

# CONVENT times

ISSUE 13  
SPRING 2020

## SOCIAL JUSTICE & CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Our research school is the only independent, Catholic,  
state research school in England.

Read the full story on page 40

### HAIRSPRAY JR

the Musical

Page 20

### PLUS

Fundraising Update

Prime Minister's Newsletter

Visits:

Supreme Court

Bruges Christmas Markets

Yr13 Retreat

Lourdes

and more...





# Welcome to Issue 13

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Message from

# Mrs McGowan.



We are publishing this newsletter in very strange and unprecedented times.

History is being written as we navigate our way through this national emergency. The impact that the Coronavirus is having globally is astonishing and deeply troubling. There is no such thing as 'normal life' anymore. We are defining a new kind of way to live and to be in the world.

We could not let all the wonderful things that have taken place in the Convent so far this year go unnoticed or uncelebrated; hence we are publishing our usual spring edition of the newsletter to remind us all what a unique and beautiful school we have and to pay tribute to the many achievements of our wonderful students and staff.

It is only when a newsletter is put together that you realise just how much happens in the space of half a year in school. It may be a while before we are able to resume our normal activity in school so please savour this newsletter and keep it safe; dip into it when you want to re-connect with the Convent and above all, be proud that you are a part or are soon to be a part of our very special Convent family.

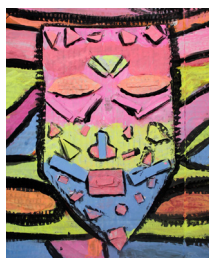
God bless.

**Mrs L McGowan,**  
*Headmistress.*



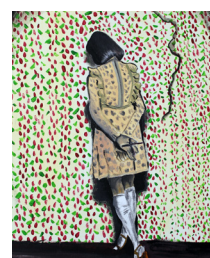
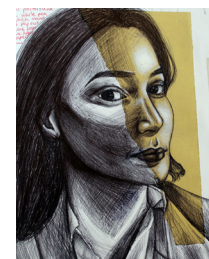
# Art Department Gallery

The Art department wanted to show off some of the fantastic work done so far this year...



These prints, produced by Mrs Faik's Y8 Art class, were made as the final piece to their Print project. Students looked at examples of printmaking from all over the world before coming up with their own designs (above).

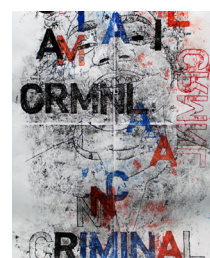
Mr Grant's Y9 GCSE Art class have been working on a still life project this term. These drawings were preparation for the larger paintings they are working on now (left, below and opposite).



Mr Grant's Y10 GCSE Art class produced these excellent drawings as part of their portraiture project (above and right).



Our very talented Y11 students produced these amazing pieces as part of their coursework.



Y12 Artists have been exploring new ways of producing imagery. These images represent weeks of hard work with oil pastel (above and left).



Our exceptional Y13 Art students have astounded their teachers with the thoughtful and considered way they have made these engaging pieces (above and left).

## Well done to our incredible artists!

Aya and Bernice year 8; Cressida, Fia, Hannah, Hilary, N'Dhanba, Nikita and Sweeny year 9; Mariah, Rachel and Sylvia year 10; Alexandra, Blossom, Esosa and Rosa year 11; Paula and Samanta year 12; Angelica, Anna Clara and Kamila year 13'



# INTERVIEW

with Mr Duggan

What made you choose geography?

*I enjoyed Geography at school because I had a really charismatic teacher who continually supported me and pushed me to achieve.*

What motivates you as a teacher?

*Day-to-day the main thing I look forward to is seeing students. This might seem like too simple an answer to the question, but it's an honest one.*

Within geography, which topic do you most enjoy teaching?

*Human geography at A-level is my favourite and, within that, the topic of 'superpowers', as you have to draw in aspects of politics and history. I strongly recommend the book *Prisoners of Geography* by Tim Marshall if you get interested in this topic – there are copies in the school library.*

How do you like being a form tutor?

*I like getting to know my tutees and helping them to find their place in the school community. I've had 8K since they were in year 7 and they're the best form in their year*



*group. (Editorial comment: Well he would say that, wouldn't he?!)*

If you could add a topic to the geography curriculum what would it be?

*I would add historical geography of the city to A level. This would examine social and political changes of the past 400 years and the impact on the local environment of city growth and development.*

What has been your biggest achievement as a teacher?

*Seeing students happily learning in my lessons! Knowing that I have helped them, even in a small way, is my most valuable experience.*

Interviewer: Kelly, 12S



## Black History Month Readings

During Black History Month my school started seminar sessions where we would read literature about the black experience in Britain. The sixth form and the younger years were combined which allowed us to interact in a new and intellectual way, and the lasting effect it had on the students is evident. For the younger years especially, it gave them a chance to see that the negative experiences that they had had due to their race hadn't only happened to them. I gave a minor seminar on the variety in black hair and care methods, and although this may seem like a small thing it made a world of difference for girls in a world that they didn't feel catered to them. The club was so successful in empowering and nurturing intelligent minds I hope it will be an annual feature and expanded next year. *Nia-Patrice, Year 12*

I thoroughly enjoyed the reading that we did in the library for the Black History Month. It was very educational and inspired me to learn more about different cultures. I also found that all the readings that the librarian picked raised an excellent discussion about different aspects that make different cultures so distinctive and unique. Some of the books we read from were *Natives* by Akala, *Don't Touch My Hair* by Emma Dabiri and *Brit(ish)* by Afua Hirsch. *Jasmina 12S*





## News from Business Studies

Our A-level Business Studies students welcomed Sinead Meany, Head of Legal – EU Withdrawal at the Bank of England, who visited the Convent to talk about the roles and functions of the Bank of England and other financial institutions. This was useful preparation for one of the topics in the students' Unit 3 Finance exam. Ms Meany also gave an insight into her career and her route into the Bank, which was a very engaging subject for our aspiring business leaders.

