engage in lots of activities that they would not normally have had access to. The students even attended a session on building resilience, giving them a positive experience to help them adapt their thoughts, and to bring to their everyday life.



Students were hugely positive about this whole experience and voiced how much it had helped them to really feel like St Thomas More students, even before school had technically started!

The Hubb Foundation's mission is to make sustainable improvements to the aspirations, achievements and life skills of young people and families, making a real impact upon their lives irrespective of circumstance. This was certainly achieved during these summer activities as students were able to develop their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing while positively creating happy memories. We are certainly excited to continue our work with The Hubb Foundation

Wellbeing

Working closely together each year group has a Head of Year and Student Support Officer dedicated to meeting the needs of the students within their year group and can be contacted at any point via the school phone or via email. Supporting the pastoral team we have Safeguarding Leads, Mrs Stubbs and Mrs Staton, offering bespoke advice and guidance should you have a concern about your child. We have recently expanded the team to include Mrs Williams to co-ordinate our Mental Health and Wellbeing provision within school to ensure students are able to access the right support as quickly as possible. Mrs Lovatt leads our SEND team supporting our students on the SEND Register and is available should you feel your child has an undiagnosed need and wish to discuss your concern.

As a school we are pleased to be offering numerous training opportunities to staff in order to upskill to support the wellbeing of all students. We currently have three qualified Mental Health First Aiders to assist our students as required, with more staff due to complete this qualification.



We are proud to be a 'Trailblazer' school with our own Education Mental Health Practitioner attached to the school from the NHS Mental Health Support Team. Based at STMCA one day per week students can be referred to access low level CBT support. Our EMHP can work on a number of mental health concerns such as:

Worry Management, Anxiety, Panic Management, Low Mood, Sleep, Problem Solving, Exam Stress, Difficulties with Emotions & Challenging Behaviour.

If a student wishes to request some support from our EMHP please contact your child's Student Support Officer to discuss concerns and for a referral to be made.

The school nurse usually provides a drop in service and this is still available virtually at present. The school nurse can support with any health or wellbeing worries.

Call or text to book your 20 minute appointment with one of our Public Health Advisors. Appointments available between 14:00—15:30

Call the Our Health 5-19 Hub: 0300 124 0362

Text our Chat Health: 07520615723



Combined Minds is a really positive app for parents to download with practical advice on how to provide mental health support to your child. The app provides information on five different mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders and digital addiction. The app provides a 'strengths-based' approach.

Virtual Parents Evenings

Year 11 on the 25th March

Year 10 on the 31st March

Parents evening appointment will continue to be virtual through the parents evening system. Letters will be sent to the relevant year groups with full details but please see below.



In order to make video calls you need to have, as a minimum:

- a device with a microphone and speaker/ headphones
- a compatible up-to-date web browser:
- **iPhone/iPad:** Safari Note: there is a known issue joining video calls using iOS 14.2. Please upgrade any iOS 14.2 devices to iOS 14.3, or use an alternate device.
- **Android:** Chrome or Firefox
- **Windows:** Chrome, Firefox or Microsoft Edge (Chromium - download here)
- **Mac:** Safari, Chrome or Firefox
- **Linux:** Chrome or Firefox

We also recommend:

Using your smartphone for video appointments. If you don't have a smartphone with a front-facing camera, use a laptop or computer with a webcam.

Using a headset (or earphones with a microphone) to reduce echo.

A full how to guide is available on the school website

[HOW TO GUIDE](#) for video appointments

[TROUBLESHOOT GUIDE](#) for video appointments

[HOW TO BOOK MY APPOINTMENTS](#)





Sixth Form



This vocational course is devised by one of the leading specialists in World Coaching. Offering direct job introductions into football coaching and the wider sporting industry, students have the opportunity to study a National Qualification in Professional Sports Coaching.

Some of the many benefits of studying with David Campbell Soccer at St Thomas More Catholic Academy include;

- ◆ Direct job opportunities as part of the course – UK and Worldwide
- ◆ Open to males and females ages 16-19

Breaking News... 100% success for jobs – for the last 8 years every student that applied received professional International contracts **(including students now from St Thomas More Catholic Academy)**

- ◆ Excellent sports facilities
- ◆ Visits to professional Football Clubs and sports event
- ◆ Practical sessions and classroom lessons
- ◆ Weekly work placement opportunities
- ◆ Can combine with 'A' levels and BTEC qualifications (available at selected venues)
- ◆ Exit routes to higher education for the more academic students
- ◆ Devised by ex-International footballer and UEFA Pro Licence Coach, David Campbell
- ◆ Opportunity for fully funded International study visits
- ◆ One of the highest retention, attainment and progression figures in the UK
- ◆ Additional FA qualifications available





Sixth Form

St Thomas More Trinity Sixth Form Accepting applications for September 2021!

Trinity Sixth Form offers a unique post-16 experience by working closely together, our three Catholic partner schools – St Thomas More, St John Fisher and St Margaret Ward. This offers you the best of both worlds; the benefits of studying in a small school sixth form where you are known, supported and cared for and the wide curriculum offer you might expect to find in a college or larger sixth form.

All year 11 students are eligible to apply to The Trinity Sixth Form, whether you're a year 11 student in one of the partner schools or you attend a different school and want to be part of this exciting sixth form opportunity.



Five reasons to study at Trinity Sixth Form according to our students:

- 1. Known and loved**
- 2. Belonging to a community**
- 3. Academic rigor**
- 4. Individualised support**
- 5. Study environment**

The Trinity Sixth Form experience really is great preparation for university life, Higher Level Apprenticeships, or the world of work. In addition to the subjects you study, you will experience a range of enrichment opportunities, including university visits, careers advice, work experience and many other exciting and enjoyable activities. More information is available on our website or on the Y11 Sixth Form Open Evening Team. Call us now on 01782 882900

Parental Feedback

Thanks to everyone's support with the switch to online learning and live lessons.

It has been a huge effort for all involved and we appreciate the challenges this brings to families.

The way everyone has adapted to new ways of learning has been inspirational. The feedback on social media is much appreciated

Seriously impressed by the quality and organisation of online learning from your school. It really shows that you care. Thank you.

I would like to personally thank you for your approach to online learning. The school is leading in its approach compared to other schools nationally. Thank you.

I really think that the commitment of schoolteachers has largely gone unnoticed during this period. Thanks to you all for your continued efforts to support our children.

Thanks to all the amazing teachers, I'm at home with my daughter and can hear her teacher's lessons, they are doing a great job and have so much patience.

A heartfelt thanks to all the teachers for you support. I think you are all doing a fab job. Its difficult on your part with the situation. Rebecca is working hard at home doing her home-schooling. She misses all of her friends and teachers but it's nice that she is in constant contact with them day by day. A massive thank you again.

My first day off and my goodness, your organisational skills and hard work have definitely been noticed by us today! Thank you all.

I can only praise the staff for their efforts throughout this week. I've listened to some great lessons. Well done.

Thank you so much for everything that all the teachers are doing, I appreciate the hard work.

