



"Growing Together for Life"

# The Newman Catholic Collegiate Easter 2024 Newsletter





## INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CSEL, IAN BEARDMORE



Dear parents and families,

I am thrilled to present to you our Easter newsletter, showcasing the many achievements and celebrating the outstanding work happening across all our schools. At the heart of our mission is to provide each child with lifelong, joyful memories. Together, as a united MAC family, we are dedicated to offering your children the finest education and pastoral care opportunities.

We understand the challenges facing families during the current cost of living crisis. Despite this, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the substantial funds raised and continuing support for our chosen charity this term, Father Hudson's Homes.

I am immensely grateful to our dedicated staff whose tireless commitment enriches the lives of our pupils and families within the MAC. It is truly heartening to see the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the recent staff survey, reflecting the professional development opportunities we provide. There is a profound sense of pride in our schools and deep appreciation for the mutual support we offer. I am particularly pleased that the vast majority of our staff take pride in being part of The Newman Catholic Collegiate.

Congratulations are in order for Our Lady and St. Benedict's on their Outstanding Ofsted judgement. While our focus is not solely on Ofsted, external recognition reaffirms the dedication and excellence of our work. With this latest achievement, all our schools are now rated as good or better, with four graded as outstanding. This is a testament to our collective ethos of "Growing together for life." I am not aware of another group of schools with such a high proportion of Outstanding schools.

You may have noticed the launch of new websites

for all our primary schools.

These platforms aim to provide our families with the necessary information, and we welcome any feedback to further improve our information and communication.

I extend my gratitude for your support in our efforts to improve attendance. While attendance rates across the country are a concern, I am pleased that our attendance remains strong. As we approach the summer, I urge you to prioritise regular school attendance and avoid booking holidays or outings during term time. To recognise and incentivise punctuality and attendance, all schools within the collegiate will reward children with 100% attendance with a fully funded day out—an extraordinary accomplishment marking a year without any absences.

In closing, I wish you all a joyful and blessed Easter. Through His resurrection, Jesus offers us a new beginning and conquers death for us all. I encourage you to join us in celebrating His love and mercy by attending Mass during this Easter period. His boundless forgiveness guides us on our journey through life's complexities.

God Bless  
**Mr Ian Beardmore**  
Catholic Senior Executive Leader

# ST GEORGE & ST MARTIN WIN COVETED AWARD

This term, the school has achieved the CAFOD LiveSimply Award.

The LiveSimply Award is an opportunity for Catholic communities - parishes, schools, religious orders and chaplaincies - to respond to Pope Francis' invitation in Laudato Si' to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us".

The LiveSimply Award is earned by communities and schools who can show how they have been living:

- simply
- in solidarity with people in poverty
- sustainably with creation.

The award celebrates what you have already done and inspires you to do more. It helps your

community to live, not just more simply, but also more fully.



# LIVING SIMPLY – CREATE A PRAYER GARDEN

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

Luke 11:1 – 4

The Eco Club developed a prayer garden. They positioned a statue of Mary and created a cross made from used bottle tops.

Children have used the prayer garden in their classes during prayer and liturgy.

This year the school has launched Inspire days, so that during the year each year group has a morning session where families are able to come and spend time learning about a particular RE focus and then take part in prayer and liturgy. These sessions are aimed at supporting families in understanding

different aspects of our RE curriculum and also support families in how to pray.



# LIVE SUSTAINABLY – FORM AN ECO CLUB

*And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*

Genesis 1:31

So far in 2023-24, the school's Eco Club has:

- Replanted and added to the planters done last year.
- Researched animals that live in the local area.
- Set up bird feeders, including window ones.
- Started research on science project – what impact will plants have on the school?
- Achieved for Ruby Robin award as part of songbird survival.
- Set up a school pond.



# LIVE IN SOLIDARITY – LINKS WITH LOCAL FOOD BANK

*Love one another as I have loved you*

John 13:34

Each year, as part of the school's Harvest Service, they collect items for their local Food Bank.

Prior to this, they have a volunteer from the local Food Bank to deliver an assembly to the children explaining what the Food Bank is and what they do.

