Friday 14th March 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

This week has been exceptionally special for me, as yesterday evening was my commissioning service as Headteacher of St Michael's. I was so honoured that Bishop Joe (The Bishop of Burnley) joined us to lead the service. Hughes Tutorial and the worship band provided the music, and pupils led us in prayer, which was simply beautiful. I have been here 9 weeks now and feel so very much at home but joining together with others to publicly place God at the centre of all we do was a particularly moving occasion; I am incredibly grateful to have joined this school community.

We've had a bit of a uniform focus this week in school. I am so keen that our pupils dress in a way that reflects our high standards and aspirations. All staff have been consistent in reminding pupils to tuck shirts in and wear skirts correctly and we have seen some signs of improvement. There is still work to do, however. Please can I ask again that you talk to your child about wearing their uniform appropriately. We may have to move to sanctions for those who choose not to adhere to expectations next week. Thank you for your support.

There has been so much happening again this week. Just when I think I have visited every club and activity, I discover another! After school on Tuesday, I was invited to see our MasterChef Club in action. Pupils were creating the most stunning floral decorations out of fruit, carving them into intricate shapes; it was so impressive! I must mention a young lady in Year 8 who had managed to transform a blueberry, such a tiny thing, into a remarkable embellishment for a meringue nest. I look forward to seeing what other culinary delights are prepared in future weeks!

Another 'first time' event for me was the School Council meetings on Tuesday. I asked Miss Watson, who leads on this, to update you on pupil leadership across the school and she kindly shared the following:

Pupil Leadership at St Michael's *is founded on the vision of servant-hearted leadership. We draw from Jesus' example that: we do not seek to be served, but to serve; it is not about promoting ourselves, but about lifting others up, and we find reward, not in personal praise, but rather in assisting others. Alongside this, we also strive to prepare pupils for life beyond our school community, honing and developing their skills in organisation, initiative, oracy, reliability and commitment, in order to grow into outstanding leaders.*

Excitingly, the opportunity to apply for our prestigious Pupil Leadership roles of Prefect and Head Pupil opened this week to Year 10, and we have already had a number of thorough and thoughtful applications. The deadline for this process is Tuesday 25th March and all guidance and information can be found on Student Bulletin. The extremely popular role of Bridge Buddy also launches today to Year 7 pupils. Being a Bridge Buddy allows pupils to be a role model in the early stages of their school career, assisting Year 6s and new Year 7s as they transition and settle into their new environment and helping them tackle the challenges that can bring. Some

new Pupil Leadership positions have been introduced this year, including the Eco Council and Wellbeing Mentors, so there really is something for everyone, and we welcome and encourage applications from all.

Finally, the School Councils gathered this week for their Lent meetings, led by Ewan and Bronnie (our Head Boy and Head Girl) and Joshua and Sarah (two of our Deputies). We discussed a range of matters including: Our school vision, ideas for the Eco Council and issues impacting the young people of Chorley. It was a privilege to see our Senior Pupil Leaders demonstrating their exceptional skills and qualities and leading discussions - they are a credit to themselves and to us as a school. Well done!

Do encourage your child to consider applying for a leadership position in school, there is such opportunity here for them to develop. We are also currently accepting applications for the new Ethos Council from Years 7-10. Your child can speak to Simon, our Christian Youth Worker for more details.

I attended worship on Wednesday this week, this time with Year 9. 07 pupils and Mrs Faulkner spoke to us about Mother Teresa, one of our tutorial patrons, explaining how she modelled courageous advocacy, faith and love, showing that selflessness can change the world. I was struck by the example of Mother Teresa and her belief that service does not have to be grand, it just has to be genuine. What a challenge to think that even small acts of kindness can be worthwhile and really make a difference to those around us.

We also had the second of our lunchtime Lent Eucharist services on Wednesday, and this time we were joined by Rev Jon Price and Rev Sam Nicol. As last week, I really enjoyed this chance to pause and reflect and find that perspective in life again. These voluntary services are open to all pupils and staff, and I'd really encourage your child to consider coming along to take part.

