

# MORE LIFE

CHRISTMAS 2022

## St Thomas More Catholic High School

### '5,6,7 BOOKS IN YOUR BAG AND GO TO SCHOOL' AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR NEW UKRAINIAN FRIENDS



Left to right: Maks Denyshchych, Ksenia Zozulia, Valeriia Komorova and Nazar Popovych

Starting a new school can be tough, we all know that. When that school is in a new country, with a new language, and when you have been forced to leave your home due to war, it can be overwhelming. Yet the four Ukrainian students who have joined us at STM have been through exactly this, and have done so with maturity and dignity.

We caught up with Valeriia, Maks, Ksenia and Nazar to ask them how they have adapted to their new surroundings.

We started by asking about school. "It's easier here", said Maks, "It's actually better than my school in Ukraine, I like the timetable that is only 5 lessons. In Ukraine we have 8 lessons. After Ukrainian school I feel more tired." Most Ukrainian students have between 6 and

**"I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S GOOD OR BAD, BUT I KNOW HIS ENGLISH IS BETTER THAN HIS UKRAINIAN."**

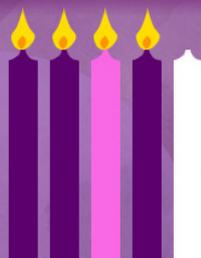
8 lessons per day, with homework from each lesson every day.

The schools are different as well. "This school is very large. Our school in Ukraine is just one big building," Nazar reported. Valeriia added that in terms of students "It's maybe half your school, maybe smaller." Ksenia added that "when I first came into this school, I was very nervous because it's very big. I thought I would get lost. But I feel ok, my friends help me, lots of girls come with me every lesson and tell me where to sit and what to do. Megan helped me a lot."

When it comes to lessons, they have found the teaching style and range of subjects different from back home. Ksenia likes the range of lessons, including Food Technology, Textiles

### AN ADVENT PRAYER

Lord, we pray for the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love this Advent season as the Christmas story begins to unfold in front of us. We are hopeful that we can begin to spot light in any darkness in our lives; that peace begins to emerge in turbulent



parts of the world; that deep joy can be found in the relationships we have with one another; and we can be reminded that love should be at the heart of all we do. In your most holy name, we pray, Amen.

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For several of our students, English is not their first language, forcing them to work harder every single day, but also providing them with an opportunity. Angela Demian, Year 13, achieved an A\* in Greek A Level at the end of Year 12. She says this 'helped me practise and refine my exam skills early for the rest of my Year 13 examinations. It adds an aspect of diversity to my qualifications that is popular amongst the best universities. My fluency in English, Arabic and Greek has strengthened my written and verbal linguistics and my multilingual nature has exercised my mental flexibility and improved my multitasking skills.'



Santiago James González, Year 10, speaks to his mother only in Spanish. After spending holidays in Spain 'my accent got better to the point where people couldn't tell that I lived in England. Last year I spent the spring term attending school in Madrid. It was odd not speaking English for three months and was very tiring being educated only in Spanish. It was fantastic living in the capital city because it let me really immerse myself in Spanish culture, from studying the history of the country to modern day entertainment like Real Madrid matches. Last summer I did my Spanish GCSE, which I could have passed quite easily. However, to get the top grades I knew I had to work hard; I revised grammar online, did past papers and learned how to develop my spoken answers. That took time so I am really proud that I got a grade 9.' More from both students: [www.stmacademy.org.uk/eal-superstars/](http://www.stmacademy.org.uk/eal-superstars/)

## UKRAINIAN STUDENTS (continued from pg 1)

and Wood Technology, with Maks adding Business to the list. In Ukraine the only practical subject is Art. Valeriia, arriving at the interview straight from basketball practice, likes that we have opportunities to do sport before and after school. She also likes "that in this school we have more excursions, like Holy Island. It's very cool." The teaching is different as well, with Maks commenting on the use of interactive boards and videos to demonstrate learning. "In Ukraine we spend more time writing" was Ksenia's main difference. "No computer, no TV. Just books and writing. 5,6,7 books in your bag and go to school."

