

Dear Parents/Carers

Salford Diocese Theme of the Week for Schools

ENVIRONMENT *'He will let out the vineyard to other tenants.'*

Sunday's Gospel Matthew 21:33-43

This week assemblies have raised the important occasion of Black History Month 2026 with this year's theme, "Honouring Our Communities", reflecting that Black history is not only made through landmark events or by famous names but it is also created through everyday acts of leadership, care, service, creativity, courage and commitment across our communities.

We are proud to mark Black History Month in school and there will be the opportunity for the students to learn more in lessons across October. Thank you to Mrs McEnroe for co-ordinating the assemblies and other experiences across the month.

<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/>

Year 11 students continued with their series of Sixth Form College Assemblies and we were happy to welcome Ashton Sixth Form College into school on Monday to talk to the students.

Savio House Retreat

<https://www.saviohouse.org.uk/>

Year 7 forms have had a wonderful week of retreats at Savio House over the past few days. Students have been involved in team building activities and celebrated and explored the shared Catholic values of the school through prayer and reflection.

All the staff who accompanied the students on the retreat have commented on the student's excellent behaviour and how much the experience has helped the Year 7 to make new friends and settle into school. Well done Year 7!

Smart Phone Free School

As you will be aware St Thomas More RC College is a Smart Phone Free Site since September. Students are not allowed to bring Smart Phones onto the school site.

Students are permitted to bring into school an Approved Non-Smart Basic Phone for their journey to and from school should parents/carers wish them to, (Nokia 105, Nokia 106, HMD 105), but these approved phones must remain switched off in a student's bag for the duration of the school day until students have exited the outer green gate.

Statutory Government Guidance which is supported by legislation from September 2026 states that: *"All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.....There are a number of ways in which schools can ensure that they are mobile phone-free, and it is for headteachers to decide how best to achieve this within their own unique contexts."*

Although the school's decision to ban Smart Phones from the site is backed by Government Guidance and Legislation, as a school, we also firmly believe that our policy is overwhelmingly in the best interests of children and the progress that they are able to make in school.

We believe that Smart Devices with access to cameras, social media and the internet, have some very limited benefits, but overall Smart Devices are very harmful to students and to the school environment due to their addictive nature, potential for distraction and the unsuitable content that can potentially

be accessed. This view is increasingly supported by policy makers and a large and growing number of parents and carers and is further supported by scientific research.

The school has included the following two documents on the school website with more information on why the school has taken the approach to become a completely Student Smart Phone Free Environment.

Further advice on the School's Smart Phone Free Environment:

<https://www.stmcollege.org.uk/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Policy%20Documents/September%202026/Further%20Advice%20on%20the%20School's%20Mobile%20Phone%20Policy.pdf>

Summary of research and evidence to support a Smart Phone Free Environment

<https://www.stmcollege.org.uk/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Policy%20Documents/September%202026/Evidence%20For%20A%20Smart%20Phone%20Free%20School.pdf>

Some of the harmful effects of Smart Phones in School include:

- Increased risk of depression and anxiety, undermining of self-esteem, and displacement of real-life activities through addictive design.
- Smart Phones fragment attention, disrupt learning and undermine healthy development
- Smart Phones increase children's exposure to grooming, exploitation and harmful content, and make online bullying harder to escape.

Some of the benefits of Smart Phone Free School Environments include:

- GCSE results 1–2 grades higher at schools with an effective smartphone ban.
- In-class phone bans improve academic outcomes, especially for vulnerable student groups.
- School mobile phone bans increased test scores by 6.4%, with the greatest gains among low-achieving students.
- PISA 2022 shows students distracted by digital devices in class scored 15 points lower in maths - almost three-quarters of a year's learning.

Since we have introduced the policy teachers across the school are reporting that students appear to be more engaged in lessons and less distracted. This has been an interesting outcome for the school as previously there was very little overt visible phone use in school by students. It is clear however, that the research indicates that even the presence of a Smart Phone in a pocket or bag on silent (or even switched off) is a significant distraction to a student's concentration and learning as it is still able to receive notifications or content. The research and our initial observations of the new policy therefore support our view that it is essential Student Smart Phones are not present in school.

It is also important to note that access to a Smart Phone doesn't just affect the learning of one student. Since the implementation of the new policy there are significantly far fewer occasions when students have stated a reason why they need to leave the classroom (sometimes previously perhaps students were exiting to check a phone notification). As you will be aware each pause to learning adds up over the course of a year and slows the pace through the curriculum for one student, but also the others in each class, as tasks or explanations need revisiting a number of times. If we are now operating in an environment where students are leaving the classrooms only infrequently for genuine reasons rather than to check in on their Smart Phone then this is a benefit for individuals and for all students. The same is true for students who might be distracted in class, due to a phone in their pockets, this individual distraction slows the pace of learning for the student and the whole class, especially if it is repeated and persistent.

