



THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
Issue 247 - February 2026*



Word from the Principal

As we reach the conclusion of this incredibly busy half term, it is important to note that it has been a very successful time for the St Michael's community, not just for what we have achieved, but importantly for how we have achieved it by staying true to our Salesian values.

I am delighted to share that I recently received a formal letter of congratulations from the Secretary of State for Education Bridget Philipson. This letter recognises our school's exceptional outcomes in 2025 for all students and especially those with significant barriers to learning, officially placing us among the top-performing schools in the country. This accolade is a testament to the tireless dedication of our staff and the remarkable work ethic of our students. However, we do not view these results in isolation; they are the result of a culture underpinned by Gospel and Salesian values which ensure academic excellence, high quality pastoral care and meaningful spiritual formation.

In light of these achievements, the Department for Education has selected St Michael's to share our exceptional practice as part of the DfE London Rise Fortnight this coming March. It is a privilege to be chosen to share our practice in this way, ensuring that the successes we see here can benefit young people across the city.

While national awards are pleasing to receive, the true ethos of our school was most visible during our recent Diversity Week, details of which are featured in this edition of The Link. You will see that this was a joyous celebration for everyone in our school community and a masterclass in how we can celebrate our differences, backgrounds and interests in an inclusive way, respecting the dignity and contribution of all.

As we head into the break, I want to thank everyone; students, staff, families and our colleagues across the St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust family of schools for their hard work, support and commitment

I wish you all a restful, holy, and safe half term break. We look forward to welcoming everyone back, refreshed and ready for the challenges of the next term.

Best wishes

Ms F. Corcoran
Principal



A message from Bridget Phillipson



Dear Felicity,

Congratulations to you and your team on the excellent outcomes the disadvantaged pupils at St Michael's Catholic College achieved at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. Your school's performance places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement.

This success reflects the dedication of your staff and the hard work of your pupils. It shows what can be achieved when ambition and commitment come together. Thank you for everything you do to give children the best possible opportunities to succeed.

Your school's achievements demonstrate what is possible, and I hope you will continue to share your experience and best practice with others. Even the strongest schools can go further. We encourage you to lead the way as a system leader - sharing effective practice, championing networks, supporting collaboration, and helping raise standards across the sector.

There are real opportunities available for you to support improvement for a wider group of pupils including through:

- engaging actively with [your region's RISE networks](#) and partnering with nearby schools and trusts;
- contributing to regional roundtables and professional communities to spread the approaches that are working in your context; and
- sustaining excellence by continuing to focus on disadvantaged pupils

Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to your staff and pupils. I look forward to working with you as we strive together to raise standards for all.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridget Phillipson'.

Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State for Education

St Michael's Stands Together - All are Welcome Diversity Week Success!

St Michael's celebrated our diverse and inclusive community with a series of lectures, workshops and cultural events. As in previous years, the theme was "intersectionality", with a focus on both our complex individuality and the commonalities that bind us together.

This is the third year of this programme and the response of students across the college has been outstanding. Throughout the week, events, lectures and workshops were delivered to packed audiences and our guests were moved by the depth of thought put into the questions asked by our students as well as the degree of empathy and Salesian values on display in their engagement with both new and familiar concepts. This year we were delighted to welcome speakers and workshops on Post-colonial Nigerian History, Neurodiversity and the concept of "normality", LGBTQ+ History with a focus on intersectional solidarity, the Refugee experience and even a special session on "Satire and Speaking Truth to Power" from the world famous Editor of Private Eye magazine, Ian Hislop. Students were also excited to explore a special week of cuisine from all the inhabited continents of the world and an extremely well-attended cultural showcase at the end of the week, where the heritage of all of our students was celebrated through an evening of dance, music and an explosion of contrasting culinary colours and flavours. We are proud of all of our students and the inclusive, Salesian, compassionate and precious community that they have created.

Strength through unity. All are welcome.

