



# THE COMPANION



## Important Dates:

### January

Mon 8 <sup>th</sup>	INSET day
Tues 9 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> day of term
	6 <sup>th</sup> Form mock exams
Wed 10 <sup>th</sup>	Yr11 6 <sup>th</sup> Form taster day
Thurs 11 <sup>th</sup>	Yr11 parents' evening

### February

Thurs 1 <sup>st</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> Form parents' evening
Wed 7 <sup>th</sup>	Themed Day
12 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>	Half Term
Thurs 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Yr9 options evening
Mon 26 <sup>th</sup>	Yr8 parents' evening

### March

Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	Yr10 parents' evening
Fri 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Easter report sent out
25 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup>	Yr9 Options interviews
Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of term (full day)

**Summer Term begins on  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April**

## Honey for Sale

We are proud to be able to sell our first batch of Maria Fidelis Honey. Thanks to a Jack Petchey grant awarded to Mr O'Dowd, we now have a beehive and will be able to produce honey each year.

Our pure raw honey can be bought via ParentPay for £7.50 a jar. All proceeds will go towards the school.



## Message from the Headteacher

Welcome to the first edition of *The Companion*, our termly school newsletter. Although it has been very busy, it has been a productive and fulfilling term. In this edition, you can read about sporting activities, House events, our extra-curricula programme and get an update about what different departments have been providing for our students.

I would like to congratulate all the students who were chosen by staff to attend the Headteacher's lunches this term. This was a new initiative and it will continue in order to recognise students who put our FCJ values into practice.

Finally, I would like to thank our governors and staff for their hard work and dedication to this school. We are incredibly lucky to have so many people who are committed to making sure that the children in our care get the very best education in the very best environment.

It is with great gratitude for their contribution to our school, that we say goodbye to Ms Barrett (Assistant Head), Ms Armstrong (Science), Dr Lawy (Geography), Ms Morris (Headteacher's PA), Ms Hylton (Technology), Ms Hatchett-Ricketts (SEND), Ms Begum (History) and Ms Moran (Assistant SENDCo). We wish them the best of luck in their new ventures.

I wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas and I hope you have a prosperous 2024. I look forward to welcoming our students back on Tuesday 9th January.

Mr M. Anthony  
Headteacher



# FOCUS ON: RSE



Relationship and Sex Education at Maria Fidelis is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching about what it is to be truly human in Christ, what it means to live well in relationship with others and be presented within a positive framework of Christian virtue.

At Maria Fidelis, we refer to Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) rather than Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), since this emphasises the importance of healthy relationships to human well-being, as the core learning within an RSE curriculum.

We use the TenTen programme, which has been approved by the diocese and it ensures that there is correspondence between phases and across disciplines. The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) at our school are to:

- Be in partnership with parents, to provide children and young people with a 'positive and prudent' sexual education which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and underpinned in a Catholic vision of education and human person.
- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare students for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help students develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships to develop tolerance of those of different beliefs in order to ensure students have mutual respect for the individual liberty of all within society, remembering the Golden Rule to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

Topics covered this year:

## **Year 7: Who am I?**

Changing bodies  
Healthy inside and out  
Where we come from  
Family & friends

## **Year 8: Created & Chosen**

Appreciating differences  
Feelings  
Before I was born  
Tough relationships

## **Year 9: The Search for Love**

Love people, use things  
In control of my choices  
Fertility and contraception  
Marriage

## **Year 10: The Search for Love**

Love people, use things  
In control of my choices  
Fertility and contraception  
Marriage

## **Year 11: Authentic Freedom**

Self-image  
Beliefs, values, attitudes  
Parenthood  
Pregnancy & abortion

## **6th Form: Self-Worth**

Addiction  
Eating disorders  
Birth control  
Pornography

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## Themed Days

We have four Themed Days each year, to support the teaching of PSHE, Careers, Citizenship and RSE. We have had two so far, one in October and one in November, and students have covered the following areas:

### **Year 7:**

1. Who am I?
2. Self-Esteem & Social Media

### **Year 8:**

1. The Economy & The Workplace
2. Citizenship & County Lines

### **Year 9:**

1. Democracy & Politics
2. Choosing your GCSE Options

### **Year 10:**

1. Careers & Employment
2. The Search for Love

### **Year 11:**

1. Authentic Freedom
2. Study Skills

### **6th Form:**

1. University & Apprenticeships

# Student Wellbeing



If students have any concerns about school, they can talk to any adult in the school – they can choose who. Children being happy at school is a priority for us and we do everything that we can to create a healthy and secure environment for our students.

