

18<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of another academic year, I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you one final time before the summer holidays begin. This letter serves as both a reflection on the year that has passed and a look ahead to the exciting opportunities that await us in September.

This past Sunday, we heard the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke's Gospel (10:25-37). In this powerful story, Jesus tells us of a man who was beaten and left for dead on the roadside. While a priest and a Levite passed by without helping, it was a Samaritan - someone considered an outsider - who stopped, cared for the wounded man, and ensured his recovery. The Catholic Church teaches us that this parable calls us to recognise that our "neighbour" is not just those who live nearby or share our background, but anyone who needs our help and compassion. As Pope Francis (may he rest in peace) reminded us, "The Good Samaritan shows us that 'the existence of each and all of us is deeply tied to that of others: life is not time merely passing by, life is about interactions.'"

What does it mean to be a good neighbour during the summer holidays? As our students enjoy their well-deserved break over the next six weeks, I encourage them to embody the spirit of the Good Samaritan in their daily lives:

- Show kindness to family members, friends, and strangers alike
- Look out for those who might be lonely or struggling in our community
- Offer help to neighbours, particularly elderly residents who might need assistance
- Be inclusive and welcoming to those who might feel left out
- Use their God-given talents to serve others, whether through volunteering, helping at home, or simply being present for someone who needs support

As this is my final letter of the academic year, it feels fitting to pause and celebrate the remarkable achievements of our St Gabriel's family. When we look back on 2024-2025, we have so much to be proud of:

- **Outstanding sporting achievements** across all year groups, with students representing the school with pride and determination including victories in football, netball and cricket in national and regional tournaments
- **Exceptional performances in the Arts**, showcasing the creative talents of our students through drama, music, and visual arts, the school production is and has been a true showcase of the talents of our students and staff.
- **Strong academic performance** with students demonstrating resilience and commitment to their learning, we have seen and improvement in progress scores for all year groups across the board, this happens through the partnership with parents and teachers working together.
- **Significantly improved behaviour** reflecting our shared values of Strength, Service, and Success, we will always continue to focus on this area as the influences through social media make it more difficult for young people to navigate the world we live in.
- **Enhanced attendance** as our community recognises the importance of being present for learning, working together we have seen a significant overall improvement. However we do recognise there is still work to do as it remains a national focus for government due other barriers that exist.

Perhaps our most significant success this year was receiving an excellent Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI) report. This inspection recognised St Gabriel's as a caring, compassionate community and awarded us:

- Excellence in the leadership of Religious Education
- Outstanding judgement for Catholic Life and Mission

This Outstanding judgement for Catholic Life and Mission is a testament to how our school truly serves its community, living out our mission statement in everything we do. It reflects the dedication of our staff, the commitment of our students, and the support of families like yours.

## **New Academic Year**

**The start to the new year** will be as follows, school opens for Y7 (current Y6) and Y11 (current Y10) students on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of September with the usual expectation of being in school by the latest 8.40 am and on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> of September all students to return.

As we look ahead to the new academic year, we remain committed to our journey of continuous improvement. I have included a snapshot of our areas of focus to give you a flavour of our direction of travel.

- **Behaviour for Learning:** Continuing to strengthen our positive learning environment where every student can thrive
- **Attendance Excellence:** Building on this year's improvements to ensure every student maximises their learning opportunities
- **Year 7 Leadership Challenge:** Introducing an exciting new programme to develop leadership skills from the moment students join our St Gabriel's family
- **Strengthening School Routines:** Refining our daily practises to create an even more structured and supportive environment for learning

To ensure that all students are fully prepared for their lessons and can participate effectively in class activities, we kindly ask that each student comes to school equipped with the following basic items: a pen, a pencil, a ruler, and a scientific calculator. These tools are essential for daily work across a range of subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. Having the correct equipment helps students stay organised, complete tasks efficiently, and make the most of their learning opportunities.

We will be starting September as we mean to go on, through further embedding our standards and expectations. There is an attachment that provides as a reminder regarding our attendance and uniform expectations and standards. As part of our strengthening of routines we expect every student to attend school on time, every day in full school uniform. Students who demonstrate this and uphold our standards and expectations will be rewarded every day in form.

Together, we will continue to drive improvement across all areas of school life, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to use their God-given talents to serve others and succeed.

As our students begin their summer break, I want to thank you for your continued support and partnership. The strength of our school community lies in the collaboration between home and school, and your commitment to our shared values makes all the difference. I pray that you and your families have a restful, safe, and joy-filled summer holiday. May you find time to be Good Samaritans to those around you, and may you return in September refreshed and ready for another year of growth, learning, and service.

Last week I included the news that the last day of term will be a non-uniform day and an early finish. Donations of £1 for non-uniform day should go to your child's form teacher. **Just to reconfirm on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> school will dismiss all students from 1pm.**

## **Staffing changes:**

As we reach the end of another academic year, I wanted to take this opportunity to inform you of some significant staffing changes that will be taking place at St Gabriels RC High School.

We bid farewell to several valued colleagues this week as they move on to new pastures. Mr Stewart, who has served St Gabriel's with distinction for 32 years, is retiring, and we wish him well in his retirement - may it be long and full of happiness. Miss Doyle, who has taught Modern Foreign Languages here at St Gabriels for 25 years, is moving on to a new role in a school in Rochdale. Mr Playfer in Mathematics is moving to a school in Blackburn after four years with us, whilst Mrs Kearns moves to become a lead practitioner in Mathematics at a school in Rochdale. Miss O'Rourke in English is leaving the education profession entirely, and we wish her well in her new adventure. Additionally, Mrs Maguire moves on to a school in Leyland. Mrs Minas leaves us to join Bury College.

We are delighted to welcome several new members of staff to our St Gabriel's family. Mrs Barrett joins our administrative team, and Mrs Almond takes up the position of receptionist. Miss Renshaw has joined us as our Safeguarding officer.

In Mathematics, we welcome Miss Song and Mrs Narayanan. Mrs Galvin joins our Religious Education department, whilst Mr Marsh strengthens our Modern Foreign Languages provision. Our English department welcomes both Miss Shah and Mr Wyn-Jones.

I am confident that these new appointments will maintain the high standards that St Gabriels is known for, whilst we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all departing colleagues for their dedicated service to our school community.

## **Wellbeing:**

As a school, we realise that the summer holidays can be a challenging time for our families as our daily routines change. Difficult situations may occur for pupils, families, and those around them.

A helpful app and website called 'Hub of Hope' <https://hubofhope.co.uk/> is a great place to search for different mental health services within any area of the United Kingdom. There are various subheadings to search for help, dependent on the challenge you are facing, from domestic abuse, through to crisis support.

Please use this as a first point tool, to guide you in the right direction of help.

Early Break have commissioned a new mental health drop in service called The RISE Team, who are ready to support children and young people aged 5 to 17 who are registered to a GP in Bury. Their drop-in service is open on Monday's 3 pm-6 pm (last admission 5:30 pm) and Tuesday's 3 pm – 6 pm (last admission 5:30 pm). Bookable slots are available on Thursdays from 11 am to 1 pm for children under 8, and anyone with access requirements. The address for the drop-in service is 3 Wash Lane, Bury BL9 6AS.

**The Lord is our strength** - may this truth sustain and inspire you throughout the summer months.

With warmest regards and God's blessings,

Yours sincerely



Mr S Braithwaite  
**Headteacher**