Mr D Magnoff



Diversity Showcase Evening: Strength Through Unity



St Michael's students and parents put on an evening of song, dance, culture and FOOD! Where else on Earth can you enjoy a plate of Mongolian, Ukrainian, Filipino and West African delicacies (and Irish crisp sandwiches) while listening to live medieval Japanese music?



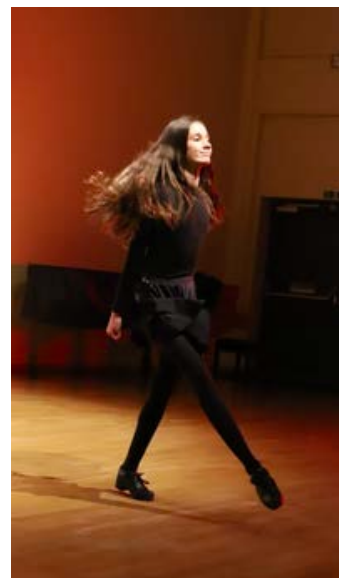
On Thursday, the after-school showcase evening was divided into two sections: a celebration of talent and a celebration of our diverse cultural foods. The talent showcase featured three performances, Irish dance, a Filipino dance, and a song exploring the complexity of identity, highlighting the wide range of talents within our school community.



Afterwards, everyone gathered in the hall to enjoy a variety of cultural foods. Personally, I really enjoyed preparing a selection of Ghanaian dishes and sharing them with others. It was wonderful to see how open everyone was to trying new foods, and I truly appreciated the positive feedback and response to what we made. The event was a strong reflection of our school's RUAH values, emphasising the importance of community and celebrating culture together.



Catherine D (12BC)



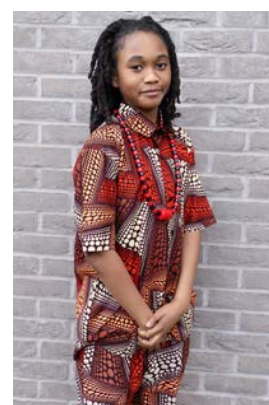
Cultural Dress Day is a Triumph!



Hundreds of St Michael's students show pride in their complex heritage. Unity through diversity. London is a salad bowl. All are welcome.

Cultural dress day was the last event of diversity week, which was organised by the school to celebrate diversity and encourage students to share their heritage (which we don't usually see whilst wearing uniform). Throughout the day students wore clothing that reflected their background or cultures which they wanted to celebrate, some students wore traditional African prints (eg bogolan or kente) whilst others wore saris, thobes or embroidered dresses. The variety of different types of cultural attire created an incredibly vibrant atmosphere, making the school feel more welcoming and expressive, making it quite clear that many students had put thought into their outfits. Personally, in my sociology lesson, we started conversations about cultural traditions and the meanings behind certain garments, we were also able to share short explanations about our cultural attire including when it would traditionally be worn and what they symbolised, helping us to understand customs beyond what we would typically learn. For me (and I'm sure others) I believe that the day encourages greater respect and awareness for diversity. It created conversations between people who might not normally interact with each other. Seeing classmates represent their heritage with such confidence and pride challenged the harmful narratives and stereotypes that exist in wider society, reinforcing the idea that cultural identity is valuable and worth recognising and sharing.

Keziah A (12VI)



Fela Kuti, Chinua Achebe and the Shaping of Modern Nigeria

Dr Robin Whitburn delivers a fascinating lecture on the development of post-colonial Nigeria, the role of protest and the ongoing socio-political tensions of the region.