Our PSHE and RSE programmes include teaching strategies for helping children manage relationships, deal with stress and keep themselves safe online.

The Safeguarding Team is led by Ms Bagnall, and includes Mr Maynard, Ms Lusher, Ms Masud and Ms Lawson.

Resources for children and young people:

**YoungMinds** – Whether you want to understand more about how you're feeling, get information about a mental health condition or find out what support is available to you, their guides can help:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>

**YoungMinds Parents Helpline** - Call for free on 0808 802 5544 from Mon-Fri, 9.30am - 4pm or email anytime via the YoungMinds website. The helpline is there to give advice to parents and carers who are worried about a young person under 25.

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## Study Skills Support

Year 11 students had a dedicated Study Support workshop during their Themed Day in November. We had a guest presenter, who showed the students how to prioritise their work, decide what to revise, work out how to study better and they were given some useful study tips and shortcuts.



## NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing

### 1. Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can help you to build a sense of belonging, give you an opportunity to share positive experiences, and provide emotional support and allow you to support others

### 2. Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by raising your self-esteem, helping you to set goals and achieve them, and causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood

### 3. Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by boosting self-confidence, raising self-esteem and helping you to build a sense of purpose.

### 4. Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward, giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth, and helping you connect with other people

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

### 5. Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

The full version can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>





## Art Department



Our Year 12 students led workshops at the Day of the Dead Festival on the 28th October on Ossulston street behind the British library. They organised and created all the materials for the workshops in which they created Good luck totems with festival goers. A huge thanks to Miss Levin who was at the helm.

### Trips

We have run two trips this term. Year 12 have visited the National Gallery as part of research into work for their projects on 'Miracles, love and creation'

Year 11's current project is on animals and people which they are working on until the Christmas break. They have been on research trips to the zoo and to Freightliners farm to draw and photograph animals in October and September and will be going on a trip to the British museum after half term to learn about old cultural traditions representing animals. Some of the students' work can be seen below.



'Wolf' by Ephraim (Year 11)



'Butterflies' by Ruby (Year 11)

### Gower St Mural

In addition, Year 11 students worked collaboratively with Ms Byford, Camden Council and Global Street Art, designing a mural to go on the side of the old Gower street building. This will be painted and unveiled next half term. This is at the end of the old Art room. The finished design looks like this:



### KS3 News

#### Year 9

We have arranged a short series of trips to the Thomas Heatherwick studios starting at the end of November. The studio created the Olympic torch for the 2012 Olympics, the new Routemaster and the architecture at Coal Drops Yard near the school. Students will learn about the design process, careers in design and visit an large international studio. They will also take part in a short workshop.



## PE Department

So far this academic year, the PE department have played in 17 fixtures across Camden in basketball, football and cross-country. Maria Fidelis finished second in the overall Camden Shield in the last academic year and the students have made a fantastic start to the competition this year.

We also hosted some fixtures at the school, which has helped raise our profile in the borough.

In order to enhance our curriculum provision, we have improved the equipment over the year, including installing basketball hoops and goalposts in the playground, and a professional-standard volleyball net in the gym. The GCSE classes have now started to learn volleyball and handball which will also be taught to KS3 in the new year.



Earlier in the term, we were lucky to be invited to Arsenal Football club as part of an interfaith girls football day. This allowed our girls unique access and insight into the stadium and facilities at Arsenal.

