THE LINK

A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of St Michael's Catholic College

Issue 254 - November 2026

Diana O and Jae J Win Deputy Head Girl and Deputy Head Boy Elections!

Congratulations to Diana and Jae who managed to win the popular vote from their fellow Year 12 students, staff and SLT. Although the results were very close, both candidates are worthy and clear winners who managed to appeal to a broad cross-section of the St Michael's population with messages of hope, optimism and innovation. Please find brief extracts from their winning speeches below:

Election of Deputy Head Boy and Deputy Head Girl
of
St Michael's Catholic College 2026-27





True leadership is not about control, it is about service. It is not about the title you hold, but about the difference you make. A true leader does not simply claim to represent their community — they listen to it, act on its concerns, and work alongside it to create meaningful change.

Because I don't believe leadership should be about one person standing at the front, making promises and expecting everyone else to follow. I believe leadership is about listening when nobody is watching, speaking when something needs to be said, and acting when something needs to change.

I cannot promise that every idea will become College policy. But I can promise that I will echo your ideas, represent your concerns, and give everything I have to turn meaningful suggestions into meaningful action.

Let's not just talk about the College we want. Let us build it together.

Diana O, 12RU

I will be an attentive listener. If you have any concerns about the school, come to me and I will try my best to find a solution so that your school experience is as efficient and positive as possible.

I'm not here just for my friends or my year group, I am here for the all year groups where I can encourage the younger pupils. I will be someone they will look up to, someone they feel like they can talk to, and be a role model for them. I am here to give some of your siblings or younger friends an enjoyable and positive St Michaels experience. I will make the school fun, by helping organise events, competitions, charity activities and things that give all pupils something to look forward to. I am not afraid to speak up. If pupils have a good idea or something needs improving, I'll make sure their voices are heard.

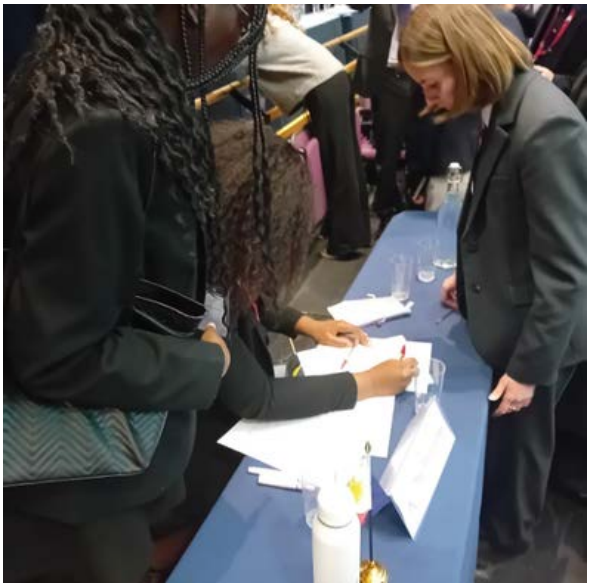
Jae J, 12BC

St Michael's Delegates Take Over the Model United Nations!









Huge congratulations to the St Michael's team who represented New Zealand and Philippines at the national MUN Conference at Alleyn's on Saturday. Delegates from Years, 10, 11, 12 and 13 spent the day collaborating with schools from across the country (as well as delegates from the actual United Nations!) to find resolutions to the world's problems. Particular mention to Chiamaka O (10BC), who won the Security Council award for Best Delegate!

Join the MUN Club in F16 with Ms Stewart every Monday lunchtime!

Please find the reflections of Diana and Corey below:

"My first MUN conference at Alleyn's was an experience that truly opened my eyes to the power of debate and the importance of different perspectives. Although the thought of entering a new environment, discussing complex global issues, and proposing resolutions was initially nerve-racking, I left feeling inspired to engage more with the issues shaping our world today. I was particularly struck by the creativity, confidence and humour students brought to their speeches, making each debate both thought-provoking and memorable. The conference reminded me that young people have a valuable voice in global discussions and that meaningful change begins with the willingness to speak up. Overall, it was an unforgettable experience, and I am grateful to have been part of it."

Diana O, 12RU



St Michael's Delegates Take Over the Model United Nations!

