



# THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of  
St Michael's Catholic College  
Issue 245 - December 2025*



## A word from the Principal

As this busy and successful Autumn term comes to a close, it is significant that we reach this point in the 3rd week of advent marked by the lighting of the pink candle and a focus on joy and gratitude, a powerful reminder that the true source of Christian hope and happiness is very near.

At St Michael's there has been so much to rejoice in this term, especially the way in which our students demonstrate RUAH values, positive attitudes to learning and their determination to make the most of the many opportunities they are given at the school for both academic and spiritual fulfilment. We are also seeing the benefits of working more closely with our St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust family of schools and we look forward to further opportunities for our students and staff to live, learn, pray and celebrate together over the course of the academic year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all St Michael's students and staff for their hard work, service, commitment and contributions this term which make our school such a positive and special place to be. This week the corridors, classrooms and hall have been filled with the joyous anticipation that this special time brings, reflecting the spirit of rejoicing as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. We have enjoyed; listening to our brilliant choir and musicians performing Christmas songs and carols at lunch time, watching students sing at the Christmas karaoke events, taking time to say advent prayers and pray for those in need, eating Christmas lunch together, as well as fundraising and creating Christmas hampers for local senior citizens. These significant activities are mapped into the wider school curriculum to support students' personal development and give them important opportunities to demonstrate RUAH and Gospel values both within and beyond St Michael's.

I would like to thank all parents and carers for your support this term and for understanding just how important it is that we work in partnership together in the best interests of all of our students, rooted in both Salesian values and Catholic Social teaching.

May the peace and blessings of Christmas be yours and may the coming year be filled with peace, happiness and good health.

Ms F. Corcoran  
Principal



The artwork for this year's college Christmas card has been created by Anuoluwa O Year 10  
The illustration is of Mary, holding her new born child, a reminder of the true meaning of Christmas.

## Borough Market Business Challenge 2025



Team 'Tinamics' are:

Sophia, Mya, Lily, Amoile, Johanna, Jonathan, Dominick, Natalie and Nicole.

Tinamics designed and costed a sustainable, attractive, multi-use holder. Collecting discarded tin cans, removing labels, and individually painting and glazing, to produce a super attractive product that can be a pen holder or flower pot!



The team successfully navigated a rigorous and competitive selection process, presenting their business idea to a field of industry specialists at The Imperial War museum, alongside teams from a number of schools. The judges were very impressed with the clarity and detail of their presentation, and chose Tinamics to represent SMCC.

The team then manufactured their product in bulk, putting in many hours of work, and on 3rd December went into competition against other local schools at Borough Market. Selling direct to the public, they took over £250 on the day and are continuing to sell to staff and students at school. A proportion of profits will be donated to CAFOD.



We await the final financial statement, to see if Tinamics will win the overall prize for most profit generated. Our year 8 team, the youngest participants in this competition, have worked so hard, and enjoyed an invaluable business experience. We are proud of team Tinamics!

Mr P Viscovich

My day at Borough Market was really successful and fun, I was able to enhance my marketing skills and improve my confidence by talking to strangers and selling items.

I'm not just proud of myself but everyone on our team, because we spent every lunch time we had by making hand-made tins and some staying after school to do it to.

The effort that we put in this shows that anyone can do anything as long as they put their heart and soul to it and show that we are capable at anything. That's why we made over £200 because we didn't give up its because we showed persistence and resilience in scenarios like this.

Thank you for reading!  
Johanna A, 8DA



## Jack Petchey Winners September, October, November 2025

### Anuoluwa O – Year 10 – September 2025

Anu's peers feel that she is an inspiration to everyone as a whole. She has taught some, how to revise properly and as a result a friend was able to get into top set science. She is also extremely nice to everyone she comes across. She has won almost every house competition she entered such as both the Black History competitions and Christmas Card competition three years in a row as an extremely talented artist. As a result of her artwork she was able to meet the Mayor of Southwark. She is part of the Kings Scholars+ program and has been selected to go to Cambridge university three times. She is also in top set for most subjects and has been consistently getting good grades across all subjects which shows her commitment to her studies. We believe Anu is deserving of the Jack Petchey Award as she is hard working and resilient. She does a lot of work for the school and volunteers for a lot of things. She is very helpful and eager to do her best. She does things out of the kindness of her heart and demonstrates the school's RUAH values more than any person in Year 10. She always offers to help even when people don't need it and is always polite towards students and teachers. Therefore, we believe Anu should get the Jack Petchey Award as she would use it in the best way to benefit our school community and do her best to bring happiness to others.



