

St Mary's Catholic School Autumn Newsletter 2019

Headteacher's Welcome

It is a pleasure to introduce the Autumn Term 2019 Newsletter. I hope you all enjoy reading about just some of the many range of activities in which students have participated over the course of the last three months. Learning beyond the classroom is such an important part of everyone's education and I am very grateful to staff and other volunteers for the time they give to make sure St Mary's students have lots of different opportunities throughout their school life. This year, we will be introducing an additional newsletter covering the spiritual life of the school. Look out for the first edition in the Spring Term.

Among many great student achievements featuring in this Newsletter, none is more impressive than the article about Joy Eze, Year 11, pictured on the front cover. Earlier this year, Joy was crowned United Kingdom and Ireland Under-17 100 metres champion. This is a fantastic achievement and we are so proud of her. Look out for Joy at future Olympics!

Finally, can I take this opportunity to thank all parents, carers, governors and friends of St Mary's for your continued support of our students and of the school. Huge thanks, as always, go to our amazing staff who have done such fantastic work for our students. Thanks too, to our students who continue to be a credit to themselves, their families and the school. I wish everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas.

J Foster
Headteacher

Subsea Stem UK Challenge

On 15 November, the school was invited to enter two teams of six students from Year 9 in the regional heats of the annual SubSea STEM UK Challenge. This national engineering competition asks teams of students to build, test and present their work on producing a remote-operated model of a subsea vehicle, which is designed to lay cables across ocean floors.



The teams were also treated to talks from industry experts and a tour of the facilities at the Port of Blyth training services. All our students performed extremely well and were highly praised by the event organisers for their creativity, teamwork and methodology. Competition from other schools was intense and standards were very high. One of the St Mary's team performed exceptionally well and won the



overall competition. This was a fantastic achievement and congratulations go to Andrew Hunsley, Fiona Kunjumon, Elliott Sharp, Robin Tyler, Abby Massingham and Hannah McLaughlin. They have booked their place in the national final, which is going to be held in Aberdeen later in the school year. Congratulations also go to Harry Rickeard, Mio Allison, Daniel Clark, Anna Anish, Sophie Moffett and Paul Caragay for their outstanding contribution.

Dr Reed

Sixth Form Chinese Lessons

Since October, a small group of Sixth Form students have been attending weekly Chinese lessons delivered by the Newcastle Confucius Institute, based at Newcastle University. Students are really enjoying their lessons, which are led by a Chinese native speaker from Beijing. So far, students have been getting to grips with forming phonic sounds, so that they can read Pinyin which is the conversion of Chinese characters to the Roman alphabet based on their pronunciation. They are now moving on to recognising and using Chinese characters. This has been a fantastic enrichment opportunity for these students, who will have the opportunity to continue with these lessons and gain some form of certification. Interestingly, if any student wants to apply for a scholarship to study in China in the future, this certificate could be used as part of the application.

Ms Mullan

Biologists Investigate Human Movement

In Year 8 Biology lessons this term, students have been looking at human movement, which has involved investigating how joints, bones and muscles function, as well as how they contribute to the process of motion.



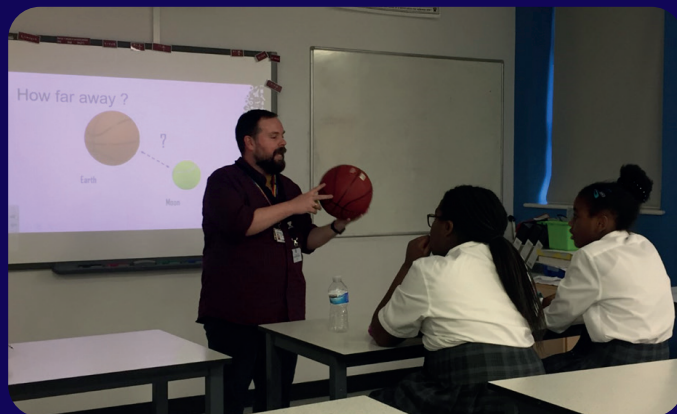
To enhance knowledge and understanding of this topic more fully, students carried out a dissection of a chicken wing, looking at how muscles work together to move the bones. Our budding anatomists examined the structure of the chicken wing, seeing for themselves how the three separate components, joints, bones and

muscles, successfully interact with each other to enable movement. Doing this kind of practical activity also enabled students to improve their awareness of safety and hygiene practice in the laboratory. It also provided an excellent opportunity for discussion on ethical issues associated with animal dissections.

Mr Turnbull

Year 7 and Year 8 Science Club

The Year 7 and Year 8 after-school Science Club resumed this term. We recently welcomed Physics lecturer Dr Portas from Northumbria University. Dr Portas delivered a session called 'Space Maths' in which the students looked at the relative distances of the planets from the Sun.



To do this, students made a one-metre-long solar system and placed the planets in order and estimated their relative distances from the Sun. Students were amazed to find out that they were unable to represent the three inner planets on the one-metre scale, including the Earth. This is because we are located so close to the sun. Another surprising discovery was the amount of space that exists beyond Neptune. Dr Portas and his team will return later in the school year to look at 'Light Painting' and 'Smart Surfaces'. We are all looking forward to these workshops.

Mr Elliott

Performing Arts

This term in the Performing Arts Department, there has been a lot going on. We held auditions for this year's whole-school musical *The Phantom of the Opera*. Rehearsals are well underway in preparation for the show in February 2020.

Our Drama and Dance clubs are more popular than ever, with high numbers attending each week. Our fantastic A-Level students continue to lead Drama Club and their rapport with the younger students is wonderful to see each week. They have been working on a range of performance skills. Currently, they are working on the genre of pantomime.



There has been an excellent start to Dance Club this year. GCSE students have taken on a leadership role in a very mature and effective way. They have meticulously planned each session, exploring a range of different dance styles and have incorporated work from outside school into the weekly sessions. Currently, the dancers are working on a contemporary movement piece, which they will perform during the advent liturgies. We have already seen significant progression from many of the dance club members and are thrilled that it has become such a motivational and creative space.

Miss Stearman and Miss Plass



Sixth Form Margaret Atwood Trip

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, novelist and literary critic who is most famous for her 1985 dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was recently adapted for television and shown on Channel 4. This September, Atwood released a much anticipated sequel to this classic work entitled *The Testaments*, which is set around fifteen years later and casts the central character in a completely different light, leading many readers to change entirely their original opinions about this character in the first novel. In October, a group of Sixth-Formers, accompanied by Miss Hornsby, were lucky enough to attend the Margaret Atwood talk held at The Sage to hear her discuss her writing, political views, and even her love of battle re-enactments.