Our year 13s also took part in an online workshop organised by PricewaterhouseCoopers, where they gained an exclusive insight into the world of business, accounting and technology, and what it's really like to work with PwC on their degree and apprenticeship programmes. The students had an opportunity to chat directly with a member of the PwC team and discuss progression options at the company post-A levels.

We thoroughly enjoyed our annual trip to Cadbury World. This is always a great opportunity to increase student awareness of the business world. The day started with a talk about the marketing of Cadbury products, followed by a tour of the factory, where the students were able to see chocolate production, while being treated to lots of free chocolate along the way!

As part of the school celebration of Brent as the London Borough of Culture our students conducted some research into Brent entrepreneurs. We posted some of their work on social media and were pleased to get a 'shout-out' from none other than 'The Ultrapreneur', Julian Hall, a Harlesden local who revealed family connections with the school. We hope he will be able to visit us later in the year.

Mrs Maclean-Thomas,  
Curriculum Leader, Business Studies

## News from Careers

Our Careers Fair was busy and featured a great range of professions, workplaces, and further and higher education providers. We were also thrilled to welcome some parents, who were happy to talk about their careers, and I would like to thank them for their time and enthusiasm. The school's Enterprise Adviser, Suzanne Semedo, was also here to talk about her work at the Ministry of Justice.

It is always a pleasure to welcome our alumni to these events, as their advice and experience is especially tailored to our students. Veronica Awuzudike, who left the Convent in 2010, came to the careers fair and later visited the year 12s to talk about her career path to becoming a Senior Account Executive working in the pharmaceutical industry. She explained her route from the Convent to the University of East Anglia to a scientific education agency to where she is now. She explained the importance of learning transferable skills which you will be able to use throughout your career; they could well end up being more useful than any expert knowledge of specific subjects.

We are always happy to hear from alumni or parents who would like to share their career stories with our students. Please feel free to be in touch to discuss.

Ms Lawrence,  
Careers Guidance Leader





## Chaplaincy News



## Lent

Our preparation for Lent started with our Ash Wednesday Liturgies, when we were encouraged to think about fasting, praying and almsgiving. The act of almsgiving fits in neatly with St Claudine's value of Service. As a school community, we are always thinking of ways to help others and we have chosen to support the following charities this Lent - Caritas, Mary's Meals, Crisis in Brent and Lourdes. *Mrs Sylvester-Charles, Chaplain.*

## Fairtrade School

Our school was successful in renewing its status as a FairAchiever School. As confirmation of our hard work to promote Fair Trade we are able to display our quality mark for another 3 years. We actively encourage staff and students to choose Fairtrade products and promote the message that by doing so people can create change through their everyday actions.

Just before Christmas the Food Technology students baked and sold gingerbread men in support of 'Bake a Difference' and raised £50 for the Fairtrade Foundation.

Our students also enthusiastically contributed artwork for an exhibition on the theme of Fairtrade held in Brent Civic Centre. This was officially opened by the Mayor of Brent, Cllr Ernestine Ezeajughi, on Wednesday 4 March and the exhibition will be on display for the next month.



## Fundraising Update

Students were actively fundraising in the Autumn Term, and we raised a total of **£3855.37** for a number of charities:

Sixth Formers held a MacMillan Coffee Morning in September and raised £258 selling lovely baked treats and coffee.

On Breast Cancer Awareness Day we wore one item of pink clothing to show our commitment to this cause and made £596.26.

In November, we joined the UK in purchasing a poppy and £75.00 was raised for The Poppy Appeal.

Finally, during Advent, we raised money for six charities through cake sales, raffles, and a well-tested Santa Dash for St Luke's Hospice, all to help those who are in need or less fortunate than ourselves as we prepared for Christmas. A staggering £2,876.11 was raised and the following charities benefitted from our students' acts of kindness:

*Cardinal Hume's The Passage £812.60*

*Lepra £263.52*

*African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust (ACLT) £630.38*

*St Luke's Hospice £834.12*

*Save the Children £41.10*

*Lourdes pilgrimage £294.39*

There was also the collection of toiletries by Yr12 students in support of Caritas and their project with Bakhita House. I would like to thank students, staff and their families for your constant support and generosity towards our charitable fundraising.



## Year 13

# RETREAT

The theme of our retreat this year was 'The road to Emmaus'. We took our students to spend some time with the RJM Sisters at their house in Felixstowe. This time away was to prepare the students for independent living, learning to be part of a team and to communicate with individuals outside their normal friendship or family circles. We asked them to use the freedom from their usual routines and distractions to think carefully about: Why do we journey? How do we journey? Who do we journey with? What happens after the journey? How does God open our eyes?

By the end of the two days, new friendships had been formed, students had learned that, if they trusted in their faith and others, all will be well;

and, last but not least, they were able to erect and dismantle tents!

Some reflections from the girls included: "I have learned that, even if you're not part of a certain faith, you can still get involved and be enlightened by the faith of others and the love that is shared"; and "I appreciated the companionship, the journey, the challenge to leave my comfort zone and getting to know everyone in Year 13, as this is our last year together."





# Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

July 2019

Our team work and fundraising efforts all came to fruit when we finally left St Pancras Station heading to Lourdes via Paris. The journey was long but one in which we had time to help those who needed our assistance as well as think about the pilgrimage ahead. Our students had volunteered to be 'Redcaps' and their duties included working for the Lourdes authorities in an official capacity, taking part in processions and carrying banners, socialising with the sick and assisting them by pushing wheelchairs, taking part in liturgies, services and Masses, as well as by supporting pilgrims by walking with them. The week was full and each day brought a different experience. As we reflected on the week we all agreed that the people we encountered and the experiences we shared made this a rewarding and extraordinary week.