Girls were selected based on who had represented the school in the football team for Camden Shield in Years 8-10. Students were given the opportunity to be coached by Arsenal coaches and then took part in an interfaith ice-breaker workshop which enabled students from different schools to build a rapport with one another and develop their interpersonal skills.



The girls were then given the opportunity to go on an Arsenal Stadium tour where they were taken through the Diamond Executive Club, second tier stand, press box, changing rooms and pitch-side. The students had an amazing and unique experience and they were very grateful for the opportunity. We will remain in contact with the other faith schools to meet in the new year to complete more interfaith activities.

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## Founder's Day

We had a wonderful celebration for Founder's Day. The weather was perfect all day! We began with Mass said by Fr Jeremy in St Aloysius Church for Years 7 and 8. Under the guidance of Pietro Cespoli, our chaplain, students read the First Reading, the Psalm and the Bidding Prayers. All our students were true ambassadors of the school.



Year 7-10 participated in a number of Founder's Day activities. They learnt about Marie Madeleine and how the FCJ values are lived out in the lives of the FCJ Religious Sisters and by our school community.

All year groups and staff completed a sponsored walk in Regent's park. Students spent time reflecting on why they were walking for the Passage and the Pensioners' Christmas party. Both staff and students enjoyed the day very much as we had time to walk together in companionship and take in the beauty of our world.

# Chaplaincy



## Year 11 Retreats

The school chaplaincy has been leading short two-period retreats for each Year 11 class in the school chapel. The theme was vocation and talents. The purpose was multi-fold. Fundamentally, the retreat aimed at offering students an opportunity to pray. This was especially achieved through a guided contemplation based on the parable of the talents. Through its activities, the retreat challenged students to look inside themselves - at their weaknesses and strengths. They were then guided to think about how they can serve God in their present life and close future (their vocation and talents). This seemed appropriate given their final year at Maria Fidelis and the choices they will make for their future. Students largely enjoyed the retreat as an opportunity to take a break from the stresses of school life, to stay silent and pray. For most of them, the retreat was the first time they were praying effectively in a contemplative manner and atmosphere. Pupil voice from Year 11 was very positive; they enjoyed the meditation very much.

Again, students largely enjoyed the retreat as an opportunity to take a break from the business of school life, to stay silent and pray. For most of them, it was the first time they were praying effectively in a contemplative manner and atmosphere. Pupil voice was very positive; one student pointed out that "meditation was very relaxing and made me think about my life".



## CAFOD

Maria Fidelis has taken part in the CAFOD Young Leaders Programme for the first time. Seven Year 12 students have attended their first CAFOD training day and became our CAFOD ambassadors. They are working on implementing school activities with and for CAFOD both inside and outside the school.

## Stewardship club Year 8

This term, the Stewardship club have been busy planning ideas for the 'Young Environmentalist' competition. They had a zoom meeting with Keith Tovey, in which he kindly advised them on how best to apply for the competition. He encouraged the Year 8's to get as practical as they can and to film all that they do. The theme of the competition is 'Waste minimisation' and the club took a vote and decided to make 'Sustainable Christmas decorations' to use as their entry.



## Year 10 Retreats

The school chaplaincy has also been leading short two-period retreats for each Year 10 class in the school chapel. The theme was The Good Shepherd. The purpose was multi-fold. Fundamentally, the retreat aimed at offering students an opportunity to pray. This was achieved through guided contemplation. Through various activities, the retreat challenged the students' image of God with the purpose of shedding light on God's loving and personal relationship with his sons and daughters.





## Chaplaincy (cont.d)



### Justice and Peace Club Year 7

About 10-15 Year 7 students attend the chaplaincy Justice and Peace Club on Wednesdays at lunch time. While leaving time for informal conversations, they have been focusing on the figure of Mary as Queen of Peace. Students enjoy the club and are likely to become an important group within the school for Catholic formation, events and activities. Over the course of the term, they created prayer cards and handed these out to other students for All Saints Day. A member of the sixth form said, 'it made their day'.