Atwood was interviewed on stage, with the audience sending in their own questions via tweets. When asked why young people should read *The Testaments*, Atwood intelligently responded by saying that young people should decide for themselves what they should read according to their own interests and views, which resonated well with our students. In sum, this was a fantastic evening. It truly was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the students to see and hear someone of Atwood's stature. I am sure that they will remember it well for years to come.

Miss Hornsby

The History Society

The History Society gives our students the opportunity to explore history beyond what we learn in the classroom. Last year, it was hugely successful, with over 20 students attending on many occasions. We usually start by watching a film or footage of an historical event, then students debate and discuss the historical accuracy, as well as the entertainment value, of what they have seen. We have watched the 2014 film *Pompeii*. Year 7 students were able to identify some clear historical inaccuracies based on what they had learnt in lessons. Comments included "I enjoyed watching the explosion, but they have added a lot to the facts we know about Pompeii!"



Another popular choice was the 2008 film *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. We discussed whether or not the story was a suitable way to learn about the Holocaust. Students showed excellent awareness of the issues. While students very much enjoyed watching the film, there was some criticism of it too. This year, students will have the opportunity to watch films such as *Apollo 13*, which focusses on the failed attempt to reach the moon in 1970, and *Invictus*. This tells the story of the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa, and touches on the important theme of continued racial division in the immediate post-apartheid era. We are very much looking forward to some more engaging and thought-provoking discussion.

Miss Lamb

Magistrates Mock Trials Competition



This year, we have entered a team of Year 9 students in the Young Citizens' Magistrates Mock Trials competition. Running since 1994, this is a well-established competition, with over 4,000 students from over 270 schools participating every year. Around 1,700 legal professional volunteers from 40 magistrates courts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland oversee the whole process. It is part of a programme to provide 'citizenship experiences' to young people, promoting their understanding of how the legal and justice systems work, improving their life skills, and making them aware how the law touches every aspect of their lives.



Each member of the St Mary's team has been assigned a specific role, including that of lawyer, magistrate, reporter and even court artist. We are currently preparing for the local heats, which will be held at Newcastle Combined Court on the Quayside in March. Battling it out against other schools in the area for a chance to progress to the regional heats in June will give students a flavour of how a real criminal trial is conducted. During the competition, we will act out both a mock prosecution and a mock defence trial based on a fictional case, involving a protester accused of vandalism. At our first meeting in November, we read through the case and began to think about the potential reasons for the defendant being either guilty or innocent. We have a lot of hard work ahead of us, which will mean writing our questions, studying the procedure of a trial, emulating this in our own rehearsals, and practising various speeches. The St Mary's team is as follows: Holly Mostyn, Deborah Iserenren, Torin Innes-Menzies, Ava Irving, Luca Barbieri, Tynara McArthur, Eunice Lau, Ka Chai Leung, Elli Frith, Fiona Kunjumon, Abbas Farook, Ella Jackson, Anna Anish, Robin Tyler, Zina Arsic-Wells and Mio Allison. They have all thoroughly enjoyed the process so far.

Miss Hornsby

Visit from Dr Derbyshire



Dr Derbyshire, principal lecturer in Adult Nursing at Northumbria University. She spoke to students about the role of the adult nurse and her own career within the NHS. Dr Derbyshire shared

Earlier this term, the Health and Social Care Department welcomed

with students what to expect when embarking on an Adult Nursing course at Northumbria University and gave top tips for preparing UCAS applications. The students went away with a much better idea about what the nursing profession entails and, just as importantly, what they need to do in order to get on to a nursing degree course.

Mrs Rutherford

European Day of Languages 2019

Each year in the Modern Foreign Languages Department, we organise a series of events to celebrate European Day of Languages. This is an initiative that was founded in 2001 and which takes place annually on 26th September. European Day of Languages is a fantastic opportunity for us to celebrate the rich linguistic diversity that we have at St Mary's and to promote intercultural understanding amongst our students.

In form time, students in each year group took part in a series of different linguistic tasks to investigate how languages and cultural diversity impact their daily life.

We also had our annual European Day of Languages party, in which sixty Year 7 students took part in a number of language-based activities, including pass the parcel with French and Spanish themed challenges, learning to dance the Macarena, a photo booth and pin the tail on the donkey. All the students had a

fantastic time and really enjoyed doing these fun activities in a foreign language.

This year, as part of our celebrations, we also organised a charitable collection of loose change in foreign currency, taking advantage of money our staff and students had left over after their summer holidays. We have received donations in a number of currencies, including Euros, US Dollars, Danish Krone, Hungarian Forints and Philippine Pesos.

We will be donating all the money collected to Action Foundation, a charity based in Newcastle that provides support to disadvantaged refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across Tyne and Wear. This charity helps vulnerable migrants to avoid homelessness and extreme poverty. It also seeks to integrate them more into society by providing assisted housing and free English language lessons.

Ms Mullan



Field Trip to Blyth Beach and Gosforth High Street

The start of the academic year is always a busy time for the Geography Department in terms of fieldwork around the region. Fieldwork is a vital element of learning for our students, not least because they find out exactly what conducting experiments in a real-life context entails. Visiting a site nearby also means that they find out more about their local environment.

In September, Year 11 GCSE students conducted their fieldwork investigation into the impact of groynes on longshore drift at South Beach, Blyth. Groynes are low walls that are built out into the sea from a beach to provide a barrier against erosion and to limit drifting.

In October, the same group of Year 11 students went to Gosforth High Street to investigate sustainable transport along a busy urban thoroughfare. Given that Newcastle City Council is in full public consultation over planned changes to how we travel, not least the possible introduction of the controversial congestion charge scheme, this is a very topical issue to investigate. Recent data, including information collected outside 22 Newcastle schools, shows that the amount of nitrous oxide in the air is regularly well above what can be considered a safe level. Students also explored the value of more sustainable means of transport, such as cycling, the Metro and buses, and compared and



A warm late-summer day provided the perfect conditions for data collection. The students looked at management of the coast and how sand dune ecosystems evolve from the sea to inland. Some were lucky enough to hear a talk from Arthur Cranson, a local coastal warden, on the importance of coastal management and the constraints under which he works. The field trip to Blyth was an excellent experience for all students. What is more, we rounded off the day with a visit to the local 'chippie' and ice cream parlour.

contrasted these with less sustainable methods. It came as no great surprise that the modal (or most common) number of people in a car was just one. Students found that, although buses in particular are reasonably well used, more people prefer to travel by car. Added to that, some buses have so few people on them that their sustainability as a means of transport needs to be called into question. There is certainly more work to be done by Newcastle City Council.