Lourdes was a life changing experience and I loved every single minute of it. It was very rewarding. *Nadia*

A very enriching experience! Physically demanding, but gratifying. *Gabriella*



Lourdes was the best trip I had ever gone to and that's why I decided to go again in 2019. I was inspired and touched by the people I met and the activities we were involved in. I would recommend to anyone and everyone. *Eunice*

It was a life-changing experience, which nourished my spiritual life. Lourdes has made my faith stronger and it has impacted my life in many ways. *Aezelle*

Lourdes was an amazing experience, but also an emotional one. This was the first time I attended and I can say that I definitely had a great time meeting new people and also helping 3 different pilgrims. Till today, I can never forget that week in Lourdes, it will always have a place in my heart. *Daniella*

I had time to be away from my daily struggles, which allowed me to put things into perspective. I was able to spiritually connect with God and reflect on my life in general. I made friends with people who came along with us and have learnt to see the world differently, being more appreciative of the little things in life. *Karolina*





## Convent girls speak at City Hall

We were invited to collaborate with Team London Young Ambassadors in order to develop a project focusing on a particular injustice in our community. A group of us created the “We Be Woke” campaign. The aim of We Be Woke is to educate and awaken people in Brent about the importance of social integration. One definition of this term is: cultivation of solidarity between different groups. We had the idea after being part of the City Hall Youth Summit, where this was discussed.

Students across many schools were asked to pitch an idea on what ways they thought they could help their community develop social integration. Our plan of action is to hold a collection of events to bring our community together. This will consist of summits, readings and art exhibits featuring art inspired by social injustices and problems. It's a non-profit association and will benefit many people as it is non-exclusive and welcomes everybody. What we would like you to remember is our slogan “sleep on beds, not social issues” because it's time to wake up!

*Ruby & Sumaya 9K, Freya 9M, Manjiba 9A and Victorina 9C*

## Dance Showcase

We were very excited to share the talents of our girls during the school's Dance Showcase. Students across all age groups performed pieces they have been developing since September. We had girls performing a ballet piece taken from the Grade 2 syllabus of the Royal Academy of Dance. A group of sixth formers performed a section from 5 Soldiers by Rosie Kay, which they are working on as part of their BTEC in Performing Arts. We also had a contemporary dance piece and some street dance. It was fabulous to see such diverse dance styles in one production!

The students all worked incredibly hard during lunch times and after school to make sure the quality of this performance was the very best it could be and I was especially pleased to see students from different year groups collaborating and working as a team during the rehearsals. They demonstrated strong choreographic skills and encouraged each other throughout.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to parents and carers who really supported them during the preparation period.

**Ms Anastasiou, Dance teacher**

This was a great experience for me as I had the opportunity to improve my performance skills and develop my confidence. *Maye, 7F*



Performing in the dance production was fun because I not only learned the dances, but also got to know students from other years during rehearsals. I would recommend dance as a way to be creative and to make friends. *Jayla-Dior, 7K*



## University Success!

Four of our students addressed an audience of more than five hundred people at an event to mark the retirement of the Founder and Director of the Urban Scholars initiative. These girls were leading members of the Urban Scholars' Scheme, which takes place at Brunel University on Saturdays. The Convent has students attending this scheme from Years 10–13 and the programme improves their prospects of successfully applying to top universities.

Frankie and Lizzie (on the right of the photo) are currently studying at top US universities on full scholarships, which cover all their expenses, and they tell me they are having a fantastic time. Abigail and Catherine (on the left) are in the final stages of their applications and we have just heard that Abigail has been accepted to Dartmouth College, an Ivy League university in New Hampshire!

Both also hold offers from Durham University and Queen Mary's as insurance. In September we sent Adelina (not pictured) to Columbia University in New York on a scholarship of \$90,000 a year.

We also have Nia in year 12 going on a summer school at Yale in August. This is the first step on the road to gaining a scholarship at an Ivy League University.

Apart from all these pleasing successes many of our current year 13 students hold offers from Russell Group Universities and Oxbridge; for example, our head girl, Giovanna, has an offer to read Law at Cambridge.

**Mr Colley,**  
*Oxbridge/USA/UCAS Mentor*



## Voice Training with the English National Opera

This year we have been providing new and exciting arts opportunities for our girls and one such opportunity is our involvement with a project led by the English National Opera.

Students who showed a keen interest in singing and music were invited to take part in this project, where Suzi Zumpe, a fantastic, renowned and effective vocal coach, comes in to school and works with them. These sessions include working on vocal technique, expression and singing as part of a professional choir. With Suzi comes a group of professional musicians, a pianist to accompany the rehearsal, and a different opera singer every week.

The students' involvement in this project has been enthusiastic and consistent, and will eventually culminate in a performance in collaboration with two other schools in July.



## In other music news...

The Y11 GCSE Music students have recorded some of the compositions they are required to write as part of their course with a professional musician and sound engineer. The girls did incredibly well at performing their work and were hugely impressive in their creative ability and professionalism. A new vocal group was formed in the process; 'Felicia and the La La's! They will be taking to the stage at the Arts Festival in July, so look out for them! *Ms White, Music Teacher.*



# Hairspray Jr!

This year's production was the biggest ever! The cast worked so hard to develop the production, with lots of late nights and Saturday rehearsals. The vision was to create a fun and unique experience for the audience, and I think we pulled it off! The pre-show entertainment involved jokes, magic tricks and songs from some of our incredible singers.

The entire cast and crew worked hard to produce such a professional production with so much energy and passion! The set designers created colourful, bright and funky designs that really made the stage pop, and we thank the staff and students involved with this. It was a huge honour to be able to direct such a fun and energetic group of young ladies, some of whom will no doubt go on to shine on the stage in years to come!

