



THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
Issue 232- October 2024*



Southwark Diocese Beginning of The Year Mass

Ms Corcoran and Chaplaincy team students attended the 'Beginning of the Year Mass' at St George's Cathedral for all schools and colleges in Southwark Diocese. At the Mass prayers were offered for all students, staff and Governors and Archbishop John Wilson gave an inspiring homily with support from many of the students present. All schools received a special candle to mark the upcoming Jubilee Year in 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. Pope Francis has invited Catholics in the Jubilee Year to renew our hope and discover a vision that can restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone. The Mass at St George's was also a fantastic opportunity for students and the Headteachers from the four founding schools in the St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust to meet up, joined by the newly appointed CEO of the Trust, Mr Ronan.



St Michael's Defeat 6 Private Schools in Dulwich College Debating Competition!

This Sunday we were given a capital experience to immerse ourselves in the world of debating. As representatives of St Michael's Catholic College, Bryant (12VI) and myself were invited to Dulwich College for one of the biggest debating events in London! We were immediately thrown into an unfamiliar, yet exhilarating, atmosphere of minds racing, working hard, fully latched onto the motions presented. What would be the next one? How could we win? Determined faces rushing into rooms, dissecting the 15 minutes of crucial preparation time. Overall, we were able to emerge victorious in two of our four rounds standing triumphant over schools such as Eton, Wellington, and Highgate. The day was a great success - spent formulating ideas and making new friends! It was a thrilling experience being able to enhance our knowledge, connections and overall expertise in debating. Join the Debating Society!

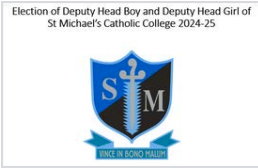
Laura B (13VI)



Please find further details on the Challenge and More Able webpages:
<https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/debating>

Isioma A and Opeoluwa O Win Deputy Head Girl and Deputy Head Boy Elections!

Congratulations to Ope and Isioma 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:



"As Deputy Head Girl, I will strive to embody and promote the Salesian values of respect, understanding, affection and humour in all aspects of school life. I will work to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels understood and supported. With affection, I will build a community that feels like a family. Lastly, I will promote a positive school culture by recognising and celebrating achievements through fun activities. Together, we can create a school atmosphere that reflects the true spirit of these values, making our community stronger."

Isioma A, 12A

"As Deputy Head Boy, I am a representative for my year group and the rest of the college. I am here to listen to your frustrations and please feel free to speak to me for whatever you need, I am here to help and listen. No idea is too big or ridiculous as long as you put your mind to it. Some people want it to happen, some wish it happen and others make it happen. As Deputy Head Boy I am your number one supporter."

Opeoluwa O, 12A



For further details, please visit the St Michael's Challenge and More Able webpages: <https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/elections>

Capturing Creativity: A Photography Workshop for Young Artists



On a sunny autumnal Friday, a group of Fine Art students from Key stage 4 & 5 took part in an exciting photography workshop led by the Zinnia Collective at The Bell House in Dulwich.

The workshop began with an introduction to digital photography. Students learned the basics of using digital cameras, including composition, lighting, and the importance of thinking creatively. With hands-on practice, they ventured outdoors to capture the beauty of the Bell House grounds, experimenting with different angles and subjects.

One of the highlights of the workshop was the creation of pinhole cameras. This hands-on project allowed them to experience the fundamentals of photography

in a unique way. The students learned about exposure and how to capture images using this old-school technique.

As the workshop concluded, students showcased their photographs to others on the large screen. This workshop not only enhanced students' technical skills but also fostered a sense of community and collaboration. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed excitement about what they had learned and the skills they could continue to develop.

Julius C (year 11)



St Michael's Student Wins National Award!

Congratulations to Ryan B, 13A, who won special recognition from Gresham College, winning their National Oracy Competition this month. Ryan's winning entry on Artificial Intelligence and its Role in Education can be viewed below, together with an accompanying article for the 2023-24 edition of The St Michael's Review.



Video and further details available on *The Challenge* and *More Able* website: <https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/competitions>

St Michael's Review

2024 ISSUE 7

THE BIG READ. Ryan B explores what may prove to be THE defining technological leap of our era.

AI in education: Democracy or tyranny?

