



THE LINK

A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
Issue 215 - 24th May 2023

Brilliant Scholars go to Oxford University

This term 14 Year 10 students enrolled on the Brilliant Scholars programme, receiving tuition from a working neuroscientist on a project on the ageing of the human brain.

As part of this project all 14 students were invited to Brasenose College at the Oxford University to spend the day with current students and lecturers and complete a set of study workshops.

Please find a review of the trip from Ash and Lydia below. - *Mr Magnoff*

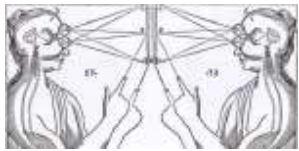
The trip to Oxford was an experience that will stay with me throughout the rest of my education, and likely beyond. It gave me, and everybody else who was selected, a really valuable insight into further education and what university has to offer any student with a passion for learning. The Brilliant Programme gives us an idea of the courses, and this trip gave us an idea of what life could be like for us. Also, it helped to give me more confidence for the future - Ivy League universities like Oxford felt out of reach to me personally before the trip, but I now feel that if I work hard I could earn a place there. Mr Magnoff was a great leader, encouraging us all to engage, and I'm so glad that he organised this. He made sure that each one of us took away something positive from the day, as he always does. Most importantly, I think he, along with the students and tutors from Oxford, inspired me to seek further education, ask questions, educate myself and find excitement in the pursuit of knowledge. There is nothing more valuable than genuine interest in a topic, and hearing the students speak, taught us all to follow whatever we are passionate about. - *Ash G-O'D, 10DA*



Brasenose College

As a part of our Brilliant Scholars Programme, we went on a trip on Monday 24th of April to Oxford University. During this trip, we had a tour of Brasenose College campus and joined other schools in the town hall for a proper introduction to the programme. We discussed different people's university experiences and how they managed to get into Oxford. In the town hall there was also a museum which we went to, where we found out about the town's history and we were able to try on costumes from Victorian England. My favourite part of the trip was the tour around the campus as we were able to get an insight into university life and feel the history of one of the most famous universities in the world. I hope to come back as an undergraduate student soon! - *Lydia H, 10DA*



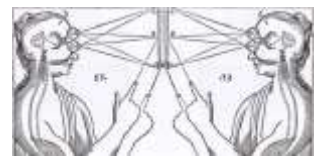


Challenge Competition Winners! -Spring 2023

Ms Sayed and I are absolutely delighted with your contributions to the competition last term.

Congratulations to: Adrian N (11DA). and Ash G.-O (10DA)

*for having won 500 House points and £50 in Amazon Vouchers for their essays and art work on the topic
“What are we”*



Please find the winning entries below.

Chinedum U. 10BC (100 House Points); Angel O. 8MA(100 House Points); Kaia-Lauren Q. 8DA (100 House Points); Adham A. 7MA (100 House Points); Joshua A. 7RU (100 House Points); Marcel H. 7RU (100 House Points); Thalia O. 7VI (100 House Points)

This competition challenged students to think about their physical and mental selves and to consider the possibility that we might be eco-systems rather than individuals.

Stay tuned for your chance to expand your mind, win cash monies and my respect in this term's Challenge Competition due to launch next week! Keep thinking boffins! - *Mr Magnoff*

‘What we Are and What we are Meant to be’

The concept of an individual and what one is meant to be is often lost upon us.

Most people, if not all, will often think about their journey in life, their ‘fate’ as some may call it often in what we call a midlife-crisis, the midpoint between life and death for many. As a child, you are limited to the understanding that who you are, what you are meant to be equates to the level of fun you can produce or absorb, or the amount of athletic prowess one has. I most definitely remember thinking I was the most evolved human being the planet had to offer after beating my friends in a race across the astro turf.