Ms Burgess,  
Curriculum Leader, Performing Arts

I have had an amazing time in Hairspray; I've met people I would have never talked to from all year groups and made so many talented and supportive friends. Being Seaweed has given me confidence and taught me so much about acting and musical theatre. I encourage everyone to take part in one of our school productions as I can guarantee you will have an incredible time.  
*Christianna, 10A*

Hairspray was amazing to be a part of! I loved working with students from across the school and helping each other to learn the dances and lines. I loved my character and enjoyed bringing him to life, and with such great costumes! Being able to invite my parents and friends was great and they loved it. *Grace, 10C*









# Jack Petchey

The aims of the Jack Petchey Foundation include: "to recognise the outstanding achievements of today's young people by awarding them for their hard work and positive impact in their community" To this end we vote for award winners from a list of nominees of students who have made a particularly effective and positive contribution to our school.

In February the winners attended the awards evening at Brent Civic centre, which was a wonderful night of celebrations with the venue packed with young people, together with their friends and families. I would like to congratulate all our winners and thank Ms Stewart for all her support in making the scheme run so efficiently at our school. Some quotes from the testimonials for each winner make for inspirational reading:

## Layan 10F

... she has a very mature outlook on life, and she is objective when reaching conclusions in conversations on complex issues ...

## Felicia 11C

... She has an amazing energy during form time, always offering to help and creating a great atmosphere every day ...

## Eunice 13C

... She spoke at the launch event for LBOC in front of hundreds of people, and because of how impressive she was, she has been promoted to the role of Cultural Trailblazer, where she will now lead Cultural Ambassadors in their work through the Year of Culture.

## Kezia 12S

... This student is living the school ethos which is to excel and lead.

## Daniella 13C

... She is really hard working, polite, demonstrates good leadership qualities to her peers and readily provides assistance in and out of the learning context.

## Chelsea 13C

... She balances her studies with school activities and outside commitments as she strives to develop herself and broaden her horizons. A truly impressive young woman.

## Sankce 11K

... She is the type of student who would not be outspoken but who would work relentlessly behind the scenes ... and is kind, articulate and funny.

Finally, Mrs Sylvester-Charles, our school chaplain, was honoured with the Leadership Award this year. ... Genuinely kind, approachable, lively, positive; in my eyes she represents all the values and more of the school. She is simply the best! Congratulations to all of our winners for their tremendous achievements!



## Historical Association Quality Mark Award

I am very proud and thrilled to share with you all that the History Department has been awarded a 'Gold' award from the 'The voice of secondary history education in the U.K' - the Historical Association (HA). Over the last few years, the department has worked hard on developing an innovative curriculum. We have championed teaching diverse histories, difficult histories and the histories of activism. We believe that history is more than just knowing what happened in the past, it's about using the past to inform us and our consciousness today.

The department had to go through a very rigorous process of auditing key areas including, the curriculum and teaching, extra-curricular activities, student voice and leadership and management. During the assessment day, lessons were observed across the department, there was a work scrutiny and students participated in focus groups to talk about their history education.



We are proud that we have been recognised and accredited as a 'Gold' school for History. The department would like to thank all our colleagues from departments across the school who gave us their encouragement and support. We also want to thank our brilliant students who work hard, contribute and engage positively in History lessons. You all inspire us every day!

Mrs Aninakwa, Curriculum Leader, History



## Visit to Dublin

One of the units in our A-level history course covers Ireland 1790-1930, with particular focus on the move towards Home Rule and the Anglo-Irish settlement. In order to gain greater insight and understanding we went on a weekend visit to Dublin. From going on walking tours and visiting museums that mapped out the history of Ireland, our understanding of the Irish struggle for self-determination was deepened. The Irish emigration museum in particular had many exhibits that really resonated with the lives of many of us with a family background involving migration. Visiting the famine memorials and reading first-hand accounts truly allowed us to understand the impact of events and allowed us to remember that these were real human experiences. Overall it was an amazing and memorable trip!



Marianna, Catherine & Abigail 13F





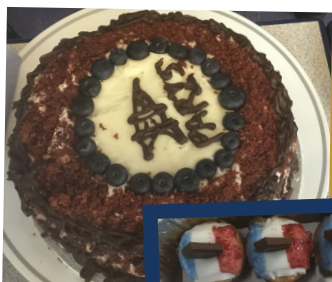
# News from MFL

## Great European Bake Off

In celebration of 'European Day of Languages', and to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support, our Modern Foreign Languages department held a themed cake-decorating competition. Girls were asked to make any cake that would represent the languages taught or spoken in our community. Students drew inspiration from colours of the flags, flavours of the countries or prominent buildings representing the country. We were really impressed by the quality, creativeness and technical flair of all of the bakes. Thank you to our star bakers and special congratulations to our winner Hannah 7A and runners up Isabelle and Patrycja 7K, Neveah and Kerry 7C

As soon as I heard there was going to be a bake off, I thought it was a great idea. As we made cakes with our families we were also making unforgettable memories. *Hannah, 7A*

It was fun because you get to express your nationality anyway you want. My nationality was Polish. *Patrycja, 7K*



## Latin at the Convent

This year the MFL Department included in its Y7 carousel of languages a series of 10 lessons in Latin language and Roman civilisation. The students were given the opportunity to learn some basic Latin and appreciate how this is the root of the three languages taught at the Convent. The girls showed enthusiasm in learning facts about Roman life and participated in a Research Project and finally presented their poster and research findings producing some stunning work to their peers. Thank you to Ms Mitchell for coordinating the course.