The Head Boy and Head Girl took part in a visit to the Food Bank to see what happens to the food the school donates. They also helped to sort the food.

The school's permanent collection point has donations all year round and is emptied

periodically. It has also worked with the church to have a collection point in church.



# OUR LADY AND ST BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY RECEIVES OUTSTANDING OFSTED REPORT

Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Academy (OLSB) is celebrating, having received a highly coveted Outstanding report across the board from Ofsted.

The school is now only one of six primary schools in Stoke-on-Trent to have earned a place in the exclusive "Ofsted Outstanding" club.

Having previously been rated as "Requires Improvements" in 2019, Headteacher, Sarah Clowes, who has been in post for 16 months, has worked tirelessly to make "rapid improvements" as noted in the latest report.

These improvements have paid off which has put OLSB in a unique position. Almost 0% of schools catapulted from Requires Improvement to Outstanding\* last year, OLSB broke the mould with this achievement.

Mrs Clowes said: "We are all immensely proud. I am delighted that the hard work and dedication of all of the staff has been recognised by Ofsted and they have clearly seen the very special place that OLSB is 'where love shines brightly'."

The Ofsted report has awarded OLSB Outstanding across the board, which includes: Overall effectiveness; Quality of education; Behaviour and attitudes; Personal development; Leadership and management; and Early years provision.

One excerpt from the report recognises the effectiveness of the school's values: "Strong relationships are at the heart of this inspirational



school. The school's values are lived out by leaders, staff and pupils. Pupils appreciate the caring ethos of the school, and they are inspired to achieve. Pupils are known, loved and feel safe. The school goes out of its way to connect with pupils' families who are met with understanding and compassion."

Mrs Clowes added: "For our wonderful children and extended school community this is nothing more than they deserve. We are very proud to be part of The Newman Catholic Collegiate who have supported the school on its journey to Outstanding. It has been a huge team effort where rapid improvements have taken place which are allowing our children to flourish."

The exemplary behaviour of the pupils at OLSB was also highlighted throughout the report with findings which include: "Pupils thrive as a result of the rapid improvements that have been made to the curriculum."



"Pupil behaviour is impeccable. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. There are harmonious relationships between pupils.

Pupils are confident that if there are any problems between them, they will be quickly sorted out."

OLSB is the fourth school in the Collegiate to achieve an Outstanding judgement from Ofsted. Catholic Senior Executive Leader, Ian Beardmore, commented: "Mrs Clowes is a perfect example of what can be achieved within the school community working with The Newman Catholic Collegiate to drive improvements so each and every child achieves their full potential."

"Mrs Clowes has been in the role for 16 months and has had an incredible impact, she is an inspirational leader. All the staff, pupils and school community have worked together to develop a curriculum and educational environment in which its pupils can thrive. We're proud that OLSB is part of our Collegiate and look forward to seeing Mrs Clowes and her supporting team continue to drive improvements."

A further quote from Ofsted highlighted the strength of the school leaders:

"Leaders at all levels are clearly focussed on ensuring that all pupils succeed and that any

barriers to success are removed. This shared vision has been instrumental in enabling the school to make rapid progress. The actions of leaders have made a huge contribution to the outstanding education that is provided."

The Ofsted inspection was carried out during November and the full report is available on the Ofsted website.



# ST WILFRID'S TOP 3 SCHOOL IN STOKE-ON-TRENT!

Pupils in Y3 and Y4 participated in the annual TimesTable RockStar (TTRS) Competition led by the Stoke-on-Trent Excellence Partnership. The competition sets out to find the most dedicated Times Table Rockstar pupils across the city.

For three days in February, all pupils competed against each other by answering as many questions as possible online via the TTRS online application. The competition was open from 7am - 7pm on each day of the competition. For every correct answer that the pupils scored, they earned themselves and their school a point. The winning schools were those that scored the highest average across all their pupils.

St Wilfrid's dedicated time to the competition at regular points across the three days and encouraged its pupils to participate as much as they could at home outside of school hours.

Out of the 50 primary schools that entered the competition, St Wilfrid's came 3rd overall, which is its highest position to date and a fantastic achievement by all the pupils. Y4 class finished 7th out of 175 participating classes and one particular pupil, Aleena Rehman, came 2nd out of 3,329 pupils who took part!