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## Celebrating Cultural Diversity

During October, Ms Barrett delivered assemblies on Black Women in History in line with this year's theme, which was *Celebrating Our Sisters, Saluting our Sisters and Honouring Matriarchs of Movements*. The aim of the theme was to learn about the achievements and accomplishments of black and mixed-heritage British women who have shaped history.



Students found out about influential black British women from different industries including sports, politics, music, science and medicine, broadcasting and literature.

During the week leading up to Remembrance Day, Ms Henderson delivered assemblies on the contribution of the Windrush Generation to both the War Effort in WWII and also the rebuilding of the country afterwards. She shared stories of those who left their homes and made great personal sacrifices in order to support the Allies against the Nazis, yet who have too often been overlooked.

The History Department has broadened its curriculum to make sure that it covers a wider range of topics.

In Year 7, students study Notable Black Britons and then, in the summer term, they complete a thematic study on migration to Britain, which focuses on Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Irish & Jewish migration to Whitechapel, and the Windrush migration.

In Year 8, students study the contribution made by Black Tudors in Britain, and in the Easter Term, they examine the impact of The British Empire on Ireland, India and Africa. They then look at the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in Britain and the USA.

In Year 9, students examine the involvement of Black and Asian soldiers in the War Effort during World War I; they also look at genocides and the Holocaust, including case studies on Rwanda, Myanmar and Bosnia. In the Summer Term, they study the USA civil rights movement, focusing on African Americans and complete a case study on Native Americans

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## Cultural Day

We celebrated our annual cultural day on Friday 10th November this year. The school was alive with vibrant colours and students and staff brought in traditional food for a shared table organised by 6th Form students.

The day raised £494 for the pensioners' party. Well done all!



# Modern Foreign Languages



European Day of Languages is where we celebrate the 7,000+ languages spoken in Europe and around the world, promote language learning and have some multilingual fun! We celebrated European Day of Languages this year at Maria Fidelis in the following ways:

## Language related quizzes

- Yr7 tutor groups took part in a European Day of Languages quiz about official languages spoken, capital cities and countries. All tutor groups did extremely well. Well done, Year 7.
- KS3 tutor groups took part in a derivatives quiz where students had to find as many derivatives in any European language from the Latin words given. 8F did brilliantly and won this competition. Well done, 8F and Ms Byford.

## MFL lessons and around the school:

- Language quizzes and discussions about why languages are useful took place during the week.
- Some classes participated in escape room activities in a different language
- We also had a languages and flags competition.
- Some teaching staff also changed the date into other languages on their lesson PowerPoints for the day to promote language learning across the school.



## Pearson Active Learn competition

We ran a Pearson Active Learn competition this half-term where students were encouraged to complete as many language learning tasks as possible. The winners will be announced in January.

## Young Linguist of the Year

Well done to Kaleb Alemayehu, who was awarded the Young Linguist of the Year Prize in November. Kaleb

## Foreign Language Christmas card competition

We ran a Foreign Language Christmas card competition at Maria Fidelis in December. Students were given the opportunity to design cards that show the languages and Christmas traditions of a range of countries from around the world. Most pupils completed their cards by hand using paint, felt tips, colouring pencils, card and various fabrics. All entries will be judged by Maria Fidelis on their originality of illustration as well as accuracy of language and content. We were thrilled to see designs incorporating such a wide range of languages.

**Joyeux Noël!      Feliz Navidad!**

## Mother Tongue Other Tongue Poetry Competition

We will be running our *Mother Tongue Other Tongue Poetry Competition* in February 2024 which is multilingual poetry competition to celebrate cultural diversity and the many languages currently spoken in schools across the UK. Look out for further details about this!

## Linguascope

As always, please encourage your child to use Linguascope to enhance their language learning at Maria Fidelis. The Linguascope username and password can be obtained from any MFL teacher.

**15 minutes on Linguascope every day will really make a difference to their language learning.**

[www.linguascope.com](http://www.linguascope.com)





# Enriching Students' Lives



## Autumn Debate Hub Tournament



Nine students from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 participated in the Autumn Debate Hub Tournament at South Hampstead High School. 16 schools were represented across three rounds of debates on diverse motions such as frequency of cabinet reshuffles and the 'feminist utopia of Barbieland'. Maria Fidelis students spoke very eloquently, winning two rounds of debates. Debate Club runs after school every Monday in Room 204; all year groups are welcome to join to prepare for the next competition.

