

WORK TOGETHER; SUCCEED TOGETHER

Respect | Courage | Pride | Determination | Compassion



**St Mary's
Catholic College**

Wallasey

A Voluntary Aided Academy

College Mass

I wanted to start this letter with a huge well done to all of the staff and pupils at St Mary's. On Friday 8th December 2023, we held our annual Feast day celebration and for the first time incorporated a full College Mass. Attendance on the day was higher than we have seen before and so it was the largest Mass we have held at St Mary's for many years. The conduct and engagement of all those pupils present was immaculate and allowed us to celebrate the importance of Our Lady in the mission of the College. The Mass was a great celebration and your children should be incredibly proud of themselves for being part of this wonderful event.

For a full round up of events for this term please follow this [link](#) to our Autumn term newsletter

Catholic Life inspection

Earlier in November, I wrote to you to inform you of the outcome of our Catholic life inspection, in which we received a 'Good' grade overall with the leadership of Catholic life being graded as outstanding. We are incredibly proud of this achievement and will continue to build on the work that they recognised.

Some quotes that illuminate the great work of staff and students are below:

"Leaders are ambitious for the St. Mary's community to experience an excellent Catholic education with prayer and liturgy central to this. It is a priority for governors and leaders."

"The school motto Christ within us all is central to all that takes place at St Mary's Catholic College and underpins the inclusive and welcoming nature of this community."

"Governors have a passion for this Catholic school and a determination that it should be a place of welcome to all."

"Relationships between students and staff are positive and reflect mutual respect."

"Working within the wider Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust there are training opportunities for staff to enhance pedagogy and practice in the classroom."

"The school's partnership with local parishes is a real strength and St Mary's is blessed by the opportunities that this brings."

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Proud to be part of Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust, an outstanding provider of education

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Ofsted

We are finally in a position to share our ofsted report and I am delighted to share that our college has now been awarded a 'Good' rating for behaviour and attitudes, this has improved from requires improvement and is a reflection of the improvements made in recent years. The students did St Mary's proud during the inspection and the sense of collective responsibility for making the school the best that it could be really shone through. The inspectors also commented on how positive the students interact with each other and how responsive the college is when a student has a problem. They were also pleased with our Inspire programme, SEND support, reading approaches, the intent of our curriculum and the subject knowledge and passion of our teachers. This achievement is a result of the tireless efforts of our students, teachers, staff, and, of course, your continued support and positive feedback. These great improvements in less than two years show that leaders have the capacity to make the further improvements identified by the inspectors. This view was supported in our recent Catholic life inspection, a copy of which can be found [here](#).

While celebrating this accomplishment, inspectors also recognised that we still have improvements to make when it comes to the GCSE and A level outcomes and also attendance of the students. As we continue striving for excellence in all aspects of our College it was identified that positive steps taken in recent improvements now need to be applied in these areas. Whilst we are disappointed that inspectors did not find the evidence to move us from requiring improvement overall, the next steps provided by Ofsted aligned completely with what we have identified as our areas of development as we continue to drive to be an outstanding provider of education in the Wallasey community.

Our vision at St Mary's is "Work Together: Succeed Together," and this is at the heart of everything we do. We firmly believe that collaboration between the college and our families is essential to the success of your children. By working together, we can provide them with the tools and opportunities they need to thrive academically and personally.

Our next step is to move from requiring improvement overall towards a good judgement in our next inspection. We believe we now have the solid foundations in place and will be working closely with HFCMAT to drive on improving the outcomes and attendance of all students across St Mary's. The full report will be uploaded to the College website later this week.

College Priorities

From our own evaluation, which has been supported by the recent inspections, we know that we must drive on reviewing and improving the quality of education in the classroom and pupil attendance. Since returning to school in September we have had the following key priorities:

Overarching Priority	We will work toward this by:	Parents and carers can support us by:
Ensure all students make progress at least in line with national outcomes	Ensure teaching is challenging and engaging for all students and assessment is used to maximise student progress	Ensuring pupils attend at least 95% of the time Ensuring pupils complete homework Encouraging pupils to revise for assessments/exams using materials shared by school

		Encouraging pupils to review their report and follow up on areas of development Ask for help and support from school with supporting pupils to study at home Access the Arbor app.
Develop outstanding systems, ensure that pupils have high levels of attendance and behaviour.	Improve attendance for all groups across St Mary's	Ensuring pupils attend at least 95% of the time Liaising with St Mary's to overcome barriers to attendance Make appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.
Ensure the curriculum extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational and students have excellent future pathways.	Ensure the college consistently provides all groups of pupils with access to a wide, rich set of experiences that spark their talents and interests and that participation levels are high.	Ensuring pupils take part in extracurricular activities Ensure high levels of attendance at the end of term when many extra curricular activities take place.
Consistently evaluate/review systems to ensure Leadership and management are exceptional.	Develop a distributed leadership model which provides capacity for leaders across the college to improve outcomes for pupils through meaningful quality assurance .	Complete the Parent/career surveys to provide feedback on our progress Communicate any concerns about progress directly with the school

Adverse weather

Each year we review our procedures for managing major incidents such as disruption due to poor weather.

We are fully committed to minimising any disruption to the education of our pupils and will always try to keep the school open and operational. There are, however, rare occasions when it may be necessary to close the school, fully or partially. The prime concern of the school will always be the safety of the pupils and staff.

We understand that it may be difficult for some parents to collect their child and so we will ensure school will remain open for any child that needs to remain on site. If you would like your child to remain onsite until 3.05pm or until we have spoken to you in person, please complete this form.