On Wednesday 4th February, I attended a lecture on post-colonial Nigeria. The lecture explored the impact of prominent Nigerian figures during Nigeria's post-independence era. These figures included Chinua Achebe, Fela Kuti and Olusegun Obasanjo. Interestingly, Chinua Achebe and Fela Kuti both used art as a 'weapon' against oppression. Achebe used literature to criticise the government, writing novels like 'A man in Power' which criticised corrupt leaders in politics. Fela Kuti (the creator of Afrobeats) used music to criticise the military regimes in Nigeria, writing songs like 'Zombies' to mock armed forces for being brainless followers of the oppressive government. Additionally we learnt about the movements these African figures were trying to push - one idea that particularly Fela Kuti wanted to push was Pan Africanism, which is the belief that all African countries should unite in order to achieve political, economic and social progress. He specifically advocated for Pan-African Socialism, which was a new way of thinking about the way Africa functioned politically, and economically. It countered the Western based economic system of capitalism while also countering the western idea of separating/dividing Africa into different countries/people. Furthermore, Olusegun Obasanjo served in Nigeria's military, playing a critical role in Nigeria's civil war. This meant that he was the direct opposition for Fela Kuti who disliked the military regime. Overall, I thought that the lecture was insightful as it taught me about the events/movements that took place post the colonisation of Nigeria.

Upile M (9VI)



Refugees in the UK

Tia Shah and Liberty Melly from the National Migration Museum deliver a myth-busting session on the refugee experience in the UK and the historic and ongoing contribution of refugees to British society.

On the 4th of February, 2026, many students had the opportunity to attend a lecture exploring the asylum seekers, migration and immigration given to us by the Migration Museum, which opens in 2028. We began by discussing the difference between migration and immigration, how one is when people move as a result of free will and opportunities, while others are forced to flee because of war, persecution or anything that serves as a danger to their lives. We further discussed how refugees were treated in the UK, how some communities saw them as a threat, but some communities welcomed them with open arms. We also learnt that until they are given legal permission



to be in the UK, they are known as asylum seekers, and by being one, you are not allowed to work, and are only given an absurd amount of £7 daily for all nutritional, transport and personal hygiene needs. We also got informed that to legally become a refugee in the UK, you have to apply from the country you are fleeing from, yet the UK allows only certain countries to apply for refugee status. Therefore, to become a refugee in some countries, you have to physically apply for refugee status in the UK, but the UK law says that if you enter without a refugee status, you are considered 'illegal'. After listening to some personal experiences of refugees fleeing to the UK or from their home country, we were asked to share our roots and connections to migration, if it was ourselves, our parents or grandparents that migrated, making us a part of the museum or part of the migration community around the whole world. We thank both Mr Magnoff and the Migration Museum, for organising this educational lecture and for giving us insight into what we may not yet have an opinion on, but we understand through the eyes of those in need.

Janka P (8RU)

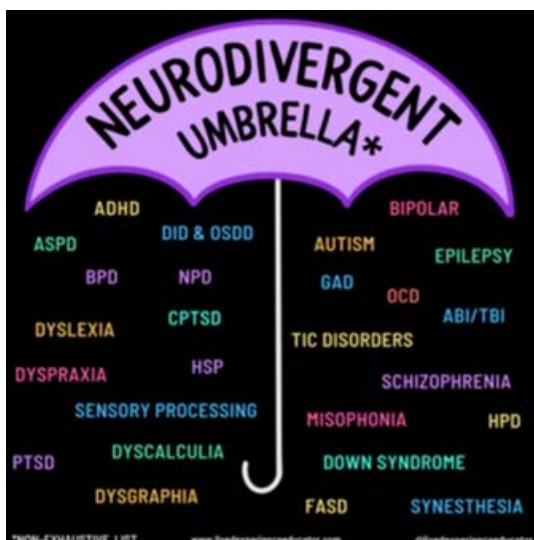
"Normality" and Eugenics

Dr Chris Bailey, Sheffield Hallam University, delivers a thought-provoking lecture on the concepts of neurodiversity and neurotypicality and what they mean for today's society.