The school policy communicated with Parents/Carers and Students does include an explanation that when Smart Phones or Smart Devices are found in a student's possession that they will be confiscated for four-weeks. I am aware that some parents/carers/students find the length of the confiscation period challenging and have expressed this clearly and articulately.

The confiscation period is however specifically designed to be an extended period of time to be a strong disincentive for students so they don't bring their Smart Phones or Devices to School.

As the purpose of the confiscation period is intended to be a disincentive and a preventative measure to Smart Phones in school, **we are not able to shorten the confiscation period** due to parental requests, as the shortening of the confiscation period weakens and removes the strong disincentive to Smart Phone possession in school that currently exists

The aim of the school policy is to deliver a Smart Phone Free Environment and the confiscation period is proportionate to serve this aim, so we have happier students, less distracted students, safer students, students who are making more progress in school and getting better grades.

It is important to stress however that it has been clearly explained to students and to parents/carers that the purpose of the policy is not, and never has been, to simply facilitate the confiscation of Smart Phones. The policy is designed so that Students **don't bring Smart Phones to School in the first place so that confiscation is not necessary**. I would therefore ask you to please continue to ensure that your son/daughter does not bring a Smart Phone to school.

I am also pleased and proud to say that St Thomas More RC College has applied for inclusion on the Smart Phone Free School Rating Website and we will be recorded as a Gold Standard School: A school that doesn't allow Students to have Smart Phones on site.

For more details, please visit the following website:

<https://www.smartphonefreerating.org/>

Further information about the benefits of a wider Smart Phone Free Childhood are available at:

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>

Achievement Point League

Well done to all the students who have continued the year so brilliantly and are collecting so many achievement points by doing the simple things really well in school. Bravo!

Remember that you can log into satchel one to check your child individual achievements and successes at any time as the parent page is updated daily, if you are unable to log in for any reason please contact school for help. admin@stmcollege.org.uk

Please note: The achievement point list below is collated and calculated at approximately 11am each Friday. This can mean that sometimes students may have slightly different points totals by the end of the day on Friday which are not reflected in the figures printed. Please do rest assured though that the points total and students highlighted are accurate at the time of production of the list.

Total Points

T	H	O	M	A	S
Year 7 Total					
Lacey B 1120	Eva P 1200	Malcolm C 950	Max T 910	Emmelinn N 960	Georgia S 970

Year 8 Total					
E Latchford 1160	Lily E 1130	Nancy L 1270	Margot K 1060	Billy W 1130	Shaun M 820
Year 9 Total					
Mikayla C 1005	Isabelle C 1110	Ella FO 860	Maya L 910	Daisy T 1030	Darcie K 880
Year 10 Total					
Charlotte H 1100	Millie D 1080	Eva K 1150	Milena R 1420	Josh B 930	Charlie M 1270
Year 11 Total					
Alex S 1300	Willow M 1050	Lucas K 1230	Finlay D 1220	Carragan M 1040	Ole M 1180

Weekly Winners

T	H	O	M	A	S
Year 7 Weekly Total					
Lacey B Emma S Ziv Y 230	Dottie O Eva P 170	Blaze N Florence R 230	Erin H 210	Evie D 160	Mary B 210
Year 8 Weekly Total					
Sam G Felix H Esme L 250	Charlie G 210	Nancy L 250	Margot K 180	Billy W 170	Tommy M 130
Year 9 Weekly Total					
Mikayla C 200	Isabelle C 250	Ella FO 140	Elijah O 210	Daisy T 200	Darice K 180
Year 10 Weekly Total					
Charlotte H 210	Emillia M 220	Valentine I 270	Milena R 310	Josh B Charlotte W 180	Evie S 270
Year 11 Weekly Total					
Alex S Lucy M 210	Doreen A 150	Lucie H 230	James G 190	Isabella M 210	William C 250

Year 11 - speakers of other languages

If you can speak and can write in a different language, please could you let your Form Tutor know or come and speak to Mrs Laycock (R29B) as soon as possible? You may be able to sit a GCSE in your own language, which will support your applications for college, apprenticeships or future employment.

Finally

Please remember that you can contact school each weekday Monday to Friday either by calling 0161 336 2743 or emailing admin@stmcollege.org.uk during normal school hours, if you do want to visit school to talk to a member of staff that can of course be arranged but do please contact school prior to your journey so that mutually convenient time and date can be arranged for an appointment.

God bless
H Brophy

Prayer for the Environment

Lord God,
we thank you for the beauty of your creation and the Environment around us.

We pray that world leaders act on the challenges that face the Earth together,
working hard to find solutions and take urgent action.

Grant us all a deeper understanding of our role in caring for creation
and help the Church lead the way in taking action.

Amen