ST CATHERINE'S NEWSLETTER

Autumn Term, Week 1-3

Message from the Head

"All can build the beautiful structure of the common good, the good that we construct together and that creates conditions of kindness, of trust, of freedom, of peace." - Oscar Romero (Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador who became a fearless voice for human rights)

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first of our new fortnightly newsletters. I hope these will give you a regular flavour of life at St Catherine's and share some of the many things happening across the school. Each fortnight, we begin our newsletter with a thought-provoking quote or reflection that reflects the culture and ethos of our school community. There is a real sense of energy across the school at the start of this year. We have already seen a number of retreats and residentials for Year 6, Year 11, and the Sixth Form - fantastic opportunities focused on team building and fostering a deep feeling of unity amongst the girls. This spirit sets the perfect tone as we look forward to Unity Week next week.

It has been a very positive start to the term, with girls settling in quickly and new families becoming part of the St Catherine's community. It was a pleasure to welcome parents last night to meet our Senior Leadership Team. I am delighted to have such an exceptional team in place, bringing together deep familiarity with the St Catherine's ethos and valuable external perspectives to help shape our future. As a team, we are ambitious for St Catherine's and, most importantly, for every girl. Our focus is on knowing each girl well, helping her grow in confidence and ensuring she is supported and challenged to make the most of every opportunity.

I caught up with several Year 7s in my office this week to check in with them and find out how they have settled in - they were all pleased that they knew their way around, were enjoying the kindness of their teachers and peers, having lots of fun and enjoying the great food! Of course, they loved making a fuss of Arthur, too.

We held our first Sixth Form Open Event, which was such a positive evening. Mrs Burns, our Head of Sixth Form, outlined her holistic approach to guiding and nurturing our Sixth Formers, with a real focus on the confidence built during their time with us, summed up so well by her philosophy: "We don't ask what you want to do in the future, we ask who are you becoming?"

Thank you for your continued support, and I wish you all a lovely and restful weekend.

With best wishes,
Andrew McCleave



Left to Right: Ms Carolyn Sharps (Head of Prep), Mrs Catherine Burns (Head of Sixth Form), Mrs Lana Eagers (Senior Deputy Head), Mr Andrew McCleave (Head), Mr Jonny Hughes (Bursar and Clerk to the Governors), Mr Norman Doyle (Deputy Head Academic) and Ms Lianne Aherne (Deputy Head Pastoral)

PREP SCHOOL NEWS

Year 3 and 4 settle into their new class

Year 3 and Year 4 have made a wonderfully positive start to the new school year. The girls have loved exploring their new classrooms, settling into their routines and getting to know their teachers and new friends. Of course, breaktime with Arthur the dog is always a daily highlight!

The girls have been working hard and have already produced some wonderful pieces of work. They are particularly proud of their Egyptian Pharaoh artwork. The topic is proving a real hit and has sparked lots of curiosity, excitement and thoughtful questions.

We are so pleased with the positive way the girls have begun the year and look forward to all the learning and adventures still to come.





Year 5 visit The Rose Theatre

Year 5 pupils recently took part in a Shakespeare Workshop at The Rose Theatre. The workshop proved to be both educational and immensely enjoyable for everyone involved.

Sharing her enthusiasm for the day, Stella noted, “The activities were fun and helped me learn more about Shakespeare.” Charlie added, “My favourite part was freeze-framing a line from A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Experiencing theater in such an iconic setting provided an inspiring experience that will undoubtedly enrich their literary studies back in the classroom.

Year 6 Residential to Henley Fort

Our Year 6 pupils set off on an unforgettable residential trip to Henley Fort, stepping back in time to experience life on the WWII Home Front.

Dressed for the era, the girls took part in historic activities, discovering what life was like during the Blitz for Home Guards and Air Raid Wardens. They embraced hands-on historical immersion as they explored authentic air raid shelters and learned essential wartime survival skills. Throughout the trip, the girls displayed outstanding teamwork, resilience, and problem-solving skills as they navigated each practical challenge.

Beyond the history lessons brought to life, the trip showcased our Year 6 pupils' enthusiasm, maturity, and boundless energy - setting a confident tone for the year ahead.



SENIOR SCHOOL NEWS

Welcome to Year 7

Our new Year 7 pupils began their Senior School journey with an engaging induction week designed to help them feel confident, connected, and supported.

The girls enjoyed some fun icebreaker activities and met their Year 8 "sisters" before enjoying a sunny picnic lunch on Duck Lawn. Dedicated time with form tutors gave pupils the chance to build strong, supportive relationships right from day one.

At the end of their first week, the girls reflected on their hopes for the future by writing letters to their future selves, which will remain sealed until the end of Year 11. What a smooth, joyous and inspiring start for our newest cohort.





