

Summer 2024 Edition



As we approach the end of the 2023-24 school year at St Thomas of Aquin's, it has been a pleasure to put together this newsletter and reflect on all the highlights of the last 6 months. There have been countless examples of creative learning and teaching, trips, events and opportunities that our young people have participated in and enjoy.

Thank you, as always, to our dedicated teachers and support staff who make these experiences a reality for our young people. I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter as much as I have enjoyed collating it.

Mrs P Hastings



St Thomas of Aquin's Feast Day

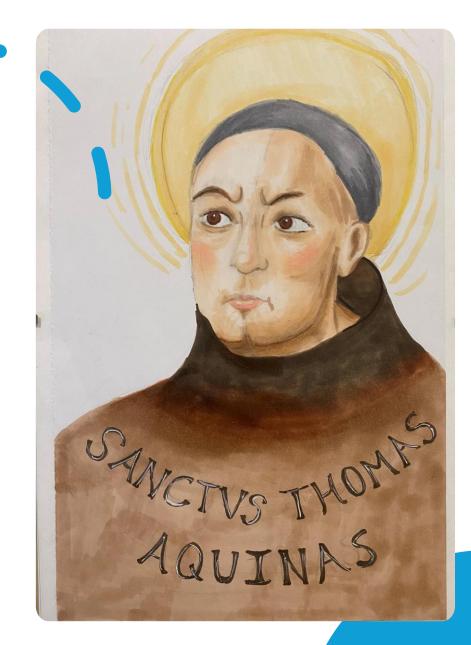
In January the school celebrated Saint Thomas' Feast Day. For our school's Patron Saint, the day involved Mass at the Sacred Heart Church as well as an assembly for S2. Pupils also learned about Saint Thomas in their RE lessons, did research on his life and work and had the chance to submit a portrait of St Thomas. The day was rounded off with ice cream, supplied by Di Rollo, which was distributed by our S6 pupils.





St Thomas of Aquin's Feast Day

The winning entry for the Art Competition was produced by Hanna Zerebilo in S1 and she was awarded a £25 Amazon gift card.



St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

In February, our Equalities Group planned and carried out our first Culture Day in St Thomas. The aim of the event was to acknowledge and celebrate the huge diversity of cultures and heritages within our school community.





St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

Pupils were encouraged to come to school in clothing of their heritage and the S6 Equalities arranged food and activities which represented their cultural backgrounds for pupils to sample.







St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

Almost all year groups were able to try different dishes, engage with face painting and henna, and listen to some live music.

St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

We received donations of food from the local charity Unity as well as from a local restaurant, Shinwari.

The event was also attended by the City of Edinburgh Council's Senior Development Officer Equalities, Nikhat Yusaf.



St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

The Equalities Group decided to use this event to collect donations for the charity Mercy Corps.





St Thomas of Aquin's Culture Day

Mercy Corps sent representatives to St Thomas to collect a donation of £500 which was raised, and informed members of the Equalities Group of the kinds of projects their donation would fund.





St Patrick's Day Celebrations

In March we celebrated one of our house saints, St Patrick. In RE pupils were learning about the life and history of St Patrick.



S3 Music Trip

S3 pupils studying Music attended The Royal Scottish National Orchestra's free Concert Programme for schools *Still I Rise: Stories of Hope and Justice*. *Still I Rise* focuses on the lives and music of three important but marginalised 20th century composers – Ethel Smyth, Julius Eastman and Viktor Ullmann – through the lens of Maya Angelou's poem of the same name.

With a live concert experience presented by cellist, poet and performing artist Simone Seales, the programme offered pupils the opportunity to engage with the composers' music whilst learning about the social and historical context of their lives and work.





S1 Fashion and Textiles

S1 classes in Fashion and Textiles were working on Boro Boro cushions this term.

Derived from the Japanese boroboro,

meaning something tattered or repaired, boro refers to the practice of reworking and repairing textiles (often clothes or bedding) through piecing, patching and stitching, in order to extend their use.









