

11th October 2024

Dear Parents/carers,

As the term continues at great pace I am reminded of the power all of us have to impact on those around us. In James 3 Jesus sets out a clear message to us all.

“Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”

Jesus tells us here about the impact of our words and how we have the power to do great damage but equally we can steer powerfully something positively. Our rudder is our tongue and we must use it wisely as a community and not simply say what comes into our minds but be thoughtful and mindful with our words.

I mention this because I have witnessed the very best of our young people, in the weekly awards I meet your children who have been thoughtful in their words and deeds and quite simply are supportive of each other and of the whole school community. On balance, our young people, like adults, do not always get this right but if we hold onto the power of our words increasingly our relationships are less strained and we stride forward together with a pace and respect that make St Gabriel's such a wonderful place.

Preparations are underway for Mock examinations for Y11 and the countdown has begun. Mock examinations begins on 29th October. Mrs Middleton has written to you with more details. Tuition from our staff has played a vital role in ensuring that our young people are prepared for these mock examinations and I am grateful for their unwavering commitment. This will continue throughout the year and I ask that if your child is selected for personalised tuition that they are encouraged to take up the offer. Equally, study support for all learners is available in the resource centre at social times, as well as the thriving chess club. This support has seen a 30% increase in the completion of maths homework rising to 80% of all learners across the school, up from 50% last year. For this I thank you for your support and together lets make it even higher and sustained.

Our musical programme is now in full swing and I was delighted to hear from Mr Turner that over 10% of our children have individual instrumental lessons in school. Many more pupils participate in the choir and other aspects of music, this shows that we are far more than just examinations. Having played the Cello as a youngster, although regularly injuring my fingers playing Rugby made it more difficult, I am well aware of how learning an instrument creates a natural resilience as the struggle to improve requires significant practice. This often translates into academic improvement as the journey to improve incrementally starts with independent practice. As stated above, to see the increase in maths homework being done is one example and the same as incrementally it improves the skills in maths and translates to greater enjoyment of the subject, as being better at an instrument means being able to play in tune and to timing meaning creating a more enjoyable sound and sense of satisfaction.

Conversely, when our resilience is lower and we are finding things more difficult it is important to reach out for support. We have a skilled pastoral team but equally there are local services that are available for you

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to contact to reach out for support. [Thriving in Bury for Children and Young People \(padlet.com\)](https://www.padlet.com/) is a really useful website that will signpost the right support and give you as parent/carers an understanding of what is available. I would urge you to explore the relevant sections to be informed and therefore able to respond if or when ever needed.

Have a wonderful weekend together.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Braithwaite', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr S Braithwaite
Interim Headteacher