**What an achievement! We are extremely proud of all the children who competed.**



# ST MARY'S IN TOP 3% IN THE COUNTRY FOR PHONICS

On 14 January, the school received a letter from Damian Hinds, the Minister for Education, extending congratulations to the entire school family on the performance of the school in the phonics screening check for Year One, conducted back in June 2023. St. Mary's positioned itself in the top 3% of schools nationwide!

With an impressive 97% of its Year One class passing the phonics screening check, we couldn't be prouder of their efforts. This recognition serves as a reminder of the fantastic teaching team, supportive parents, and amazing children that make up our St. Mary's family.

To share its joy and success, the school posted a copy of the letter on its social media platform. But the excitement didn't end there! They were lucky to be visited by Radio Stoke, giving the teachers and children the opportunity to share their experiences and insights. And guess what? They even secured a spot on live radio and an article on the BBC News website! The overwhelming support and pride from within and beyond the school community has been truly heartening.

This letter of commendation is not just about numbers; it's about celebrating the collective effort and dedication that defines St. Mary's. It's a testament to its collaborative spirit and commitment to excellence.



# OUR LADY OF GRACE CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

On 12 March, Our Lady of Grace gathered at English Martyrs' Church to celebrate The Sacrament of Confirmation with Canon Paul McNally and its very own Father Julian. The children were gracious as they received this next significant step in their spiritual journey. They embraced their role thoughtfully and with great maturity as they received the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The candidates said that they all felt empowered to spread the Gospel message and make a positive impact in their communities. Stan added that during his preparation to receive this sacrament he particularly enjoyed choosing his Saint, getting to learn about their lives and the impact that they made on us as Christians.

Olivia felt the support of her family was invaluable and Aiden agreed saying that his Sponsor was just as Father Julian had put it his 'Back stop' who would always be a role model and an example of Jesus to him.

It was such a special time of celebration and commitment, as candidates affirmed their faith surrounded by their family and friends as they embark on a lifelong journey of discipleship, guided by the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.



# ST PETER'S CHILDREN GET CREATIVE...

As we journey through Lent, St. Peter's has been reflecting on its duty of alms-giving and the school has been working hard toward the collegiate's efforts to raise money for Father Hudson's 'Good Shepherd Appeal'. Its Good Samaritan group began the week with a cake sale before the school moved on to the class fundraising activities.

Children at St. Peter's were keen to get creative this year and decided to do things a little differently... Each class devised their own way to raise money, arranging separate events based on their own passions and interests. All their efforts culminated on Friday 8 March for an exciting afternoon of fundraising. The results were absolutely fabulous:

- Year 1** undertook a sponsored school grounds litter pick and planting session.
- Year 2** went for a sponsored walk.
- Year 3** opted for a sponsored penalty shootout.
- Year 4** enjoyed a sponsored basketball shootout.
- Year 5** decided on a sponsored silence... and they managed it!
- Year 6** chose to contribute to the local environment with a sponsored litter pick.

Thank you to all staff and children who were involved - your fundraising efforts really do make a difference.



# SURVIVAL SCHOOL IS A HUGE SUCCESS AT ST. JOHN'S!

In September, St. John's welcomed Peak District Survival School to deliver a forest school programme in line with the foundation subjects in its curriculum. Mr Fox and Mr Gee have been working with all children across the school to engage the children in a new way of learning at St. John's. The children have been enjoying lots of outdoor learning in the school's very own forest school area and amphitheatre.

In EYFS, Nursery became Spring explorers, looking for the signs of Spring. They have been using bottles to catch rainfall and comparing the amounts. Nursery have been looking at habitats of different animals within the woodland area. It is safe to say there was a lot of mud involved!

Reception became woodland explorers looking for signs of Autumn, looking carefully at the different bark and leaves on the trees, creating their own rubbings. They became bug hunters and thought about how seasons and the weather effects where animals live.