"My First Time Behind the Placard:

My Journey in Model United Nations (MUN)

Model United Nations is a simulation of the United Nations, where students act as **'delegates'** representing different countries to debate global issues and draft resolutions.

Over the last few weeks, I and many other students at St Michael's had been preparing for the highly anticipated MUN Conference on Saturday, 10th of October 2026. Although the preparation period was much more challenging than I expected, I still managed to prepare my speech and resolutions in time for the conference. It was a spectacle, to say the least.

- Students were assigned a specific country and an intergovernmental organisation, and had to research and adopt its foreign policy, laws and stance on the various topics on offer to them, acting as **delegates** for their countries.
- Upon arrival, students were placed into their respective organisations, forming committees, and in these **committees**, debated their designated issues from the perspective of their assigned countries.
- Finally, students were placed into their respective nations and debated potential solutions to a recent political issue in front of everyone.

Debating in our committees and in front of the other delegates provided us with the opportunity to display our rich understanding of political issues circulating in the world now. It presented me with the opportunity to build my skills in public speaking, research, cooperation and communication.

Hosted at Alleyn's School in Dulwich, this year's MUN conference was one of the best yet.

I was fortunate enough to meet **Rola Hallam**, who provided me with a wealth of knowledge on her personal experiences and how they have shaped her to be the consultant anaesthetist, humanitarian, and social entrepreneur that she is."

Corey A, 12BC





Careers in Languages Event



On October the 1st, the MFL department took a group of twenty five Year 11 students to St Dunstan's College for a special Careers in Languages event.

Our students were able to listen to guest speakers from organisations such as the United Nations, Médecins sans Frontières and various creative industries. They learned from expert talks on topics such as AI and languages, language and linguistics in the real world and studying abroad. There was also a theatre performance on the Battle of Hastings and a theatre workshop all performed in French. The students were delighted to discover how much they could understand!

Finally, our students took part in taster sessions on languages such as ancient Greek, Japanese, Italian and Arabic which they found very engaging and enjoyable. This was a very exciting and inspiring event where students who love languages were presented with potential career opportunities.

One of the students said:

The 'Careers in Languages' event at St Dunstan's was incredibly insightful. It made me feel more inclined to pick French for A-level because of how useful it is in so many careers. I especially enjoyed the 'Medecins sans frontiers' talk as it showed me all the different careers that you can go into in just one organisation - in which French is very useful. I also really enjoyed the French drama workshop because many times where I thought I didn't understand what they were saying I was able to figure it out just based on context which I think is really important when learning a language.

Ms Dearden
Head of MFL

Workshop at 'The Guardian' Newspaper



Earlier this month, Media Studies and History students across Key Stage 4 and 5 attended a workshop at the headquarters of 'The Guardian' newspaper in Kings Cross. The workshop introduced students to the issue of fake news in the media, providing them with a set of tools used by journalists and editors of 'The Guardian' to identify and debunk false stories. Students were put into teams and given the task to research a variety of news stories. Once they had identified whether the stories were true or not, they presented their findings to the whole group. The workshop introduced them to two fantastic fact-checking platforms: fullfact.org and snopes.com, sites that can verify and fact-check anything online.

"I found The Guardian workshop useful as it helped me identify fake news. To fact check you can use reverse image searching to identify AI images".
Chiamaka, Year 10

"I really enjoyed working in a team, researching and presenting our stories".
Paula, Year 11

"I enjoyed learning ways to verify news since it is relevant to this age of technology and digital news. The activities were really fun".
Alaia, Year 10








AI Generation Launched! Year 9, 10 and 12 join forces to build a plan to save the world!

This week a combined team of boffins from St Michael's travelled to Alleyn's school to work with other students from across age ranges and backgrounds to begin a 6 month project into how to be harness the power of AI in education. Watch this space!

"Attending the AI conference at Alleyn's School on Thursday was a great experience, largely because the sessions felt practical and engaging rather than overly technical. I learned that AI works best as a helpful starting point for ideas and research, while humans still need to check facts, make decisions, and bring original thinking to the table. My favourite part was the group work, where ideas from classmates and building a shared project together made learning much more interactive and fun. Seeing how different perspectives shaped our final result really highlighted the value of teamwork alongside new technology.