When asked about the teachers, the students laughed. "Are they stricter here or in Ukraine?" asked Ms Bell. "I think in Ukraine there are more strict teachers" was Maks' answer, "but I don't think strict is a better characteristic of a person. Here teachers help students who are working hard, here teachers are more kind." Valeriia backed this up, saying that "all teachers try to help you, they try to understand. For us it's very important because sometimes we don't understand everything, so they come to translate for us. In the first months when we arrived, more teachers translated and printed presentations for us. My Physics teacher, he printed all the presentations for me."

We went on to ask them about learning English back in Ukraine. Valeriia started by saying that they "learnt the rules, present-simple, past-simple, past-continuous, we

have books where we do lots of exercises." Maks added that "in Ukraine the teachers study more grammar, not speaking." Most Ukrainian students also study English as an after-school class or learn it at home. "In Ukraine, I learnt a lot of extra English at home with my Mum," said Nazar, "from maybe 6 or 7 years old. She really likes English." We commented that having watched news reports from Ukraine, most people spoke very good English, and Maks agreed, saying that they joke in Ukraine about former-boxer-turned-mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko. "I don't know if he's good or bad, but I know his English is better than his Ukrainian."

We ended by talking about their experiences of living in Newcastle. "It's big," said Valeriia, "in Ukraine, in my town we don't have a metro. We have metro only in big towns." "Not even in big towns," added Maks, "Mykolaiv, where I live, it's big, but we don't have a metro. It's Kyiv and Kharkiv who have them." They also like the houses here, as in Ukraine most people live in large apartment blocks rather than individual or terraced houses.

It is clear that these four students have formed a bond based on language and their shared experiences, but that they have also become an integral part of our school. For as long as they choose to stay, we hope they continue to feel welcome, and when they return home, we hope they will keep in touch.

Thanks to Ms Bell for all her support of these students and our other EAL students.

- Mr Logie



# YEAR 8 RETREAT

When we arrived at the Youth Village, the staff were very welcoming and showed us to our log cabins.

The activities were very educational and all based on the scriptures of St Paul. One activity we had was an Escape Room where we travelled to the places Paul once visited. To escape the room the code was 4 different Bible scriptures from St Paul.

Each team had to get as many points as they could and on the last day the team with the most points got a special prize. There was also plenty of time to either play football, go in your dorms or explore the Youth Village.

One of the best games in our opinion was Capture the Flag, where two teams either side of a bunch of trees competed to get the other team's flag.



On the last day, we had a calm, respectful Mass to come together, to pray and to say goodbye. The retreat was overall a GREAT experience!

- Ashleigh Sales, Lucie Barclay and Olivia Elliot-Jackson

# ICELAND 2022

Day 1 Planes and Lagoons by Lauren, Chloe, Ava, Claudia, Jacob and Matthew: First stop after arriving in Iceland was the plate boundary. We stood in black sand, one foot on the North American plate and the other on the Eurasian plate. Who says you can't be in two places at once?

Following a soaking wet coach ride, we arrived at the blue lagoon. The weather cleared up brilliantly for the time we spent there, and we had the most incredible time keeping warm in the hot pools, powered by geothermal energy.

Day 2 Hydraulic Action and Sustainability by Natalia and Anna: After an incredible morning and lunch, we travelled to Mr Murray's favourite waterfall Gullfoss. It was the most amazing waterfall I have ever seen in my entire life.

Our final stop on day 2 was a giant greenhouse. We learnt how they use geothermal power to grow strawberries, cucumbers, and tomatoes which are all sold locally! Very sustainable.

Day 3 Fire, Ice and Black Sand by Jacob, Jack and Matty: The lava centre left us fascinated and intrigued as we set off for yet another waterfall. This time, a path looping

around the waterfall gave us a spectacular view and plenty of pictures were taken. After a challenging 400 steps we witnessed a vast waterfall which made the stairs worth it.

A quick coach drive and we disembarked at a retreating glacier, where Mr Murray explained the processes behind it. A well-deserved pit-stop for souvenirs was needed as many Icelandic gifts were purchased.

Day 4 Reykjavik by Ellie and Gabby: Day four started with singing Happy Birthday on the coach to our wonderful tour guide Leif, who everyone loved. We then had a lovely tour of the River Varma, the hot springs and the town we were staying in.