As life begins to progress more, the average person will start to compare values, in the sense that they will compare what they were taught to value and what they truly view to be precious. The sad truth is, in modern-day society, the value of life is limited to a sequence of numbers, divided into groups of three, displayed horizontally, which can either go up or down depending on what you prefer to spend your new pieces of laminated holographic paper on. Time begins to fly by, and the saying ‘time stops for no-one’ becomes increasingly more meaningful and true to people the less of it they have. A lack of time then becomes a desperate rush to try to solve the answer to life in a matter of years, months and days. It’s sad. It’s meaningless. I could start everyday by rushing out of my house, desperately trying to ponder how molecules of gases create the recipe for life, but I don’t - not because it does not matter (for it does), but because there is a time and place for it.

I became increasingly fascinated over the course of 3 weeks about the concepts of monism and dualism, given that I often like to think about the human blueprint, and because I come from a very pious family. Now, to start, the philosophy of monism is the one that suggests that every concept, such as existence for example, leads to a single point, the view that reality is one unitary organic whole with no independent parts. My mum nodded in agreement with this philosophy, which led me to become quite torn. Was she agreeing because she believed in the idea, or because she believed in a transient figure that could be interpreted as an example of the idea? Two different things, even though they sound the same. God, or what we understand God to be in Christianity, is a transcendent, omniscient and benevolent mysterious being who created all of reality and space and time - a trinity of trinities, as I believe: space (length, width and height), time (past, present and future) and matter (gas, solid and liquid), which were created simultaneously and instantaneously. A continuum. That’s the way that religion often uses in alliance with science, and what I mean when I say that my mum believes in the interpretation of God. But then there is the other half to it, right? How do we explain emotions, rationality, consciousness and all these elements which I believe could not simply be the way they are because of a mix of chemicals? This is where the other half of my question comes in; it was very possible that my mum was in fact combining all the previously mentioned aspects of reality and human nature into one, and THAT is what she believed in.

But would that be a monistic view? Another philosophy, ironically seen with the question I asked, is dualism - the idea that the use of two irreducible, heterogeneous principles (sometimes in conflict, sometimes complementary) to analyse the knowing process (epistemological dualism) or to explain all of reality or some broad aspect of it (metaphysical dualism).

'What we Are and What we are Meant to be'**(continued)**

Though they can potentially differ, and despite the argument that says that they both come from the same place, it can ALSO be argued that they come from two different places or realms. Take lichen for example. Lichen are part fungi and part algae, a composite organism that can be found on streets, walls, rocks and anywhere in the world. When fungi and algae combine, it becomes something incredibly complex, yet sublime. It creates chemical and biological structures which actually benefit both aspects, and lichen has many uses - to list a few, it can purify the air or be the building blocks for many organisms, just from that one mutualistic relationship. If you bring it back to humanity, there's many ways we see dualism: the two sides which form one debate, the two parents which form one child, the two directions of left and right which guide us and the two concepts of good and bad which align us.

Humans, in simple terms, are composed of good and bad things, and good and bad thoughts which often cancel each other and make the right equilibrium - most of the time. Society has so many aspects and elements which have a dual nature too, and often they come together to create something. It was here I began to proofread, and then I noticed something I mentioned in the previous paragraph. I said that two things could come together to become one; where the two aspects in basic dualism could come together to create one thing, one source, the monistic. If that were to happen however, you would not be able to label that scenario as either dualistic or monistic because two have become one, but the one was ultimately composed of two in the first place, if that makes sense.