## Year 10 Classics Trip to the British Museum

The Year 10 Classical Civilisation class visited the British Museum last week to see the Parthenon sculptures. These 2500-year-old marbles, which were originally on the Temple of Athena in Athens, form an integral part of the Myth and Religion course. Students enjoyed seeing the sculptures up close and discussing their importance to the Ancient Greeks - as well as the controversy surrounding their current location in the UK.



## The Scholars Programme

14 students from Years 9 and 10 started the prestigious Scholars Programme with the Brilliant Club this week. The programme consists of a series of seminars and tutorials with a PhD student on the topic of 'What is News?'. Students will be working on producing a dissertation over the next few months, which will be marked at university level. They will then visit a top university in the Spring.

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## Poetry Workshops

Maria Fidelis students are taking part in an ongoing series of poetry workshops on the theme of 'Spoken Word Power'. The poetry workshops are facilitated by Eastside Schools and delivered by poet artist, Daisy Barrett-Nash.



Students are learning about weaving together theatre and spoken word poetry to create a narrative, drawing on their personal experiences. By the end of the series, our pupils will have written spoken word verses and will incorporate theatrical techniques to build into their performances at our school poetry slam which will be hosted by our poet in Spring.



All our budding poets are very excited to be able to work creatively with Daisy and thoroughly enjoyed their first workshop in October. This is an exciting opportunity to nurture a love for poetry and to celebrate our talented pupils as a community.

## Science Department



### Craft Club

Students have been given the opportunity to participate in a knitting and craft club with Ms Richards. In these sessions we have included activities such as pompom making, finger knitting and crochet. It is clear our students have great talent and are keen to develop new skills

### STEM outside the Classroom - Ms Byford

This term students in years 10 and 12 were given the chance to explore STEM beyond the classroom at New Scientist Live.

There were hands-on activities, immersive exhibits and exciting talks by some of the greatest minds in science. This event brings topics from the classroom to life to show the next generation how important science really is to our future. From learning about how we can tackle the biggest challenges facing our natural world, to exploring the newest developments in technology that will change the future of healthcare forever, students had a unique chance to discover how science really can change the world.

### Creative Dimensions Trust - Ms Gamble

TCDT offers workshops and work experience opportunities designed to give talented young people the skills and confidence to pursue a career in which core hand skills - i.e. a high degree of manual dexterity, draughtsmanship and the ability to understand and (re)construct 3-Dimensional structures - are prerequisite. Workshops are taught by craft specialists who are acknowledged



leaders in their professions. These are not simplistic art courses – the goal is to learn, experiment, gain confidence, take inspiration from the

have exposure to career opportunities. Students gain an awareness of what is possible, and how to achieve it.

We have run mini foundation courses in school which include gilding, jewellery-making and leather work. Both staff and students have taken part and it has been a great opportunity to learn together and demonstrate the importance of life-long learning.



### The Francis Crick Institute

The Sixth Form Science students attended a Genetic Engineering Study Day at the Francis Crick Institute in December. Not only did they get to experience cutting edge Science in this important research institute but they also had the opportunity to complete core practical skills under the guidance of current researchers and scientists.

Year 8 are working on a pilot programme with Andy Harrison from the Francis Crick Institute to develop a new Year 8 project on viscosity looking at the mucous membranes in humans. Ms Kumar is leading this and when completed, the project will be rolled out to all the Camden secondary schools.

### Working with FSC

We worked with the Field Studies Council in October when the Year 13 Biology group carried out their field work at Regent's Park. This trip not only meets the requirement to do their core practical but is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the local environment and how we impact on it.



## House Events

It has been an exciting term so far at Maria Fidelis with the House Competitions. Well done to Y7s, Y8s and Y9s for getting involved in Pumpkin Carving, Basketball in House, Black History Month Poster Competitions and raising money for the Sponsored Walk. It's amazing to see all the entries so far for the current Christmas Card Competition.