S1 Fashion and Textiles

Here are some more examples of their work from their last lesson in S1



S1 Fashion and Textiles











S3 Fashion and Textiles

S3 pupils studying Fashion and Textiles this term were working on making pyjamas.

They showed off their completed pieces which included a variety of patterned textiles.



S3 Fashion and Textiles

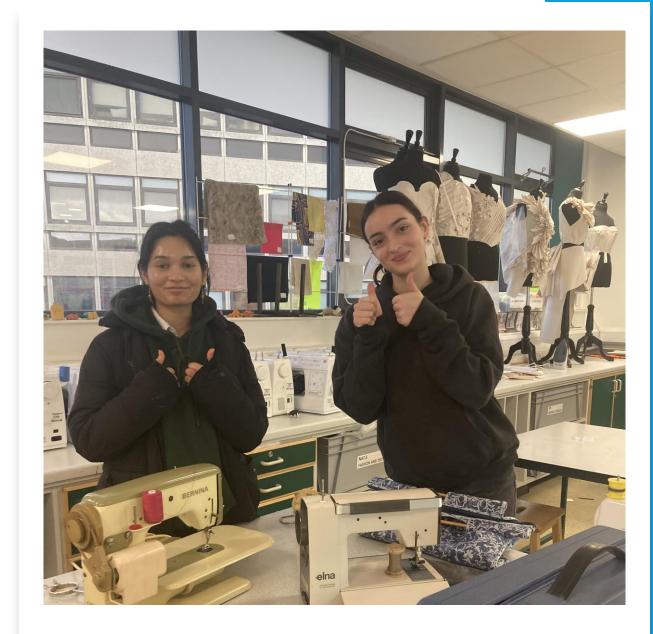
S3s also worked with paper and created dresses. They used a variety of techniques and created these wonderful designs.







Fashion and Textiles also gave Ines and Natali in S6 their very own sewing machines to take home that were gifted to the school. Keep sewing!



Spring Concert

In March, the Music and Drama departments put on a wonderful Spring Concert.





Spring Concert

There were performances from the Wind Ensemble, the Guitar Ensemble, the Percussion Ensemble, the choir and the School Orchestra to name just a few.

Spring Concert

There was also a performance from the Drama Club of "Oh What a Lovely War".



The Scotsman Editor Visits

Neil McIntosh, Editor of The Scotsman newspaper came to St Thomas to talk with some of our S3 pupils about journalism, how to get into the media industry and some challenges involved in this process.



The Scotsman Editor Visits

Neil then held a separate talk and Q&A with the School Magazine club (run by Ms Harley) where we spoke more about writing for target audiences, managing deadlines, engaging readers, and layout. The pupils really enjoyed both sessions.







Paris Partner School Visit

Over 18 months the languages faculty have worked on a digital partnership with Collège Giacometti, a school in Paris. Our senior pupils were matched with a digital pen pal and swapped text, photos and videos files with their Paris partners, in which each describes aspects of daily life in their home cities. This develops language learning and cultural understanding on both sides of the partnership.





Paris Partner School Visit

In May it was very exciting to welcome a visit from our Paris partner school. A group of our new S4 pupils acted as hosts and followed a joint programme of lessons and out of school activities with their Paris partners: three teachers and 27 French pupils who spent a total of four days here.

Paris Partner School Visit

Even the wet weather did not prevent the group enjoying a fun weekend in Edinburgh including swimming at Portobello before visiting school on Monday and rejoining our group on Tuesday for local visits. The French were very impressed with the interactive technology at the National Museum however for some of the young Parisians the highlight was trying a deep-fried mars bar.



Mathématiques Sans Frontières

This year students in S4, S5 and S6 competed in Mathématiques Sans Frontières, a national competition which requires teamwork, problem solving and ability in both maths and modern languages.

St Thomas pupils answered maths questions posed in Spanish, French, Italian, German and Mandarin!



Mathématiques Sans Frontières

This Higher class did especially well, coming 8th in Scotland as well as getting particular praise from the competition organisers for their team name. Mathématiques Sans Frontières: Scotland @MSF_Scotland

MSF Scotland (and Friends) Senior Division : 8th Place goes to @thomasofaquins / @stthomasSTEM and their wonderfully titled The Number sin^2(x)+cos^2(x) Team. Not quite #1 in the Senior Division, but definitely up there for team name! @scottishmaths

...

10:01 AM · Apr 25, 2024 · 319 Views

Support for Learning S5&6 Leavers

On Monday, 27th May the Support for Learning department said goodbye to our five senior leavers: Arhum, Matthew, Theo, Callan-Adam and Victor.



Support for Learning Leavers

Pupils got their shirts signed and celebrated in Support for Learning with a party and karaoke!

We will miss them all and wish them the very best as they move on to the next stage of their lives at college.



S4 Trip to Redford Barracks

In June new S4 classes attended a STEM Business trip to Redford Barracks. Pupils had a ball learning about the different job roles and the skills required to join the army.









S4 Trip to Redford Barracks

S4 Trip to Redford Barracks









Improving children's mental health

Place 2 Be

Place2Be will be leaving St. Thomas at the end of this term, after seven years. Over these years, Alexia and Counsellors on Placement, have supported young people through regular sessions, drop-ins, groupwork and celebrating children's mental health week. Alexia would like to thank the young people, the staff and the wider school community for openly engaging with her in conversations around and about mental health. She has really enjoyed working in St. Thomas and we will be sad to see her go.



Improving children's mental health

Place 2 Be

St. Thomas remains an active advocate of children's emotional well-being and will continue in its mission to support all young people achieve the best of their abilities. In August, there will be a counsellor continuing the work of Place2Be.

Right Respecting Schools: Silver

Following an Accreditation Visit and an awful lot of work, St Thomas is thrilled to have been awarded Silver status as a Rights Respecting School

This year, we have been focusing on building knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC across the whole school community. We have been working to build strong foundations to ensure sustainability so we can continue to work towards embedding a rights-based approach throughout St Thomas of Aquins RC High School.





SILVER – RIGHTS AWARE

Launch of Plans for Silver

We launched our plans for Silver to staff during CAT time, and to pupils during Key Adult time and pupil assemblies. We also communicate our plans for Silver and progress with parents and carers via the school website and newsletter to ensure that the whole school community is aware of and involved in our next steps. Here are some images that evidence this:





Article of the Month

Each month, we launch our Article of the Month. This is designed for pupils, staff and parents/carers to raise awareness of the rights included in the UNCRC. We use Microsoft Sway as a platform to ensure we can reach the whole school community and divide it into sections for pupils, staff and parents/carers.

- In Key Adult time throughout the month, Key Adult teachers work through the Sway with their class which includes an activit(ies) based on the Article of the Month. These are intended to generate discussion and continue build language around rights.
- The link to the Sway is shared with all staff and a reminder is sent out towards the end of the month
- The Sway is uploaded to the school website so that all parents and carers can also access it and are aware of updates and our progress.



Rights in Action

- A copy of the UNCRC is displayed in every classroom, reminding pupils and staff that rights should be embedded through out everything that we do, and every classroom Article 28 displayed on the door.
- The RRSA Steering Group have also identified where other rights are being met across the school and signs will be placed in these areas too to help our pupils understand more about where their rights are being met across the school. *This is an on-going process due to some redecorating and finalising St Thomas RRS branding.*
- Two S1 pupils have also designed our School Rights Mascot which is being incorporated into our displays.
- Staff are embedding rights into their lessons and are using visuals of the articles to enhance pupil knowledge and understanding.



Outcome 3 - Relationships are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights

As a school we are proud of the relationships we build across the school community. These are based on mutual respect and we are committed to conflict resolution and empowering learners to engage in restorative practices.

To support positive relationships the school promote a range of ways to celebrate the accomplishments of our pupils which links to this outcome. This includes:

- · Better Relationships, Better Behaviour, Better Learning Policy
- · Classroom teachers regularly celebrating pupil successes through texts home
- Celebrating pupil success through including pupil work and achievements the School Newsletter and Magazine
- Success display boards present throughout the school

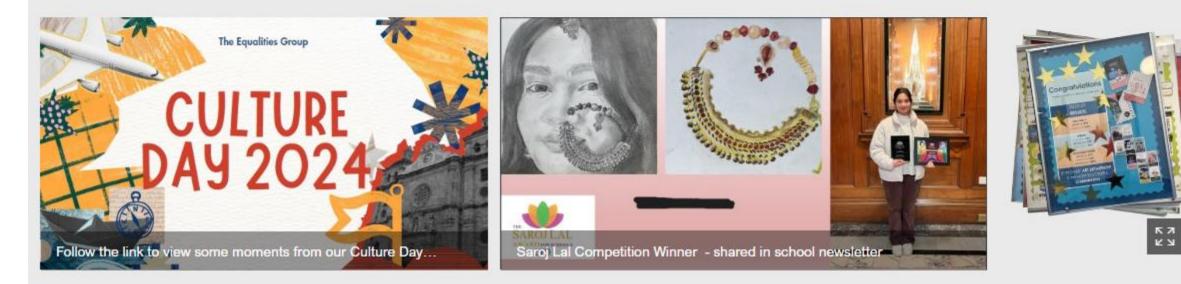
As a school, we are working on ensuring our young people feel safe and protected. One initiative in particular that has been brought in this year is Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP).



Outcome 6 - Children and young people are included and are valued as individuals.

Each individual within our school community is celebrated throughout the school.

Click on the pictures below to move through the images to see some of the ways that individuals and their achievements have been recognised and celebrated.



The assessor was extremely positive about the school's rights journey and very impressed with pupils that he met and the work of Ms McGowan and her team. The pupils involved were:

- Cameron Cheape
- Ruby D'Ambrosio
- Sophie Stewart
- Ala Kowalewska
- Letizia Morana

Euan Archibald Eimear Young Poppy Willis Cerys Reed Maddy Henry Molina





Meaningful May

Not all senior pupils have exams throughout May and so a programme of activities take place in the month of May, named Meaningful May, to engage them in other experiences during exam time.

Meaningful May

This year's activities included an excursion to the Museum of Modern Art.





Science chicks

May also saw a very exciting addition to the Science Faculty in the form of 7 incubating chick eggs.

Within having them for 1 hour, there was already one braking through its shell!



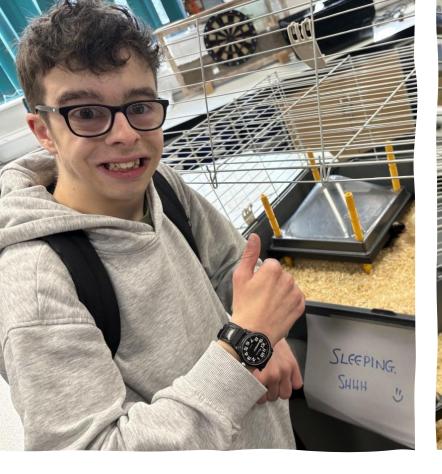




Chicks Hatching

Based in Mr. Linden's Science lab, pupils and staff loved visiting to watch, in real time, the hatching of the chicks.







Chicks Hatching

Pupils were able to handle the chicks and loved this experience.

Duke of Edinburgh Expeditions

We have such numbers in the S3 Bronze D of E cohort this year, that two separate expeditions were planned for 71 pupils. Traditionally, D of E expeditions have been a rainy affair - the two Bronze expeditions could not have been more different...



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

The lucky ones on <u>"Exped 1"</u> definitely did some sort of weather dance and used up all of Edinburgh's sunshine in one May mini-heatwave. Early summer sun set on a balmy Bonaly evening that included toasted marshmallows and an entertaining talent show of exceptional variety and quality.



All groups succeeded in passing their expedition section after a very warm second day walking independently through the Pentlands towards Threipmuir Reservoir. All groups were exceptionally strong with only occasional "interesting" route choices.

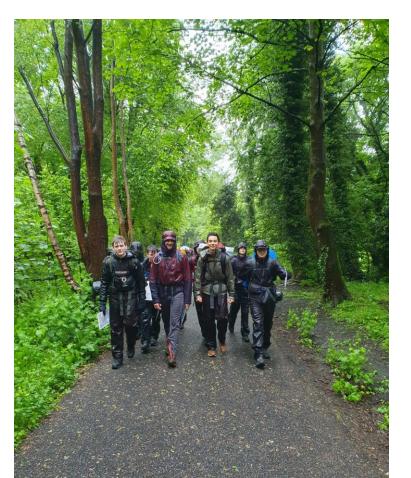


All arrived at the end tired, tanned, but in high spirits!



"Exped 2" certainly gained experience - Olly Stephenson (one of our volunteer leaders) reclassified this as a Bronze++++ expedition. Rain was forecast, the "yellow" weather warning in place advising there would be some spray and standing water on roads. This we were well prepared for - the kind of weather we've been used to recently.

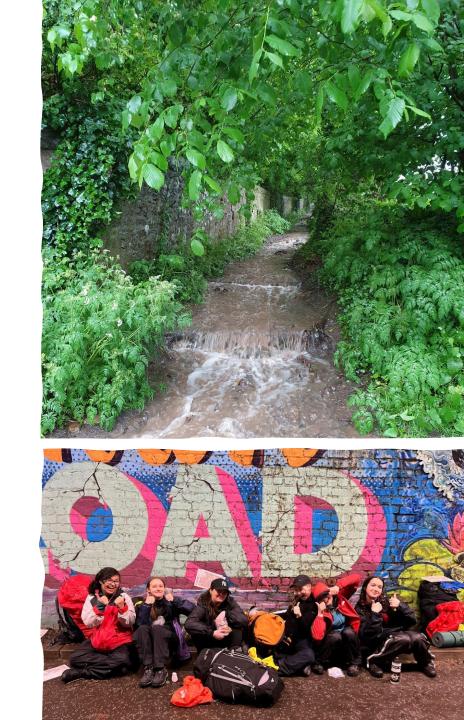




A 6:50 a.m. check at Bonaly confirmed our expectations, wet - but not too wet. It was even quite warm, proper summer weather! Fully togged up in head-to-toe waterproofs our plucky S3s set off along the canal, stepping over black leeches on the towpath that were loving the wet conditions. When drying off over lunch in Colinton Tunnel, word reached the staff that Bonaly Scout Centre was closing overnight due to flooding. We began to roll out contingency plans to finish the walk but head back home at the end of the day.



A short distance further on it became clear that reaching any part of the Pentlands might require a boat. Sadly, this was the end of the adventure for now, groups bailed out to link up with buses and parents at Bonaly and Currie. The wonderful team in the school office were on hand with biscuits, hot tea and fan heaters to warm bodies and spirits. We now know that parts of Edinburgh experienced record-breaking rainfall, far beyond the scope of the original "yellow" weather warning.



We were amazed by the positivity and perseverance of pupils to make the best of a bad situation and have a bit of fun, despite the disappointment of heading home early. A big thank you to all involved, volunteers and staff have just about dried out and are remarkably keen to try again in drier weather after the holiday!

Duke of Edinburgh

The expeditions are just one component of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award at all levels. Pupils must undertake a physical activity, a volunteering role and develop a skill to achieve the award. Congratulations to all who will complete this year and to the staff who have made this happen.



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

Music and Drama London Trip

S3-S6 pupils in St Thomas' Orchestra and Drama Club spent three days in London this term. Here are some of their highlights from their time there...





Music and Drama London Trip

The trip included 2 trips to the theatre to see the musicals '*Guys and Dolls*' and '*Six*'.

Pupils got the chance to be part of an "immersive audience" for *Guys and Dolls* and enjoyed singing along for the finale at *Six*.







They visited the London Eye, and a went on a river boat Cruise.

Music and Drama London Trip

Music and Drama London Trip

They also did a walking tour which included Buckingham Palace and The Albert Hall







Junior Awards Assemblies

We celebrated S1 – S3 pupil achievements with Awards Assemblies at the end of May.

Junior Awards Assemblies

Pupils were awarded Certificates of Merit from different subjects as well as "Colours" for extra-curricular achievements.







Senior Awards Ceremony

On Thursday 30th May we celebrated S4-S6 achievements with the Senior Awards Ceremony.

Senior Awards Ceremony

Pupils from these year groups were awarded Certificates of Merits from their subject teachers for both attainment and achievement.

Pupils' extra-curricular success in sports and music were also recognised through *Colours* being awarded.



Senior Awards Ceremony

The Head Boy and Head Girl, Harry and Beth, did a wonderful job hosting the event, and we had a number of impressive performances throughout the evening.



Senior Awards Ceremony

We were entertained musically by the orchestra, a piano solo by Callum and a clarsach and voice duet by Beth and Katie in S6.

The S3 Dance class closed the show with an energetic performance.





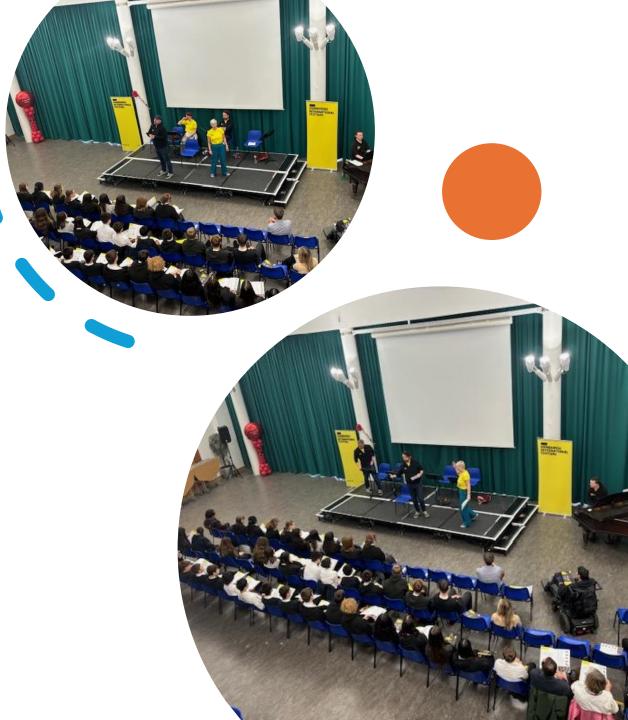


May 2024 saw S4 and S5 classes visit the ECA Graduate show including the Textile and Costume Departments.



Opera Performance

S3-S6 pupils who chose Music attended an opera event in the main hall on June 12th. The Edinburgh Festival Opera Project were in school and delivered incredible performances to our aspiring musicians.



Sporting Success

St Thomas pupils have experienced another excellent term as far as sporting successes go. Here are just some of the highlights...

Sporting Success

S3 pupil Ioannis won both the Scottish Youth Cup and the South East Regional Cup with his team. As the goalie, Ioannis made a huge difference in both cup ties.





Sporting Success

S5 pupil Griffin Manning took part in the U18 British Championships for Men's Sabre. He finished in an impressive third place; a fantastic achievement!



Sporting Success

St Thomas also entered a squad into the Scottish Cheerleading competition for the time this year.

They received a certificate and merit of participation.

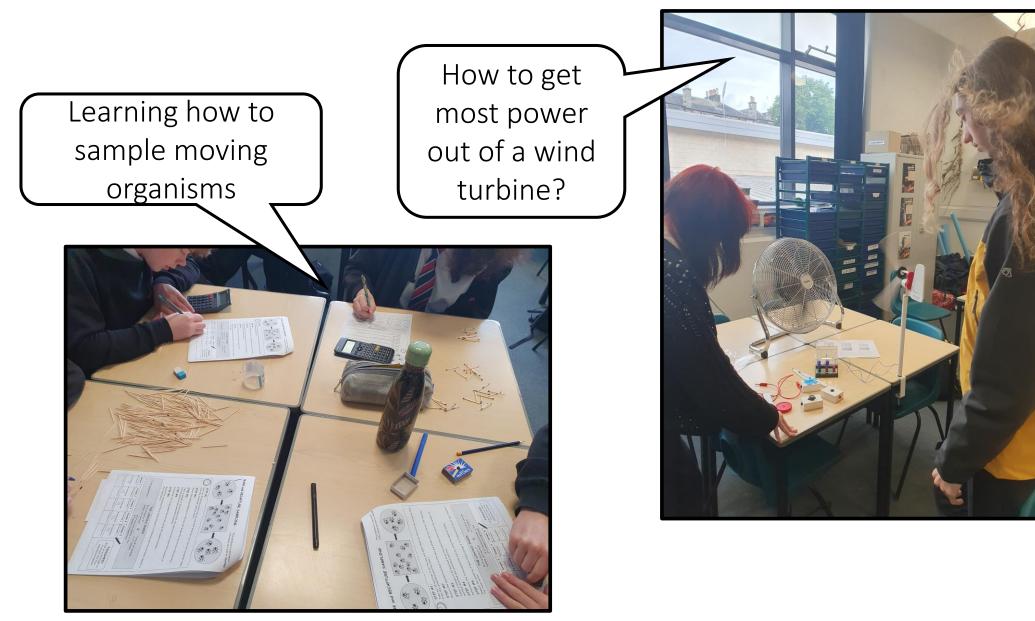
Well done to the team, Ms Stalker and Ms Wood.



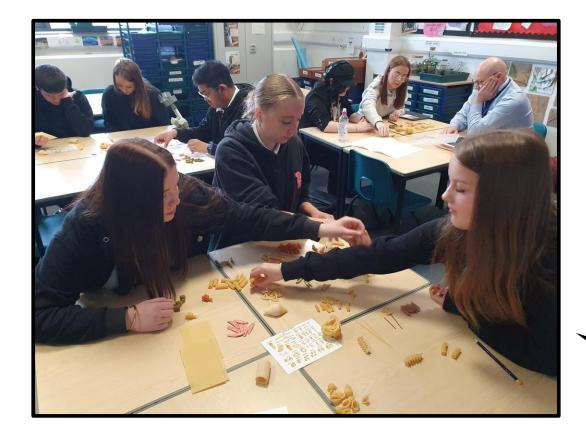




Environmental Sciencists in action



Environmental Scientists in action





Learning classification of organisms by classifying PASTA!

S6 Retreat Day

Pupils attended Mass in the Sacred Heart Church, then a carousel of activities (including a guided meditation and a quiz in the hall), before ending the day with a visit to St Catharine's Convent where they heard a powerful testimony from a reformed drug addict on the importance of mercy, love and forgiveness.







Caritas Award

Congratulations to S6 pupils Giovanni, Najeeba, Paolo, Zofia, Mahir, Luke, Dominika and Scott who collected their Caritas Award in Glasgow on 3 June. These pupils were asked to complete a minimum 40 hours voluntary service in their school and parish communities.





School Magazine

The St Thomas times published their Summer Edition in June. The group is passionate about embracing and showcasing creativity. They offer a creative space for pupils, from any year group, to get involved and utilise their unique talents: from writing and editing, to illustration and design. They publish a new issue of the magazine every 2-3 months. Each edition has a specific focus, usually relevant to the period in which they are publishing, but also have regular pieces which appear in every issue.



ISSUE NO.03



HISTORY & CULTURE	SCIENCE	LONDON TRIP
INTERVIEW WITH AN EDITOR	DRAMA REHEARSALS	COMIC STRIP
TOP 5 TO DO OVER SUMMER	PUZZLES	

School Magazine

The magazine is always keen to attract more members. Anyone wanting to join should meet every Wednesday lunchtime in room 3.11, or get in touch with Miss Harley in the English department.

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Sports Leaders P7 Sports Days

In June, Senior Sports Leaders were supporting and running Sports Days at our associate primaries.