Dr. Chris Bailey, started the lecture by giving us definitions of the terms: neurodivergent and neurotypical. Neurodivergence was defined as "the different processing of information and behavioural functioning in individuals, which is considered to deviate from the typical norm". Then, he kindly shared with us his own diagnosis of autism as an adult, and gave us an insight into his paternal and family life and how autism influences it. He did this by explaining how being autistic is another form of neurodivergence, and how this influenced his social connections and interests at a young age. For example, he personally had deep interests and passions for things he strongly believed in or enjoyed such as videogames and interpreted what people said to him more literally. Moreover, this understanding of how this sort of neurodivergence can cause prejudicial assumptions and preconceptions from people who expect others to develop and interact in a certain way, is what he believed led him to understand, sympathize and find solutions to his own children's struggles that drew parallels with things he had to deal with as a child such as blaming himself for his own interpretation of things when it was society that wasn't well equipped to understand this difference in social/neurological functioning.

To add to that, what stood out to me was learning about Quetelet's ideology of eugenics and how favouring traits that were viewed as desirable or more advantageous such as height, intelligence led to prejudicial ideas about the value of certain traits in society that didn't fit the desired accepted standards. This is significant, as it links to society today, in the sense that the idea of neurotypicality constructs an image of what kind of behaviour, language and other mannerisms are perceived as normal or socially acceptable. However, by embracing our neurological diversities, people are able to chase and explore what excites them and makes them curious, rather than conforming to social expectations of how we "should" interact with others and approach day-to-day activities.

Ayomide D (12SA)



Power, Media and Hope

Ian Hislop, Editor of Private Eye, discusses the ability of satire to undermine authoritarianism and give people hope for the future.

The experience of Ian Hislop coming to our politics class really revealed the ins and outs of how he uses his satirical press - "The Private Eye" - and offered a clear look into his political stance and perspective on today's political issues. It started with his disdain for current US political discourse, especially Donald Trump, whom he asserted was continuously breaking the US Constitution. In spite of this, Mr Hislop outlined that Trump faced minimal challenge from Congress since the Republicans hold a majority in both houses (However, this may change during the Midterms). He also rejected the argument that Trump's Executive Orders could be compatible with the US Constitution.

Given his distaste for populist figures, it was only a matter of time before we started discussing populism in the UK. Hislop also commented that even in the press, it's hard to satirise populists (Donald Trump, Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson) when they're already in on the joke; their "unserious vibe" makes traditional satirical commentary seem redundant. However, the way to get to them is by making commentary on what they're insecure about (eg: Donald Trump hates being called weak). Authoritarian leaders really don't like being laughed at and it may be the most effective way to undermine them.

We then discussed the effectiveness of the UK government. Despite Ian Hislop having a working relationship with Boris Johnson, he did not pull any punches when talking about his government. In short, he claims that it was a terrible chapter of British politics and one from which we have yet to

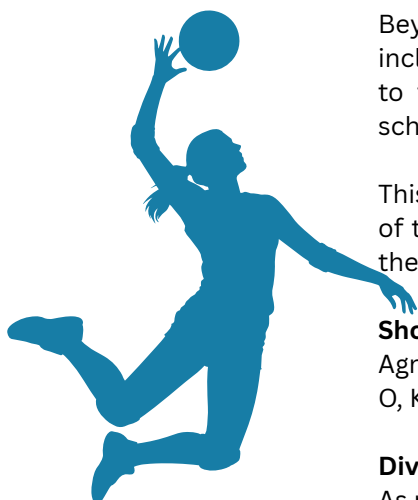


recover. Mr Hislop also commented that the current Labour Party was ineffective in governance and losing popularity. Surprisingly, he believed that the Conservative and Liberal democrat coalition government were actually effective, and was in favour of introducing a multi-party system.

As the discussion went on, we also discussed his perspective on the Leveson inquiry. Ian Hislop believed that Leveson's inquiry was an effective introduction by the government, cracking down on the power of the media and stopping phone hacking. Overall, it was a pleasure for all of us to meet Mr Hislop and to discuss power, politics and the media. It was even better that he was able to do this with charisma and witty jokes that made us all laugh. Ian Hislop believed we should be able to discuss politics without wanting to kill each other, but take a professional but humorous light to politics. I agree!