In KS1, Y1 became different animals from the story of the little red hen, thinking about the seeds and the crops and the making of the bread. They used the natural resources from their woodland walk to create a jam for Grandma! Y1 looked at different animals and how to track them, thinking about the wolf from the story and how and when they would travel. Y2 became local historians, thinking about the Potteries in the past. They used the woodland area to make their own clay pots and create their own fire for the kiln for these. They looked at the local history of Kidsgrove and created fires again to cook their own local oatcakes - delicious! They went on a trip to Middleport Pottery to finish off their investigative work!

In KS2, Y3 became Stone Age Hunter Gatherers in the woodland area preparing Stone Age shelters and fires, making Stone Age tools and learning



how they tracked and trapped animals. No animals were trapped or harmed in Y3's adventures! On their adventures they looked at Stone Age drawings and cave pictures. Y4 became Roman soldiers, turning the woodland area into a Roman camp. They used their orienteering skills to be like the armies, making and following maps. They also looked at stories through Roman paintings. The class were able to look at different Roman artefacts including coins, jewellery and weapons. In the Spring term they went off site to complete a local river study, there were a few wet children that day!

Y5 became Anglo-Saxons looking at how they travelled and created "Sail Shelters". They looked at different tools used outside of battle and created and understood the importance of fire for these people. The children worked together to create their own Anglo-Saxon drink of mead! Y6 have further developed their map and orienteering skills using a compass to find different areas within the school and woodland grounds. They have lots more adventures planned for the summer!

The Survival School programme has further enhanced the children's learning experiences using the outdoor environment and allowed additional elements to the school's teaching. We're very excited to find out where their next adventures will take them!



# ST JOSEPH'S RECEIVE MODESHIFT STARS ACCREDITATION

St Joseph's Catholic Academy is very proud to have, once again, received the Modeshift Stars Accreditation for its Travel Plan 2024. This award recognises the hard work that children, staff and parents invest in improving the physical and mental health of pupils by encouraging active travel to school and making the area around school as safe as possible.

The school held a number of events to achieve the accreditation including:

## Hiking with a Viking.

Children and families were encouraged to park a little further away from school and walk the last leg of the journey, accompanied by a Viking character. The Viking then led an interactive, engaging and hilarious assembly for all of the children to learn more about the Vikings and the importance of walking to school.

## Y2 and Y3 Learn to Ride Club After School.

Children learned to ride a bike without stabilisers so that they are confident to ride to and from school.

## Scooter Skills Day.

This in school session increased children's confidence in scooting safely so that they can travel to school in a more active way.

## Be Bright, Be Seen assembly.

To help children to understand how to scoot or cycle safely to school during the winter months.





# NINE SCHOOLS, ONE VOICE



The Music Team across the Collegiate have much to share with you again this term. At the start of term in January, children from all our schools had the opportunity to perform as part of a 6000-voice massed choir at the Young Voices concert in Birmingham. Soon after, children from three academies worked with the composer Richard Taylor and various musicians from the Manchester Camerata Orchestra to compose a song for a retelling of The Enormous Crocodile by Roald Dahl. The final performance with other schools showcased a wide range of song styles and was enjoyed by an audience of parents and friends. The children were so patient on the journey, especially those who were so seriously delayed on the motorway that they unfortunately missed the performance.

It was truly delightful to see and hear all our recorder players filling the stalls area at the Victoria Hall at the Recorder Festival. Current Sixth-former at St Margaret Ward, Leah Fahey was asked to perform with the professional guest Anna Davies between the massed items. The quality of the children's performances this year was very good, as they paid attention to detail and showed that practice can indeed make perfect! We are proud of our recorder clubs which use a range of sizes of recorder, further developing the talent that is nurtured in whole class first access lessons.

The Stoke and Staffordshire Young musician 2024 competitions are underway with a very healthy number of competitors from collegiate schools. We wish good luck to those competing in the finals next term, including our own junior brass winner.

Choirs from St Joseph's and St George and St Martin also performed at the more intimate setting of the Mitchell Memorial Theatre for Stoke's Gotta Sing 2024.

In schools, our younger students have presented performances such as a Dragon Parade for Lunar New Year, Mother's Day Assembly songs and Easter Bonnet Parades. As we approach Easter, our thoughts turn to our Lord's passion and students at St Joseph's will again perform excerpts from the "Born for This" production.



