



THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College*
Issue 246 - January 2026



Year 12 Student Wins SSLP Shackleton Award!



At the end of last term, Dr Joe Spence – former Co-Director of the SSLP and CEO of the School Partnerships Alliance – visited St Michael's Catholic College in his capacity as an ambassador of the James Caird Society. Dr Spence presented a certificate and a book prize (a copy of Ernest Shackleton's South) to Dominic J, as part of a nationwide programme honouring students who embody the virtues and values of Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Each SSLP school was invited to nominate a pupil who had demonstrated the “Shackleton Spirit” – showing proven commitment to service, leadership, or triumphing over adversity.

Dominic J

Dominic is recommended for this year's Shackleton Award for his academic excellence and resilience in the face of exceptional challenges.

Dominic's indefatigability has been inspirational. Not only has Dominic faced down challenges with conviction and courage, he has also far exceeded expectations. Through a remarkable display of discipline and focus, Dominic is now one of the highest achieving students in his cohort. Dominic has pursued all this with quiet fortitude and optimism. He remains too humble to ever apply for an award like this for himself but has become a source of inspiration to his peers at St Michael's. His continuing achievements are a profound testament to his strength of character and ability to overcome adversity. He has not only proved to himself that he is capable of succeeding in the face of extreme challenges but has also emboldened his friends and peers in Year 12 to face down their own fears too.

Mr D Magnoff

Imposter Syndrome

In January over 90 students were in attendance to the Big Ideas lecture delivered by Mike Sealy on Imposter Syndrome - the term given to the inner monologue that questions your sense of belonging in top Universities or Employment. Mike has enjoyed a stellar career in senior positions including the BBC and Hewlett Packard. He reassured our young people that everyone has self doubt, about appearance, accent, race or gender identity, and recounted his own experience as a young ambitious black person entering the workplace in the 1980s how he felt compelled to try and be someone else to fit in. He reassured the attendees that although many stigmas no longer exist, this does not stop self doubt, and imparted a toolkit of takeaways to counter this. We are extremely grateful to Mike for his time, and should feel very proud of what the college has achieved so far in the Big Ideas programme, and it is wonderful that so many of our young people recognise the importance of these perspectives.



Mr I Davis

Year 9 and 10 trip to the Barbican Centre to hear The London Schools Symphony Orchestra

On Monday 12th January the Music Department took 35 pupils from Year 9 and 10 to a concert at the Barbican Centre given by The London Schools Symphony Orchestra- an ensemble made up of children attending schools within the Greater London area. It was a wonderful concert and the standard of playing was very high. Maia J, 10VI was one of the pupils on the trip and commented: "With a set of pieces created by famous composers such as Sergei Prokofiev and Alexander Arutunian, and more modern composers such as Connie Harris, Jack Smith, and several others, the programme was exciting and very varied. The overall experience was delightful with the ambient atmosphere of warm lights and the spatial resonance of the Barbican Hall, the pieces filled the concert hall with a wonderful sound. The repertoire consisted of a trumpet concerto by Soviet-Armenian composer Arutunian, a brilliant solo piece that showed off the virtuosity of the performer followed by some modern, alternative pieces that were seeing their first ever performances in public. This gave my peers and I, more insight into the imaginative, unique forms of musical expression of modern music. After the short interval that followed, the orchestra performed several selections of Sergei Prokofiev's famous Selections from Romeo and Juliet, which were personally my favourite. I found the trip to the concert to be sublime and phenomenal, one that I would definitely enjoy experiencing again."

Taking pupils to concerts is very beneficial on so many levels, as it allows them the opportunity to experience musical performance at a high standard and motivates them to be more inspirational with their own instrumental and vocal practice. We look forward to the next concert trip on the 21st of January when the Year 11 GCSE Music class visit Cadogan Hall to watch Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker: excerpts and his Symphony No. 6, 'Pathétique' after a workshop at St Michael's with members of the orchestra.

Mr D Laurence
Head of Music



Our Year 12 Model United Nations team had another successful conference this week!