### Daniel A – Year 12 – October 2025

We proudly nominate Daniel A, a new Sixth Form student to our school, for his exceptional resilience, commitment, and inspiring selflessness. Daniel quietly manages his time effectively. His willingness to seek help and his subsequent commitment to his education, despite challenges speaks volumes about his determination to succeed. Daniel is flourishing, demonstrating a remarkable drive to contribute positively to the school community. Daniel voluntarily gives up his personal time to actively support the school. He was an outstanding ambassador during our Open Evenings, providing tours and engaging positively with prospective families. He dedicated himself to the school's culture through sport, playing a vital part in the school football team. Daniel's humbleness underscores the depth of his character. He does not seek recognition; he simply operates at an extraordinary level of personal responsibility. Daniel perfectly embodies the qualities this award seeks to recognise. While

he may occasionally struggle with the minor technicalities of school life, his profound moral compass, commitment, and daily acts of care far surpass any expectations for a young person. We nominate Daniel so that he understands that his dedication is truly special and an outstanding act that deserves formal commendation.



### Isabella CB – Year 9 – November 2025

Isabella has been an excellent role model in the Coding for Girls Club over the past year and more recently with the Digital Design Club.

She has been instrumental in encouraging new students to join the group and has actively supported both younger and older students. She never shies away from supporting younger students when they find a particular coding challenge particularly difficult, and will take the time to go through the problem so that the other student understands the process thoroughly.

Additionally, Isabella always tries her very best, is eager to learn, and rises to any challenge set. For example, when she first joined the Girls who Code Club at the beginning of Year 8, she found Python coding quite difficult and benefited from additional support from a Year 12 student. She is now in a position where she is supporting others, and her mentoring has been invaluable in instilling confidence in younger students.

Additionally, in Digital Design Club, she always puts the needs of others before her own and has taken on the responsibility of Club Monitor, circulating the room to make sure that other students have understood the project and to offer advice and support as needed.

She has an incredibly positive attitude and is an excellent team player, and as such would be a worthy recipient of a Jack Petchey Award. Isabella is an active member of different clubs throughout the school and outside the school. She spreads happiness, kindness and affection to everyone including staff members. She shares her opinions and thoughts in class and everywhere. In the Eco-Committee and Gardening Club, she is aware of the environment and gives ideas on how to improve our school to be a more eco-friendly, sustainable place.



## Does Human Intelligence Exist?

### Big Ideas Lecture Series Launches with Fascinating Exploration of the Concept of Human Intelligence

The Big Ideas lecture series launched this week with geneticist Dr Jacob Knyspel from King's College, University of London, questioning the concept of intelligence itself and introducing the ideas of "mutualism." Students from across Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 were gripped and took part in a lively discussion on the cultural and statistical biases of this concept and the harmful impacts on society at large.

Alan P, 10VI says:

"I found the lecture very enlightening. I really enjoyed thinking about the different ways humans have intelligence. Not just logical/mathematical but also musical, interpersonal and existential intelligence. It has made me reevaluate how I think about humans."

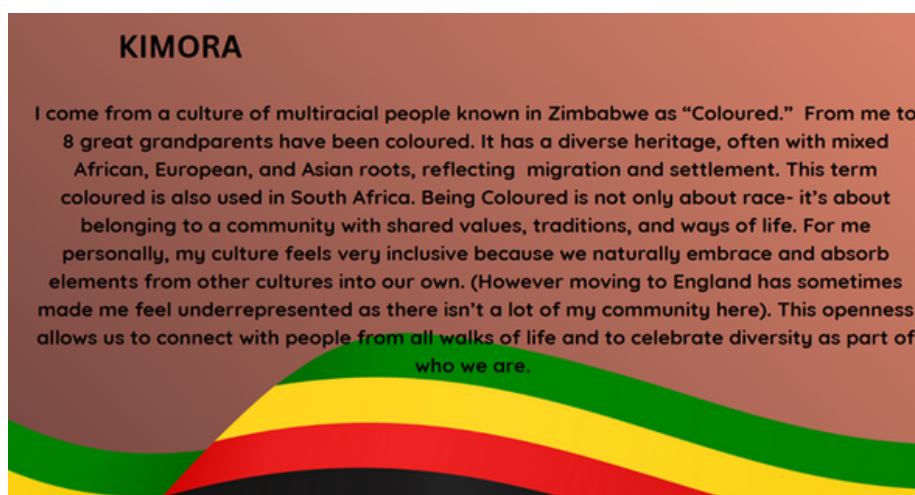


## Black History Month Competition Winners 2025

Ms Etemewei and Mr Magnoff are absolutely delighted with your contributions to this competition. It was incredibly difficult to choose – We are now collating the entries to construct a display and a special BHM edition of the St Michael's Review....watch this space!