Mr Gamesby

KS3 Haiku Competition for National Poetry Day 2019



This year, National Poetry Day was celebrated on Thursday 3rd

October. To mark this, the English Department worked with KS3 students during that week to explore ideas associated with writing poetry. This culminated in a Haiku Competition. For those not familiar with it, Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry comprising three very short sentences of five, seven and five syllables. It focusses on a brief moment in time. Students carefully chose the most appropriate vocabulary to fit into the confines of this heavily structured poetic style. There were some fantastic entries across all year groups, focussing on many topics, including dystopia, climate change, nature, dreams, faith, mythology, love and football. Congratulations to the following students who were awarded a certificate and a prize.

Year 7

Winner: Isabella Hall 7A

If starvation is
Freedom, the world is broken.
We survive with faith

Runners up: Dennis Brown 7A, Cellina Guan 7R,
Alistair Craggs 7A, Jaiden Ncube 7A.

Year 8

Winner: Janneke Crowdy 8N

When the winter comes
Hopefully the snow will fall
And we can have fun

Runners up: Frankie Scrowther 8M, Esme Cleeve
8M, Emily Jackson 8N, Steven Lincoln 8I.

Year 9

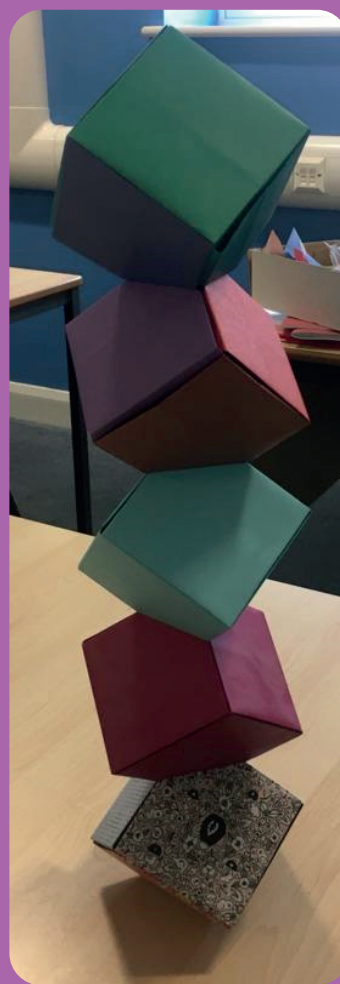
Winner: Thandeka Mandeya 9Y

Mountains at the peak
Imagine at the bottom
Dream until the top

Runners up: Millie Cowen 9M, Daniel Francis 9T,
Jinwoo Lee 9S, Katy Twizell 9T.

Mrs Clough

Year 7 and 8 Origami Club



This term has seen the introduction of an Origami Club for Year 7 and Year 8, which allows students the opportunity to explore mathematics outside the taught curriculum.

It has been well attended so far, with a wide variety of fantastic models produced by students, including butterflies, jumping frogs, birds, cubes and crayons. We have continued this term with some Christmas-themed projects. All models have been on display in the Maths corridor. Special thanks go to the following

students from the upper school, who have been invaluable in their support for the younger students when making their models: Jessica Stephenson and Malaikah Hashim (Year 12), and Laura Nicholson, Lily Gills, Sophia Spoor and Phoebe Sanderson (Year 10).

Mrs Crosbie and Mrs Howarth

Lessons From Auschwitz Project

In October, two year 13 students, Abigail Charlton and Mary Delariarte, took part in the Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) project run by the Holocaust Educational Trust. The project explores the universal lessons of the Holocaust and its relevance for today. The central premise of the project is 'hearing is not like seeing' and gives students the opportunity to find out what can happen when prejudice and racism go unchecked and unchallenged by society.

The first step

Firstly, Abigail and Mary attended the orientation seminar at The Assembly Rooms in Newcastle, which involved the students studying pre-war Jewish life, listening to a Holocaust survivor's testimony and then discussing the unique issues of preparing for a visit to a Holocaust-related site. Abigail and Mary looked at photographs of Europe before the outbreak of World War Two and discussed their ideas with students from other schools in the North East. The main part of the seminar was the testimony from Holocaust survivor Steven Frank. He was a child during World War Two, growing up in occupied Holland. In his incredibly emotional story, Steven described his experience of surviving the Holocaust and his time in a concentration camp. He talked about his family, in particular his father, who was imprisoned and then killed in Auschwitz. Both students noted how it was a great privilege to hear Steven tell his story, and found his positive and courageous outlook inspiring.



The trip to Poland

The next part of the project was the one-day visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which required the students to be at Newcastle Airport at 4.00am for an early flight to Krakow. Upon arrival in Poland, they took a coach to the town of Oswiecim, which is where the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was built during the German occupation. The students were shown pre-war images of the bustling town of Oswiecim, which had a large Jewish population. After the war, there were no Jews at all in the town. This made the students think about the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish populations across the whole of Europe.

The students then visited Auschwitz, walking through the museum with two guides: one from the museum itself and another from the Holocaust Educational Trust. Abigail and Mary learnt that this site was initially built to house political prisoners before being converted into a concentration camp. The students found the images of the inmates and the Book of Names particularly emotive. They then moved on to the Birkenau camp. They were shocked at the scale of the whole site, and were particularly moved by the cattle wagons on the railway line, which were used to transport hundreds of prisoners at a time. Abigail and Mary both commented on how they wanted to document their experience for other students to read as part of their 'Next Steps' project, to increase wider understanding of the Holocaust.

At the end of a full tour of both sites, the two St Mary's students took part in a memorial service at the Birkenau as the sun set. The memorial was led by Rabbi Marcus. He spoke of the importance of remembering these awful events and sharing our experience with others, especially in an age in which Holocaust denial, antisemitism and discrimination still exist. Abigail and Mary found the service both very inspirational and heart-rending. They lit candles in memory of those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and took part in a final communal prayer. It was a fitting end to the visit.