They were invited to Kingsdale Foundation School to represent countries including Venezuela, France and Pakistan to discuss everything from the question of generative artificial intelligence and intellectual property to the future militarisation of the moon! They even had the chance to take part in a historical council based in 1956 on the question of the invasion of Egypt by Israel, France and the United Kingdom.

They worked hard all evening to debate resolutions, pass amendments and work together with both state and private school delegates to plan how to leave the world a little bit better off.

Their minds have already turned to their next conference, and are even looking forward to holding their own later in the year - watch this space! Well done Year 12 - clapping is most definitely in order... (a classic MUN joke)

If any of this sounds interesting or you would like to know why 'clapping is in order' then come to our club on Wednesday lunchtime (4b) and get involved!

Come and speak to Ms Stewart in the RE office for more information.

Support for Families

www.contact.org.uk a charity for families with disabled children

www.fledglings.org.uk (Contact's online shop which has all things useful and practical for families and practitioners)

Family Fund UK charity which offers help once families have completed a form (with school and other health professionals being a referee about the child's needs) - this can be in the form of money towards a holiday, a giftcard for electronical items etc. It is targeted towards those that are in need so if you are claiming Universal Credit/Tax Credits and other benefits or have low income/low savings; it is always worth a try for all families. Parents need to provide evidence and it is a very simple process. It is currently capped every 2 years for reapplying

Little Village - help for those families who have young ones (pregnancy-birth-5 years old). This may be of help to those students with siblings in their family.

Thames Water also can help with money off bills for low income families.



Under-14 Girls' Basketball Success

We are incredibly proud of our Under-14 girls' basketball team, who have shown outstanding commitment, resilience, and teamwork throughout their recent fixtures.

The girls worked tirelessly across the group stage, demonstrating not only their developing basketball skills but also a fantastic attitude when faced with challenges. Their determination and resilience paid off, as they won their group and secured a place in the playoffs – a brilliant achievement.

This success reflects their hard work in training, their support for one another, and their willingness to keep pushing forward, even in difficult moments. Well done to all the players involved – we look forward to seeing how far this team can go in the next stage of the competition.



Lost PE Kit – Important Notice

We currently have a large amount of lost PE kit stored in the sports hall, including tops and Jumpers.

Students are encouraged to check the lost property before Friday 6th February to see if any items belong to them. After this date, any unclaimed kit will be sold at a discounted rate, with all proceeds going towards fundraising for the PE department to support future equipment and activities.

Please remind students to clearly label their PE kit to help us return items more easily in the future.



Ori and the Elephants

A short story by Ms P Belvett

For nearly a year Ori researched elephants. He learnt everything about them: that they are the largest land mammals, he knew the different species, their life cycle, eating habits, weight, the way they would squirt water over their bodies to cool down and that they stayed pregnant for two years! Ori believed elephants to be indomitable; they survived despite being overworked in circuses, and the cruelty they faced having their tusks hacked off! He knew he just had to see them free from all that, roaming in their natural habitat. He wanted to stand next to them, to have his photograph taken beside an elephant - not like one of those mercenary ivory harvesters, or silly tourist, giddy with laughter astride an elephant. Ori wanted to revere them.

Now it was time to realize his dream, Ori was finally on his way to the jungle of Chiang Mai in Thailand. There at the rescued elephant sanctuary, he would come face to face with the magnificent creatures which had not only occupied his every waking hour, but had also depleted his meagre savings. Unquestionably, it was worth it. Yes, he would meet the elephants printed on his pyjamas, plastered on his screen savers and dangling from his key ring.

The bleakness of the early morning could do nothing to dampen Ori's excitement as he left his hotel and entered the tour bus which would take him to the jungle. He spared a cursory glance and quick jerk of the head by way of greeting to the other 3 passengers already on the bus. Quickly, he found a seat next to the window at the back. He had no desire to talk with other passengers nor to share this sacred moment with anyone else. Surely, they couldn't possibly love elephants as much as he did. After 10 minutes of finger-tapping impatience had elapsed, the last two passengers hobbled into the bus.