# FIRST TECH CHAMPIONS!

On Thursday 7th March, 11 schools sent teams to visit St Margaret Ward to take part in the First TECH Challenge tournament.

Throughout the day, the teams showcase their robots, with judging interviews and inspections, qualifying matches, alliances, semi-finals and finals – with all teams hoping to take one of three places available at the National Championship.

Read more about SMWCA's activities this term in their own newsletter [here!](#)



# COLLEGIATE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the Spring term, groups of Collegiate teachers have continued to meet to develop and extend our exciting and progressive curriculum, covering all strands of the National Curriculum. The aim of our ambitious and innovative curriculum takes all children in the Newman Catholic Collegiate on a learning journey that stretches from Early Years, throughout Key Stages One and Two and into Key Stages Three, Four and Five at St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy.

Subject leaders from the Collegiate's nine schools meet on a termly basis to develop their curriculum planning, share excellent teaching and learning strategies and work together in the design and creation of bespoke resources.

This ensures that our children are learning from a challenging curriculum that builds on previous learning and prepares them well for the next year of education, and in doing so ensures that repetition and any wasted time are avoided.

Outcomes from this term's curriculum development include securing £14,000 of computing training, the design of a Key Stage Two Shakespeare unit of work, a practical hands-on Art workshop, the creation of a travelling Geography library, the introduction of local history sources relating to each of our schools and a Y5 to Y8 Power Maths transition programme – all for the benefit of our staff and of our pupils as they move through the Collegiate.



# CHARITY WORK



## ST GEORGE & ST MARTIN

Each St George & St Martin class chose their own sponsored event. They included a sponsored silence, a sponsored obstacle course, a sponsored run, and a sponsored penalty shootout.



## ST WILFRID'S

St Wilfrid's has responded enthusiastically to the call to raise money for Fr Hudson's charity this term.

Each pupil has committed to doing all they can to raise money individually for the Good Shepherd Appeal and their donations have been coming into school throughout Lent. The school has accepted the challenge from the Birmingham Diocese to raise £1 per pupil. On top of this, select groups of pupils have organised and led their own charity stalls to raise money for Fr Hudson's. The pupils have held Bake Sales and Toy Stalls, organised 'Guess the teddy's name' competitions, and even sold their own homemade loom band bracelets to their fellow pupils during break and lunchtimes.



## OUR LADY & ST BENEDICT

This Lent OLSB joined school children all over the Archdiocese to raise money for Father Hudson's Care.

### The school:

- Collected coins in specially designed envelopes.
- Held a school disco.
- Took part in the pledge a pound initiative.
- Took part in a Lent Walk to Hulton Abbey.
- They also be collected any change for the charity in buckets.



## ST JOSEPH'S

The children and staff of St Joseph's enjoyed an Easter Egg Hunt, organised a cake sale and collected loose change to raise money for the Father Hudson's charity this term. At the Easter Egg Hunt, families worked together with their children to find all the clues and solve the riddle "How does the Easter Bunny keep fit? He does eggercise." The St Joseph's Catholic Life Leaders organised a cake sale (and some of them baked cakes too) and everyone collected loose change in collection bags.



## ST PETER'S

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## ST MARY'S / OUR LADY OF GRACE

Our Lady of Grace and St Mary's Academy's Mini Vinnies set up a 'selling stall' in their own time where they successfully sold a number of donated knitted chicks filled with a Creme Egg.



They raised money for charity fulfilling their Lenten promise and all the children at both schools enjoyed buying the chicks during their break time and taking them home to share with their families.



## ST JOHN'S

St. John's have been fundraising for Father Hudson's too.

### This term they fundraised with:

- Good Shepherd appeal money bags.
- A non-uniform day which included bringing in a chocolate egg or £1.
- A Raffle which included an Easter egg hamper per class.
- Giving of time in the local community.
- Delivering local care home prayer services.
- Completing a local area litter pick.

THE COMBINED TOTAL OF THE NEWMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGIATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS SO FAR IS:

**£2,650**



“Growing Together for Life”

## AND FINALLY!

As we come to the end of this term, we wish you a blessed Easter filled with the love and mercy of our risen Lord.

Our schools re-open on  
**Monday 8 April 2024.**