Jairus B (13BC)

PE Department Highlights



Beyond the result, the players demonstrated outstanding values, including teamwork, resilience, and respect. Every player contributed to the performance, supporting one another and representing the school with pride both on and off the pitch.

This achievement is a testament to the commitment and togetherness of the squad, and the whole school community is extremely proud of their success.

Shoutout to the Team

Agnes W, Angel O, Fantay R, Victoria J, Favour O, Rosie S, Mary B, Kitty O, Kitty-Rae H, Elizabeth R, Martha W, Eliza AB, and Mavelle P.

Diversity Week Volleyball: Celebrating Culture Through Sport

As part of our Diversity Week celebrations, students took part in a vibrant and inclusive volleyball competition that brought our school community together through sport, music, and culture.

Across two action-packed Lunch Periods, around 150 students participated, with around 100 Key Stage 3 and around 50 Key Stage 4 students getting involved. It was fantastic to see such a wide range of students taking part, many of whom were trying volleyball for the first time.

The competition was about much more than just winning matches. With music from different cultures playing throughout the event, the atmosphere reflected the true spirit of Diversity Week – a space where students could explore, celebrate, and appreciate different cultures while enjoying physical activity together. The energy, positivity, and mutual respect on display made it feel like our own mini Olympics.

Events like this highlight how sport can be a powerful tool for inclusion, bringing people together and creating shared experiences. A huge well done to all the students who took part and helped make Diversity Week such a memorable celebration.

Rugby Teams Off to a Blistering Start

It would be remiss not to highlight the outstanding start made by our U13s rugby team and our U14s rugby team, who are already off to a blistering start in the defence of their South London Schools Cup title, won so impressively last year. As the Six Nations approaches and rugby takes centre stage nationally, our students are doing a fantastic job of flying the flag for the school on the local stage.

Across both age groups, the teams have shown excellent teamwork, resilience, and a rapidly growing understanding of the game. Their commitment in learning and composure in competition has been clear to see, with players working selflessly for one another and responding brilliantly to challenges on the pitch.

Mr Brett-Roberts is incredibly proud of the way the students have represented the school, not only through their results, but through their attitude, sportsmanship, and willingness to learn. It's a hugely encouraging start to the season, and one that sets the tone for what promises to be another exciting year of school rugby.

Mr M Laribi



Outstanding Success in the UKMT Intermediate Mathematical Challenge 2026

Students at St Michael's Catholic College have achieved outstanding success in this year's UK Mathematics Trust Intermediate Mathematical Challenge, one of the UK's most prestigious national mathematics competitions. Competing against students from across the country and overseas, our pupils demonstrated exceptional problem-solving ability, resilience and mathematical insight.

Particular congratulations go to Adham A (10MA) and Maia J(10VI), who both achieved Gold certificates and were named Best in School – a truly exceptional accomplishment that places them among the highest-performing students in the competition. Adeoluwa O (9MA) also achieved a Gold certificate and Best in Year 9, highlighting his outstanding mathematical talent. Michael is also the first Year 9 to achieve Gold at the IMC at St Michael's. Alongside with Best in school and Best in Year 9 title holders, Adriel A, Marcel H and Filip S have also been invited to complete the next round of the 'Pink Kangaroo' maths challenge. Only 7000 Year 10/ 11s across the UK are qualified for this round, and at St Michael's this year, we have 6 qualifiers.



(Pictured are the 6 qualifiers for the next round. They will be preparing for this competition with Miss Nguyen after school on Tuesdays after February half term).

We also celebrate the success of Denis DC (11MA), who last year achieved a Silver certificate. Despite being busy preparing for mocks, Denis joined the IMC team as he is genuinely interested in the art of maths problem solving. His hard work has now been rewarded with a Gold this year.