In 1967, American novelist Harlan Ellison wrote a short story giving his take on what a world where a supercomputer had gained intelligence would look like. He named it AM, a play on the famous words by Descartes: "cogito ergo sum" — I think, therefore I am. AM was able to think, exist, and yet could not do anything with any of the knowledge or sentience gained, other than wipe out humanity, leaving just 5 humans alive, at the mercy (or lack thereof) of the computer. The protagonist refers to AM as "him", for "he" is a "jealous people". "Him". In a way, the ability of AM to feel anything humanises him, going beyond the capabilities of machinery. To think. To feel. So incredibly human.

Is this just a work of science fiction, or can this tell us something about our relationship with technology in the Modern Age?

Admittedly, we are not yet at a point where Artificial Intelligence is able to think organically, of its own volition. In fact, large-language models are more aptly described as autocomplete on an incomprehensible scale. They take a sentence with a missing word, and use probability to estimate what a feasibly human response would be, based on data it is introduced to. Except for it is not just a word anymore: sentences, paragraphs, essays, documents — all built on the probability of what it has access to.

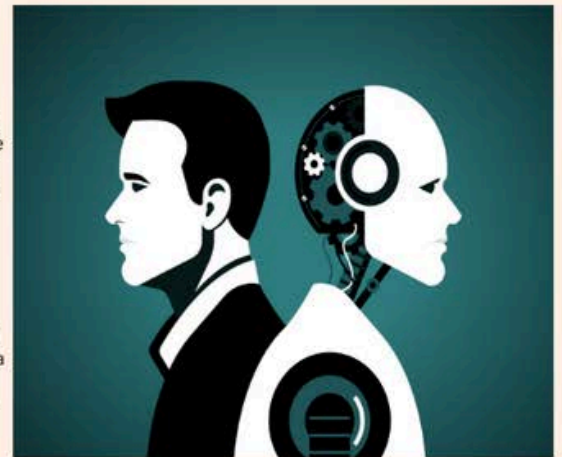
Thirty years ago, the Internet proved a turning point in the democratisation of information. Large-language models take this notion and magnify it. Not only do you now have all of the information you could possibly ask for, but you also have a tutor that can pitch things to you at your level, generate an infinite number of questions for you to practise, answer whatever questions you may have, utilise the Socratic method- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And 125,000 times faster than the human brain.

So why can't AI replace all forms of education? Behind every artwork, every piece of music, every novel written there is a want fueled by emotion. Authenticity, creativity, originality — they all stem from how we personally engage with the world and our response to it. And this is influenced by how we feel. The education system already undervalues this chronically, making very little space for human intuition and emotion amongst the skills of memorising and assimilating. Losing all of this in favour of one single, structured and efficient means to an end is losing the very essence of our nature. And what about the skills that school is supposed to equip you with; the skills of judgement and critical thinking? No algorithmic process that can generate accurate approximations to the questions these subjects ask.

AI may work when it comes to logical, step-by-step processes — it is an algorithm after all. But there is an element to humanity that transcends the logical, the reasonable, the rational. To deny this is to deny our own humanity.

Ultimately, education is not just about the development of skills, but about being able to better understand the world that we live in and how we feel about it. Being able to understand what value we can bring to this world. ChatGPT cannot decide that for you.

And, to be Frank, the day that AI is able to feel authentically — well then its impact on education will be the least of our worries.



Year 8 Rugby Festival



From learning about Rugby in their PE lessons to then finding themselves on the pitch at Burgess Park, the Year 8 boys team participated in their first Rugby Festival of the year. At first, it took a lot of getting used to but, the boys ability to learn from their mistakes on the fly and also, remain motivated saw them getting better and better as the afternoon progressed. During moments of uncertainty, it was the leadership of Paul, and Myroslav who kept the boys focused. All the boys made both Mr Laribi and Mr Brett – Roberts really proud.



Year 10 Donation Appeal: Formula 1 in Schools

Valere Motorsport has been the College's latest venture this Academic Year, as the Science Department begins preparations to compete in the renowned Formula 1 in Schools competition.

With guidance from the likes of Miss Parr and former-champion Mr. Khairi, 6 students in Year 10 have been tasked with designing a Formula 1-style team, ultimately culminating in the production of a F1 model car (designed entirely by students) - which will race against the creations of other schools at the Regional Final.

However, no team is provided with a budget by Formula 1, and it is the team's responsibility to raise money in order to fund the manufacture of their car. For this reason, Valere Motorsport is seeking the support of the St. Michael's community in their efforts to fundraise.

The College has been consistently praised for its strong community, rooted in its Catholic identity; it is thanks to the work of staff, students, and parents alike that St. Michael's has flourished in the local area. We humbly ask that you may extend your frequent generosity to support our ambitions of challenging for the World Final. The College has experienced many successes in external competitions, and we hope that your generosity will help extend an illustrious catalogue of College triumphs.