In October our Y7 and Y8 students took part in a spooky evening of pumpkin carving to celebrate All Hallows Eve. We had some fantastic designs and the students were very imaginative with their creations! It was lovely to see students working well in their teams and even lending a hand across the different year groups to help support their house.

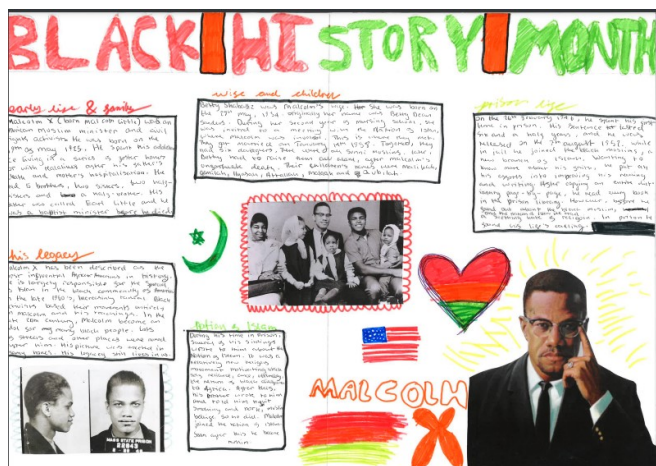
### Winners:

Year 7	Year 8
1 <sup>st</sup> D'Houet	1 <sup>st</sup> Loyola
2 <sup>nd</sup> Guillemet	2 <sup>nd</sup> D'Houet
3 <sup>rd</sup> Faber	3 <sup>rd</sup> Guillemet
4 <sup>th</sup> Loyola	4 <sup>th</sup> Faber

Thank you to all the students for participating in this year's competition. We want to particularly thank Y11 students, Reyve, Joshua and Rufus, for helping to referee the Basketball house competition.

### Black History Month Poster Competition

As a school, we also celebrated Black History Month and students got involved in a poster competition to highlight and celebrate black lives throughout history. It was very inspiring to see how many students took the time to go away and research the achievements of either one or several lives throughout history and beautifully illustrate their ideas through imagery, writing and design. Well done to all who took part! Congratulations to this winner—Flak Ali, from Loyola House!



Winner: Falak Ali 8L(Loyola)



As part of Founder's Day, students took part in the Sponsored Walk raising money for the Maria Fidelis Annual Pensioners' Party and The Passage. Students and families were very generous with their donations.

### Current Standings

Joint 1st	Loyola & Guillemet (122 points)
3rd	D'Houet (106 points)
4th	Faber (70 points)

## Prizegiving

At the beginning of November, we held our annual Prizegiving ceremony. We were very pleased that our chair of governors, Ms Elizabeth Carey, was able to attend and present the Antlers to Ms Everson, Head of Guillemet House.

The range of prizes reflect many different aspects of school life– from those who have achieved in the face of adversity, to those who have shown companionship in supporting others, and those who have made great efforts to succeed. The prestigious staff award was presented to Jonathan Olasunkanmi, Head Boy, for the outstanding contribution he has made to school life.

Well done to everyone involved, and we look forward to next year's ceremony!



## Pensioners' Party

We celebrated Christmas in style on 7th December for our annual Senior Citizens' Christmas party. We had over 120 guests, all of whom had a wonderful evening.



This is an event that really shows the local community at its best – businesses, schools, community centres and various organisations all working together for a wonderful celebration of the spirit of Christmas. Our staff and pupils put in a huge amount of effort to make the evening possible, both on the night and during the weeks leading up to it, and we are very blessed to have such a dedicated group of people at Maria Fidelis.

We are very grateful to the local organisations and businesses who gave donations, in particular the Somers Town Big Local, the Somers Town Community Association, and Caterlink, who provided the food and their staff who stayed late to prepare and cook it.

