



St Mary's Catholic School Sixth Form Prospectus 2021 / 2022

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Welcome

We are delighted that you are considering joining St Mary's Sixth Form as a place to continue your studies. We recognise that this stage in your life is crucial in developing key skills, personal qualities and academic qualifications, in preparation for life beyond school, whether you plan to progress to university, further education or the workplace. Whether you're moving up from our main school or joining us from elsewhere, our Sixth Form offers a highly distinctive experience.

Being the only mixed Catholic Sixth Form in the city, our Sixth Form is a vibrant and energetic place to study. Sixth Form life involves much more than simply academic study. At St Mary's, we are proud of the provision we offer, which allows students to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge, as well as providing many opportunities for students to develop as individuals in a more social, moral and spiritual sense.

Our Sixth Form is characterised by its strong sense of community, and wide-ranging curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. We have an outstanding Sixth Form Study Base, a highly dedicated team of teachers and leaders, as well as a highly talented and industrious student body, characterised by its enthusiasm, talents and intelligence.

Ethos

As a Sixth Form that is proud of its Catholic tradition, our ethos is very important. We are a very caring and supportive community where every student is valued and where every student's talents and interests are nurtured and encouraged. With around 250 students in our Sixth Form, every individual is known extremely well by the leadership team and form tutors, making our Sixth Form an extremely supportive place to study.

Students are given many opportunities to explore and develop in faith, whether that is through contributing to form assemblies, leading prayers or using the opportunities to develop faith, through Masses, pilgrimage and the Pope John Paul II Award. Our Faith in Action is seen through much of the work we do. Students regularly make contributions to charitable fundraising, by organising events such as cake sales, car washes and other events, and Sixth Form students make a significant contribution to the care and support offered in the main school. Students in our Sixth Form are trained Peer Mentors and reading coaches who help support

students in younger year groups who are vulnerable or require support.

Achievement

At St Mary's, we are proud of the excellent exam results students achieve year on year. A-level results are now among the very highest in the north-east. Over the last three years, the A-level pass rate has averaged 99.3%. An impressive 40% of all A-level entries were A*-A, 66% A*-B and 87% A*-C. Remarkably, 14 of St Mary's A-level students each achieved straight A*-As in their A-levels last year, which is an outstanding achievement.

Vocational A-levels are equally impressive. The pass rate has been 100% over the last three years, and an incredible 77% of entries were Distinctions or starred Distinctions, with 98% at Merit level or higher.

In recent years a number of students have gained places at Oxford and Cambridge to read Medicine, Modern Languages, Linguistics, Literature, Education, Mathematics, History and Politics with more than half the cohort going off to other Russell Group universities.

Opportunities

There are many exciting opportunities for students to take up over the course of their time in our Sixth Form. We believe that it is important that students develop a broad set of social and leadership skills, as well as their academic skills, to prepare them for the next stage in their lives. In a competitive market, we seek to ensure that our students stand out from their peers. For example, students are offered opportunities to get involved with the Career Ready Scheme, Service Tasks, charitable work throughout the city and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Life in the Sixth Form is busy and exciting. There is an atmosphere of focus and direction, but also a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. The support for sixth formers begins now, in Year 11, as we work with students and their families to ensure students are placed on appropriate courses that are suitable and that are linked to students' career aspirations.

From this prospectus, you will get a strong sense of what is on offer at our distinctive Sixth Form. However, should you wish to discuss any aspect of the Sixth Form in more detail, you are more than welcome to contact the Sixth Form team at the school. We look forward to working with students in Year 11 and their families to ensure a smooth and enjoyable transition into the Sixth Form.

Miss Patterson
Headteacher

Mr McKeating
Assistant Headteacher



Sixth Form Ethos

St Mary's Sixth Form is a unique place to study and has a distinctive ethos. It is the only mixed Catholic Sixth Form in the city and we take seriously our responsibility to nurture the Faith in our young people. Students from diverse cultures, faiths and ethnic backgrounds are welcomed equally and add to the richness of our community.

We believe that it is our duty to offer a variety of experiences for our students, so that they can develop as dignified and fulfilled young people who can leave our Sixth Form as well-rounded individuals ready to make a positive contribution to society.