On Wednesday, Miss Curtis, who is one of our maths teachers and also the school lead on Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), took 8 of our Year 9 pupils to Runshaw College for an 'Oxbridge Bound' event. Pupils attended a number of sessions where their critical thinking and debating skills were challenged as they discussed the assassination of JFK and conspiracy theories around this and social ethics.

This week in RE Year 8 have taken part in a conference run by the Faith and Belief Forum Charity. We hosted guest speakers who led online presentations and spoke to the year group about their religious worldviews. The sessions were interactive as pupils heard personal stories and were then able to ask questions to really deepen their knowledge - thought provoking stuff indeed!

Yesterday, we were visited by Iris Smith from Chorley in Bloom (and I believe she is also a former Mayor of Chorley and woodwork teacher at St Michael's). She came to help us evaluate our school garden and grounds as we have entered the North West Britain in Bloom Schools' competition this year. Our new Eco Council and pupils in Year 9 Enrichment will be taking the lead on this, but judges will be visiting school in July to assess our work, looking at how well we are caring for our environment and how it serves our local community. Our school garden will be key in this - we currently grow produce such as onions, potatoes, beetroot, raspberries and strawberries as well as a mixture of herbs. The produce we cultivate then gets taken to the Open Kitchen at Hollinshead Street Church in Chorley, along with cakes made by pupils in Enrichment for the benefit of people in the community. In addition to all of this wonderful work, we also produce raspberry and strawberry jam for gifts for our visitors at our Christmas Community party. Wow! Mrs Smith suggested a number of plants, vegetables and flowers to

attract wildlife to our grounds and next week we will be sharing a list of these items that you could donate if you would like to get involved.

Since my arrival, it has been a real priority for me to build relationships with our local community: you as parents and carers, but also our local churches and primary schools. In the coming weeks and months, I am planning to attend some of our Foundation Parish Church Sunday services. Recently, I have also managed to get out and about to Runshaw College and some primary schools to meet Headteachers there too. Last week I thoroughly enjoyed a trip to St James' CE Primary School to meet the Headteacher, Mrs Greenway and this week I had a lovely visit to Whittle St John's CE Primary School where Mrs Metcalfe showed me around and introduced me to Year 5 and 6 pupils. It is great to see where St Michael's pupils have come from and where they might be heading post 16.

Of course, the Gold Stamp has been out again this week. We celebrated more brilliant volcanoes from Year 9, as well as two pupils in Year 7, who were nominated for achieving exceptional results in their recent science test. Year 7 have also shared more of their fantastic chocolate creations with me – a product of their Character for Life lessons. These moments in the day when I get to see individuals like this are such a highlight.

In sporting news, the North Lancashire Girls' Cricket finals took place on Tuesday and Wednesday with both our Under 13 and 15 teams competing. After a mammoth effort in the group stages, our Under 13s lost a very tight semi-final to a good AKS Lytham team. The Under 15s went one step further, beating St Bede's and qualifying to represent North Lancashire in the Lancashire Finals later this month – a fantastic effort by all the girls. The Year 9 Chorley and District Handball tournaments took place this week where, after some fabulous play, our boys came away with silver medals and the girls were gold medal winners. Finally, the last netball tournaments of the year took place on Thursday evening, after many rain delays. We are so proud of our Year 7 teams where the A team were runners up to Holy Cross and the B team were Champions.

I have included a list of events that are coming up next week at the end of this letter, but can I just highlight our Wellbeing Evening on Monday and encourage you to attend. We have a wonderful speaker, Sam Tyrer joining us to talk about youth mental health. I want to stress how important it is for us that we look after our young people and this evening will be a valuable time in supporting that. It's a 6:30pm start (parents/carers only) and we will hopefully see you there.

I will finish with a quote from Mother Teresa which we reflected upon in worship this week, 'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love'. Have a wonderful weekend.

With kind regards,



Mrs Rachel Rongong
Headteacher

Events next week

Sunday 16 March	Pupils attending Lytham Speech and Drama Festival
Monday 17 March	Science week – activities during the week at lunchtimes

Monday 17 March 6:30pm	Wellbeing Evening in school – parents/carers only welcome
Wednesday 19 March	Lent lunchtime Eucharist – all pupils welcome
Saturday 22 March	Year 11 trip to Leeds Armouries