Personally, I found the Latin course interesting and fun. In this course we broadened our knowledge about Latin in an intriguing manner. This course will always stay with me as I learnt things I didn't know before. We had the chance to learn how Latin is linked with the languages we are able to learn and more about the dead language. The course was all in all brilliant. *Abira, 7C*

The lessons that we had about Latin were very entertaining and taught me a lot of interesting facts about the language and the people who spoke Latin. Also, it was very helpful to know about our three languages: Italian, Spanish and French as they have words that are very similar to Latin. *Moram, 7M*

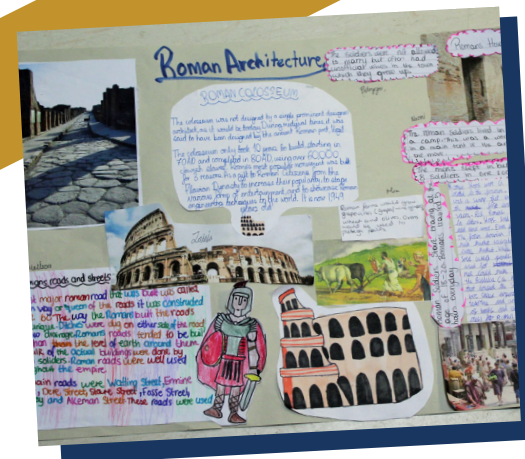


## Eurovision Song Contest

is by now a traditional annual activity completed in celebration of European Day of Languages in which the Y9 students can showcase their wonderful singing and dancing talents in a language they study.

I am in Ms Pearce's Spanish class and we choreographed and developed an act to perform in our MFL language contest in front of the rest of our year and some judges. Just like everyone else we performed putting our all into our act with loud singing voices, smiling faces and beautiful props made with precision and passion by yours truly. It was quite nerve racking but we still pulled through and tried our best, resulting in a win and the wonderful prize of a movie to watch during one of our MFL lessons. *Cheni, 9C*

The Eurovision Competition was very exciting! At first we struggled with the choreography, but we worked through it and ended up with an amazing dance to go with the Song 'La Bamba'. Fortunately, our class won the Eurovision! *Mellisiya, 9F*





## News from MFL



## Bruges Christmas Market

As congratulations for completing their first term of language studies, 60 girls travelled to the Christmas Markets in Belgium, at the end of November. What a place to get into a Christmas spirit by wandering through quaint cobbled streets and pretty squares!

The trip to the Christmas markets was probably one of the best times. When we moved around the stalls, we learnt and used little phrases such as “Hello, how are you?” and “How much is this?” in French. This was helpful to see we could use French in a real life situation. *Abira, 7C*

The Christmas market had a lot of good food, interesting looking accessories and the cheese and chocolate was wonderful. *Clare, 7A*

We had lots of fun because we were able to see how different everything in Belgium is to London. We even had a chance to practise some of our French words when we spoke to some of the workers in the shops. *Nia, 7M*

I really liked going to Belgium because it was a great experience. To go to a new country and talk in a new language was really a privilege. *Mia-Rose, 7M*

## Model United Nations Conference

### at the University of Kent

As a teacher at the Convent I am always humbled by the calibre of young women at this school. When our students are given an opportunity to shine they grasp it and excel. A group of year 12 and 13 students exemplified this when they took part in a Model UN conference at the University of Kent. This required extensive research so they could effectively represent their allocated country as well as understanding the issue of the environment as a human right in a Model UN Human Rights Council role-play. They did this brilliantly, engaging in arguments with other countries in a passionate and confident way. I was so proud seeing how much the students grew over this weekend. The fact that they did this at a university with many older students was outstanding. They left the conference with a much deeper understanding of the way the United Nations functions and how a country's history and politics can often be a barrier to creating meaningful change.

*Ms McCombe, Curriculum Leader, Government & Politics*

I really enjoyed participation at the Model UN. Not only was I able to develop public speaking skills, but it has made me more confident in research and debate. I also got the opportunity to meet people from all around the world which made the experience feel more authentic. Most importantly, I got the opportunity to spend time with old friends and make new ones. *Clara, 13A*

The overall experience was something that I will proudly carry into my university journey as it has shown me the importance of research and confidence in debating a topic. It was extremely enriching as it developed our teamwork skills as we helped each other in arranging arguments and obtaining specific examples. It was also a great opportunity to grow closer to my year 12 and 13 peers as we were able to create connections amongst the year groups. It has been an experience that I would love to have again at a potentially higher level — I definitely recommend it. *Giovanna, 13C*





Convent went to the polls:

# Parliament Election

The Convent experienced its second election after Parliament voted to trigger the Fixed Term Parliament Act. Polling day ran smoothly thanks to the help from the Lords, the 6th form Politics students who handed out ballot papers and directed students through the voting process. After voting, students received a debrief from Ana in year 13, who taught them about how elections work in the UK and encouraged them to vote when they are 18. The results returned a landslide electoral victory for the Cecilia Party who have since been working hard to implement their manifesto.

Ms McCombe

Because the Convent parliament election took place on the same day as the general election in the UK, it made the participation of the students much greater as they could experience voting first hand. This would benefit them in the future as they understand the importance of voting from a young age. *Chelsea, 13C*

It was nice to be able to witness how young people are being shaped into knowledgeable citizens through giving them experience of voting. I think it was very important to provide them with the understanding of exactly how important the voice of each individual is and how much voting really matters. *Jasmina, 12S*

## Prime Minister's Questions

Prime Minister's Question time is a powerful opportunity for opposition MPs to hold the government to account by asking questions to see how far they've fulfilled their manifesto promises. This PMQs marked the first for our Prime Minister, Zainab. She was fantastic, commanding the room well and responding to difficult comments and questions comfortably. My favourite part of the event was the solidarity and sisterhood that shone through; halfway through the time allotted MPs moved away from competitive snipes towards 'how can we help you deliver change?'. Since then, the Cecilian government has been working hard to draw on ideas from other MPs, creating a cooperative parliament, all working together to make our school a better place. *Ms McCombe*

The Convent's PMQs are an amazing way for students across the board to get a taste of what MPs and the PM face on a regular basis. All students get really involved with the whole process of making and asking questions to hold the PM accountable and it's clear that their understanding of politics has developed because of it. As a Year 13 Politics student, I get to act as a Lord and oversee what happens during the PMQs which has also given me a better understanding of my course. *Heaven, 13F*





## The PE Department

Our A-level Business Studies students welcomed Sinead Meany, Head of Legal – EU Withdrawal at the Bank of England, who visited the Convent to talk about the roles and functions of the Bank of England and other financial institutions. This was useful preparation for one of the topics in the students' Unit 3 Finance exam. Ms Meany also gave an insight into her career and her route into the Bank, which was a very engaging subject for our aspiring business leaders.