Overall, the day left me feeling much more confident about using AI responsibly and creatively in the future tasks I get set, and the workshop I will continue attending. "

Alex A, 10BC



Geneticist from King's College London shoots down myths about mental health and young people in launch of Big Ideas lecture series 2026





A combined audience of Years 9, 10 and 12 took part in a lively lecture from Dr Jacob Knyspel, who shared his research into mental health amongst young people in Southwark and exposed the myths about a generation.

Please find Amy's thoughts below:

"A genetic researcher called Jacob Knyspel from King's College London recently came to give a lecture about whether youth mental health problems are over or under diagnosed. News reports are saying that Gen Z is a "snowflake" generation implying that it's weak. News reports are also claiming that there is a lot of overdiagnosis going on with mental health problems like depression , anxiety etc., or neurodivergences like autism , ADHD etc... These are both... INCORRECT!

Gen Z and Gen Alpha already have it hard enough facing fear of jobs, housing and stability whether they have thought about those things now or will in the future. As well as this, these generations face a lot of comparisons both in person and on social media, a lot of pressure to succeed and a lack of meeting friends in places without having a phone to shield behind. After a lot of careful research, researchers have decided that in fact if we look at the data there is in fact underdiagnoses. Over the following years, there has been a rise of mental health problems and neurodivergence records and the truth is simply stating that there is too much overdiagnoses going on is not going to solve anything.

However, first we have to understand the nature of diagnoses. There are two types of diagnosis: theoretical diagnoses and practical diagnoses. Theoretical diagnoses are the thought the doctor has about a diagnose whereas practical diagnosis is when the doctors actually tick the box that goes on the NHS records. The UK healthcare systems rely on diagnoses to have better access to therapies and other treatment that may be needed. Prevalence also has an impact on this as it tells us the % of people that have some sort of neurodivergence or mental health disorder or challenges. Prevalence is the % a population has/a group of people and there are two types of prevalence: Current prevalence and Lifetime prevalence. Current prevalence is the % of something people currently have and lifetime prevalence is the % of something people will have in their lifetime. An example of this is 100% of people will have flu in their lifetime prevalence. Now statistics show that when we try to remove diagnoses and see with other forms of data it stills shows mental health and neurodivergences rising. Other methods that psychologists can use to try to see whether a person has a disorder is with clinical interviews, questionnaires and self-diagnosis. Self- diagnosis is when a person does research and identifies with a type of neurodivergence or disorder and this can mean that they get access to therapy and other treatments quicker. A problem could be misinformation however, that a habit that could be experienced by many neurodivergent people could be spread by misinformation to be "autistic traits".

Questionnaires get you to choose how strongly you feel symptoms and how they impact your daily life however a problem is that it doesn't paint the full picture just part of it. This is why the best method without a diagnosis is clinical interviews. These are face-to-face interviews with physiotherapists and they can actually paint the whole picture. Statistics have shown that 80,000 of young people have symptoms of disorder in SLAM (South London And Maudsley). However, only 26,000 get access to support and even worse only 1 in 15 get a diagnosis. This goes to show there is in fact major underdiagnoses and this is from not enough access to the system and as shown in the SLAM statistics the percentage of prevalence v/s diagnosis is higher.

Overall, the system makes it harder for many young people to access support without diagnosis already even though they have symptoms of a mental health disorder or neurodivergence that impacts their life. As always if you are struggling you can talk to the nurse or a teacher or a trusted adult. You don't have to go through anything alone."

Amy C, 9BC

Combined Year 12 and Year 11 Team Reach Knockout Stages of prestigious English Speaking Union MACE National Debating Competition!



Huge congratulations to the St Michael's Debating Team that became the first ever from Bermondsey to qualify for the knockout stages of the national ESU MACE competition. Well done to Diana, Corey and Anu as well as Camille who MC'd the event with articulate confidence and charisma. Please find the thoughts of Diana and Corey below:

"I was the First Speaker for team Proposition on the motion “The House Would allow under-16s to use social media but require platforms to take stronger steps to protect them from bullying and predatory behaviour.” I argued on the imperative of social media in our modern world and its benefits in aiding communication amongst adolescents. I enjoyed this debate as each student shared their passionate views on this motion and it was truly inspiring to see rigour in students both older and younger than me! Also, I am grateful that we were able to move onto the next round, this is proof of our dedication and hopefully we will come back stronger and more analytical in the next debate."

