

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs N Oddie BA(Hons) NPQH



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light shine*

7th September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

Newsletter 1 2026-27

The start of a new school year always brings a real sense of energy and opportunity, and it has been wonderful to welcome pupils and staff back to Browndedge for 2026–27. The school has quickly come back to life, with friendships renewed, new routines established and classrooms once again busy with learning. The first few days have set a very positive tone, with pupils showing enthusiasm, confidence and a real sense of purpose. Our ambition, as always, is for every young person not only to achieve academically, but also to grow in character, confidence and compassion. I am excited to see all that this year will bring and the many ways in which our pupils will continue to let their light shine. A particularly warm welcome goes to our new Year 7 pupils and their families. Starting secondary school is a significant milestone, and they have made an excellent start—quickly finding their feet, building new friendships and embracing life at Browndedge. It has been lovely to see their confidence growing already, and we look forward to seeing them flourish in the months ahead.

While pupils have been enjoying the summer break, school has been a hive of activity as we prepared for the new academic year. A number of improvements have been completed across the site, including a brand-new Food Technology room, refurbishment of the gym to create a more flexible space for activities such as dance, upgrades to classrooms and interactive boards, and significant investment in new pupil and staff computers and improved Wi-Fi infrastructure. We have also continued to strengthen site security and pupil access, with additional CCTV, new secure doors and improved entrance arrangements. At a time when school budgets are increasingly stretched, we are especially proud to continue investing so carefully and ambitiously in Browndedge. Our priority remains clear: to provide our pupils with the very best opportunities, facilities and environment we possibly can. Every improvement is made with their learning, safety and wellbeing in mind, because our young people deserve nothing less.

Open Evening Thursday 1st October: early school closure

Our Open Evening will take place on Thursday 1st October from 5.30pm, and it is always one of the occasions when we are especially proud to open our doors and share Browndedge with future families. A school is, of course, far more than its buildings and classrooms; it is the people within it who create the sense of family, belonging and community that makes it special. That is why our pupils are such an important part of the evening. They know Browndedge best, they live its values every day and they are the very best people to show visitors what life here is really like.

To allow us time to prepare, **school will finish at 12.30pm that day**. Lunch will not be served, although pupils will have an extended morning break with additional food available, and pupils entitled to Free School Meals will be able to use their allowance then. If the earlier finish causes difficulty for your family, please let us know and supervision can be provided until the usual 3.00pm finish. We are always incredibly grateful to the many pupils who return in the evening to support departments or act as Tour Guides. Their confidence, warmth and pride in their school say far more than any prospectus ever could, and we know they will once again help prospective families see what makes Browndedge such a welcoming and special place.

Update on staffing

We are delighted to welcome several new colleagues to Browndedge this September, each bringing their own experience, enthusiasm and commitment to our pupils. Mrs Parsons joins us as Second in English, alongside Miss Cegielka as Teacher of English, while Mr Holloway has been appointed Second in Mathematics. We also welcome Mr Latham as a Teaching Assistant, Miss Abbot as a temporary Teacher of PE and Mrs Leese as a temporary Teacher of Science. We know they will all make a valuable contribution to school life and quickly become part of the Browndedge family.

Yondr Pouches

Following our consultation last term, we have now introduced the Yondr phone pouch system across school. As shared in July, the consultation showed strong support for the change, with families highlighting the benefits of improved concentration, fewer distractions, better wellbeing, reduced social media issues and more face-to-face interaction.

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during the school day. We also listened carefully to concerns around communication with home, the practicalities at the start and end of the day and ensuring phones remain safe and accessible when needed. The first day has gone very smoothly, and we are grateful to pupils and parents for supporting this important change as the new routines become established. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact school. [Much information, including a FAQ section can be found on our school website.](#) A reminder that if pupils are leaving site or arriving on site between 9.00am and 2.50pm, that they should report to pupil reception using the car park entrance on Collins Road.

Home learning

As we start the new academic year, we'd like to remind you about our home learning expectations. Home learning allows all of our young people to build their ability to self-manage and it really does positively impact progress. Therefore, we thank you in advance for your parental support in ensuring this can happen. All tasks, for pupils in Year 7 up to Year 11, are set on MS Teams, with suggested completion timetables available [on our website](#). Year 7 will begin with an interim adjustment of paper-based home learning in English, maths and RE as they continue to adjust and settle into their new secondary school routines. Parents and carers will be notified via Firefly if home learning is missed. We always push our pupils to complete work to the best of their ability and for it to be something they are proud of. If you haven't received our introductory parent letter or would like more details about our home learning policy, please contact [Mrs Crew](#).