Final reflection

Following their trip to Poland, Abigail and Mary attended their final seminar, where they reflected on their experience, discussing the parts that they found surprising, shocking and particularly difficult or upsetting. Students at the seminar also got the chance to discuss their 'Next Steps' project, in which they are encouraged to share their experience with others. For her part, Abigail intends to document her experience so that it can be used as an educational resource, helping as many students as possible studying the Holocaust to gain a better understanding of the whole event. Mary would like to tell her story to students herself, so she can answer any questions that they may have. The Lessons from Auschwitz project has been an important personal and educational experience for Mary and Abigail, giving them a deeper insight into the Holocaust and its relevance in society today. Equally important is the fact that they are now able to share their new knowledge and understanding with many other students in their role as Holocaust Educational Trust Ambassadors.

Mrs Feekins

Year 9 News

Year 9 have had a fantastic first term with all students contributing to the productive atmosphere within the year group. Across all areas of the curriculum, Year 9 are making great academic progress and displaying excellent standards with regards to their conduct and attitude in their studies. Outside the classroom, Year 9 have continued to show how gifted they are by participating in numerous clubs, both inside and outside of school. This has been showcased in two fantastic assemblies this term, which were led by 9S and 9T. A number of students have been celebrated individually in the most recent *Shine* bulletin too. Year 9 students have shown throughout the autumn term that they have a very positive approach to all aspects of school life and it has been a pleasure to work so closely with them so far this year. I am confident that they are working as hard as they can to achieve their very best.

Mr Donnelly

Joy Eze: UK 100m Champion

A few lines from Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'If', best describe Year 11 student Joy Eze's 2019 Athletic season.

"If you can meet with triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same".

A stellar indoor season over 60m saw Joy win medals and titles, setting the second fastest time in the country for her age group, and recording the fastest ever time run by a North East woman at the Scottish Indoor Championships. Disaster struck with a disqualification, for a disputed false start, in the final of the National Indoor Championships. Whilst very disappointed, Joy was determined to turn adversity into success.



Decent early outdoor season form saw Joy win races for her team Gateshead Harriers and county club and school titles. She comfortably achieved the high entry standard times required for the prestigious English Schools Championships and decided to compete for Northumberland Schools over the challenging 100m at the Birmingham event in July. Joy was ranked outside the top 15 athletes going into

the event but was confident her improving form, and determination to right the wrong of the disqualification earlier in the season, would help her to succeed. She duly cruised through her heat smashing her personal best time. She followed, this with a big breakthrough run in the semi-final where she broke the magical 12



second barrier for the first time, winning in 11.96. Like all quality athletes, she ran even quicker in the final. Blasting from the blocks she showed the high quality field a clean pair of heels to claim the gold medal, running 11.93 seconds, the fastest run in the country at the time.

As a result of her performance she was selected to represent England Schools at the prestigious SAIB schools competition in Swansea. This was Joy's first International selection, racing against the best athletes from Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England, Joy maintained her stunning form winning the 100m race from lane 8, becoming UK and Ireland 100m champion. To complete a wonderful day she joined her England team mates in winning the relay, setting the fastest Under-17 relay time in the UK.



Joy continued her form through the summer, winning medals in the Northern and National Age-Group Championships and anchoring her club team to victory in the 4x100m relay at the televised Diamond League event in Birmingham. She even got the chance to meet the world 200m champion, Dina Asher-Smith.

The disaster of her setback at the Indoor Championships certainly helped to provide the motivation and dedication that enabled Joy to achieve her triumphant outdoor performances. Her coach reports that she remains very level-headed, despite the highs and lows of her



season, and respectful of her competitors and the discipline required in her chosen field. They both realise that she has lots to learn and has many months of hard, dedicated training ahead of her if she is to continue to progress and improve.

A full record of Joy's performances can be found at the following weblink:
<https://www.thepowerof10.info/athletes/profile.aspx?athleteid=565894>

A recording of her English School's victory can be viewed from this weblink.
<https://mobile.twitter.com/GatesheadHAC/status/1150497493211332609>

Signing in Health and Social Care

Year 9 students have been learning about how care workers communicate with service users who may have a barrier to communication. Miss Egdell visited all Year 9 classes to explain and demonstrate how British Sign Language can be used to reduce barriers to communication for individuals with a hearing impairment.



Students learnt the sign-language alphabet; they found out what signs someone will use to show they are deaf; they engaged in basic sign-language conversation; they also learnt how to offer help to someone who is deaf. Being 'deaf aware' was an important part of the session too. This touched on key themes, such as how to attract the attention of a deaf person and include them in the conversation. Students put this knowledge into practice during the lesson by signing in silence and waving when they wanted my attention. All the students were highly enthusiastic and asked lots of questions. Students have been practising what they have learnt at lunchtime too, as several students who do not study Health and Social Care have asked Miss Egdell for an alphabet so they can join in. Praise points were given to Sky and Elisha Laurie, Grace Kirkland, Maisie Malia, Courtney Main and Victoria Davidson for their effort in the lessons and willingness to stand in front of the class and sign.

Mrs Rutherford

Year 10 News

Year 10 have made a fantastic start to their GCSE and vocational studies since their return in September. I have been very impressed by their focussed approach to learning. Teachers have commented on their positive contributions in lessons and their determination to ensure excellent progress is made at every opportunity. I am sure this will be reflected in Achievement 1 data.

This term, many extra-curricular opportunities have been offered to Year 10 students, and it has been a pleasure to see so many students getting involved in the wider life of the school. Whether it is representing St Mary's at sports, attending one of the many extracurricular clubs or participating in the school's upcoming musical, *Phantom of the Opera*, Year 10 students have impressed staff members with their effort and attitude. I would encourage any student who is yet to join a club or attend an organised school event this year to do so. This will ensure that they make the most of their time here at St. Mary's.

As a year group, Year 10 have contributed a great deal this year. Three tutor groups, M, T and S, have presented their assembly to the full year group. All were very well prepared and delivered to a high standard. Students from each tutor group also organised the Year 10 Advent Fayre, in which money was raised for a range of charities by selling cakes and organising games. Finally, I am very pleased to pass on my thanks to all students who have helped contribute towards the Hampers for the Homeless initiative. This is an excellent cause.

The transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 can be a challenge. Year 10 students have handled this adjustment very well indeed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Year 10 students, teachers and form tutors for their continued hard work this term.

Miss Owen

UK Senior Maths Challenge



On Thursday, 7th November, six students from Year 12 and Year 13 took part in the National Senior Maths Challenge, run by the UK Mathematics Trust.

The students really stepped up to the challenge, which consisted of a 90-minute paper, using their advanced Maths skills to answer problem-based questions. All participants did very well, with more receiving certificates than ever before.