The results are as follows:

**Winner: Abigail A and 12A**



**Runner-up: Samantha BV, 8BC**

The Colombian hat that I have painted is generally referred to as sombrero vueltiao, which is a national symbol that represents the identity and culture of indigenous people. The hats are made by hand, of dried cane and leaves, mainly worn by farmers and people who collect coffee in Colombia. It is also worn in festivals and carnivals.

Another detail seen in the painting are the maracas, a very significant instrument used in Colombia for music, ceremonies and salsa which originates from African and indigenous culture. Maracas represents the multiculturalism of Colombian culture through folkloric rhythms like cumbia and joropo and is manifested in the happiness of the participants. The woman painted on the canvas is an example of a Colombian taking pride in their African culture, like people who have used art, music and dance to preserve their identity to show who they are and they are proud of it.



The background of Colombia:

Colombia is a very diverse country, a culture that is Afro-descendent. Our country is rich in coffee, flowers and its biodiversity- full of many parrots and our country is known for its vibrant salsa. Its country is surrounded by two Oceans – The Pacific and The Atlantic. Colombia is a vibrant, welcoming and humble country to visit with such a beautiful culture. However, at the moment they do not have a very good government as the country is becoming going poor in some places. We may not be rich but luckily the people stay passionate with a strong sense of family and community.

**Runner-up: Elianna C, 9RU**

From Tears to Bloom

Medium: Air-Dry clay, Wire, Acrylic Paint

This sculpture is an abstract representation of the emotional journey of Black History and my cultural identity, told through the image of a single eye. At first glance—from above—you see the face of a Black person with a deep cut, symbolizing the wounds carried through generations. Inside the eye, there is a flower—fragile and small—representing the quiet hope that endured even in the darkest times of slavery and oppression.

When viewed from the side, the sculpture transforms. The flower within the eye becomes a red poppy growing upwards—strong, proud, and blooming. This shift in perspective is intentional. It tells

a story of growth, resistance, and how the legacy of pain has blossomed into something powerful and enduring.

The cut on the face is a central symbol. It represents generational trauma—the physical and emotional scars passed down through history. Located on the face, it also speaks to the erasure of identity and humanity during slavery and colonization. But the wound is not just a symbol of violence; it is also one of survival—a scar that has healed but will never be forgotten.



The colour red plays a dual role in this story:

- From above, it represents blood, pain, and sacrifice—the lives lost and the struggles endured.
- From the side, red becomes the vibrant color of a poppy, symbolizing remembrance, rebirth, and resistance. It shows how, from hardship, something living and strong can grow.

I carefully mixed three different browns, adding black and white to create many shades of brown. This variation was intentional, reflecting how Blackness is not a single, uniform experience—it is diverse, layered, and unique for everyone.

This transformation—from sorrow to bloom—reflects how Black culture has not only survived but thrived. What was once a symbol of pain has become one of beauty, power, and pride.

Through this abstract piece, I aim to show a “two-part” meaning in one work of art: from above, it represents challenge and hardship; from the side, it shows where we are today and what we hope for—a culture that grows, remembers, and continues to rise.

Inspired by our CPSHE lessons on African art as a tool of resistance and renaissance, I wanted my piece to show how perspective changes everything. Art carries stories of struggle and hope—and through it, we remember, honor, and grow.

## Challenge Competition Winners 2024-25!

Anuoluwa O, 10BC - £20



Alan P, 10V - £101



Enara AG, 9RU - £5

New Competition to Launch in  
January 2026  
You too can be cool like these  
winners!  
Watch this space..

## Parliament Week : Our Students Engage with Democracy!

Mr G Williams

We are delighted to report on the fantastic engagement and success of this year's Parliament Week activities! It was inspiring to see so many students actively participate in learning about our democratic process and the important role of their local Member of Parliament (MP).