Diana O, 12RU

"On the 10th of November, I, and the rest of the debating cohort, partook in a national debating competition hosted here at St Michael’s. Spanning across several hours, I, and the rest of the team competed against three other schools with amazing debaters. To launch the event, we faced Wilson's Grammar School. The motion was ‘This House Would allow under-16s to use social media but require platforms to take stronger steps to protect them from bullying and predatory behaviour.’ As the proposition, we agreed with this statement, and argued thoroughly in favour of this team. Diana was our first speaker and provided a clear, direct, and resounding speech which included a scenario of a disabled girl, unable to go to school and socialise with friends to reinforce our belief that social media should be accessible to all. After hearing the opposition’s rebuttals, Anu responded as the second speaker with a series of articulate and prudent statements in favour of the motion to bolster our argument and position in the debate. After hearing the opposition’s final counter arguments and summary speech, I provided the proposition’s summary speech, in which I delivered a summary of what both the proposition and opposition had said within the debate. To conclude, I critiqued the arguments provided by the opposition and argued why the motion should pass (why our side was better).

This debating competition provided me with great insight into the remarkable world of debating and developed my communication, debating and presentation skills. The competition has given me an overwhelming amount of confidence in my ability to speak publicly and to debate various nuanced and challenging topics that shape the debating world today."

Corey, 12BC

UK Senior Maths Challenge 2026 Results



Best in Year 12 and best in school



Adriel and his invitation letter to the Senior Kangaroo and Adham and his invitation letter to the BMO1



Year 11s and year 12s who qualify for the next rounds

The UK Senior maths challenge is an annual competition for Year 12s and 13s to select the best mathematicians across the country for the British maths team. However, having worked with our year 11s for years and knowing how brilliant they are, I took the liberty of signing a group of them for the competition along with our current Year 12s. The results turned out to be a massive success.

Year 11's results:

Gold:
1. Adham A (also overall best in school)
2. Adriel A

Silver:
1. Fillip S

Bronze:
Kassandra G
Marcel H
Emil J
Sara S

Year 12's results:

Gold:
1. Vlad M (also best in Year 12)
2. William E
3. Denis D C
4. Matthew F

Silver:
Remy T

Students who proceed to the next round:
Adham A in Year 11 has made history at St Michael's to have qualified for the British Maths Olympiad round 1, an intense competition which lasts 3.5 hours. Only 1000 students (mostly Year 12s and Year 13s) are invited to this round in the UK.

Adriel (Year 11), Vlad, William, Denis and Matthew (Year 12) have qualified for the Senior Kangaroo maths – the Andrew Jobbings competition. Several thousands of students in UK are invited to this round.













Year 11 Geographers Put River Studies into Practice at Epping Forest

St Michael's Year 11 pupils embarked on their annual field trip to Epping Forest to study rivers. The fieldwork was hosted by the Field Studies Council - the FSC - who run a centre at Epping Forest specialising in school field trips.

Understanding fieldwork is fundamental to success in Paper 3 of the GCSE.

We were particularly blessed on Friday with dry sunny weather (that's a 'high pressure system') and the beech trees were in full autumnal colours. As a result of a very dry and hot summer, flows in Loughton Brook was lower than usual, despite heavy rainfall in October, which impeded velocity measurements.

Pupils carried out geographic enquiry, i.e. finding out what they already know, but in order to understand the process of gathering data and of making sense of the data.

In summer term as Year 10s they carried out geographic enquiry - Human Geography - at the Olympic Park site.

The FSC staff praised the outstanding behaviour and attitude of our pupils; they see pupils from a wide range of schools and so can offer an informed comparative analysis.

Congratulations Year 11!

Fine Art

Poem by Ms P Belvett

The Art of it
is a trickle of water on brush bristle
She splashes ink of her work into the sink
Perhaps a master-piece washed down the drain
Now displayed in Thames sewer main.