Every day, students have the opportunity to join their form tutors and peers in Morning Prayer. There are regular opportunities for collective worship throughout the year in the form of special Liturgies for all students at important times in the Church's year such as Advent and Lent, as well as voluntary Masses.



are vulnerable or need support.

Our Sixth Form has a supportive atmosphere and, although we are a distinctively Catholic Sixth Form, we welcome and celebrate students from a range of other faith backgrounds too.

Our students have high aspirations and so there is a strong focus on achievement and diligence. For example, during study periods, our students stay on site to work independently and continue their studies.



Sixth Form students have the opportunity to lead justice and peace groups and work. They are also given the opportunity to take part in pilgrimage and the Pope John Paul II Award. This award recognises the work young people undertake in their local, school and parish communities, where they have used their God-given talents in order to serve others. We believe firmly in putting our faith into action, and students do this in a variety of ways. Students also enjoy a spiritual 'Day of Aspiration' at the start of Year 12.

In recent years, students have worked closely with a range of charity organisations to raise awareness of the troubles women face in Kenya or the crisis in the Congo, as well as supporting charities such as CAFOD and Macmillan by organising fund-raising events. Our students also demonstrate their faith by taking on supportive roles in school to help younger students who



Personal support

The transition into Sixth Form can sometimes seem daunting. Specialising in certain subjects, and being expected to be able to work autonomously and prioritising work, can be difficult for some. To support this transition, students have daily contact with their Form Tutor who will be experienced in supporting students and helping them to achieve their absolute best.

The relationship between the Form Tutor and student is essential to success in the Sixth Form, as tutors will monitor and support students throughout the two years of their studies. They will work with their tutees, getting to know them well as individuals, helping to nurture their talents and interests as well as supporting them academically. Form Tutors will have the holistic overview of how our students are progressing in the Sixth Form and they will be the first point of contact if parents or students have any concerns or problems.



As well as a Form Tutor, students are currently supported by two Assistant Sixth Form Leaders (each dedicated to either Year 12 or Year 13), and an Assistant Headteacher. As key leaders in the school, they work with students and their families to ensure their needs are met. They will monitor students' pastoral and academic progress very closely to ensure all students are fully supported in reaching their full potential.

We work closely with parents and carers to ensure all of our students' needs are met. We are very happy to discuss with parents any aspect of your child's needs and development at any point throughout the course of the year.

Financial support

16-19 Bursary

Students at St Mary's have the opportunity to apply for financial support to help them continue with their Sixth Form studies. The 16-19 Bursary was introduced by the Government and payment should be used to help students fund such things as:

- Travel to and from school
- Stationery
- Travelling to university open days
- Books and revision guides

Bursaries are available to those students in the following categories:

- Students from a household where the total income is below £27,000 before tax and National Insurance
- Students in care
- Students who have left care having been in care for a minimum of 3 months since the age of 14
- Students whose parents are receiving income support
- Students whose parents are receiving both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

Applications open in July 2021 and should usually be submitted electronically by the end of October. More information on this can be found at www.newcastle.gov.uk.

Students from other schools

We warmly invite students who have studied their GCSEs at other schools to apply to our Sixth Form. The process is straightforward. Complete an application form, available from the school website, and submit it to the school by the end of February 2021. Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, you will either be invited into school or have a remote meeting to meet with Mr McKeating, Assistant Headteacher, to discuss aspects of your application and to discuss your options. Any offer of a place at St Mary's will be subject to entry requirements being met for specific courses and to receiving good references from your current school.



“I felt at ease immediately at St Mary's, like I always belonged here. The staff were really welcoming as were the students. Choosing to come here was the best choice I have ever made as St Mary's has helped me to develop my character and given me a chance to succeed.”

“The quality of the pastoral care is excellent and results in outstanding personal development and well-being.”

Ofsted

Nurturing High Ambition

St Mary's Sixth Form prides itself on creating a learning culture of high expectation, where all students are actively encouraged to maximise their potential. In doing so, we believe our students leave us as confident, articulate and caring people who are well-equipped with the academic skills to succeed and flourish in higher education or the workplace. At St Mary's, students attend lessons that are stimulating and challenging and, as an inclusive school, we endeavour to ensure that the needs of our talented and ambitious students are met in a variety of ways.