At last, they were on their way through the winding mountain roads. The child in him wanted to ask, "how soon will we get there?" but he, a grown man could not face the ridicule of the others if he dared ask. With barely controlled patience, Ori settled into his seat as the mountain mist descended on the bus. They were soon enveloped into a heavy fog. Nearly ninety minutes had passed and with each bend in the road, it seems the jungle, an amorphous beast had completely swallowed them. Ori imagined that deep within its belly, elephants must be frolicking.



The mist cleared and he spotted the huge arch sign: 'Welcome to Chiang Mai Elephant Sanctuary'. Finally! He was there. As they filed out of the bus, in the distance, Ori's eyes beheld them; a herd of towering bulky brown mass. His elephants!

They were much bigger than he imagined. Gone was his joyous anticipation of petting those creatures. Instead, Ori was gripped by an alien fear which rooted his feet to the place where he stood, next to the door of the bus. No cajoling by the guide could get him to move closer. The elephants were menacing. It seemed as though they knew he was coming. En masse they were waiting to trample him. They were not docile welcoming creatures. They, nearly thirty thousand kilograms of mountainous flesh, stared at him menacingly. They were advancing towards him with their awkward purposeful gait; their massive trunks poised as if to hurl pain over his thin frame. This reminded him of a poem about frogs he had learnt in school; like those frogs, these were not the elephants of his dreams. On jelly legs, Ori sought refuge in the bowel of the bus. This was not the meeting he anticipated. These elephants were vile!

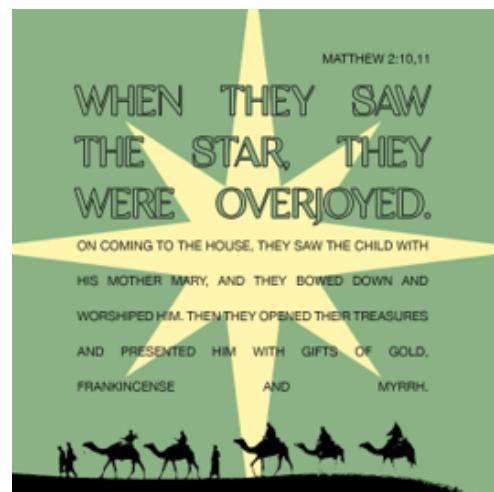
Chaplaincy Corner

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

- Year 11 and Year 13 returned to the college on Monday 5th January along with all staff
- Year 13 were welcomed back by a reflective Catholic life retreat focusing on the final stages of their St Michael's Catholic College journey and the Salesian Values of Respect Understanding Affection and Humour and how these will equip them in their futures. They created reflective art pieces and prayers focusing on not just these RUAH Values, but these life values
- The Feast of the Epiphany took place on the 6th January, as well as marking the end of the Jubilee Year in the Church. Ms Corcoran, supported by the Young Salesians, led assemblies reflecting on the gifts that we receive from our faith, just as Jesus received from the Magi and that the Hope of the Jubilee Year remains within our hearts as it comes to an end. Ms Corcoran set all students and staff the challenge: How can we be inspired by the Wise Men to carry the Jubilee light into the world?

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 2:10-12



A reflection on this...



Lord,

Thank You for the light that leads me to You. Fill my heart with the same "exceedingly great joy" the Wise Men felt when they saw the star.

As I come before You, I offer the treasures of my life—my heart, my work, and my praise. Give me a spirit of true worship and the wisdom to listen to Your voice. If I am headed toward danger, guide me to "go another way" and stay and walk in Your protection.

Amen.

Miss R Casey
Chaplaincy Coordinator



Upcoming Events



January

Tuesday 20 th	Morning Mocks Maths
Tuesday 27 th	Morning Mocks English

February

Tuesday 3rd	Morning Mocks Maths
Tuesday 10th	Morning Mocks English
Thursday 12th	Year 7 Parents' Evening via SchoolCloud
Friday 13th	End of Term
Monday 23rd	Back to College
Monday 23rd - Friday 27th	Year 11 & 13 Revision Week



Parent Focus Group

Thursday 12th 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 22nd January | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams
 Thursday 7th May | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams



Safeguarding Team



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