## Alessandra Tadros Speaks Out

Congratulations to Alessandra Tadros who performed her speech on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December at the Jack Petchey Speak Out Camden Regional Final, which was held this year at La Sainte Union Catholic School.

Alessandra was placed 2<sup>nd</sup> among 18 speakers from Camden's 10 Secondary schools. The audience erupted into applause when it was announced that Alessandra had been given second place and as she took her place on stage next to the winning contestant, she received a standing ovation for her very moving and compelling speech entitled 'shoes'. Alessandra left her audience spellbound as she recounted journeying through the difficulties of leaving her home as a refugee, with few of her belongings

and arriving now at a point where she understood her path and feeling able to at last, stand on her own two feet without her beloved Nike Jordan high top shoes (which she had to leave behind). This brief summary does not do her speech justice. Alessandra's performance reflects her ability to not only articulate thoughts coherently but also to engage hearts and minds, making this truly a winning speech.



Students and staff are all so proud of what Alessandra has achieved!

## Christmas Jumper Day

As part of our commitment to Social Justice, we hold a Christmas Jumper Day each December. This year students could either make a financial contribution to Save the Children or gave a donation to the Euston Foodbank.



Both of these charities play a significant part in our society, both locally and nationally and we want our students to have a greater awareness of the issues faced by many people.



## Eco-Champion Awards



Congratulations to our students in Year 8 and to our 6th Form Leadership team, both of whom won prizes at the annual Camden Clean Air Awards Ceremony.

The Year 8 students were part of our Young Stewardship Group, and they won Third Prize for their gardening project which they started last spring.

Each week, the team worked on planting and cultivating a peace garden in the playground. They wanted to create a space where students had the opportunity to plant simple vegetation and care for what they have created. This project was supported by the London children's flower society, and the students planted a mix of potatoes and flowers.



The winning team was Chloe Foley 8F, Tayon Powlette 8L, Esther Bamgbose 8A, Alfred Iswa 8L, Raphael Tesfay 8W, Luna Badawi 8F and Berjan Cocelli 8C.

Our 6th Form Leadership Team won the special Community Award for the work they have been doing with a local charity, Life After Hummus. They have been operating a clothing exchange scheme in the 6th Form Centre where students can exchange and recycle unwanted clothes. The aim of this is to both remove the stigma of wearing second-hand clothes and to reduce the amount of waste that we produce.

The team are Sebastian Quintero, Jonathan Olasunkanmi, Laura Soto-Bocian, Farhana Ahmed, Maria Bajan, Romeo James and Mehreen Hussain.



Lifeafterhummus provides food aid by operating a social supermarket and re-use centre for 80 local households and a redistribution network that supports the local community. They are powered by 50 local volunteers and a growing number of resident volunteers who collect surplus from 45 stores weekly and support the 2 permanent members of staff.

Homes they support have access to the 'Room of things'. People here can access clothing, household items, stationery items, toys and children books, plus small items of furniture and white goods when they have them. On a pilot project, access to the room was also given to recently arrived Ukrainians and Afghan families in bridging hotels on a referral basis. They do monthly outreach sessions at the local primary school and have permanent pre-loved clothing rails and collection points at our school.

For more information contact:

Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society  
58-62 Phoenix Road, Somers Town, NW1 1ES

Email: [info@lifeafterhummus.com](mailto:info@lifeafterhummus.com)

## 6th Form News

### Careers Programme with St Pancras Grand Hotel

During the Autumn term we have been working with The St Pancras Grand Hotel who have provided insight and experience in working in hospitality for our students. Our Year 10 and 12 students were taken on tours of the hotel and given careers guidance on working in hospitality. In preparation for our annual Pensioners' Christmas Party, four members of the hotel's team came to Maria Fidelis to provide training for our sixth formers who would be working at the party.

Our school choir has also been asked to perform in the lobby of the hotel - a real privilege and an exciting opportunity for our students!



All these experiences have provided a valuable insight into the hard work, but rewarding hospitality sector and we are very grateful to the hotel for working so closely with the school.