We are extremely proud of the academic achievement of our students. St Mary's Sixth Form has a track record for high achievement by the most able who consistently achieve grades A*/A in their chosen subjects at A-level. Students mostly achieve A*-B grades in the most demanding subjects.

As well as ensuring our students are catered for through excellent teaching in lessons, our talented and ambitious students have recently been involved in a variety of opportunities.

- The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), to develop and strengthen study skills in an area of a student's own choosing. Students research a topic, evaluate sources, and prepare a 5,000-word-long essay. Guided by a mentor, students have to work autonomously to

complete this original piece of work and, as such, an EPQ is highly regarded by universities.

- Attending subject-specific lectures and workshops at local universities.
- Reece Scholarships, which are awarded to students who show an aptitude in and talent for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects, and who have an interest in pursuing Engineering at university. This prestigious award gives students the opportunity to work with companies on 'live' engineering tasks. Students have to work collaboratively and present their work to leading engineering firms. Students are awarded £400 throughout their time in Year 12 and Year 13.
- A thorough programme to prepare a high-quality Oxbridge and Russell Group university application, including residential visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities and mock interviews.
- Successful summer school placements at various leading universities including the Durham Progression Scheme and UNIQ, the summer school at Oxford University. Student involvement with the Sutton Trust Programme has allowed students to experience university summer school in America. Students have applied to leading universities in America with the support of the Sutton Trust.



Progression

At St Mary's, we take very seriously the responsibility that we have to ensure students are well-prepared for whatever they plan to do after school. Whether that is university, an apprenticeship or a job, we want our students to use the skills they develop during their time with us.

We have an excellent record for students securing places at their first-choice university. For those who decide that university is not for them, we have an employability group that meets a designated member of staff regularly to discuss interview techniques and CV writing. Students are supported as they attempt to secure apprenticeships, internships and employment.

Our significant revamp of the Sixth Form area, that opened in September 2018, includes a cafe-style work area, group study room, and dedicated learning resource centres with ICT facilities and it has proven to be a huge success with the Sixth Form students. This new space is a very impressive addition to our outstanding facilities.



Curriculum 2021-2022

From September 2021

Each year, we welcome approximately 130-150 students into the Sixth Form. This group is largely made up of students from our current Year 11 with, additionally, a small number of students who join us from other local schools.

Students joining us in September will be placed on a pathway that you can read about in further detail below. For most, this will involve studying 3 A-levels, or their equivalent, during Year 12 and Year 13. A very small number of students may opt for 4 A-levels. For students starting Year 12 in September 2021, all A-levels will be linear. This will involve studying for courses for which the content is assessed entirely by examination at the end of Year 13 in June 2023. Choosing the right pathway and subjects is, therefore, vitally important.

Pathways

We work closely with all students to give them individual guidance on their subject choices. It is very important that students start with an appropriate programme of study. We have to balance a number of elements, including aspirations and interests, with the relative difficulty of courses in order to ensure that our students leave St Mary's having achieved their full potential.

We use a range of national data in order to identify the relative difficulty of subjects. This information is then used to guide students towards choosing a suite of subjects for which they are suitable. At St Mary's we offer the following pathways to students:

- 3 A-levels and an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)
- 3 A-levels
- A combination of A-levels and vocational courses
- 3 vocational courses.

Students are directed towards a pathway and advised to pick subjects based on their GCSE performance and their average GCSE grade. Many students at St Mary's complete 3 A-levels and an EPQ.

Entry Requirements

Students who join our Sixth Form do so voluntarily. In signing up for Sixth Form, therefore, students agree to abide by all of the general requirements of students at our school. The decision to join Sixth Form should be carefully considered. An excellent work ethic, attendance and punctuality record are all essential for success, as is a contribution to the wider dimension

of Sixth Form life, such as full attendance at, and participation in, all aspects of our Core Curriculum and support for the school ethos. A student with poor attendance (unless there are genuine medical reasons), poor punctuality or a poor work ethic in Year 11 is unlikely to succeed in Sixth Form where the academic demands are greater. Throughout Year 11, all of these factors will be reviewed and, if necessary, discussed with students during the transition to the Sixth Form process.