Our year 13s also took part in an online workshop organised by PricewaterhouseCoopers, where they gained an exclusive insight. The PE department has achieved great accolades thus far this academic year, having achieved several sporting successes, commencing with our Year 8 netball team finishing third in the annual secondary schools Borough competition.

Our PE Award ceremony on 15th October was a huge success and honoured more than 120 girls for their amazing performances over the past year. There were several awards given at both club and key stages; girls were nominated by their PE teachers and winners were decided based on exceptional qualities and performances.

More recently we have had huge successes at Track Academy where three girls won the prestigious Jack Petchey Award. These Achievement Awards recognise and celebrate young people aged 11-25 who have gone above and beyond the standard measure.

These students were nominated unanimously in 2019, as they demonstrated leadership, kindness and helpfulness. Huge congratulations to: Grace, Tina and Deborah.

Our winners received a grant of £250 to benefit the academy, along with a certificate, pin-badge and book. They were also invited to attend a fun ceremony, at which they were presented with a medal in front of their families and VIPs.

I am so proud of our girls for a job well done!

Ms Johnson,  
Curriculum Leader, PE

Being inspired by the people around me, surrounding myself with high achieving people motivated by to aim for the best. I would like to say thank you for the positivity and encouragement from my coaches, teachers, family and friends. *Deborah, 10F*

I am delighted and extremely proud to have received recognition and a reward for something I work so hard for. Every week is dedicated to enhancing my athletic skills and every second of Track Academy gives me this opportunity. *Grace, 10C*

## Futsal Team News

The Convent put on a strong team performance to come second in the 2019 Brent Futsal competition, eventually losing to an excellent QPCS team in the final. A great performance and well done to our players: Insaf, Brilinda, Olivia, Dion and Brianna, Sharai, Blean, Yvonne, Shardonnae and Adwoa

*Convent 3 - 2 JFS*

*Convent 1 – 1 Crest*

*Convent 3 - 0 Kingsbury*

*Convent 1 – 4 QPCS*

*Convent 2 – 0 Claremont*



## Year 10 Santa Dash

The Santa Dashers were amazing this again this year running for St Lukes Hospice as part of their Advent fundraiser. Between 14 of them they raised £501.98 out of the £834.12 collected by the whole year. St Lukes have written to us saying how grateful they are for all our efforts. I couldn't be prouder of every Santa Dasher, you truly are Angels.

*First place in the run went to Miriam – congratulations Miriam!*

Our top fundraisers were *Layan* and *Stella* who raised more than £100 each!

A huge thank you to all of our Dashers: Maria, Elena, Maria Cathleen, Rosslyn, Deborah, Arleen, Grace, Layan, Sarah, Miriam, Gloria, Kayla, Christianna and Stella. And a big thank you to the staff who supported us: Ms Burgess and Ms Vujicic. Mr James, Director of Middle School.





# We hear from **Kayla**, star of Hairspray Jr, on her love of Performing Arts

Performing arts is a diverse, creative and energetic faculty to be a part of at the Convent. As a community we are all passionate about performance life at our school and we strive to explore a variety of styles and a range of technical skills in order to produce the best possible performance or piece we can.

As a GCSE Drama student, performing arts inspires and motivates me to strive for my absolute best in every lesson. My teachers are supportive and truly care about providing the best possible experience, in order to enrich my learning and ongoing journey as a young woman. Drama is important to me as it is a time to step away from normal life and explore the theatrics of becoming someone or something else, being confident in each character, movement or performance I take on.

Being a member of the Performing Arts faculty brings some amazing opportunities. Last year we had the absolute gift of going to see War Horse at the Troubadour Wembley Park theatre. As a performance group it's key that we get to experience a range of different shows and pieces in order to further our learning in the arts. War Horse was an experience like no other, the mechanics involved, the music, the lighting, was such a surreal experience. This work had me laughing, smiling, crying and gasping all at once. Later in the year we visited The Vaults in Waterloo to see an immersive piece of verbatim theatre by world renowned company Paper Birds.

Year 11 and Sixth Form Drama and Music students went to see a special schools' performance of Hamilton, with a talk-back from the cast, and year 12 were also able to see Love Love Love at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith.

Which brings me on to this year's musical, Hairspray Jr! The experience of being part of our annual school musical is unlike anything else. Each and every person is vital to the performance; no role is too big and no role is too small; everyone involved is needed, from the lighting technicians in the balcony to the crew in the wings and the set designers in the Art department. This year I had the great opportunity of taking a lead role, which was a completely nerve-racking experience, but the ensemble around me became my family. We felt like a big group of sisters who were relying on and supporting each other in order to ensure we all gave our best performance. I am proud to say that, after our final show, the audience gave us a standing ovation, something which our Chair of Governors said he had never seen before at the Convent. It was a truly happy and emotional moment for all involved.

Kayla, 10C



Kayla (centre)

For more Hairspray Jr photos see page 21 - 24

"Being able to attend and enjoy such top quality theatre motivates us to strive to produce similarly high quality performances and entertainment in our own school productions."



# Prime Minister's Newsletter

This year I have taken on the wonderful responsibility of being the Student Prime Minister for 2019-20.



I meet with the rest of Parliament and we discuss the pressing matters in school. Together we work very hard to ensure that these matters are raised and we strive to achieve positive change within the school and society. I am very happy to say that, as a result of our hard work, we have achieved so much in only a few months.