Bronze Awards went to Anisha Smith, Lucas Grillot, Gabriel Penman, Asif Khan, Jake Wilson, Cameron Ritchie, Rory Bell, Erin Ruscoe and Oliver Edgar from Year 13, and Kamil Uljanski, George Atkinson, Chloe Swinbanks, Gabriella Nagy, Sam Lievesley, Pawan Martin, Jessica Stephenson, Marek Menke, Kieran Bell and John Carr from Year 12. Silver Awards went to Abbie Rai, Rachael Stone, Adam Hastings, Matthew Sheerin from Year 13, as well as Daniel Young and Bradley De Dios from Year 12. However, the stars of the competition were Mrugaya Mulay from Year 13, and James Keller and Sam Sorensen from Year 12. All scored high enough marks to receive a Gold Award. They will now be invited to take part in a follow-up round later in the term. The Maths Department are very proud of the efforts of all the students who participated. We hope that they build on this success in future competitions.

Mrs Crosbie

Duke Of Edinburgh Award

In the very last week of the previous academic year, four Sixth Form students, James Metcalf, Aidan O'Toole, Mary Delariarte and Rory Bell, successfully completed their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Over a period of four days and three nights, they had to navigate their way over open country in the Pennine Hills around Richmond in North Yorkshire. The group faced several challenges, not least carrying very heavy rucksacks with all their equipment and walking for up to eight hours a day. The four students did exceptionally well. Working together as a team, they passed the expedition part of their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award with aplomb. Once they have completed their residential, physical, volunteering and skill sections of the award, the four successful students will be invited to go to Buckingham Palace where they will be presented with a certificate to celebrate this fantastic achievement.

Miss Winckle



Visitors from Oxford University

This term, we were very lucky in the English Department to welcome two visitors from Oxford University: Rebecca Costello, an outreach worker, and Leah Veronese, a postgraduate student from Balliol College. Leah and Rebecca delivered a workshop to some Year 9 students on letters and letter-writing.



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Students were given the opportunity to open a letter sealed with wax. They found this fascinating. They were also encouraged to research the historical practice of letterlocking. Dating back to the 13th Century, letterlocking is the technique of folding and securing the letter, so that it cannot be read without breaking seals and slips. Later on, Rebecca spoke to students from Year 10, Year 11 and Year 12 about what it is like to study English at Oxford. She explained how tutorials and supervisions work, talked about the content of the English course at Oxford, and highlighted several reasons why students should consider applying to study at Oxford. She also spoke about some of the destinations of English alumni who have graduated from Oxford. This was an excellent experience for the students.

Mrs Clough



St Mary's Sweep to Victory in North Regional Tennis Finals

Congratulations to Andrew Hunsley, Sam Foster, Finlay O'Brien, Paul Caragay and Ethan Henderson who represented St Mary's at the Lawn Tennis Association North Regional Finals on Friday, 27th September in Leeds. In the first round, they beat Egglecliffe School from Stockton, winning three out of four singles games and both doubles games. The boys played brilliantly again in the semi-final against Fallibroome Academy from Macclesfield. Once more, they won three of their four singles games and both doubles matches, progressing to the finals against Stonyhurst College from Clitheroe in Lancashire. This was going to be their biggest challenge of the day. The number one seed match was very tight, with Andrew Hunsley coming from two games down to win his game on a tie-break. Sam Foster won his game 4-2 and Finlay O'Brien won 4-0. With three more games to play, Stonyhurst pulled the tie back to 3-2 after winning the next two games with one match to play. Pulling out all the stops, Andrew and Sam won a brilliant match 4-0 against high-quality opposition, making the final score 4-2 to the St Mary's team, who were crowned the Division 2 North Regional Champions of 2019. This was a fabulous achievement. All five students played their part in a thrilling day.

Mr Maughan



Year 8 Girls Football

In late November, the Year 8 girls football team took part in a round-robin of matches against Year 9 teams from three other local schools. Despite the horrible weather conditions, the



girls did brilliantly and won all three games without conceding a single goal. The St Mary's team played some outstanding one-touch football and scored several stunning goals. Their attitude and effort was outstanding throughout the evening and they are now well placed to finish very highly in the League. Two players are worthy of special mention. Niamh Boothroyd, who was clinical in front of goal, scored in every game, netting seven goals in total, including two hat-tricks. Hannah Morrison worked tirelessly in midfield, breaking up opposition attacks throughout and supplying the ball quickly to the forwards. Hannah also scored with a thunderbolt of a strike into the bottom corner from distance. Congratulations also go to: Loulia Anagnosti, Emily Mooney, Becca Johnson, Emma Urwin and Anna Brent. Also part of the team are: Hanna Ali, Amelia Allan, Georgia McDonnell, Charlotte Hobbs, Abby Kelliher, Ellie Burn and Holly Fenwick. Girls football training continues every Monday lunchtime in the Sports Hall.

Mr Hook

Year 7 Rugby

In early October, the Year 7 boys rugby team had their first competitive fixture of the season against St Thomas More, Blaydon 'A' and 'B' team. With all three teams containing a wide range of abilities and experience, the games were a good chance for all those involved to increase their confidence and develop both individually and collectively. In the first game against St Thomas More 'A', the boys struggled initially, giving away possession too easily in the tackle and conceding two quick tries. St Mary's players were terrific in the tackle and were strong defensively for large parts of the game. Toby Thorpe, Corben Dodds and Alistair Craggs were all outstanding, making tackle after tackle to push back the St Thomas More attack. The game was very even in many areas, but the inexperience in the ruck area of the St Mary's team meant that they were constantly on the back foot. St Thomas More ran in two more tries before half time to make the score 4-0. The second half was much more even, with the whole team making a much better effort at the breakdown. Another try for St Thomas More was answered with a strong run from Alistair Craggs, making excellent ground to dive over in the corner to make the final score 5-1.

In the second game, St Mary's were much more confident and the game was much more even as a result. Tomas Souza and Sam Brooks began to have much more influence over the game and started to distribute the ball very effectively. Noah Mellett, Callum Duncan and Andrew Dagg did a great job in the ruck area, resulting in St Mary's having many more opportunities to attack. Sam Brooks powered over to give St Mary's the lead, but St Thomas More quickly replied to make the score 1-1. Both teams had opportunities in the final minutes of the game but were unable to cross the line. The game finished in a draw, which was a fair result.

All in all, this was a really positive start for the Year 7 boys rugby team. Player of the match was Alistair Craggs, who showed excellent commitment in defence, was brilliant with the ball going forward and fully deserved his score. Congratulations also go to the rest of the team: Tomas Souza Monteiro (captain), Sam Brooks, Toby Thorpe, Callum Duncan, Billy Crawford, Oliver Cass, James Quinn, Leo Gray, Corben Dodds, Alan Acho, Andrew Dagg, Finn Koepl, Noah Mellett, Alistair Craggs, Hayden McDermott and Zain Hussain.