Going all the way back to the beginning, when I was talking about people rushing to find the meaning of life and such. My aunt used to work in a rehabilitation centre, primarily in a section which looked after people above the age of 55. What she noticed was that after people recovered and put an end to their vices, they often would begin to wonder where they could go next in life, and find themselves in difficulty because there truly are infinite possibilities to a person's future. And then it hit me. Monism and dualism are both interesting concepts, which hold ubiquitous amounts of value in society, but that does not mean that they are concrete in the way we understand human beings and human potential. Even with lichen, you can't say that lichen is JUST part algae and part fungi, because there is an infinite amount of things that lichen could become. I believe that monism attributes a oneness to a concept, but that does not mean that there is JUST a oneness to a concept; there could be infinite ideologies and beliefs and qualities which can be grouped together, but that does not make them all the same. In life, we serve a purpose. Life is not the action of finding your definitive purpose, but the action of accepting your purpose could be anything. The inner mind, the planet, ecosystems, businesses, communities: whether you choose to look at each in a dual mind or a single viewpoint, there is always going to be limitless possibilities to what each produces. Our own genomes carry the story of evolution, written in DNA, the language of molecular genetics, and the narrative is unmistakable - but only in this genre. Humanity is capable of so much. We are so complex and intricate, beautiful. We can't confine what we are to philosophy, because even then, would we truly be able to understand everything there is to us? Who we are and what we are meant to be can complement each other, differ, be irrelevant, be everything to us, even be mere concepts. I believe that we do not have a single source or two elements to us but an infinite amount of choices and decisions and beliefs and attributes that give us one of an infinite amount of answers to the meaning of life. We should not be so quick to find the definitive, but be happy to enjoy the non-restrictive comprehensive.

Adrian N , Year 11DA

What are we?

Humanity is not as it seems. Though we may think of ourselves as complex, intelligent, united and free, our personal colonies of microbes run 90 percent of our bodies. The general understanding of our own species is incomplete, inaccurate and truly incomprehensible. Even scientists, who have devoted their lives to learning more about our species, cannot predict many new experimental findings. For example, a group of the best-informed senior scientists and human researchers were asked the question: How many genes does it take to build a human?

Given that a mouse was known to have 23,000 genes, it was assumed to be higher than that. Probably also higher than a wheat plant, known to have 26,000 genes. And surely higher than the worm, with just 20,500 genes.

'What we Are' (continued)

Taking this information and their own understanding of human biology, the scientists placed a total of 165 bets. Their guesses averaged at over 55,000 genes, with some above 150,000. Initial bets were placed in the year 2000, and in 2003 the true gene number was revealed. Lee Rowen was awarded the prize for her second bet of just 25,947 genes - the lowest of all bets. The true number? Just shy of 21,000 genes; barely more than that of a worm. To put that into perspective, a rice plant has double, and even a water flea is far higher with 31,000. None of these species can talk, create or think, so what accounts for our complexity?

Well, we humans do not live alone. 100 trillion microbes live in and on us, and together they contain 4,400,000 genes. These are mostly bacteria - tiny beings made up of just a single cell - but also viruses, fungi and archaea. We are only able to survive, evolve and flourish because we live in harmony with them. However, they control more than just our bodies. You are probably aware of the connection between the brain and the gut, and most of these microbes are found in the gut. Beyond general function, our microbiota can significantly affect our moods and behaviour. (continues next page)

Which poses the question: Are we in control of our emotions, thoughts and actions? If our emotions are a byproduct of chemical reactions and the activity of our microbes, then what place do we have in our own bodies? How does any of this link to the formation of personality, cultures, societies? Are we the sum of our memories, or the sum of our own personal ecosystems? Unfortunately, there is no answer for these questions. You could find hundreds of different theories and contributions to the topic, but it is all speculation - possibly an attempt to keep our illusion of control intact so we don't question things for too long. That said, it's a very interesting thing to question. It's fascinating that we can't (yet) understand what is behind our lives. Are we our minds? And if so what separates a mind from a body? The two are so deeply intertwined that it seems impossible to separate them. We are the union of all our many parts, and they may be very different if isolated. Like water is made from hydrogen and oxygen - two gases that come together to form something very different from each of its components - we are made up of our own components, coming together to the benefit of all parties. This symbiotic relationship provides the potential for life as we know it. But what is life? Is it the number of offspring we produce or what we do with our time on this earth? Are we anything more than a host for this bacteria? We have to wonder where our hopes, dreams and ambitions come from if we really are just meat sacks providing a home for these microbes.