Mrs Donaldson in PE got wonderful feedback from the primaries as well:

"Many thanks once again for organising the assistance of your Sports Leaders for our Sports Day. What a lovely amenable and enthusiastic bunch of young adults they were!! Here's some highly positive feedback for them from the staff at HC. Their contributions were massively appreciated. So, thanks to each and every one of them and to yourself! "





- Miss McCourt (P6 Class Teacher): "The high school helpers were great especially the ones helping out with the sprint race, they were fab, so enthusiastic!"
- Miss Scott (P7 Class Teacher): "I found the helpers from St Thomas helpful at each event as it meant that you could enjoy the events with your class."
- Mr Doyle (P4 Class Teacher): "The High School Sports Leaders were excellent".
- Mrs Rankin (P5 Class Teacher): "Secondary pupils were great very well organised and professional in their approach"
- Mrs McCafferty (P2/3 Class Teacher): "The senior pupils were spot on"



S6 Prom

The S6 Prom took place on the 6th of June at The Scotsman Hotel on North Bridge.

The Prom Committee organised a drinks reception and meal, and were supported by Ms Ritchie, Ms Mariani and Ms Stalker with everything from decorations to photos.

S6 Prom

Both pupils and staff scrubbed up well for the event and made full use of the props and decorations for photos...



















The BIG Green Week

In June there was a week of full of climate action activities. The Climate Action Group used this week to carry out fantastic research into our school's energy use. Have a look at how we celebrated this week.









10th -14th of June LITTER PICK

Our brilliant pupils volunteering their time to help make our city beautiful!





Refugee Week

St Thomas celebrated Refugee Week 17-21 June.

To mark this our Rights Respecting Group have been working with pupils at Balerno High School to plan events for each day of the week which links with this year's theme: **Home.**



Refugee Week

Celebrations included the recipe book that was made to celebrate the favourite foods of pupils, parents and carers from St Thomas's and Balerno.

There is also a QR code to a playlist of songs that were submitted that remind our pupils and staff of home.



We Care Award

We are delighted to announce that we have recently been awarded the **"We Recognise" level of the We Care Award** from Edinburgh Young Carers. This recognition reflects the tremendous work we have done to support the young carers at St. Thomas of Aquin's. Mr Murray (our Young Carer Coordinator) thanked staff for their ongoing efforts in identifying and supporting our young carers. Their dedication is vital to ensuring these students receive the help they need.



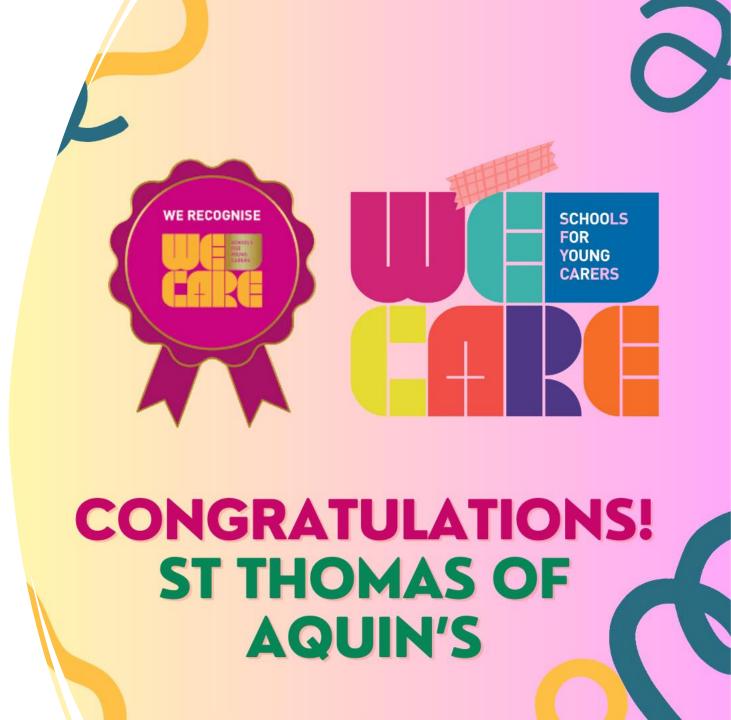
CONGRATULATIONS ST THOMAS OF AQUIN'S





We Care Award

Please continue to notify Mr Murray if your child identifies as a young carer. The more students we can identify, the more support we can offer to them and their families.



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and St Thomas of Aquin's High School wishes all of those in our community a very happy and healthy summer break.