Mr Hook



Key Stage 3 Languages Club

Students have been enjoying sessions on a variety of different languages and cultures in our weekly Languages Club meetings every Wednesday lunchtime. So far this year, we have been fortunate enough to welcome some native speakers of Greek and Chinese. Students have not only enjoyed learning some new vocabulary in these languages, but have also been able to find out about life and customs in Greece, Cyprus and China. Added to that, we have made lanterns to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival



of lights. We have made a wreath of gratitude in honour of Thanksgiving. Students have looked at how other countries use fireworks and bonfires to celebrate their traditions. We look forward to welcoming all students to Languages Club next term. We will get the opportunity to practise some origami, celebrate Chinese New Year and do some French cookery. This cultural theme has extended into Year 8 French lessons, where students have been learning about why pancakes are eaten for the La Chandeleur festival in February. We will also find out why, on 1st April, you might expect to see some French people with a paper fish stuck to their back. Students really enjoyed discovering these unique celebrations. In particular, they did some research into what other festivals take place in French-speaking countries. A firm favourite was the Fête du Citron, which sees huge statues made of lemons and oranges being paraded

through the town of Menton, in the south of France. Hopefully, students will get the chance to take part in one of these festivals one day and put their French speaking skills into practice and develop their cultural knowledge further.



Miss Voshtina and Mrs Mullan

Morgan Outplays the Opposition to Win Chess Championship

In September, Morgan French won the prestigious Nora Hunter Trophy and a cheque for £250 at the Northumberland County Chess Congress. The competition was held across three days at the end of September at The Parks in North Shields and attracted many seasoned chess-players from across the UK.

One of the youngest of the more than fifty contestants in his division, Morgan drew one and won four of his five four-hour-long matches to secure a winning total of 4½ points. This achievement is considerable because Morgan only started playing chess just over two years ago. Since taking up the game, he has developed his skills as a regular member of both the school's chess club and of Forest Hall Chess Club.

Morgan has continued to add to his success this term as a member of St Mary's 'A' team. He and his teammates – Alexander Johnston, Ciaran Macdonald, Alex Rudzenis, John Wall and Feitong

Wu – secured a place in the knockout stage of the National Schools Chess Championships after beating Marden High, Ponteland High and St Mary's 'B'. Alex Rudzenis, Ciaran, John and Morgan are also waiting to hear whether their results in the NSCC's recent Team Chess Challenge – which included a superb draw against an impressive line-up from the RGS – have earned them a place in next year's national final in London.



Dr Richardson

students to develop their reading skills and boost their confidence. Sixth Form students are also involved in many sporting activities in the school, helping to coach netball and football, as well as running the school gym. Below, there are testimonies from two of our Year 12 students who have risen to the challenge of doing a regular service task in school. As you can see, completing service has mutual benefits. In their generous act of giving something back to the school community, the Year 12 students gain an awful lot in return from the experience.

Mrs Nelson

"I took GCSE Spanish and have continued my studies in the subject at A-Level. I wanted to use my knowledge to assist those who are sitting their GCSE exams this summer, so I volunteered to help Year 11 students with their speaking skills. I find it extremely rewarding to see their vocabulary and confidence progressing each week. I work with the students in their lesson time, helping them to gain valuable speaking practice. I did lots of this in my revision time and I know it will be of benefit to the students."

Jodie Summersby Year 12

Year 12 Service Tasks

This year we have introduced 'service tasks' for our Year 12 students. This is the idea that every Year 12 student should regularly carry out an act of service for the school community, usually one hour a week. This may be in the shape of providing extra support to younger students in lessons under the direction of their subject teachers. It may entail helping out at one of the many lunchtime or after-school school clubs at St Mary's, such as the Origami Club, the Languages Club, the Art Club, the Music Club, the Drama Club, the Dance Club or the Debate Club. Some students are taking part in a reading scheme, where they are paired up with a Year 7 student, who reads aloud to them one morning a week. This enables the younger

"When starting my journey as a sixth former, I decided to take up the challenge of a service task. I think it is vital that we older students in school help younger students. Every week during one form time, I help run the school 'Reading Scheme' for Year 7s. The concept of the scheme is to partner an older Year 12 student with a younger Year 7 student. The purpose is to improve the younger students' reading ability and develop their confidence. However, it also helps me to gain experience of tutoring and mentoring."

Amy Henderson Year 12



Year 8 Trip to Thurston in The Lake District

In October, 48 Year 8 students travelled to Thurston Outdoor Education Centre on the shores of Coniston Water in Cumbria for the annual St Mary's outdoor education trip. This is always an opportunity for students to experience the great outdoors in the beautiful and tranquil setting of the Lake District. All students took part in a variety of fantastic activities over the course of the five-day visit, including kayaking, climbing, canoeing, abseiling, mountain-walking and ghyll-scrambling. The students thoroughly enjoyed themselves and pushed themselves to the limit on a daily basis. The weather was not always ideal, which is to be expected in that part of the world, but the students worked through the challenging conditions to complete every activity with enthusiasm. More importantly, they came together as a group to support each other and work together to achieve their collective goals. Every student involved in the trip was fantastic from start to finish and it was a pleasure to see them develop so much over the week.

Mr Hook, Mrs Miland, Miss Greenwood and Miss Marshall



Year 10 Table Tennis Tournament

In early December, the Year 10 Table Tennis team travelled to the Foundation of Light Centre at Sunderland to take part in the Under-16 City Finals. In the group stage, we were pitted against teams from Whitley Bay, Whickham, Biddick Academy in Washington and St Joseph's in Hebburn. At the end of the group stage, St Mary's and Whitley Bay finished joint top on 10 points. However, due to our superior margins of victory, we progressed through to the final against St Cuthbert's. In a hard fought contest consisting of four separate singles games, the St Mary's team showed determination and resilience to take the tie three wins to one. The boys performed brilliantly and were crowned Under-16 City Champions. They now progress to the Northern Regional Finals in Cumbria, which will take place in January. Congratulations go to Jonathan Jativa-Calle, Daniel Gazerani-Lopez, Mikey Block and Taylor Rippington.