The highlight of the week, spearheaded by our enthusiastic Politics students, was the challenge for students across the school to write a letter to their own local MP. This task encouraged students to research their representative, identify issues they care about, and articulate their concerns or ideas in a formal, persuasive manner.

The quality of the entries was exceptionally high, demonstrating great thoughtfulness and civic awareness. We are pleased to recognize the following students for writing some of the best and most impactful letters:

- Adam S (Wrote to Neil Coyle MP)
- Julian OE (Wrote to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP)
- Amoile S (Wrote to Miatta Fahnbulleh MP)

These three students will each receive a small prize as a token of our appreciation for their brilliant work. Crucially, their compelling letters have already been formally forwarded to their respective local MPs for consideration.

We must give a special mention to the standout entry that truly impressed the judging panel with its passion, research, and clear call to action.

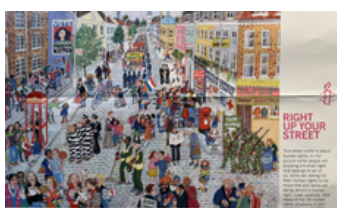
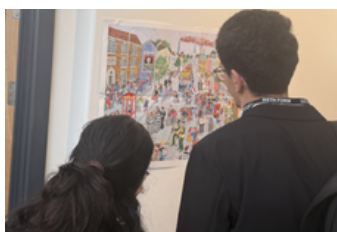
A huge congratulations to Year 8 student Janka P who has won the top prize—a £20 Amazon gift card—for her superb letter to Apsana Begum MP. Janka's letter focused on the critical issue of improving recycling and waste management services within her borough. It was a thoughtful and well-reasoned argument that highlighted an important local matter.

We are now eagerly awaiting responses from all the MPs who received letters from our keen and hard-working students. We hope to share any replies, direct feedback, or future opportunities for engagement in our next newsletter. This process gives students a real-world experience of parliamentary communication and demonstrates how they can influence positive change in their communities.

Well done to all the students who took part in Parliament Week. You have shown that the future of active citizenship is in excellent hands!



## Human Rights week Celebrated in St Micheal's



Human Rights Day was observed at St. Michael's Catholic College with a week-long series of educational assemblies following the day itself on Wednesday, December 10th. The sessions were provided by the Politics and Sociology Department and were designed to educate students on the importance of human rights principles. Aiding these sessions were Year 12 students, Szymon K and Ayomide D, who contributed to the delivery of the material. The College utilized resources provided by Amnesty International UK, including books, pamphlets, and badges, which were distributed specifically for Key Stage 3 students to support their learning and understanding of global rights. As a key feature of the observance, students across all year groups were encouraged to engage with their rights via an interactive activity. They explored posters from artist Dan Jones' 'Right Up Your Street' collection, prompting them to identify and spot various human rights principles represented in the artwork.



## PE Department Wrapped: September - December



The Physical Education (PE) Department has made a strong and purposeful start to the academic year, providing inclusive opportunities that support students' physical wellbeing, personal development, and character formation. Guided by the St Benedict Trust's priorities and St Michael's RUAH / Salesian values, the department has focused on participation, aspiration, leadership, and service to others.

### Student Participation and Inclusion

During the first half-term, a high number of students engaged positively in extracurricular physical activity:

- 204 girls participated in at least one extracurricular sports club.
- 178 boys participated in at least one extracurricular sports club.
- 382 students in total were involved across Year 7–13

This level of participation reflects a strong commitment to inclusion and unity, ensuring that students of all abilities and backgrounds have access to physical activity that supports both physical and mental wellbeing. Engagement is expected to continue to grow as more students are encouraged to become involved. We expect these numbers to have increased drastically as engagement increases.

### Breadth of Opportunity

The PE Department has delivered a broad and balanced programme of extracurricular provision, allowing students to explore a range of interests and talents. Clubs offered this half-term included:

- Badminton and table tennis
- Basketball
- Football across multiple age groups
- Girls-only sport sessions
- KS4 volleyball
- Dodgeball
- Strength and conditioning
- Sixth Form Only Sports

This variety reflects our commitment to equity of opportunity and the Salesian principle of educating the whole child, enabling students to develop confidence, resilience, and a positive relationship with physical activity.