In conclusion, 'we' are the conductors of the bacteria, fungi, viruses and archaea that we host. We are the ultimate, fine-tuned magnet, attracting and utilizing all of these existing organisms. Once all our microbiota and cells are stripped away, we are nothing more than energy, frequency and vibrations. Our complexity comes from the ability to harness our microbiota to its fullest potential, and to create our unique self. Personally, I believe that 'we' are our response to stimuli, though I have no evidence other than my personal experience. There are events that must alter things internally, and these changes build up to form our own individual ways of processing new input. In essence, that is life. Simplified, of course. But something must trigger our thoughts and actions, so they are merely a reaction to our environment, personalized by our past, and reflected through our own lens. Ash G. Year 10DA



Year 12 - Professional Standards Workshop presented by Hydrock

Representatives from Hydrock, an integrated engineering and design consultancy, spent the morning with our Year 12 students discussing careers within the engineering sector, participating in mock interviews, learning key interview techniques and thinking about CV writing. Thanks to Hydrock our students are better equipped with the skills necessary to enter the world of work. Mr Smith, Ms Roshier and our Year 12 students would like to thank Alan, Charlotte, James and Julia for preparing and delivering these sessions. We look forward to working with you in the future. - Ms Roshier



Sixth Form Lunchtime Music performance

On Friday 12th May, during lunch break, Anjola B., Matthew Lim, Joshua D. and Dylan S. rendered beautiful musical performances in the sixth form canteen. The performance began with Dylan playing 'Just The Two Of Us' on the saxophone, while Josh beautifully accompanied him on the piano. Later on, Anjola B. sang her first song 'If I Ain't Got You' by Alicia Keys and it was absolutely breathtaking. The sixth formers in the audience were happy to have their lunch with such lovely entertainment.



Shortly after this, Matthew performed 'This City' which he also performed on the guitar. He sang with great emotion, as many brought out their phones to capture such a beautiful moment of Matthew's talent. Not long after, Matthew and Anjola performed 'True Colours' by Cindy Lauper, 'Can I Be Him' and 'Rolling In The Deep' by James Arthur, which all the sixth formers enjoyed equally. When they finished performing, they were hugged and congratulated by their friends and were asked to perform more, although time had run out. All in all, it was one of the most entertaining lunch breaks that took place throughout the term. *Anjola B.*

Library news



Library Monitor Pick of the Week



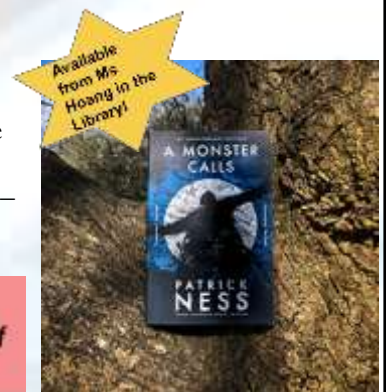
A Monster Calls, by Patrick Ness

At seven minutes past midnight, thirteen year-old Conor wakes to find a monster outside his bedroom window. But it isn't the monster Conor's been expecting - he's been expecting the one from his nightmare, the nightmare he's had nearly every night since his mother started her treatments. The monster in his backyard is different. It's ancient. And wild. It wants something from Conor. Something terrible and dangerous. It wants the truth.

Review:

Patrick Ness' meaningful storytelling is wonderful in making you reflect on life itself, using the fantasy element in the monster to tell a story about dealing with real life struggles and how young people like Conor must move past his fear and towards accepting the truth. Gabrielle F – Year 12

*"Stories are important, the monster said.
They can be more important than anything. If
they carry the truth"*



Winners of the UK Junior Maths Challenge:

Adham A. (Silver - Best in school)
 Marcel H. (Silver - Best in school)
 Emmanuel Y. (Silver - Best in school)
 Kassandra G (Silver)

Best in school



Silver
Medals



Catholic Inspection Report
St Michael's is Outstanding

Following a Diocesan inspection in March St Michael's Catholic College has been judged as an **Outstanding Catholic School** and meets the outstanding criteria in all 4 categories:

Overall Effectiveness Catholic Life Religious Education Collective Worship

- It is a report that the whole community should rightly be proud of, as the outstanding judgements are based on findings that were evident within the whole school and extended community.
- These judgements are only possible due to the hard work and contribution of staff, students and Governors which along with the support of parents/carers and the wider community ensures the highest quality of education, Catholic faith formation and pastoral care.