For each specific course in Sixth Form, entry requirements will vary, depending on the degree of difficulty of the course, as well as each student's track record over their two years' study of the subject in Key Stage 4. The 'make up' of a student's GCSE grade in the subject is evaluated too. For example, a student may have a 6 overall at GCSE in a particular subject that they wish to pursue at A-level but, if the key written exam component was a 5, our strong advice might well be not to take the subject at A-level, if extended writing is a key feature of the A-level. Some courses will require a higher minimum entry grade, either in the subject itself or in a related subject. For example, entry to certain Science courses will have a minimum requirement not only in Science, but in Maths too, given the degree of Maths involved in the A-level. Many subjects will have a minimum requirement in English if written work is a key feature of the A-level. Finally, we also look very closely at the combination of A-levels that a student is proposing to study. For example, we may feel that a student has the potential to succeed in one of the harder A-levels, but a combination of two or three such subjects may well prove too much and, in such cases, we may well advise strongly against the proposed combination.

In general, students are most likely to succeed on the traditional academic A-levels if they have obtained GCSEs that include, as a minimum, a number of grades in the 7-9 range and some at grade 6. Ideally, a student would have a 7 or better in their chosen subject, but some of these subjects may consider a 6 if there is evidence of strong performance in some of the key components of the GCSE or of mitigating circumstances that affected the GCSE grade. In a number of A-levels (for instance, some with a strong practical component), grade 6 or above will be considered and, exceptionally, a grade 5. Students achieving grades largely in the 4-6 range will be best suited to our vocational courses. Further information about individual courses is contained in the Curriculum booklet and, throughout Year 11, entry requirements and their suitability for different subjects will be discussed with students.

Subjects offered

The subjects we usually offer at A-level are the following. Please note, however, that not all courses run each year if the numbers are very low.

Art	Geography
Biology	History
Chemistry	Maths
Computer Science	Music
Design Technology	Philosophy and Ethics
Drama	Photography
Economics	Physics
English Language	Psychology
English Literature	Sociology
Film Studies	Spanish
French	Sport Studies
Further Maths	Textiles

The vocational subjects that we usually offer (depending on demand each year) include:

Health & Social Care	Applied Science
IT	Child Development
Business	

Our curriculum is reviewed regularly and subjects being offered are subject to viability. For further information on subjects, please refer to the booklet included in this prospectus. Our Core Curriculum is part of what makes our Sixth Form distinctive, as all students also study as part of their timetable Religious Education, Sport, and the Pastoral Programme. Students are encouraged to take part in a wide and varied Enrichment Programme. This curriculum provides excellent foundations for studying in the Sixth Form and allows the students the opportunity to develop a variety of skills that will enhance their overall Sixth Form experience.

Core Curriculum

NOCN Level 3 Award in Religious Education

All students in the Sixth Form continue to study Religious Education. As part of a Catholic Sixth Form, students are encouraged to study and reflect upon moral, ethical and philosophical issues that have an impact on our lives. Studying RE provides students with an opportunity to explore the pressing and relevant issues of a modern society, as well as to share and develop their own understanding of living by the Gospel values in a modern world.

We begin by developing further an understanding of spirituality, theology and ethics that continues from our work at GCSE. As a part of this, students are taught to understand the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and to consider different faith traditions within contemporary society. Moving from Year 12 to Year 13, we extend our work to focussing on the relationship between religious belief, personal faith and lived experience. The course is also focussed on putting faith into action, and so there are opportunities for students to take on Service Tasks in the school and local communities in a practical way. Students leave St Mary's with a national Level 3 qualification in Religious Education.

Sport

Keeping fit is central to a healthy life so we encourage all students to keep fit and take part in sport, whatever their ability or interest. In doing so, they are able to develop self-confidence, learn the importance of teamwork and explore their own strengths. All students are encouraged to engage in a wide variety of sports and physical education opportunities throughout the year. Students will be provided with an opportunity once a week to participate in a variety of recreational sporting activities, including activities off-site.