[Survey link.](#)

You can read a full overview of our adverse weather plan [here](#).

Attendance

As a key priority, I want to share an honest overview of attendance at St Mary's. Many families are very supportive of our effort to support their child's attendance, this is reflected in the large number of pupils who are regularly recognised for good attendance. This said, our current daily attendance is 87%, when compared against the national average of 92% and our own aspiration target of 95%, we are falling short of what is expected of us.

We now have solid evidence that pupils who do not attend regularly do not achieve well in their GCSE exams, this is not just a national trend but we have the evidence from last year's year 11 and 13 data to show this. Pupils who attended at least 90% of the time made progress in line with national averages. Whilst our published GCSE results are below average, those pupils who attend regularly, take part in revision and extracurricular activities perform well in their exams.

Mr Wilson and the attendance team will continue to drive on improving attendance with the full support of myself and the governors.

Uniform standards and equipment

In January, we will once again work with pupils to ensure they have the correct uniform and equipment. This is vital to ensure they are ready to learn and can make the maximum progress in their lessons. This is an ongoing activity in which we appreciate your support. Our uniform expectations policy can be found on the College website, the link can be found [here](#). This year we have also introduced a school stock of uniform to support pupils who arrive without full uniform.

I would like to thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Parent and carer voice

Thank you for taking the time to complete the parent and carer survey this term. This term we saw the most positive responses around the improvements in behaviour and culture and also in the standards of work that are being set across year groups. An area of improvement that you identified is around communication. To support this we are introducing a new link on the website that will allow parents to escalate issues directly to the senior leadership if the normal procedures have not worked.

Your feedback is really important in helping us move forward. This term's survey saw the lowest response that we have had in recent times. I would encourage you to take part in the summer term survey to ensure your voice is heard and your views have a direct influence on college developments.

Parking

During the final weeks of term, we have received a number of complaints and concerns raised regarding parking in and around the college site at the end of the school day. The majority of parents and carers are considerate in their parking, and we thank them for this. However, a significant minority give cause for concern. The School prides itself on being at the heart of our local community and considerate parking goes a long way to positively promote St Mary's in our community. The Department for Transport advises that whilst schools have control over parking on their grounds, they have no jurisdiction over parking outside the school. Nevertheless, when drivers habitually park in an inconsiderate manner, they often cause significant inconvenience and are a danger to themselves, other road users, residents and most of all, to the pupils and staff of the school. I am asking for your support in maintaining a good relationship with our neighbours and ensuring the safety of our pupils and pupils from local primary schools. Would urge all parents and carers who collect pupils in cars to park in places that the highway code considers to be safe and legal.

I would also like to bring your attention to some planned works that will install automatic gates on the vehicle and pedestrian entrances of the main car park. This will limit access to the main car park to

staff and parents who require access as part of a healthcare plan. Once we have a date for this work to start, I will share this with you.

College show

This year's college show is Buggy and will take place at the Floral Pavilion on Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th February 2024. Rehearsals have already started and from what I have seen so far it is going to be a great show. Details on how to purchase tickets will be shared in the New Year.

Leavers and starters

As we approach the end of Autumn term we unfortunately have to say goodbye to a number of staff who are moving to pastures new; Mrs Hickey, Miss McAleer, Mrs Holman, Miss Moore and Mrs Li are all leaving us to take up new roles in other schools. We are incredibly grateful for all that they have done for us at the College and I'm sure you will join me in wishing them well for the future.

When we come back in January we will also be welcoming a number of new members of staff. Miss Lee will be joining the Music department. Miss Yates will be joining our Art department, Mrs Tolley will be joining the Social Science department, Mrs Morgan will be joining our Maths department and Mrs Soskin will be joining the Arc team. I look forward to welcoming our new staff on our return in January.

We are also delighted to welcome our new parent governor, Dave Horncastle. Dave was appointed after the vote earlier this term. Dave has already visited the College and will attend his first meeting in the spring term.

End of Term 1 arrangements

St Mary's will close to students at 12:30 on Thursday 21st, December, 2023. All pupils eligible for free school meals will be able to access this provision during an extended break time (where a brunch will be available), there will also be grab bags available in the canteen at 12:30. School buses will still run at the normal time, if you are not able to make alternative arrangements for your child to get home and would like them to stay in school until 15:05 please complete this form [here](#).

The final day will also see a number of activities taking place to raise awareness and funds for Claire House, further details of the events taking place on the day can be found [here](#).

Admissions consultation

Please find a link [here](#) to my recent letter regarding our admission policy consultation.

Advent Activities, Christmas services and support of the Christmas break.

We hope that you will join us at our Christmas Carol Service this evening at 6pm at Holy Apostles and Martyrs' Parish Church. You are also invited to attend your parish church at any time during the Christmas period. Christmas eve and Christmas day Mass times for at our parish Churches please click [here](#)

A list of useful contacts that may be of some use in the coming weeks can be found [here](#). Wirral's Holiday Activity Fund also provides enriching activities, nutritious meals, and a chance for young people to meet new friends in a safe & fun environment during the college holidays. Use the [interactive map](#) to find an activity near you.

Final note

It has been a wonderful season of Advent at St Mary's that has been full of love, peace, joy and hope. We have shared in many activities that have brought joy and and now as we break for Christmas we can look forward with hope to the birth of Jesus and the light that this will bring into all of our lives. I look forward to welcoming all pupils back on Tuesday 9th January for another term of us all working together to succeed to together

I wish you all a peaceful and joyous Christmas