### Social justice workshop

La Sainte Union kindly agreed to host a school's workshop for sixth formers involved in social justice work in their schools. The event took place on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October. A small representative group from the leadership team attended.

### CAFOD Young Leaders Programme

Year 12 students from schools across dioceses in England and Wales were invited to take part in the Young Leaders Programme. The programme is a great opportunity for driving global justice action in schools and was also a great CV-builder for participants, who received a certificate of volunteering and leadership at the end of the programme. The programme consisted of three training days focusing on developing leadership skills such as planning, influencing others, problem-solving, time management and communication.

Seven students attended the first training day on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October at Romero House with Pietro Cespoli from our Chaplaincy team.

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## T Levels are Coming...

Over the last 18 months the Science Department at Maria Fidelis has been working closely with the Francis Crick Institute to offer a T level for Year 12 students from September 2024. We are delighted to be offering the Health and Science Technical Level, with a specialism in Laboratory Science.

A T Level is a relatively new qualification worth the equivalent of 3 A levels, and so would be the only course studied throughout the sixth form. It also attracts an equivalent number of UCAS points to 3 A levels. It will be taught by specialist teachers, all of whom currently deliver A level courses, with a 9-week paid work experience placement during Year 13 at the Francis Crick Institute. Scientists from the Institute are also involved in shaping and planning the course and will use their industrial expertise to deliver parts of it.

We are holding a launch event for our T level offer on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January at 2:15pm** for all year 11 students, where they will be able to find out



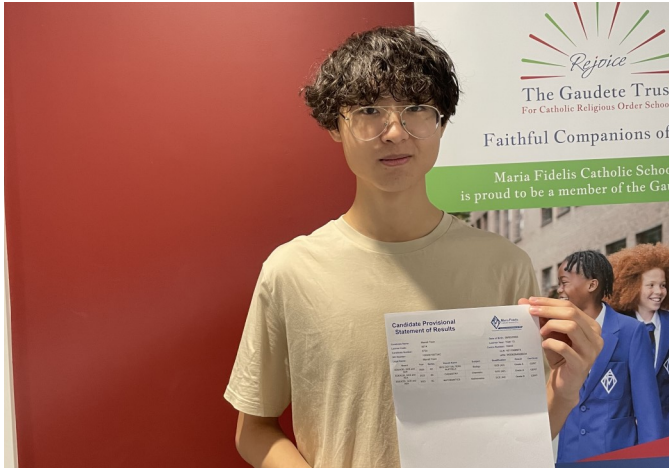
about the course, hear from Francis Crick staff, and ask any questions. There will then be a similar event for parents at **3:15pm**, which is immediately before our Year 11 parents' evening.

This represents an amazing opportunity for the current Year 11 students. Please be advised that strictly 10 places are available, and prospective students will be interviewed prior to being accepted on to the course.





# PHOTO GALLERY



August: A Level Results



September: Yr7 Retreat to Aylesford



September: 6th Form Retreat to Aylesford



October: Headteacher's lunch



November: New Goalposts and basketball hoops installed in the MUGA



November: Remembrance Day





# PHOTO GALLERY



November: Cultural Day



November: Prizegiving Ceremony



November: Sponsored Walk



November: Poetry Workshop with Daisy Barrett-Nash



November: Year 11 Study Skills Talk



November: Eco-Champions Award





# PHOTO GALLERY



November: Drama Trip to Witness for the Prosecution



December: Christmas Jumper Day



December: Silver-service training for the 6th Formers



December: Pensioners' Party



December: Senior Citizens Reading Project



December: Carol Concert



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION

13+

(certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

### DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

### CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-18s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

### IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

TikTok can be addictive, especially for young people: compulsive repeated use can interfere with sleep patterns and be a distraction from other activities. The platform recently introduced default usage time limits of 60 and 100 minutes for new members under 18 (in the UK, children with TikTok average 102 minutes per day on the app), but these restrictions can easily be removed in the settings.

### TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

### MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-16s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.

### LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.

### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.

### READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

### Meet Our Expert

Carly is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



National  
Online  
Safety

#WakeUpWednesday