Pastoral Programme

Our varied and exciting Pastoral Programme offers students the opportunity to develop skills that will help them in their studies and in their preparations for life after Sixth Form. Students spend two hours a fortnight in the Pastoral Programme.

Currently, once every fortnight, the full year group comes together and a guest speaker offers impartial advice and guidance. Speakers are from a variety of backgrounds, sectors and professions, and often include:

- Newcastle University focusing on study skills
- Santander Bank focusing on "Money Matters"
- Get In Go Far (Government body) focusing on apprenticeships.

Following each talk, time is spent with tutor groups reviewing and discussing the content delivered. Alternate fortnights are spent in tutor groups following a carousel of activities focussing on developing life skills, study skills and employability skills. Aspects so far have included the opportunity to develop skills in self-sufficiency, money management, travel and cooking.

The important UCAS process (for entry to university), and applications for employment and apprenticeships, also form an important part of this programme.

Choosing your subjects

What subjects should you choose?

Picking subjects to study in the Sixth Form can be a difficult task and requires careful consideration. Here, we offer some advice and key questions to ask when thinking about which subjects you might want to choose.

Which subjects do you enjoy the most?

The amount of time you will have to spend studying your subjects in Sixth Form means you should pick subjects you enjoy. In Year 12, you will have nine hours for each A-level every fortnight. In Year 13, this increases to ten hours. You should then look to ensure these are subjects that you will be able to cope with at a higher level and that you meet the entry requirements for the course.

In which subjects are you expecting to excel?

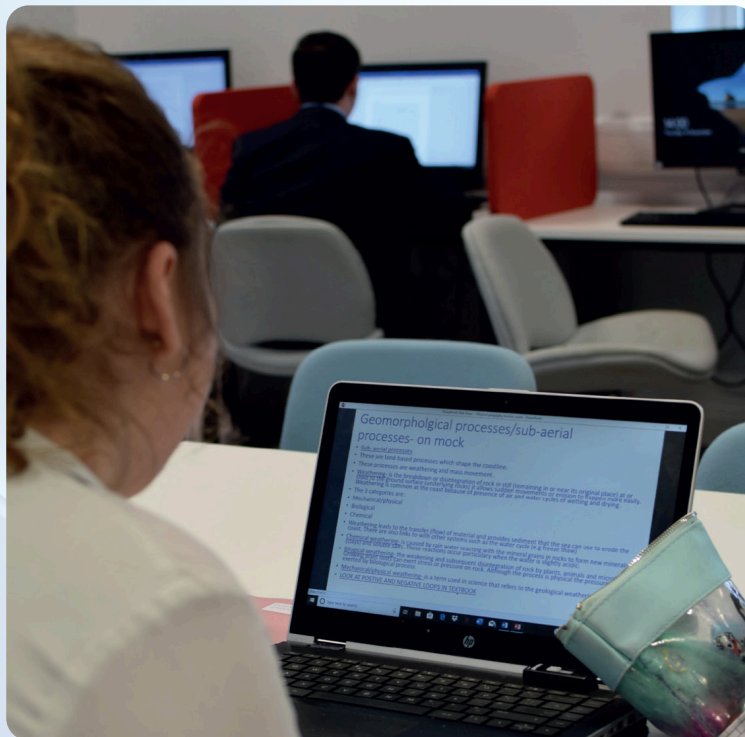
Your predicted performance in your GCSE subjects will be a real indicator as to what you want to study at A-level. The work you do at GCSE will lay the foundations for the work in the Sixth Form. Talk to your teachers to discuss whether they think it would be suitable for you to study their subject in the Sixth Form.

Do you have a career / university course in mind?

Do you require specific subjects? Some degree courses specify subjects that should be taken in the Sixth Form. For example, to study Medicine you will need to secure a high grade in Chemistry. Think carefully about what you may want to do after Sixth Form and then look

to see if you are required to have certain subjects. If you don't yet know what you want to do after Sixth Form, then opting for a range of types of subjects will help keep your options open. You will, of course, have to ensure you meet the entry requirements for these courses.