Artificial Intelligence

We recognise the increasingly significant role that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing in society and in the lives of our pupils. With this in mind, we have carefully considered how best to support our pupils in developing their understanding of AI, so that they are equipped to make safe, responsible and ethical choices throughout their education and beyond. We will share our plans with parents and carers, including information about how our staff can make appropriate use of AI-powered marking systems as one of a range of approaches to support and monitor our pupils' progress. We also recognise the value of understanding how parents and carers perceive and use AI. Your experiences, views and insights will help us build a clearer picture of our school community and its context. This, in turn, will help us shape the guidance, support and provision we offer to our pupils and families. Thank you in advance for taking the time to share your thoughts and responses. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and will help us as we continue to develop our approach to AI across the school. [For more information, see our website page.](#)

Our House Saint's Feast Days

You may be aware that, throughout the school year, we celebrate the feast days of our five House Saints: St Maximilian Kolbe, St John Bosco, St Teresa of Calcutta, St Katharine Drexel and St Oscar Romero. These are special occasions for each House, giving pupils the opportunity to come together for a House Celebration of the Word, reflect on the life and values of their saint, enjoy a range of activities and strengthen the sense of community and family within their House. This year, we are delighted to extend these celebrations further by including a House Mass at Brownedge St Mary's Church at 2.00pm on each feast day. We would like to extend a very warm invitation to parents, grandparents, family members and friends to join us. Our first celebration is for Teresa House this Tuesday 8th September and all families with pupils in Teresa House are warmly invited to join us in church at 2.00pm.

Medical Information Update

If your child has a medical condition that requires medication to be taken or kept in school, please make sure that we have the most up-to-date information. Parents and carers should contact the school office in the first instance, and we will provide the appropriate medical form for completion. This helps us to ensure that any medication is stored and administered safely and that relevant staff are aware of your child's needs. Please also let us know promptly if there are any changes to medication, dosage or medical advice during the year.

Charity

Service and community are at the heart of life at Brownedge, and this September we will once again come together to support Macmillan Cancer Support and The Christie Hospital, a cancer centre serving the Northwest through our

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annual Cancer Awareness Coffee Morning on Friday 25th September. From 9.30am, we will also welcome parents, carers, family members and friends to our Community Coffee Morning, where our Year 7 pupils will be on hand to serve refreshments and cakes prepared by pupils. Throughout the day, pupils will also be fundraising within their House groups, with cakes, biscuits, sweets and drinks available to buy. We would be very grateful for any donations of cakes or other treats, and pupils may wish to bring a little extra money to join in. It is always a lovely occasion that brings the whole school community together for an important cause.

Foundation Governor Vacancy

There is currently a vacancy for a Foundation Governor and so, if you are a practising Catholic, please consider serving as a Governor. It is a fantastic way to shape the direction and success of our school. You would attend three full governing body meetings a year and three more as part of a sub-committee. Meetings tend to be early evening and are a mixture of remote and face-to-face. I understand it is a time commitment; however, it is such an important job and such an exciting time in our school development. If you are interested in putting yourself forward, please send me an email: head@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk and we can discuss further what the role entails.

The start of a new school year always feels full of promise, and I am excited for all that lies ahead. Already the school is alive with smiles, energy and the unique spirit that makes Browndedge feel like a family. With the enthusiasm of our pupils, the dedication of our staff and the support of our families, I know this term will be one of growth, joy and achievement. Thank you for the part you play in making our community so strong. I wish you and your children every happiness as we journey through this Autumn term together.

Kind regards

Mrs N Oddie
Headteacher

Key Dates for your diary

Teresa Feast Day	Tuesday 8 th September. Mass at St Mary's, Browndedge at 2pm for families and friends of Teresa House
Macmillan Coffee Morning	Friday, 25 th September 9.30am
Open Evening	Thursday, 1 st October 5.30pm to 8.30pm Pupils finish school at 12.30pm
Year 7 Mass of Welcome	Wednesday, 7 th October 7pm
Year 10 & 11 GCSE Information Evening	Thursday 15 th October Year 10 – 5pm Year 11 - 7pm
End of Half Term 1	Friday, 23rd October
Return to school	Monday, 2nd November
Year 11 PPE 1 start	Monday, 9 th November
Year 7 Information Evening	Thursday, 12 th November 7pm
Christmas Markets	Friday, 4 th December from 4pm
Leavers' Certificate Evening	Monday, 7th December 7pm
Year 7 Parents' Evening	Thursday, 10 th December 4.00 to 7.00pm
Carol Service	Monday, 14 th December 7pm

[All key dates for our school calendar can be found on our school website.](#)

By subscribing to this calendar, it can be added to your personal calendar.

Station Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston PR5 6PB

Tel: 01772 339813

info@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk

www.st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk