



THE LINK

A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
Issue 237 - March 2025



Diversity Week Special Edition

Diversity Week Success!

St Michael's celebrated our diverse and inclusive community with a series of lectures, workshops and cultural events. The theme was "intersectionality", with a focus on both our complex individuality and the commonalities that bind us together.

This is the second year of this programme and the response of students across the college has been outstanding. Throughout the week, events, lectures and workshops were delivered to packed audiences and our guests were moved by the depth of thought put into the questions asked by our students as well as the degree of empathy and Salesian values on display in their engagement with both new and familiar concepts. This year we were delighted to welcome speakers and workshops on Black British History, LGBTQ+ inclusivity, Neurodiversity and the concept of "normality", Migration, Media and the Law, Women's Rights and "everyday sexism." Students were also excited to explore a special week of cuisine from all the inhabited continents of the world and an extremely well-attended cultural fashion show at the end of the week, where the heritage of all of our students was celebrated. We are proud of all of our students and the inclusive, Salesian, compassionate and precious community that they have created.

Strength through unity. All are welcome.

Mr D Magnoff

DIVERSITY WEEK 10TH FEB 2025

MONDAY

- 5-Day Challenge by ABU @ Form Time
- Indian Cuisines @ Lunch
- Diversity Role Models Charity: Let's End LGBTQ+ Bullying - Year 8 @ S08 All Day
- The National Migration Museum: Migration is Not a Crime. All Year Groups, Main Hall @ 3:30pm

TUESDAY

- 5-Day Challenge by ABU @ Form Time
- South American Cuisines @ Lunch
- Robin Whitburn from UCL: Learning from the Americans: African-American leaders in the UK in the mid-1960s. @ 3:30pm

WEDNESDAY

- 5-Day Challenge by ABU @ Form Time
- East Asian Cuisines @ Lunch
- Dr Chris Bailey from Sheffield Hallam University: What is Normal? 75 + Year 12 Period 5 @ 2:15pm

THURSDAY

- 5-Day Challenge by ABU @ Form Time
- West African Cuisines @ Lunch
- Year 7 Parents Evening

FRIDAY

- 5-Day Challenge by ABU @ Form Time
- British Cuisines @ Lunch
- Cultural Fashion Show - Main Hall, KS3 @ 12:15pm, KS4/5 @ 1:15pm

EDUCATE

*SEE GUIDELINES FOR MORE INFORMATION
WANT TO KNOW MORE? SPEAK TO YOUR DIVERSITY AMBASSADORS & MR MAGNOFF!

Please see the St Michael's Challenge webpages for more details:
[https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/lectures-and-research:](https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/lectures-and-research)

Cultural Fashion Show!



Diversity Week finished with an outstanding crescendo. Students from across year groups took the opportunity to present their cultural heritage to a packed and enthusiastic audience. St Michael's stands together!

Please find the reflections of selected Year 7 students below:

“It was magical and full of fun,”- Neriah B (7SA)

“The fashion show was filled with beautiful and magical outfits,”- Jaiden K (7RU)

The Diversity Week fashion show was an opportunity to show the unique diverse cultures of the St Michael's community through clothing, the fashion show was one of the most attended events during diversity week, with piles and piles of students lining up to see the different cultures unfold upon the runway.

There were all sorts of countries and cultures all in one room and the outfits themselves were just stunning - there were all sorts of engaging outfits, floral patterns, artistic dresses, gorgeous flags, unique shawls, elegant colours, even the way they carried themselves across the runway was perfectly put together.

Each time a pupil walked onto the runway the crowd erupted in a cheer so loud it could have been heard from outside of the second building.

Lily R (7RU)



Please see the St Michael's Challenge webpages to the fashion show video:
[https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/lectures-and-research:](https://sites.google.com/stmichaelscollege.org.uk/challengeandmoreable/lectures-and-research)

What is "Normal"?

Dr Chris Bailey visits St Michael's as part of Diversity Week to discuss the origins and legacies of "normality"

On the 12th of February, both 7S and Sixth form attended a marvellous lecture about neurodiversity, presented to us by Dr Chris Bailey (Senior Lecturer in Education Autism, Disability and SEN) at Sheffield Hallam University. He started by questioning what "normal" means (a term used to describe something expected or average). We learned that this term came from mathematics and was used by scientists in the 1800s to measure intelligence, height, health and such. Adolphe Quetelet later formed the idea of an "average man". He did this by collecting data from a certain number of people, and taking the average. The problem was however, that anyone who wasn't "average" was broken or flawed. By using the word "normal" or "average" when describing a person, you exclude those who are different or not "normal" which is a way of discriminating against a person's unique and special characteristics. Neurodiversity is the description of the natural variation of human minds. Essentially, it describes how people are different, particularly in relation to the way their bodies co-operate with their brains. Neurotypical, on the other hand, meant that a person was not neurodiverse. However, in this lecture, we learnt that everyone is neurodivergent in their own special way. This is because everyone has their own needs and boundaries and different people function differently in contrasting environments. When complementing our school that both recognises and appreciates diversity, with events such as Diversity Week, Dr Bailey told us how important it is for schools to be inclusive of all cultures and neurodiversity. He shared both his experiences before he was diagnosed with Autism (he was diagnosed as an adult) and the experience of his children, who were neurodivergent as well. He explained to us how his children's special schools allow them to learn what is needed in their own time and their own way, which allows them to gain confidence throughout further life. This lecture was an amazing experience for both Year 7 and Sixth Form, and it was a fantastic opportunity to learn how each of our brains work, and how we all are different from each other.

Janka P, 7RU



There Is No Such Thing as Normal: Embracing Neurodiversity in a World Obsessed with Conformity

What is normal? The idea of being normal has not only been the tool to harm and isolate groups of people but also to belittle and dehumanize as a means to uphold the majority in society and make them feel superior, however in reality as Dr Chris Bailey—a Senior Lecturer in Education specializing in autism, disability, and SEN—states, that the root and idea of the meaning normal is flawed in the context of human beings and is a deeply harming term to those who are called abnormal or otherwise.

In his work, Bailey challenges this construct, advocating instead for a neurodiversity-affirming worldview that celebrates difference rather than pathologizing it. Coming from his lived experience as an adult with autism and ADHD with neurodivergent children, Bailey overthrows the status quo of "normality". His insights, grounded in both personal narrative and academic research, reveal how embracing neurodiversity can foster inclusion, equity, and authenticity.

The concept of "normal" emerged in the 19th century from the fields of mathematics and statistics, this means that it was not initially even invented for the idea of a "normal" person. Belgian scientist Adolphe

Quetelet introduced the idea of the average man, framing deviations from this average as deficiencies which can already be seen as a negative outlook on physical differences as it does not affect the value of a person yet it is labelled as a deficit outcome. Francis Galton expanded this into eugenics, promoting the belief that certain traits were superior and should be cultivated, while others—deemed inferior—



should be eradicated. “These ideas weren’t just abstract theories,” Bailey explains. “They fuelled policies that excluded, sterilized, and institutionalized people who didn’t fit the mould.” Even today, the legacy of “normal” persists in educational systems, workplaces, and social attitudes that prioritize conformity over diversity.

What society deems “normal” is neither static nor universal. Consider left-handedness: once stigmatized as hereditary and wrong but now it is understood as natural variation. “Normal is a moving target,” Bailey notes. “When we weaponize it to judge human worth, we risk alienating anyone who diverges from arbitrary ideals.” This is particularly true for neurodivergent individuals—those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or other neurological differences—who are often pressured to mask their authentic selves to fit in or worse ignored and dehumanized in some societies.