We can all share in and celebrate this judgement!

Catholic Inspection Report
St Michael's is Outstanding

Diocesan Inspectors say that :

St Michael's Catholic College is an Outstanding Catholic school because...

- The school is deeply rooted on principles of care and compassion based on the Salesian values of respect, understanding, affection and humour (RUAH) evident at all levels within the school and extended community.
- Pupils at all key stages benefit from extensive opportunities to excel and participate in school life which impacts directly on the whole school community.
- School leaders and governors ensure all pupil have opportunities to engage with and lead projects within the school through extensive student voice and student leadership opportunities.
- Outcomes at Key Stage 4 and 5 remain consistently above local and national averages.

Catholic Inspection Report
St Michael's is Outstanding

Quotes from the report:

- A comprehensive and highly proactive pupil and student leadership programme through student voice, chaplaincy and faith in action groups, enables all pupils to engage with leadership across the school.
- In the range of lessons observed positive behaviours and mutual respect supported learning. Pupils cooperated with each other enabling interaction and discussion.
- Pupils readily engage in opportunities to support their local community and spoke of being proud to be able to give to and support others.
- Prayer is an integral part of college life. Inspectors experienced student led prayer commencing every lesson and tutor session, providing calm reflective opportunities throughout the day.

You can read the full inspection report on the college website: <https://www.stmichaelscollege.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Section-48-Report-May-2023.pdf>

Chaplain's Corner

The Word of the Lord

The Ascension of Jesus

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"



A reflection on this...

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Miss Casey, Chaplaincy Coordinator

What's been happening in the faith life of the school?

- As always Friday Mass continued with Fr Keith leading us in the season of Easter
- Miss Casey led assemblies on the Glory and the Impact of the Ascension and Pentecost – pupils were asked to think about how they might continue to live in the Spirit and help to build the message of Christ on Earth as he asked His disciples to do so.
- The school planned celebrations for the King's Coronation that were linked in the assemblies led by Miss Stewart and Mr House about the importance of service and dedication.
- The feast days of Mary Mazzarello and Dominic Savio took place
- The Year 12 and Year 10 chaplaincy teams continue to run the Rosary in the Chapel before school each day to mark the month of Mary.





Safeguarding Officers



**Designated
Safeguarding Lead:**

Ms Jo Nottage

Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
j.nottage@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



**Safeguarding officer &
Deputy Designated Lead:**

Mrs Debbie Freegard

Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
d.freegard@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



Safeguarding Officer:

Ms Tania Rughooputh

Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
t.rughooputh@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



Mr Allan Daly

Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
a.daly@stmichaelscollege.org.uk

Overall Responsibility:

Ms Felicity Corcoran - Principal

Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
Email: contact@stmichaelscollege.org.uk

Important Notice from the Safeguarding Officer - there is a copy of our Safeguarding Policy on the College Website. A hard copy of this is available in the College Office.

SUMMER TERM 2022-2023

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Year 10 face to face parents Evening

Thursday 8th June

4.00pm-6:30pm

INSET DAYS:

Friday 26th May 2023

Wednesday 19th July 2023

(Staff Retreat)

HOLIDAYS

HALF TERM

Monday 29th May

to

Friday 2nd June 2023

Lost property

Please make sure your child's property has their name on, this makes it easier to reunite lost property to its owner.

Please don't bring expensive property to school;

Please note that all lost property that is not collected will be disposed of at the end of each half term.



Contacting the College - Direct parents access to college via email
contact@stmichaelscollege.org.uk

For absence please phone: 0207 237 6432 Option 1



Llewellyn Street, London SE16 4UN

Tel: 020 7237 6432

www.stmichaelscollege.org.uk

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