We have:

- Changed the 1-maths-book per year policy
- Made the dining room food cheaper and have introduced a better, more diverse menu
- Improved the marking policies
- Organised a contract to place several recycling bins on our school grounds

Soon, we hope to:

- Organise a cultural day event
- Improve toilet and site conditions

- Reform PSHE lessons
- Improve mental health mitigation

The highlight of my time as PM so far has been the Prime Minister's Questions that I did for the first time a few months ago. My fellow MPs asked me several questions about my achievements as PM. It was very intense but I loved every second of it.

I have been privileged to be part of such a wonderful House who have supported me throughout my time as PM and I am grateful for the kindness and encouragement that has been provided to me by my peers and teachers throughout the school.

In my time, I have appreciated the importance of integrity, accountability and professionalism and I have learnt so much already about being a leader and the value of selflessness and I strive to continue to be the best PM I can possibly be.

**Zainab, 10C.**

## My A-Level Journey

When you are told that Theology is a difficult subject, don't underestimate it. The last two years of Theology have tested the boundaries of my mind in terms of what I believe about the world and society as a Catholic. You uncover things you would not have paid attention to before and start to seek an answer to the unanswerable questions in the world.

It did not take long for me to become captivated by Theology. A Level Theology was the catalyst in choosing my future career in teaching religion. I have become more and more intrigued by the way religion has shaped society and the way things are today. This was enforced by particular topics such as the Problem of Evil which is covered in Philosophy. In Philosophy, there is no right or wrong answer in terms of the creation of the universe, or why God allows evil and suffering, which allows a broad scope for debate. One topic you get to work on is how faith and feminism intersect in society. This is an intriguing subject area and you have to examine all sides of the argument and why people believe what they do. Theological debate gives everyone involved a sense of agency and identity.

With the support of the RE department I feel I have the power to succeed in this A Level and go onto Theology at university. Yes, it is a lot of work, but the teachers are there for you when you are struggling and help you achieve. But ultimately it's down to you, the student. This A Level gives you a significant sense of independence; the teachers won't tell you what to write about a question, your own beliefs are used to direct your answers. It is authentic and that is what makes it so fun to do. No two views can be absolutely the same.

Ultimately, to choose Theology is to re-evaluate the world from a personal point of view. I have had incredible support and role models during the course. Choosing to do Theology was honestly one of the best decisions I've ever made and I'm ready to teach those who also seek out-of-the-box answers to abstract, unanswered questions and hopefully inspire them to go into teaching too!

**Ellie, year 13**







## Steinway School

As part of our Steinway school initiative we were able to invite Francesca Orlando, a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, to give a recital for staff, students and guests. She chose an interesting programme of pieces ranging from Bach, Chopin and Liszt to a contemporary, more conceptual piece by George Crumb, which includes a pizzicato technique, which is most unusual in piano performance. We were honoured to welcome her and look forward to her promised return visit, when she will be accompanied by her duet partner.

I started getting excited about Francesca's visit to our school a couple of weeks before she came. I was amazed when I read her biography to discover that she gave her first recital at the age of 14! Her performance was thrilling and I was really pleased to be able to speak to her afterwards. I told her about my passion for music and asked her "How did you get to this stage?" She told me "Practice makes perfect" and went on to say that she practises for 3 to 6 hours a day. This has really inspired me to put more hours into my instrumental work. Meeting and speaking to Francesca was a beautiful experience. *Nehal, 10F*

## News from R.E.

### Deepening our understanding of Judaism

In January and February all year 9 students had the opportunity to visit the Orthodox Synagogue in Great Portland Street. It was a really lovely afternoon where the Rabbi David spoke to two Year 9 classes about his Jewish faith. The students previously have learnt a little bit about Judaism in Year 8 and this trip made some really important links for the girls getting an insight into what Judaism means in their everyday beliefs and practice. This is really invaluable for the students as much of what was discussed in their talk will deepen their understanding of Judaism which is vital for their GCSE topic, which they are now studying.

Many of the students freely asked questions and were truly inspired by the talk. The students also had the chance to look at the Torah Scrolls and all were genuinely amazed at just how beautiful they are and the real time and dedication that goes into making them.

All students were an absolute credit to the school and all staff in the RE department felt particularly proud to be on the trip with you, so thank you for a lovely afternoon. A special thank you to our staff in the Learning Support team who accompanied us, as, without you, these trips cannot go ahead.

**Mrs Kelly, Second in R.E.**

The Synagogue trip was a unique and fascinating experience for us all. I have learnt a lot about the Jewish religion and many interesting facts. *Manjiba, 9A*

We had a blast learning about the Jewish people, their faith and festivals, it was really enjoyable. *Briyannah, 9M*

It was really great to be able to learn about Judaism on a trip, the stained glass windows show the stories of lots of their festivals, it was really interesting. *Keia, 9S*



# Social Justice & Catholic Education

Our research school is the only independent, Catholic, state research school in England. Since September, a group of students from Years 7 to 10 have been actively involved in the research and have attended sessions in which they have had the opportunity to choose individual or group research projects.

In addition to this, they have been preparing for our first research conference, which took place on Thursday, 12 March 2020. The theme of the conference was “Social Justice in Catholic Education: how do Catholic Schools serve the goal of social justice?”, and we were visited by esteemed academics, Headteachers and representatives from Catholic organisations from across the UK (from Scotland down to Bournemouth!) for a day of lively debate, discussion and learning. The keynote and short papers were extremely interesting and provoked a high-level Q&A session at the end of the day.

Additionally, a huge thank you to those staff members who presented papers: Mrs Paisley, Mrs Aninakwa and Mr Doel all presented

to the conference and received fantastic feedback from the delegates!