Year 9 Bonding day

Our action-packed Year 9 Bonding Day strengthened friendships, built trust and prepared pupils for their step up into Middle School. With a series of problem-solving tasks, and collaborative team games, the girls worked in mixed groups, were encouraged to step outside their comfort zones, communicate effectively and support one another through every hurdle.

Beyond the high energy and laughter, the day highlighted the resilience, inclusivity, and supportive community spirit that characterises the Year 9 cohort. It was a brilliant experience that left everyone feeling energised, reconnected, and ready to tackle the academic year ahead.

Year 11 Retreat

Year 11 pupils set off for a restorative retreat at Restore Hope Latimer in the Chiltern Hills, ahead of their GCSE year.

Designed to cultivate calm, the retreat focused on understanding authentic rest and ways to practice it daily. Guided meditative prayer sessions allowed pupils space for quiet reflection, spiritual focus and personal growth. A highlight of the day was the wellness walk, where the girls enjoyed connecting with nature and meeting the local farm animals.

By balancing academic dedication with intentional rest, we empower our Year 11 pupils to grow in confidence and navigate the year ahead with resilience.



SIXTH FORM & ALUMNAE NEWS



Sixth Form Retreat

Our Sixth Form pupils kicked off the new term with an action-packed residential trip to the Oakwood Outdoor Education Centre, diving headfirst into high-energy activities designed to build confidence, trust, and strong friendships.

From conquering high ropes, ziplines, and bouldering walls to tackling bushcraft, archery, and the legendary "Flying Kiwi" team challenge, the spirit of friendship was evident. The day wrapped up with a barbeque, reflective evening retreat sessions, and a cozy movie night.

These shared experiences are a vital part of the Sixth Form journey. Stepping away from the traditional classroom allows pupils to develop key life skills- such as resilience, leadership, and collaboration - to anchor them through their A level studies and beyond.

Sixth Form Open Event

Our Sixth Form Open Event provided a wonderful opportunity to welcome Year 10 and Year 11 pupils and their parents into our Sixth Form.

Families were able to meet our new Head of Sixth Form alongside our dedicated A level teaching staff to explore the wide range of subjects on offer. We proudly shared our outstanding results while showcasing the exciting future opportunities and top university destinations that await our pupils.

Warm, welcoming and ambitious, our Sixth Form is well-known for being a ‘second home’ and a place where every pupil is known, supported and empowered to achieve her best.





Alumnae Summer Sundowner

Our recent Alumnae Summer Sundowner at St Catherine’s was a wonderful success, bringing together former pupils for an evening of warmth and shared memories.

It was truly special to reconnect with so many familiar faces, swap stories of school days, and reflect on how St Catherine’s continues to evolve while remaining steadfastly true to its roots and core values. Events like these highlight the enduring strength of our school community and the lifelong connections forged during a pupil's time here.

If you know a former St Catherine’s girl, please encourage her to sign up to our Alumnae network via our Alumnae page on the school website.

CO-CURRICULAR NEWS

Autumn Term Clubs

Co-curricular life is already well underway this term, with pupils across Prep and Senior School making the most of a packed programme before school, at lunchtime and after lessons.

There is plenty to choose from, whether pupils want to try something completely new or spend more time doing something they already love. This term's activities range from Explorers and Creators in Prep to Innovators and the Futures Lab in Senior School, alongside Science Clubs, DT Club, STEM Club (Industry Cadets) and Chemistry Enrichment.

Creative opportunities include Fashion Design, Art Club, Creative Writing Club, LAMDA, Hot House Dance, Rock Band, choirs, crochet and embroidery, while sport and fitness options include rowing, cross country, football, netball, Swim Squads, badminton, trampolining, Earlybird Yoga and Funakoshi Shotokan Karate.

There are also plenty of opportunities to stretch thinking and build confidence through Debating and Public Speaking, Philosophy Club, Maths Enrichment, Geography Quiz Club, Explore Psychology, chess and Duke of Edinburgh.





It has been lovely to see so many pupils getting involved already. Over the coming weeks, we look forward to sharing more of what they are doing, creating and achieving across the school.

Explore our full Co-Curricular Programme here.

Alongside the co-curricular programme, wrap-around care helps support our families across the week, with Breakfast, After School and Homework Clubs in Prep, as well as a wide range of before and after-school provision in Senior School.

Breakfast Club: new booking process

A reminder that Breakfast Club should now be booked in advance through SOCS, using the same process as booking a co-curricular club or Prep After School Club. Please book by 4pm on the previous day. Breakfast Club costs £6 per session. In SOCS, go to Activities → Breakfast Club → View Events → Add Event and select the day required. For any queries, please contact portalhelp@stcatherineschool.co.uk.

Not words, but deeds.

Remember to follow us on social media.