### Competitive Sport and Aspiration

Competitive fixtures have provided valuable opportunities for students to represent the school with pride, demonstrating respect, teamwork, and perseverance:

- Under-15 Boys and Girls Successfully making it to the quarter finals of the London Cup.
- The Under-14 Girls' Football Team progressed to the next round of the South London Cup, reflecting strong collaboration and commitment.
- The Year 8 Rugby Team currently sit at the top of the South London Schools Rugby league
- The Year 9 Rugby Team are also leading their respective South London Schools Rugby competition

These achievements highlight a culture of aspiration and excellence, while remaining grounded in humility, sportsmanship, and respect for others.

### Enrichment and Positive Role Modelling

Students also benefited from enriching experiences beyond the school site that broadened their horizons and reinforced positive values:

- A group of 16 girls attended the T1 Rugby Festival, developing confidence and teamwork while meeting Shaunagh Brown, former England Women's Rugby World Cup winner. This experience provided powerful inspiration and reinforced the importance of female role models in sport.
- Students attended the England Women vs China international fixture, gaining first-hand exposure to elite sport and supporting the visibility of women's sport.

These opportunities support the Trust's aim of widening experiences while encouraging aspiration and self-belief.

### Sports Leadership Academy: Leadership Through Service

This academic year has seen the successful launch of the Sports Leadership Academy, with 53 students from Year 7-13 currently involved.

Students are developing leadership skills through service in areas such as coaching, officiating, sports marketing, photography, and journalism. The programme encourages young people to take responsibility, support others, and contribute positively to the wider school community, reflecting the Salesian values of service, humility, and leadership through example.

### Looking Ahead

The first half-term has provided a strong foundation for the year ahead. High participation, competitive success, and meaningful enrichment opportunities demonstrate the PE Department's commitment to nurturing confident, active, and compassionate young people.

The department looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with students, staff, and the wider community to ensure that sport remains a vehicle for wellbeing, character development, and unity throughout the school year.

Mr M Laribi  
Sports Development Officer

## St Michael's alumni puts Catholic social teaching principles into action

Former St Michael's student Anthony N was given an award for young volunteer of the year at the Caritas Westminster awards ceremony. On Wednesday 26th November, Anthony joined lots of other Catholics of all ages at the event at Westminster Cathedral, to be recognised for his services to the Church.

The ceremony is in its 4th year and was a wonderful evening showcasing all that our community does in service of one another. I was particularly impressed at how many young people picked up awards on the night. The future is bright!

Bishop Paul McAleenan handed Anthony his award and the following was said of him:

From the age of just 17, Anthony has shown extraordinary leadership and care at his parish of Our Lady and St. Catherine of Siena in Bow. After the tragic death of the parish MC, he stepped up and offered to train and mentor the younger altar servers. Despite his own grief, Anthony comforted others, ensuring they grew in confidence and dignity serving at the altar. Known for his concern and attentiveness, he has become a role model for his peers.

How lovely to see that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in Anthony and he is truly continuing to live out our Salesian Values. Well done Anthony!

Mrs L Bryant

*'In the deserts of poverty and loneliness, volunteers help a new humanity blossom in the garden that is God's dream, always and everywhere, for all of us.'* - Pope Francis, Homily during Jubilee of Volunteering

## An Alternative Read This Festive Season!

Stuck for a Christmas stocking filler?

Well, you could try 'An Alternative Irish Christmas', a new short story anthology published by Tramp Press and featuring a story by our very own Mr. Bourke.

From old traditions to the creation of new ones, from moments of quiet reflection to chaos, comedy and even horror, this alternative seasonal collection reflects the stunning breadth of experiences an Irish Christmas offers.

Mr Bourke's story, called The Angel of Lyon, tells the tale of a man who spends Christmas dressing up as a gorilla – very festive we are sure you will agree. And if you can't wait to get your hand on the whole anthology then we have good news - The Angel of Lyon will be published in the Sunday Independent on 20th December as part of the anthology's promotion.



The Irish Times praised 'An Alternative Irish Christmas' as "great for those Jaded by other Christmas offerings" and a "celebration of the season with new stories and essays from the best and most exciting Irish writers."

You can listen to it being discussed here: <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22565220/>

Or read a review with an extract, here: <https://www.image.ie/living/read-an-extract-from-short-story-anthology-an-alternative-irish-christmas-976222>

Happy holidays!

Mr N Bourke

## Expand and Simplify

I tried to expand whilst I simplified,  
But the effort only made me cry.