An option to donate is being made available on ParentPay; we understand not everyone can donate in the cost of living crisis, but we graciously accept any form of donation. No donation is too small - and all donations help Valere Motorsport in their strive for victory. We thank you in advance for your plenteous support.

Year 10 Formula 1 Team

An Unforgettable Trip to Pembroke College, University of Cambridge

By Maja N, 10DA

On the 11th of October 2024, Year 10 students and I had the wonderful opportunity to see what it felt like to be a Cambridge university student at Pembroke College. It is hard to describe the thoughts and feelings that I had setting foot into such a prestigious university and I truly had such a great time. Arriving in Cambridge, bursting with excitement, we soaked in the sights of the historic town on our way to Pembroke Hall, the third oldest College at the University, where we took our places and met our lovely guides for the day. The first activity was an icebreaker where we gained insights about university life and then had a Q&A session with a few of the undergraduate students studying there. We then had an exclusive tour behind the scenes at the College. We were assigned a lovely undergraduate guide called Kira who showed us all



the amazing parts the campus, including the gardens, common room, accommodation, library, chapel and lecture halls. We then ate lunch together in the grand hall which looked like something straight out of a Harry Potter book. It was incredible! Portraits of well known figures of the past who had studied there were hung up all around us, including former prime ministers, scientists and celebrities. During lunch, we got to know a few other undergraduate students who talked about how much they loved studying at Cambridge and how we should strive to study there one day. After lunch, we returned into the new Pembroke lecture hall, where we were greeted by PhD student who gave us a taster session on Geography and Disaster Management. Lastly, we had a talk from admissions tutor, Libby Prodger, who told us about the application process and what we could study there if we ever wanted to apply. After that we packed our bags and set off on our way home. I am forever grateful for this experience and having an insight on what it felt like to study at Cambridge and that hopefully, (one day) I can attend there too.

Please find more details on the Challenge and More Able webpages: <https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/challenge-trips>

Changing Perspectives: Antisemitism and Film

Last week, my peers and I were fortunate enough to participate in an insightful workshop delivered by UK Jewish Film. It was focused on the idea of changing people's perspectives on Jewish identity as well as promoting British values of tolerance through showcasing a series of unique films. The workshop was very informative, fostering an environment where we were exposed to the diversity of Jewish life. This allowed us to learn more about antisemitism and not only about how to recognise it but also how to challenge it.



One of the films we were shown was titled 'Blewey' and it was an animation which explored the life of a young, Black Jewish boy. Growing up, he would always feel like he didn't belong in the Jewish community due to being surrounded by ideologies which only saw Jewish people as White and Eastern European.



However, this idea was later challenged as Blewey began to realise that there were more people who were like him in the Jewish diaspora. This film not only highlighted the diversity among the Jewish community but also revealed and challenged one of the many misconceptions about Jewish identity: all Jews are White.

I really enjoyed this workshop and engaging with films detailing the complexity of Jewish life and identity. It also made me think about complexity of my own identity and sense of belonging in the UK. Ultimately, the workshop was very useful and informative, offering ways film can be used to highlight as well as to combat antisemitism, and it most definitely achieved its aim of changing perspectives.

Mirabel M, 10DA

Year 8 Achievements and meeting with the Mayor of Southwark

I love art because it is a privilege to be able to do it. Time is precious and is one of the few things we can never get back - using it fully and not wasting it is important. I believe that we should use all of the gifts that God has given to us as best as we can, and we should use them to glorify him - I only have this gift because of the grace of God. I



encourage other young people to explore their own gifts and talents because we won't have as much time to when we are older. I was at the Rotherhithe festival this summer which I usually attend each year with my family. I had started painting more often because my dad had me some canvases on my last birthday. I have wanted to start selling my art because others have told me that it is good, so my mum asked one of the men who were organising the festival if I could do it there. I was very excited at the time and I displayed all my paintings throughout the day - I was able to sell three paintings and made £40 in total, and I met a local artist who was painting live portraits. It was a very happy day and I got many compliments from people passing by - I also met the mayor of Southwark who was very kind to me and took a picture with me. She told me that she had a daughter around my age, and that she wants her child to also do similar things instead of staying at home. People

were impressed with my work, especially because I am a young, and have skills that are better for my age. I am glad that I was able to display my work and inspire other people that they should be ambitious and explore their talents, even if they are young like me.