Finally, we have to mention that our Research School students hosted the delegates to the highest of standards and the praise they received on the day was been absolutely wonderful. Well done to you all; you are a true credit to the Convent! They are:

<b>Rosana 10S</b>	<b>Reyhan 7M</b>
<b>Ifa 10A</b>	<b>Layan 10F</b>
<b>Hannah 10M</b>	<b>Laura 10F</b>
<b>Valentina 10M</b>	<b>Andreea 10K</b>
<b>Martina 10K</b>	<b>Sedra 9A</b>
<b>Rebeka 10K</b>	<b>Viktoria 8K</b>
<b>Noor 9K</b>	<b>Hena 8K</b>
<b>Zainab 10C</b>	<b>Abira 7K</b>
<b>Marianne 7F</b>	<b>Hermela 10M</b>
<b>Albana 7F</b>	<b>Syeda 10M</b>

I was enormously impressed by the warm welcome from students who are outstandingly ambitious for academic research in public schools.

*Christian Kendall-Daw, St George’s, Weybridge*

I was very impressed with the warm welcome from the student ambassadors who did a wonderful job looking after us. *Maxine Potgieter, Douay Martyrs, Ickenham*

I have been much inspired by my visit to your school, both enjoyed and benefitted from the excellent reports of research. Thank you. *Richard Pring, Professor Emeritus, University of Oxford*

A brilliantly inspirational day to broaden the mind. Thanks for the superb hospitality – wonderful ambassadors for the school! *John Harris, Governor, East Anglia Diocese*





# Sixth Form Leadership Conferences

Students have had the opportunity to participate in two conferences this year that were focused on empowering and preparing our sixth formers for future roles as leaders and shapers of society. At St Albans Cathedral they were given tools to develop skills and confidence in public speaking, including support in structuring arguments and speech delivery. At the end of the event they were able to give their speech in this fabulous setting.

Additionally, Ms McCombe took Year 12 students to a conference with other members of the Association of State Girls' Schools, which the Convent has recently joined.

The Cathedral event was a great opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and debate with people besides my classmates. The experience gave me a great insight on what debating with people at university would be like and I'm grateful that I was given the opportunity to go. I felt quite empowered once it was announced that I had won as I had felt extremely uncomfortable speaking and I've learnt that it is important and thrilling to try new things. *Giovanna, 13C*

It was such a fun experience that I thoroughly enjoyed and being at the Cathedral was extra special. It was a great opportunity to exercise my speech delivering talents and got to meet really lovely people. I didn't expect to win but I was really proud of myself and the money was nice. The free bottle was cool too! *Ana, 13F*

The ASGS conference gave me an insight into female struggles in today's society. I was able to meet inspirational women, pioneers in their field, including Dr. Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, who has been a source of empowerment for me for a long time. This trip was beneficial in that it enlightened me to the problems I'll potentially face in the future and gave me some tools to face them. *Shafa, 12K*

The ASGS conference was entitled: 'Leadership to empowerment' and it was phenomenal. It felt like the other girls and I were experiencing an awakening of our consciousness, while trying to understand the problems that the 21st century woman faces. It was inspiring to hear the barriers to progress that these women were actively overcoming and the choices that they were making to make space for other women to follow behind them. *Nia, 12C*



## Supreme Court



Year 12 and 13 Politics students visited the Supreme Court to further their understanding of the ways in which the executive is held to account. The Year 13s researched key cases to support their revision and took the Year 12s on a guided tour. It was excellent seeing such a display of leadership from the older students and exciting to sit in the same chair as Lady Hale when she issued the verdict that Johnson's proroguing of Parliament was unlawful! *Ms McCombe*

It was a really good opportunity that allowed us to witness parts of our Politics course first-hand. The Year 13s had the opportunity to talk to the Year 12s about cases that we'd learnt about, consolidating our knowledge. It was a fun and efficient method of revision for all of us. *Heaven, 13F*

The trip really aided our studies as it helped us to see how the theory that we had learned in class transfers to the work done by the judges in the Supreme Court. We were also able to build on our existing knowledge by learning from the year 13s about some specific court cases. *Jasmina, 12S*



## Year 9 BTEC Fashion & Textile

In a new departure for the school we are offering a BTEC textile and fashion course. Our Year 9 girls started in September with virtually no sewing skills; now they are whizzing away on sewing machines like accomplished seamstresses! These cushions were their first project, inspired by Brent being the London Borough of Culture 2020.

Ms Shakes, Art & Design teacher





## News from STEM Departments



## Tunnelling to Success!

Years 7 and 8 were visited by a civil engineer working in the transport sector, under whose supervision the students worked on constructing tunnels using straws and masking tape. The tunnels were made to exact measurements and had to be strong enough to support a certain weight. The girls worked as a team and problem-solve as they went along. This gave them a great insight into the world of civil engineering and transport infrastructure.

We really enjoyed working as a group and using team work. Each of us had a particular job; design, investigation (taking measurements) and construction. It was really funny that we said we weren't going to use a lot of tape to make our bridge (to keep the weight down) but in the end we were the group that used most tape. We didn't win but we could see why the winning tunnel was the best, so we definitely learned something. *Hena, 8K, Nikola & Jeanne d'Arc 8C, Pinelopi 8A*

## Health in Brent

As part of our engagement with Brent's London Borough of Culture celebrations our Year 10s did some research into the prevalence of non-communicable disease in Brent. They uncovered some concerning statistics around local childhood obesity, among other things, and looked at how public health can be improved in our borough.

## Family Recipes

Also as part of our LBOC lessons our Year 7s brought in family recipes from their countries of origin. The maths part came in as they were asked to scale-up the recipes from a family meal to a celebration feast! The Maths skills extended to converting between imperial and metric, converting kitchen measures to metric and best-buy problems; and we learnt more about the diversity and family traditions in our classrooms.

## BioMedia Meltdown

The wonderful team at Linnean Learning were with us again this term and gave a lesson on convergent evolution. The girls learned how the similarities between sharks and whales are a classic example of convergent evolution, in which two distinctly different animals exhibit similar traits in the same environment.





# Convent of Jesus and Mary

*Laudentur semper Jesus et Maria*



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