

“Everyone succeeds – no excuses, no exceptions”

Head's Welcome

Hello, and welcome to our first ever St T's newsletter!

I cannot believe how fast this year has gone! It only seems like yesterday when I was writing to our primary school parents and carers wishing a warm welcome to St Thomas's family. Even more so difficult to believe, it's been three years since I came to St Thomas's Centre, and together as a school we have achieved so much. It's true to say we have come a long way! We are very proud of our pupils progress from primary right through to Key stage 4.

So much has been achieved over the past year – some of which will be celebrated in this our first newsletter.

As I write we are busy planning for the next academic year, staff are busy looking at our school self-evaluation and ensuring our school development plan continues to focus on gaining the very best outcomes for our young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support over the last year – together we really can achieve the very best. As we head towards the summer and thankfully better weather – if it stays! I would like to wish you everyone a very happy and safe summer holidays and look forward to celebrating successful results for our year 11 pupils in August – further details will be sent closer to the time.

SMSC days throughout the year.

Each half term we suspend our normal curriculum and take part in a day to celebrate diversity and embed Fundamental British values within our school. Pupils and staff thoroughly enjoy these days as you can see from the pictures on our school website. This year we have taken part in the following days.

Half term 1: Rules of law

Half term 2: House of Commons outreach visit

Half term 3: Online safety

Half term 4: Industry morning

Half term 5: Cultural awareness day

Half term 6: Health and sport

Our Faculty leaders are currently working hard planning our SMSC days for the next academic year – more information will be sent closer to the time.

Academic Review days

Thank you to all parents who have supported our academic days throughout the year – we will continue to host these valuable days throughout the next academic year. Attendance of parents and carers are really important in setting both academic and social targets.

Provision leaders will contact parents in advance of these meeting to set convenient times.

Lots to celebrate and so much more to look forward to!

It's this section of the newsletter I pass over to the rest of my senior leadership team to share our successes over the academic year and give you a sneak preview into the year ahead!

Tricia Walker and Janet Donnelly – Our Deputy Headteachers

Tricia Walker

Staff have been working hard on the timetable for 2016 -17, we have introduced several new elements that will further develop important skills for learning, employment and life. The Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) for Keystage 4 students will offer a range of activities and personal challenges.

New qualifications for Keystage 4 students in 2016 -1 7 include: The Junior Sports leader award, a social media Btec (working with a local business) and an outdoor qualification working with colleagues from Brockholes Nature Reserve.

Our Apple educator has installed our apple server and has delivered training to school staff to develop skills in the use of the ipad within the classroom. We have purchased a new bank of the latest up to date ipads and we look forward to seeing them in action next year.

Janet Donnelly

Students have been learning about how behaviour affects social situations and being sensitive to the feelings, views and needs of others. This year we have taken part in Mental Health awareness week where the focus was on relationships. Across the school pupils were focusing on random acts of kindness and how this impacts on the welfare of others. We have also been working on building resilience in our students. We have done this through building a sense of belonging and identity and will be building on this further next year. Building resilience is a way of helping our young people cope with the changes and difficulties that are a normal part of life and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and attitude to cope with adversity, preparing them for their future.

Sue Armson and Cheryl Williams Cocoran – KS4 North Provision leader and Faculty leader

We have celebrated the fantastic success of two year 10 students who have taken their European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) a year early. ECDL is the industry standard qualification for competency within ICT and is equivalent to a GCSE. These two student achieved an A* and A respectively – we are so proud of them. We also have great successes in yr 11 with two students achieving a grade A and one student achieving a grade B – again so proud!

Frances Dore and Billy Begum – KS4 South Provision leader and Faculty leader

Pupils from Year 10 took part in the Borough's 'Dragons Den' competition. Presenting to the panel of judges at Youth Zone. Pupils created a presentation to make awareness of community cohesion and promote equality and diversity. Through the project called Project BBC, "Blackburn's Beautiful Colours". St Thomas's Pupils came with a unique idea and name for the project. The presentation was to raise awareness to help people build lives for people from different communities. Pupils to work with refugees and build the Blackburn community charity service.