A very special mention must go to Alba D (8DA), who achieved a Bronze certificate despite being in Year 8, below the intended age group for this challenging competition. Remarkably, Alba joined the competition at the last minute and completed the paper during her lunch break with Miss Nguyen, making her achievement even more impressive and a clear reflection of her natural mathematical ability and enthusiasm.

These exceptional results reflect the strength of mathematics at St Michael's and the dedication, ambition and excellence of our students. We are immensely proud of their achievements and look forward to even greater success in the future.

Miss T Nguyen

Outstanding Success in the UKMT Intermediate Mathematical Challenge 2026

Below is the full breakdown of our results:



GOLD

Year 11
Denis DC

Year 10
Adham A
Maia J
Adriel A
Marcel H
Filip S
Mason B

Year 9
Adeoluwa O



SILVER

Year 10
Lilly G
Jui T
Emmanuel Y
Anuoluwa O
Mikyas F
Shalom O
Emily K
Kassandra G

Year 9
Hubert J
Oliver OC



BRONZE

Year 10
Stephanie E
Sebastian VL

Year 9
Deandre BV
Nathaniel AJ
Ivan L

Year 8
Alba D



Year 7 King's Scholars 'Discover University Day'



Up the Grade

Poem by Ms P Belvett



She has ascended the slide to self-destruct.
I tried to apply the brake to stop the fall
But she is full throttle,
And in her effort, she will not stall.

I see her slipping up the grade
Free fall in full
No clutch to depress
No steering back on course.

Maybe she's that dark horse
Galloping to the end
Not the show-pony I want her to be
The dressage is not for her but for me.
I see her half-pass and piaffe, when I need the extended canter.

But rein her in I must.
It is a constant pull and thrust towards the finish line.
The trophy will be hers but the victory mine!

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 electrical 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.



Chaplaincy Corner

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

- Ms Tengra led assemblies about LGBTQ+ history month, showcasing that sharing in the Spirit of Christ should unite us not divide us and the importance of living out Catholic Social Teaching focused on dignity and solidarity
- Miss Casey and members of the Year 12 chaplaincy team attended the Racial Justice Sunday Mass at St George's Cathedral. Archbishop John Wilson shared the message of unity and love between one another through Christ
- Preparations are in place for Lent which will include a range of activities including prayer, reconciliation and fundraising

The Word of the Lord

Galatians 3:28



A reflection on this...



6th form Students on Racial Justice Sunday outside St George's Cathedral

Lord,

Thank You for the radical grace found in Your Word. We admit that we often find comfort in our "tribes" and build walls out of our differences. We focus on what divides us rather than the Spirit that unites us.

Help us to see others through Your eyes. Strip away our prejudices, our sense of superiority, and our insecurities. Remind us today that:

Our heritage does not make us more holy.

Our status does not make us more significant.

Our gender does not limit Your love.

Teach us to live as "one," honoring the unique tapestry of Your creation while resting in the equality of Your salvation. May our lives reflect this unity in a fractured world.

Amen.

Miss R Casey
Chaplaincy Coordinator



Upcoming Events



February

Friday 13th

End of Term

Monday 23rd

Back to College

Monday 23rd - Friday 27th

Year 11 & 13 Revision Week

March

Wednesday 2nd-Tuesday 10th

Year 11 & 13 March Mocks

Friday 20th - Thursday 26th

Years 7-10 & 12 Assessment Week

Friday 27th

Easter Liturgy | End of Term



Parent Focus Group

Thursday 12th March | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

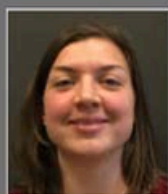
Wednesday 3rd June | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

Friends of St Michael's PTA Group

Thursday 7th May | 16:30 - 17:30 via MS Teams

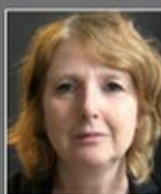


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