Therefore in order to prevent neurodivergent people from being outcast and framed abnormal society needs to adapt to be able to coexist with all people, Bailey’s research highlights how embracing neurodiversity can transform classrooms: Flexible Learning Environments-

- Allowing sensory accommodations, asynchronous communication, and interest-based learning.
- Strength-Based Approaches: Recognizing talents in pattern recognition, creativity, or deep focus often seen in neurodivergent students.
- Challenging Stereotypes: Moving beyond myths (e.g., “autistic people dislike fiction”) to meet students as individuals.

“Education shouldn’t be about fixing children,” Bailey argues. “It’s about adapting systems to honour their unique ways of being.” The pursuit of “normal” has caused immeasurable harm, marginalizing those who diverge from societal expectations. Yet, as Bailey’s work demonstrates, neurodiversity offers a path forward—one where difference is not merely tolerated but cherished.

“Imagine a world where we stop asking, ‘Is this normal?’ and instead ask, ‘Is this fair? Is this kind?’” Bailey reflects. “That’s the world we’re fighting for: one where every mind belongs.”

Cyprian K, 12RU

Black British Civil Rights History

Dr Whitburn visited St Michael's to ask "Why do we know more about American civil rights campaigns than the ones in our own country?"



Professor Whitburn's lecture on Black British History was incredibly engaging and thought-provoking. His words not only informed but also inspired many in the room to take action and make a difference.

He began the lecture by showing us images of famous figures from the American civil rights movement, asking us to name them. Without hesitation, we recognized Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X. However, when he presented images of different historical figures and asked us to identify them, the room fell silent. These were British civil rights activists—yet none of us could name them. This raised an important question: Why is the British civil rights movement not as widely discussed as its American counterpart?

Professor Whitburn then introduced four key British civil rights activists, one of whom was Paul Stephenson. A leading figure in the fight against racial discrimination in the 1950s, Stephenson played a pivotal role in the Bristol Bus Boycott. When the city's bus companies refused to hire Black or Asian workers, Stephenson led a boycott that lasted for months, ultimately forcing the company to change its racist hiring policies.

However, unlike the American civil rights movement—which tackled issues of race, class, gender, and broader social injustices—Stephenson's activism was primarily focused on race. Some argue that if he had taken a more intersectional approach, he could have built alliances with other movements, leading to a larger and more impactful campaign. Others critique his movement for being too centred on public acts of discrimination, rather than addressing deeper systemic inequalities, which may have limited its overall impact.

In my view, Paul Stephenson's work reflects the broader British civil rights movement—impactful, yet lacking the scale and national visibility of the American movement. This, perhaps, is why it remains underrepresented in historical discussions today.

Overall, Professor Whitburn's lecture was enlightening and inspiring. He reminded us that as the future generation, we have the power to create change. With hard work and determination, we too can make a difference in society and contribute to building a more just and inclusive world.

Uyiosa I (12SA)



Migration is Not a Crime!

Liberty Melly from the National Migration Museum opens Diversity Week 2025 with an important lecture

During this lecture, two representatives from the migration museum came to our school to talk to the pupils about migrations and the realities behind it. They talked about the differences between migration, immigration and emigration. A key misconception is that immigration is illegal migration. However, they explained what it really means to migrate IN to a country. The two young women also helped us understand the dangers and difficulties of the language we use towards migration. We must talk about this subject with care as it sets the standard in which people deal with it. For example, we must understand that we should not call unauthorised immigration "illegal" as it dehumanises these people who are seeking a better life. People do not make the choice to move countries without authorisation lightly and we should understand the weight of their decisions instead of scrutinising them for it. The representatives also touched on how the power of your passport makes a very big difference to how your life may go and how easy it is to get a visa. This opened our eyes to how the countries who need access to travel/escape the most do not have access to it through no fault of their own.



This lecture was a very important lesson to the sixth formers and secondary school students who attended especially in the climate we are in now as it is becoming an ever pressing topic of conversation in our world. Being as educated on the subject as possible helps us go into the world with open eyes and more of an understanding of the things going on around us as well as to establish and defend our beliefs. The migration museum is also working on developing a permanent base of operation very close to our school and are looking for ideas and migration stories from the students as this would help them broaden their exhibitions. It would also give a chance for students to get directly involved in the museum as well as become more educated on the topic of migration.