We continue to work hard to make our school an even more effective and enjoyable place to be. We are working with our students to create a peace room in the provision that offers a place to relax. It

will have a library and lots of information to support well-being. We are also planning lots more activities and clubs such as the newly created cookery club.

David England, Simon Clarkson and Lorraine Grime – KS3 Provision leader and Faculty leaders

Well done to the Year 7 pupils who completed some creative and thoughtful pieces of poetry around the theme of 'being a teenager'. As well as exploring the creative writing techniques, this activity led to some engaging and reflective discussion within the group. Their poems have been entered into a national poetry competition and used to create a display at Darwen, to show what great ideas our pupils have. A class prize was also given.

From early July, linking into KS4, we are also looking at incorporating Forest School learning into the KS3 curriculum, allowing our pupils to develop key skills outside the classroom environment. This innovative and exciting initiative will enable our pupils to build relationships and social skills, to further enhance their emotional maturity and resilience – valuable life skills!

Towards the end of this term, KS3 year 9 pupils will be joining their fellow students at KS4 in Blackburn and making a start on their GCSE courses. We are all very pleased with the progress that has been made by our year 9 students at St Thomas this year. On behalf of all staff, we would like to wish all our Year 9 pupils every success as they prepare to embark on this new exciting chapter in their education.

Charlotte Rolfe and Adelle Brown – Primary provision leader and Faculty leader

The primary children have had an exciting year. Since our curriculum is topic based, I would like to share these topics with you:

Ourselves, Celebration, Inventors and Inventions, Planet Earth, Heroes, Gardening and Growing.

We have established a stable safe environment concentrating on the nurturing aspects of the curriculum. This includes the children's social and emotional wellbeing.

The children have particularly like the themed days we have done in line with our SMSC curriculum.

We have had several successful returns to mainstream school and look forward to improving on this next year.

Next year we are going to hold curriculum topic days where parents will be invited to attend the introduction of that topic. We look forward to seeing you there.

Helen Knight and Victoria Burnside – SENCo and Outreach manager

Work to give our pupils that extra bit of help has been happening all through the year. Several pupils have had successful Education and Health care plans, and some have reintegrated to mainstream schools with the extra support they need to succeed. Some of our pupils are now enjoying successful placements in specialist schools in and around the Blackburn with Darwen area.

Building update

Amanda leaver our school Business manager and her site team have been busy over this year, ensuring our school sites are developed to the highest standards. Developments over the last academic year include: the refurbishment of our Darwen Campus and the on-going improvements we continue to make for our younger pupils. At our Blackburn Campus we have had a new heating boiler installed.

Staff news

As ever in a busy school over the past academic year we have had staff leaving for pastures new! It's always hard to say goodbye to staff at St Thomas's as we really do become part of a bigger family. We wish these staff the very best of luck in the future, and know they will remain friends of St Thomas's.

This year we have welcomed new colleagues who have settled in well and it seems like they have been here forever!

We have some special news as we head towards the end of the summer term, Nat one of our teachers within North provision gets married over the summer – we look forward to celebrating with her and her soon to be husband Marc.

We wish Ambrose the very best of luck as he leaves St T's to take up a PGCE opportunity in primary teaching – we know you will be fabulous!

Finally on a sad note for St T's Helen (our school SENCo) retires this summer, Helen is a loyal, trusted and valued member of our school team and will be a great loss. On a personal note but I know it will be echoed by the whole team Thank You Helen for all you have done for colleagues, pupils and families – enjoy your retirement! Do not be a stranger.

New colleagues will be joining St T's during the autumn term I will introduce these colleagues in our Autumn newsletter.

And Finally

As you read this newsletter, the year 11 exam series will be over and classes will have followed our transition programme into new classes or key stages. Our year 6 pupils in particular will be preparing for transition to high school – we wish them every success.

Please dates for next academic year on school website.