He stares at a screen looking but not seeing.
I see the scene he replicates
A blob of red against the grey
Matter in his head floats around
But his inspiration cannot be found
He closes his eyes to open his mind.

I spy the painter across the room
His brush moves much like a broom
A family portrait intently etched
Is someone missing from this sketch?
A missing dad the bristles find
A father-figure his colours define.

On the other side
She makes a wedding dress on fabric frail
A future dream without the veil.

A collage of newspaper clippings chronicles
and catalogues
War stories past
A splash of red replicates the blood,
Gaza's pain
On canvas drains.
Israel's retaliation
on easel stands
A dirty war in beautiful art.



Jack Petchey Winner Awards Ceremony 2026



Year 7 St. Michael's Day Mass - Feast of St Michael









St. Michael's Day Celebrations





















Queries from parents/carers

We are introducing a new system to address parent/carer queries more quickly by providing direct contact to the relevant team to support your child.

Team Contact Form	
Year 7	https://tinyurl.com/2s3cm8wj
Year 8	https://tinyurl.com/88yj445n
Year 9	https://tinyurl.com/wke7z7t9
Year 10	https://tinyurl.com/yzhj4re5
Year 11	https://tinyurl.com/4yz28epw
Year 12	https://tinyurl.com/4rru4btf
Year 13	https://tinyurl.com/32dy3utt
Special Educational Needs	https://tinyurl.com/4pthnx5r

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?

- The College celebrated St Michael's Day with a wealth of activities. Students were invited to write on the wings of St Michael – messages of hope and faith
- Year 7 students also took part in a special Mass at Dockhead to mark this occasion, we were able to celebrate with Fr Dermott for the first time after his instillation in the parish
- Year 13 Sixth Form Salesians, ran a successful St Michael's Day Palooza once again, supported by the Year 12s. Jeremy D and Exodus A took their new roles as Student Head and Deputy very seriously and were integral to the running of afternoon
- Year 7 Young Salesians were announced, with their first meeting taking place this week!
- Staff and Students have collected and donated a wealth of donations for Southwark Food Bank
- Sixth Form Salesians in Year 12 met with Jeremy and Exodus, the leaders in Year 13 to discuss upcoming plans for Advent and the coming year within Chaplaincy
- Mr Daly facilitated assemblies about Diwali, the Hindu festival of light and asked students how they can be the light for others. Students in Year 9 Young Salesians supported with readings and information
- The Young Salesians in Years 8-11 successfully completed their previous year, with Uploads and Final Pieces and were able to Graduate their first or next level in the programme. They were presented with certificates by Fr Keith and some students were part of the celebration, sharing speeches reflecting on the year they've had

The Word of the Lord

Love in Action – Romans

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

A Reflection on Romans…

Paul strips away any romantic or theoretical ideas about love and turns it into gritty, everyday action. Real love isn't a polite mask we wear when things are easy—it's showing up without hypocrisy.

It looks like celebrating a friend's win without a trace of envy, making space at your table for someone who can't pay you back, and refusing to match someone else's hostility with your own. Ultimately, love in action means refusing to let the darkness around you dictate how you treat people—choosing instead to disarm evil with stubborn, practical goodness.

Miss Casey
Chaplaincy Coordinator



Upcoming Events

November

Friday 27th Nov – Friday 4th Dec	Year 11 & 13 Mock examinations (75% of the curriculum)
Monday 30th Nov – Friday 4th Dec	Years 7-10 & 12 Revision week

December

Monday 7th – Friday 11th	Years 7-10 & 12 Assessment week
Wednesday 16th	Christmas lunch
Thursday 17th	Christmas Trips / Rewards Activities for students
Friday 18th	Christmas Liturgies | End of term

Meeting dates 2026-27



Friends of St Michael's – all meetings via MS Teams

Thu 21st Jan @ 16:30-17:30

Thu 15th Apr @ 16:30-17:30

Parent Focus Group

Thu 10th Dec @ 16:30-17:30 – at St Michael's

Thu 11th Mar @ 16:30-17:30 – via MS Teams online

Thu 17th Jun @ 16:30-17:30 – via MS Teams online

Safeguarding Team