Crystal G, 12DA

Migration was a lecture I really never wanted to attend, even though I usually find lectures quite interesting, whether they are sociological, historical, or maybe a combination of the two. It was not because I didn't find it engaging or significant, but rather because I believed that something so commonplace shouldn't require so much attention—after all, there are over 11 million people who have immigrated to the UK alone. To me, it made it seem like something new, something unheard of, or something that isn't mentioned enough in our daily lives when time is taken to speak so analytically about it. And that's simply not true.

We hear topics on migration almost every single day. Some of us have families that are solely founded on migration, like myself. To me, it was an aspect of life I knew well—too well to attend a lecture about it. Or so I thought.

But after being convinced to attend, I learned something that I have only truly considered briefly: the power of language and perception. The narratives we create from words and subjects can completely alter their true meaning and the way in which they influence people. I decided to test what I had learnt from this lecture here through etymology.

The word "migration" originates in the Latin verb "migrare," which means "to move from one place to another." The word "immigration" is likewise derived from Latin and means "movement." -ma' is presumably the Greek equivalent of the French/Latin suffix '-ment'. It is appended to a verb stem to

create a noun that denotes an occurrence of the activity the verb indicates. Thus, "kinein" means "to move," and "kinema" means "movement." Kinetic energy, which is focused on movement, reflects this. Additionally, emigration stems from the Latin *ēmigrātus*, which means "moved away." They all have individual difference, such as internal and external movement, but essentially, they are all very similar.

But say for example, a very ignorant person made a statement such as "a certain group of people that have moved to the UK are criminals and invaders". The words that have been used to describe these people in the UK connote problems and negativity and both words are synonymous with law breakers and people who are not peaceful.



This then causes a chain reaction; all the words in relation to movement lose their definition and individuality; it becomes a symbol of problems. What the words originally equated to morphs into something else, and it's original meaning is lost. The ladies from the Migration Museum made a very important point that I feel really resonates in our society. They explained that how we use words is very important. but also how we don't use them. Some people easily conform to how those who appear more intelligent and educated use words, but when they are used incorrectly, everyone becomes incredibly wrong, and then the classification of people begins.

Therefore, it is reasonable to hope that respectable leaders, policymakers, experts, and the media will avoid using toxic analogies, dehumanizing rhetoric or language that incites fear when discussing migration. Our behaviour and thought processes are influenced by language. The public will view migration as such the more it is portrayed in the media and public discourse as something to be feared, as unmanageable, and as an issue that needs to be resolved. This creates a vicious cycle of increasing political hysteria and ad hoc acts, preventing a more rational conversation as more and more voters find politicians with strong (negative) views on migration appealing. This prevents the development of more logical, compassionate, astute, and all-encompassing approaches to migration.

More often than not, we put so much effort into the words we want to say that we fail to give them any real thought and, therefore, what is said is completely baseless. This was why I studied the word "migration" and its origins both explicitly and generally because despite its straightforward definition, individuals continue to use it incorrectly and associate it with ideas it has no correlation to.

Exhibit A: At an alarming rate, the current US administration has implemented new immigration laws, some of which destroy decades-old initiatives that provided pathways to safety for those escaping persecution and conflict. The refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, their families, and communities are all directly impacted by these policies. However, there will also be a wide-ranging effect because the US sets an example that will probably lead other nations to abandon those escaping for their lives. Proclamation of "Alien Invasion," Border Sealing, and Prohibition of Asylum on US Territory.

The noun "aliens" is simply dehumanizing, and invasion is typically linked with dangerous behaviour and negative activities. However, as painfully unfortunate as this is, the Oxford English dictionary states that "emigrant" is a synonym for "alien." Naturally, these words shouldn't even be used together, yet here we are.