Mr Hook



Rapunzel Performance

On Thursday 5th December, the Performing Arts Department spread the festive cheer to Year 7 and the Year 8 Drama and Dance Club members by welcoming 'Bigfoot Arts Education' into school to perform their pantomime of Rapunzel. The afternoon began with a pantomime workshop led by our Year 13 students, with students

producing their own versions of classic pantomime tales, which they showed to Rachael Adamson, Director of Bigfoot Arts Education.



Rachel was impressed with their work and, in particular, the comedy that they incorporated into their performance. After that, it was over to the professionals. Three extremely talented performers dazzled our students with their own version of Rapunzel, expertly playing all roles in the story between the three of them. Three lucky St Mary's students in the audience were invited up on stage to participate, in true pantomime fashion! Our students thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and took part with gusto and maturity.

Miss Stearman



Visit from Labour Candidate Nick Brown

Recently, politics have been the topic of many a conversation, and it can sometimes seem that political views are dividing the country. On Friday 22nd November, Nick Brown came to visit the Sixth Form to talk about his experiences as an MP. Nick is the Labour candidate for Newcastle East and has been a Member of Parliament for nearly forty years. This voluntary session proved very popular, with over 50 Year 12 and 13 students attending. Nick talked about his life in politics, then invited us to ask him questions, mainly about the upcoming election. Before taking questions from students, he outlined Labour's policies for the election, which included earmarking £250 billion in the next decade to tackle climate change, provide free broadband and abolish university tuition fees.

The first question centred on the voting system, which resulted in a heated debate about the merits or otherwise of the 'first-past-the-post' system. The next question was about Brexit, with many expressing opposing views about the whole issue. In the end, the two sides, as one student put it, "agreed to disagree." Nick said that this was one of his favourite phrases. It demonstrates that, although we may see things

completely differently, we can always respect each other's point of view.

One main topic on everyone's mind seemed to be whether 16-year-olds should get the vote. It is safe to say that the vast majority of the students present thought that the franchise should be extended. Nick also agreed that 16-year-olds should be allowed to vote. He added that, if Labour got into power, he would try his best to make this a reality. One student, Manyong Mayan, commented: "I thought he was really interesting. He was really informative and educated about his role. He tried to speak without political bias, too."

Nick answered all the questions that were put to him and most people seemed reasonably happy with his responses. Political opinions were clearly divided, but, as Nick said, the most important thing was that people had a view and voted. The visit was a big success. It was a great opportunity for sixth-form students to meet and hear such an experienced politician. It was also an opportunity for us to get our voices heard.

Liam Smith (Year 12)

Key Stage 3 Art Club

The memorial flame in development



Our Year 7 and 8 Art Club students are currently collaborating to create a Holocaust memorial flame. The flame design is based on a poem entitled 'The Butterfly', which was written by Pavel Friedmann in 1942 whilst he was in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. The poem calls upon children to take a stand against prejudice and intolerance by creating a butterfly, which is supposed to represent endurance, hope and life. The flame that the Year 7 and Year 8 students are making will eventually be filled with colourful origami butterflies and 3D birds. The students will also be planting flowers to attract butterflies to their 'living' piece of art. The work will be on display as part of Holocaust Memorial Evening, which will take place at St Mary's in January.

Mrs Tait

Visit to the Lit and Phil

In early December, a small group of Year 12 students visited the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society near the Central Station, more commonly known as the Lit and Phil. The students were greeted by school governor Malcolm Gregor, who had organised the tour of this fascinating building for the students. The tour began in the impressive staircase, hung with portraits of former presidents of the Lit and Phil. It was founded in 1793 as a 'conversation club' and has now grown and evolved into an independent library in Newcastle, housing over 170,000 books. Since opening in 1825, the Lit and Phil has been a centre of learning in the heart of the city, witnessing 'world firsts' in innovation and developing a unique collection of books. In fact, it is the largest independent library outside of London.

During their tour of the building, the students discovered the Lit and Phil is so much more than a library. Depending on who you ask, it is a historic building, a meeting place, an office, a theatre,

a lecture hall, a jazz venue, and a performance space, as well as an exceptional library. After the tour, the students took refreshments in the library and relaxed in the beautiful surroundings, chatting to the librarian and browsing through the vast collections. Many students hope to return to work and study in the library, with some students already inspired to start their Extended Project Qualifications or to attend some of the public lectures over the coming months.

Mrs Nelson



Year 7 News

Year 7 students have made a great start to this academic year. They have settled so well into the routines of secondary school, demonstrating incredible effort and a positive attitude to all aspects of school life. It has also been lovely to see and hear all the talents of our Year 7 students. I am so proud of all that they have achieved so far and excited to see the achievements and successes that the rest of the year will bring.

A special mention goes to 7S and 7T, who delivered their first form class assemblies in front of the whole year group during the first term. There had evidently been a huge amount of planning and preparation put in to these assemblies and the students in both classes spoke brilliantly. In addition to this, there was some excellent use of drama to help illustrate clearly the themes of 'one world' and 'step-up'. Well done to 7S and 7T, and I look forward to seeing the other assemblies throughout the rest of the year.

I am really pleased to be able to share the success of Millie Marron in the regional Irish Dancing Championships in October. Millie qualified for the World Championships, which are due to be held in Dublin in April 2020. She will be representing our region. Well done to Millie!

It was also lovely to hear that Tamsin Dale was successful in gaining a part in the ensemble for the *Wind in the Willows* production at the Tyne Theatre in November. This is an excellent achievement. Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the Year 7 form tutors during this first term at school. The support you have offered students has been invaluable. I would also like to thank the students for all of their hard work and efforts over the autumn term.; you really are a credit to St Mary's Catholic School.

Miss Harper

RFU Young Rugby Ambassadors

Nine of our Year 9 and 10 students began their RFU Young Rugby Ambassadors qualification at the end of November, attending their first session, 'entitled Refereeing Youth Rugby', at Walbottle Campus. The course includes a series of workshops aimed at developing coaching and refereeing skills, leading to a Level 1 qualification. This will enable the students to take a lead role in youth rugby in their own clubs, as well as in school. Previous Young Rugby Ambassadors have had great success and remain very active in supporting rugby at St Mary's. Every week, there are several A-Level and GCSE students helping out at training sessions and organised matches. The students attending the course this year are Vinny Baker, Sam Jubb, Malachi Duff, Fenton Mitchell, Torin Innes-Menzies, Sam Cleife, Dan Clark, Solomon Mak and Tomas Boothroyd. We wish them every success as Young Rugby Ambassadors in the future.

Mr Hook

Year 11 News

I have been really impressed with the start that students have made to the year. Everyone has shown a great deal of focus and is motivated to do well throughout the year.