Anuluwa 9BC



A HUGE WELL DONE to all those involved in the very first St. Michael's Model United Nations! The day was a wonderful success!

We were delighted to host schools from Southwark and Lewisham schools including Bonus Pastor one of our partner schools in the St Benedict Trust to this event. We look forward to hosting another United Nations events later this year.



Chaplaincy Corner

What's been happening in the faith life of the school?

- The funeral of former Governor and local Parish priest Canon Michael Cooley's took place at St George's Cathedral on the 27th September and was attended by St Michael's staff, Governors and at the request of Canon Cooley's family, a group of students, including the Head Girl and Head Boy. It was an honour for those present to be able to represent St Michael's in this way and to hear about his life of service from Archbishop John Wilson and a very moving eulogy given by Canon Cooley's niece.
- A memorial Mass to celebrate Canon Cooley's long service to St Michael's and one of our feeder primary schools, St Joseph the Borough, took place in the College Chapel on Friday 18th October. We were delighted to welcome Emeritus Archbishop Kevin McDonald to say the Mass, with the support of Fr Keith Stokes and Canon Alan McClean. It was a chance for the St Michael's and St Joseph's communities to share memories of his life and give thanks for Canon Cooley's years of dedicated service to our schools. Thanks to students who read, performed in the choir and acted as hosts at this special Mass.
- DaCosta Feast Day, took place on the 13th October and was marked by Mass led by Fr Keith ahead of DaCosta Charity Week which was used to promote and fundraise for the Catholic Children's Society. The Catholic Children's society support students and families in need in the local area, including at St Michael's. Therefore, it's an organisation we are pleased to be able to support as we know first hand the difference they make.
- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, both a solemn and a joyful time in the Jewish calendar were marked in a small world religions celebration after school, organised by the junior and 6th form chaplaincy students alongside Miss Casey, Head of Chaplaincy. This is the first of many world religions events planned for this academic year.
- St Michael's Feast Day which took place on Sunday 29th September, was celebrated at the college with a day of prayer and activities on the 26th September organised by the Chaplaincy Team. This included the St Michael's Hoopla after school in aid of CAFOD, raising £587 in total. Students enjoyed candy floss, karaoke and sponge the teacher amongst many other events. During the day students wrote prayer intentions on the wings of St Michael's which were on display in the hall and will remain there as a reminder to follow in St Michael's example to overcome evil with good.
- The Young Salesians of St Michael's programme was officially launched on Monday 7th October, the new KS3 and KS4, four year programme in the chaplaincy team is based on a commitment to supporting with the promotion of RUAH around the college. Successful applicants will take up their new roles after half term.
- All Year 12 students have taken part in a religious retreat during the last 2 weeks, led by Ms Casey, Head of Chaplaincy. Students were encouraged to find events in the news which were examples of Catholic Social Teaching and then find appropriate scripture to match.
- October is the month of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary and every Thursday Ms Casey and the Chaplaincy Team have been praying the Rosary in the chapel and have invited staff and students to join them in prayer.

The Word of the Lord

Revelation 12:7-12

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

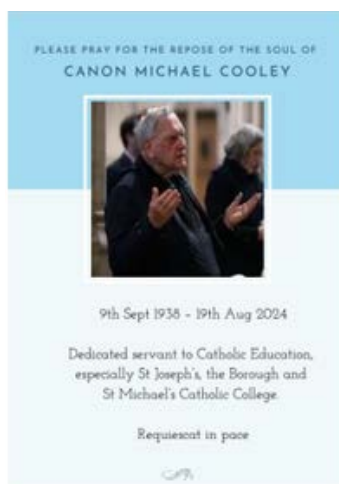
They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;

they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.

Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!

But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”



Chaplaincy Corner

(continued)

A Reflection on the inspiration of St Michael

Gracious and loving God,
We thank you for being our companion as we journey through a world where there is a great deal of indifference.

We thank you for welcoming us just as we are.
We pray that you will transform us and make us the people you want us to be.

We pray for all these things through Christ, our Saviour.

Miss Casey
Chaplaincy Co-Ordinator

Mental Health Awareness Week

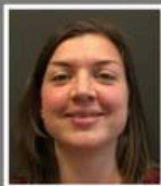


Thanks to Ms Chabaud our school nurse and to the Student Mental Health Ambassadors for their work to promote good emotional and mental health on world 'Mental Health Day'.

See www.stmichaelscollege.org.uk/mentalhealth/home for more details.

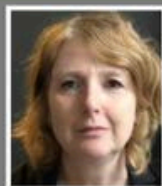


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