What subjects will be most useful and will give you the best chance at success?



As mentioned above, it might be that you want to keep your options open for when you make decisions about life after Sixth Form. Think carefully about the combinations of subjects you are studying too. Russell Group universities have published a guide which can be found www.informedchoices.ac.uk. This guide outlines which subjects will help prepare students for the demands of specific undergraduate courses. It is important to get a balance between the subjects you enjoy, have the best chance to

succeed in, and that will be relevant to you for the next stage of your life.

Who can you talk to about your options?

All students in Year 11 at St Mary's will complete an online form to outline their current plans for September, including the Sixth Form options they are currently interested in studying next year.

If you have any questions regarding Sixth Form and/or would like to discuss any aspect of your option choices further, you will also be able to have an online appointment with a member of the St Mary's Sixth Form Team. They will guide you and discuss with you the most appropriate options and pathways. Remember, discussing your options with teachers will also help you to get a good idea of what is involved in a subject in the Sixth Form and your suitability for it.

Extra-Curricular

Sixth Form Sport

There are many opportunities to develop sporting interests at St Mary's. We currently have a very successful basketball team as well as netball and football teams. Sixth Form students have been very keen, in the past couple of years, to organise a range of charitable sporting fixtures. Not only do we offer a range of team sports, but students also have access to a modern, state-of-the-art gym. Students who have a keen interest in sport and fitness are encouraged to share their expertise by taking on a Sports Leader role. With this responsibility, students help other students as well as staff to use the gym. Students who are talented in sport and who compete at a high level are supported by the school.

Drama and Music

Sixth-formers enjoy taking part in drama productions. We have many talented musicians in our student body and there are also various opportunities to take part in the orchestra and the school choir.