**$(2x+7)(3x+1)(x+8)$**

These figures over complicate.

There's nothing simple about this equation  
that provokes an expansion.

To words only I can relate.

Fascinated,

I see them try.

I see the focus in their collective eyes.

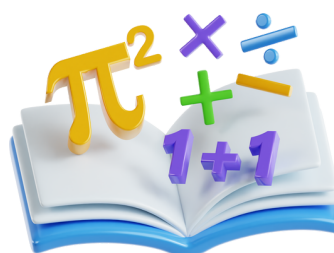
Pens tightly gripped

Answers cascading from their tips.

At maths they seem quite adept.

And so, I say to everyone:

YOU ARE BRILLIANT, PLEASE HELP ME  
UNDERSTAND!



I need to multiply the brackets  
Which by definition means  
Increasing brackets.  
In that I see an expansion.  
Is this the only way to crack it?  
Still, it defies comprehension.  
How can you Simplify  
Whilst being forced to multiply?  
By collecting like terms,  
I can only confirm - expanding my  
mathematical knowledge is a new challenge.  
It's far from simple.

Ms P Belvett

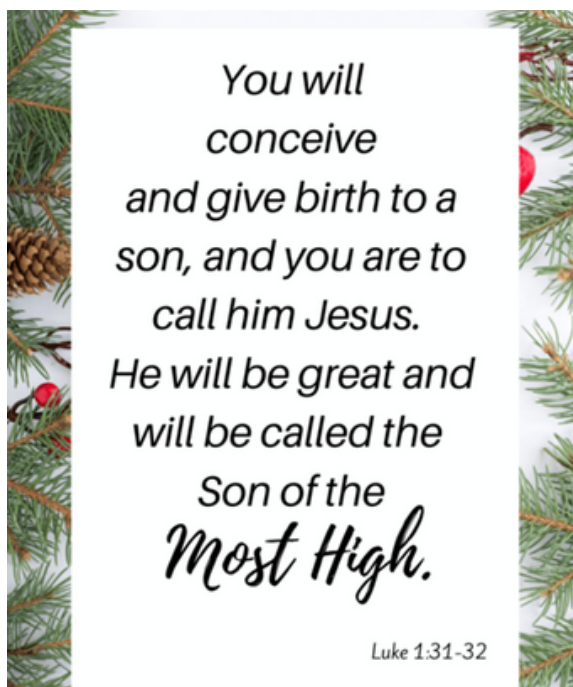


## Chaplaincy Corner

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

- Mr Kelly led assemblies supported by the Young Salesians about the season of Advent launching our different Advent appeals
- Staff and students under the inspiration of the Go Forth part of Mr Kelly's assembly started to bring in cold weather items to be donated to the charity Shelter
- Mazzarello House held their charity week in honour of another homeless charity St Mungo's raising over £300
- Advent Fundraising began with students in Sixth Form Chaplaincy helping to facilitate the various events we are holding and preparing Christmas hampers for our local senior citizens
- The St Michael's choir performed advent carols and the Jubilee year hymn at the last Friday Mass of the term to mark this important time and the close of the 'Pilgrims of Hope' Jubilee year.
- 7DA prepared for and shared in their first form Mass lead by Fr Keith, a wonderfully attended service

### The Word of the Lord



### A reflection on this...

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the incredible news delivered to Mary—the promise of your Son, Jesus.

I thank you that He came to be my Saviour and that His name is above every name.

I am grateful that He is truly great and is rightly called the Son of the Highest.

Thank you for giving Him the eternal throne, establishing His rule forever. I thank you for His kingdom and the hope I have because He is King.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Miss R Casey  
Chaplaincy Co-Ordinator



## Upcoming Events

### January

Monday 5 <sup>th</sup>	Only Year 11 and 13 back to College
Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup>	All students return
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Year 11 Parents' Evening at St Michael's
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Mocks   English
Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Year 13 Parents' Evening at St Michael's
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Mocks   Maths
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Mocks   English



### Parent Focus Group

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

Wednesday 3rd June | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

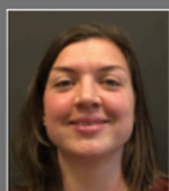
### Friends of St Michael's PTA Group

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

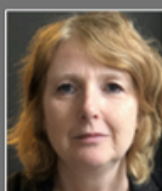


## Safeguarding Team



**Designated  
Safeguarding Lead**

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### Overall Responsibility

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