Year 11 mocks have gone really well. The students followed the routines regarding movement around school to a very high standard.

There are a few students who deserve special mention.

Morgan French continues to do brilliantly in chess. In a recent match against RGS he beat an opponent ranked 80 points higher (a very significant difference). This resulted in the overall match being drawn and is the first time in 30 (possibly 40) years that RGS has not beaten a local school competitor in a match.

Helen Biver always gives more than the required effort to any given task and is a polite, friendly and supportive student who always offers help to others.

Katie Stanger-Leathes is also someone who is extremely hard-working and never looks for praise. She is a great friend to her peers and is often heard telling them that they need to revise and offering advice on how to do it. She is one of those quiet, hard-working students who just gets on with everything without making a fuss and achieves good results through hard work.

I am extremely happy to report that so many of the Year 11 students display the same qualities.

Mr Boyle



Sixth Form News

This has been a very busy term for all our Key Stage 5 students. Year 12 students have been settling in to their new routines and adapting to the added challenge of A-Level study, whilst Year 13 have been preparing their UCAS applications, and revising for mock examinations. Excitingly, many Year 13 students have already received many university offers. At the same time, we have launched our Employability Group, in which we offer effective advice and guidance to those students who are not planning to go to university. This scheme runs alongside the support that we offer those wishing to enter higher education.

Pastoral Programme sessions this term have provided an extremely diverse range of experiences for all students, with talks on everything from the National Citizenship Service and Success4All, to interview skills, student life and finance. Nick Brown, the local Member of Parliament, paid us a visit, too. He hosted a very popular political debate.

Year 12 students have been taking full advantage of the many opportunities available to them, such as applying for the Reece Scholarship, which promotes engineering, undertaking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), and attending the Medicine and Dentistry Club to name but a few. Fundraising for the Year 12 trip to Zambia next year has also been in full swing this term, with students providing refreshments at parent and open evenings in their quest to raise as much money as possible to support their expedition.

A group of Year 12 students attended the Newcastle Lit and Phil, where they spent time in an academic environment. This will be an invaluable experience and will provide excellent preparation for life at university.

We held a very well attended and successful Sixth Form Open Evening, which launched the start of our transition work for current Year 11 students.

Mrs McEwan

Art Trip to Edinburgh

In November, A-Level students from Design and Technology, and Art went to Edinburgh for the day. Students had a really enjoyable and productive time, gathering resources and getting ideas for their own projects at the Scottish National Museum. They also had a tour of Edinburgh's beautiful old town, which is always a wonderful experience. Afterwards, the students saw an exhibition of work by the Royal Scottish Academy. Seeing innovative and exciting artists at work was certainly an inspiration. It was a busy day and the students returned to Newcastle with lots of new ideas about how to apply what they had seen to their own work in a creative way.

Mrs Eakin



Year 8 Boys County Cup Rugby

At the end of November, the Year 8 boys rugby team took part in the finals of the County Cup at Kingston Park. With 16 schools participating, the event was a clear sign that schools rugby is growing in popularity. The St Mary's team was outstanding in the group stage and finished top of the group. This meant that we were pitted against the three other group winners in the competition. Our first two games were against experienced opposition in Dame Allan's and Chantry Middle School. In both games, St Mary's competed very well and played some great flowing rugby, scoring three tries in the two games. However, our opponents passed the ball well, had very strong attacking players and ran out victors in both games.



Our final group game, which was against St Thomas More of North Shields, was in effect the 3rd and 4th place play-off. St Mary's took control of the game from the start, thanks to powerful running from Wisdom Jerry, Moses Ndudi and Dan Morosan. St Thomas More occasionally hit back, but the St Mary's team was too strong and we ran out comfortable winners at 5 tries to 2. Finishing 3rd overall in the whole competition was a fantastic achievement, the best result that we have had in recent years. Player of the day was Wisdom Jerry, who made countless tackles, constantly broke up attacks

and scored two excellent tries (carrying the opposing players with him as he headed for the line). Congratulations also go to Moses Ndudi, Jack Eltringham, Dan Morosan, Kyle Allan, Thomas Holland, Ted Old, Seamus Knight, Joseph Smart, James Gallagher, David Lancaster, Daniel Trojanowskis, Noah Clarke, Iyayi Odeh, Guilherme Fragata, Alexander Drossos and Sam Brooks.

Mr Hook and Mr McComb

Sixth Form Year 7 Lunchtime Science Club

The Year 7 Lunchtime Science Club is organised and run by Sixth Form students. We have a regular quiz, discuss current developments in science and highlight interesting experiments for younger students to watch and sometimes try.



It has proved very popular with about thirty Year 7 pupils regularly attending. This year, students have investigated many things, including chemiluminescence, elephant's toothpaste and reversible reactions. Year 7 students attending the club have really enjoyed these informal lunchtime sessions and have made several suggestions for the future.

Mr Elliott

Year 8 News

The start of any new academic year is always very busy and this term has been no exception. I am really pleased to report that Year 8 students have settled back into life at St. Mary's with great ease. They really are a credit to the school, their parents and themselves. With the first term of Year 8 over, it is now a good time to reflect on their achievements so far and to focus on what they need to do in order to achieve success over the rest of this academic year. As the Head of Year 8, I am really proud of all their achievements and, most of all, the positive attitude that they display in all aspects of school life on a daily basis.



There has been sustained academic and pastoral progress made by the students during the first part of Year 8, as well as clear evidence of personal satisfaction and enjoyment of school life. I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge well done to Abby Kelliher in 8I. Abby is a very talented young tennis player.



She balances her studies with a hectic tennis-training schedule. She plays for the school Under-13 girls football team too. Abby's talent

has even been recognised at national level. This year, she has represented Team GB at many prestigious tennis tournaments across Europe. Recently, Abby returned from the 'Tennis Europe Tournament' in Turkey, where she reached the semi-finals. This meant that Abby finished in the top four out of 64 other elite European players at this event. This is an outstanding achievement and she should be very proud of her amazing success.

Mr Gray

Visit to Sunderland Medical School



Earlier in November, as part of the MaD Club, eight prospective medical students from Year 12 visited the Medical School at Sunderland University. This is a brand new facility, which is equipped with cutting-edge technology. Students were given a tour of the Medical School. In addition to this, they were able to carry out a consultation with a patient, take measurements from programmable robots in a mock hospital ward, and carry out a human dissection on a virtual body. This was a fantastic experience and the students gained so much in such a short space of time.

Mr Reeve