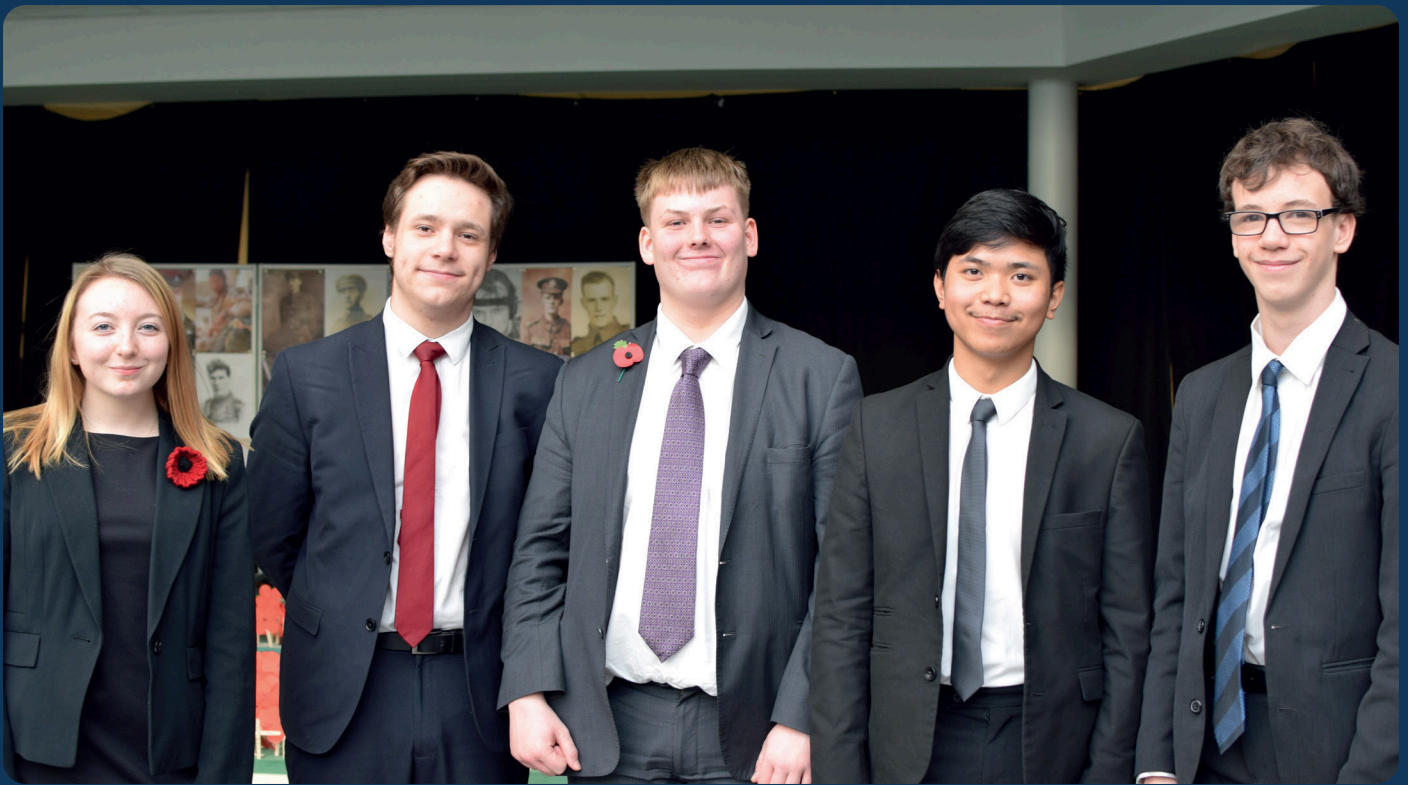


Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award

We are pleased to be able to offer students the opportunity to pursue the Duke of Edinburgh Award. This well-recognised and highly valued award offers students the chance to develop a variety of life skills. They will take part in voluntary work, sport and expeditions.

Service Tasks

All Sixth Form students are expected to take on Service Tasks, which range hugely in nature depending on the interests of the student. Previous Service Tasks have included helping out in one of the student's chosen subjects, either by supporting lessons or running lunchtime clubs and clinics. Students have also undertaken supported reading with Year 7 students, and have become 'buddies' to students lower down the school.



Leadership Committee

Sixth Form students are also encouraged to become involved in leadership, by taking on key roles and responsibilities within school. The Leadership Committee is a visible and respected group of students whose presence can be seen across a huge variety of school events.



International Links

Our Catholic ethos welcomes students from all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds, and, in order to further the international dimension of our school, we have developed many exciting and successful links abroad. Sixth Form students have visited destinations such as the Philippines, Zambia, Peru and India, where they have helped local communities by working on charity projects that have been made possible through tremendous fund-raising efforts.

events, both in school and at home, to pay for this experience. This experience, of course, was such a fantastic opportunity for St Mary's students to be involved in as they were, quite literally, ensuring the continued education of children in Zambia. Once the project was over, students visited the incredible Victoria Falls, and crossed the border to Botswana to see the wildlife at Chobe National Park. Even though the living conditions were extremely difficult, the students were absolutely



In July 2019, nineteen Year 12 students travelled to Zambia to work on a life-changing expedition project for the local community of Sinazongwe. During the expedition, students built a chicken coop food, storage building for Chisyabulungu Community School. The eggs are sold to the local villagers, with the profit being spent on educational resources for the school. Being able to buy the chicken feed in bulk and store this on site will save them money, which can then be spent on resources for the students too. As well as the main building project, students taught English and Maths to a wide range of age groups, and organised a Sports Day for the local children. In the months leading up to the expedition, students organised and participated in a variety of fundraising

events, both in school and at home, to pay for this experience. This experience, of course, was such a fantastic opportunity for St Mary's students to be involved in as they were, quite literally, ensuring the continued education of children in Zambia. Once the project was over, students visited the incredible Victoria Falls, and crossed the border to Botswana to see the wildlife at Chobe National Park. Even though the living conditions were extremely difficult, the students were absolutely

incredible and all teachers involved could not speak more highly of the positive attitude and humble outlook that they showed throughout the trip. Our Sixth Form students have benefitted hugely from these visits, gaining an array of life-changing experiences as well as enhancing their CVs in readiness for their applications to university. They have also been provided with an invaluable insight into the lives of people who are far less fortunate than themselves. Whilst all educational visits depend on any Covid restrictions, we are hopeful that students will soon be able to enjoy these worthwhile experiences once again.



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