The representatives from the Migration Museum were truly intelligent women, and spending the day there as part of a History trip the following week, truly made me appreciate the various experiences and struggles that people have faced moving and being moved to different places. I only hope that the concept of migration itself will be better understood and accepted in our society.

Stephanie C, (11VI)

Diversity Role Model Workshops

The workshops were a huge success!!

It was fascinating to hear the personal stories of members of the LGBT community. We learnt about Diversity, the Law and protected characteristics. It was very fitting for Diversity Week.

We acknowledged what different journeys everyone can go through and how we need to understand and celebrate our differences. We also got to voice our own opinions. It felt a safe space, and nobody was judging us.

Overall, this workshop helped us all in different ways and we all benefited from it”.

Enara AG (8RU) & Minerva M (8MA)



International Women's Day marked with important lecture on "Everyday Sexism"

We were delighted to welcome celebrated author and Civil Rights activist, Elizabeth Olulari, to St Michael's to discuss intersectionality and the dangers of day to day prejudice and discrimination. Please find the thoughts of Evie H (13MA) below:

What I enjoyed the most about Elizabeth Olulari's lecture on everyday sexism was the comfortable and welcoming atmosphere she created towards such a difficult topic. She greeted everyone as equals and made the space one where it was purely educational; any answer or question was welcomed and unjudged. The way she presented not only herself but her family as such successful and giving people was inspirational, and her open attitude towards other people's experiences as well as her own was both comforting and empowering. It both scares and angers me that modern day issues of sexism are so commonly disregarded and yet so embedded into society that they have become a norm. However, the lecture offered me reassurance that in the end there will always be someone to turn to and get help to fix the problem in any environment - whether it be in relationships, school, or the workplace. Furthermore, her inclusion of theorists such as Bell Hooks and studies on intersectionality were insightful. Lastly, her encouragement when I informed her that I studied these theorists in Media Studies was motivational, reminding me of the importance of highlighting marginalised experiences in education.



I would recommend to a friend,

Evie H, (13MA)

A Prayer for Diversity and Inclusion

May the God who created a world of diversity and vibrancy,
be with us as we embrace life in all its fullness.

May the Son who teaches us to care for a stranger and foreigners,
be with us as we try to be good neighbours in our communities.

May the Spirit who breaks down our barriers and celebrates community,
be with us as we find the courage to create a place of welcome for all.

Amen



Whenever people listen to one another humbly and openly, their shared values and aspirations become all the more apparent. Diversity is no longer seen as a threat, but as a source of enrichment.

— Pope Francis —

AZ QUOTES





Upcoming Events

March

Wed 10th - Thu 20th
Thu 27th

Year 11 & 13 March Mocks
Spring Concert

April

Fri 4th
Tue 22nd
Wed 23rd
Tue 29th

Easter Liturgies | End of Term
Back to College - All students
Year 11 & 13 Results' Evening in person
Year 9 Options Evening in person

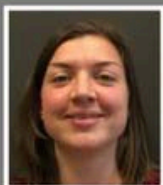
May

Wed 1st
Fri 9th
Thu 15th
23rd May

Year 9 Parents' Evening via SchoolCloud
Year 9 Options choices made | Year 13 Leavers Service
Year 12 Parent's Evening via SchoolCloud
INSET No students in the College | End of Term

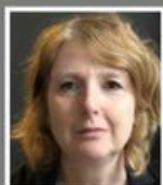


Safeguarding Officers



**Designated
Safeguarding Lead:**

Ms Jo Nottage
Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
j.nottage@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



**Safeguarding officer &
Deputy Designated Lead:**

Mrs Debbie Freegard
Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
d.freegard@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



Safeguarding Officer:

Ms Tania Rughooputh
Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
lrughooputh@stmichaelscollege.org.uk



Mr Allan Daly
Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
a.daly@stmichaelscollege.org.uk

Overall Responsibility:

Ms Felicity Corcoran - Principal
Contact: 0207 237 6432 or
Email: contact@stmichaelscollege.org.uk