In Reykjavik we lit candles for those we love at the historic Lutharian church, took in the stunning views from the Music Centre then walked around the town centre where we bought more souvenirs for family and friends. With that our journey was over; back to STM with a whole load of amazing memories!

For the full diary and many more photographs see the school website at [www.stmacademy.org.uk/iceland-2022](http://www.stmacademy.org.uk/iceland-2022)





# YOUTH SUNDAY

Sunday 20th November 2022 was the Catholic Feast Day of Christ the King and Youth Sunday! It is a chance for the Church to celebrate young people across parishes and schools.

It was great to see some of our pupils helping lead Holy Hour and a service at Our Lady and St Aidan's. The group also included pupils from St Cuthbert's and Sacred Heart High Schools. The students were a credit to themselves and our school, with many parishioners echoing this after the service.



Autumn BUCHANAN 7H  
and Archie WORRALL 7E



## ELECTION DAY 2022

On Election Day 2022, pupils from each year group gathered in the hall and voted for who they wanted to represent them on the Student Council. Election Day was a great success with a real buzz in the air and the majority of pupils displaying a positive and mature attitude towards the voting process. The Year 9 Ambassadors were outstanding, professional and diligent (if I do say so myself) in their responsibilities and duties, ensuring that everything ran smoothly and efficiently.

- Danielle Howe  
Year 9 Ambassador

James BLACKBURN 8R  
and Kora HOWORTH 8O



Eve ELLIS 9T  
and SHRIRAM SATHISH 9T



Jacob HOLLAND 10T  
and Hannah MCKENZIE 10M



Joyce MISA 11O  
and Elliot SHAW 11R



Josie GAUKRODGER 12A  
and Meg GILES 12H



Molly OWENS 13A  
and Zoe PARKIN 13T



The Student Council has a strong record of influencing positive change and improvement for students at STM; the new Student Council Members are energised to carry on its impressive legacy!

The Student Council has met twice since the election and has already begun the necessary foundation work to highlight, address and discuss the key issues and concerns of our school community, covering topics such as recycling, sustainability, catering and extra-curricular activities.

The Student Council is looking forward to ensuring the school continues to thrive and is a positive and welcoming environment to be part of.

- Mr O'Connor  
Student Council Co-ordinator



# ZERO TOLERANCE



## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION INSET

On November 25th, when all students had the day to themselves, our staff were taking part in a special training day on the issue of anti-discrimination in our community.

The day started with a time of prayer, followed by Mr Watson addressing the staff, as to the reason why anti-discrimination is so important to us as a Catholic community. We are all unique and wonderfully created in the image and likeness of God, and so it is our moral duty to support, advocate for and reinforce the message that everybody is welcome and nobody should be subjected to any form of prejudice or discrimination in our school.

Our School Chaplain then fed back some of the listening that took place in Autumn 2021 around three issues: sexual harassment & gender; racial justice; and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. He shared some of the powerful testimonies that came from the 1-to-1 conversations and House Meetings that were held throughout last year.

Staff then broke off into carousels – one workshop on each issue – and listened to some of the work and action that the Anti-Discrimination Staff Working Parties have achieved since this project began. Staff have been working hard to ensure that everybody feels safe in our community no matter who you are, although we recognise there is still a long way to go to fully stamp discriminatory language and behaviour out.

We also received some fantastic input from Jill Finch, a schools equalities co-ordinator, who delivered some practical training on how to support LGBT+ pupils.

When asked about the key message from the day, many staff replied with the sentiment that “not addressing things can make things worse” and the importance of zero tolerance when calling out racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism and ableism in the classroom and in the corridors.

**NO Prejudice...  
NO Discrimination...  
NO Excuses...**



St Thomas More stands for **zero tolerance** of any form of prejudice or discrimination. This includes any prejudice or discrimination based on appearance, ability, ethnicity, class, gender, gender presentation, sexual orientation, nationality or religion.

**There are no excuses for this behaviour... If you witness or you fall victim to any form of prejudice or discrimination, then please inform a member of staff or email [safe@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:safe@stmacademy.org.uk).**

*‘St Thomas More is a Catholic School and as such we strive to follow the example of Jesus Christ in our work, worship and relationships.’*

*‘Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than this.’*

**Mark 12**

One staff member remarked, “This has been one of the best training sessions in a very long time in terms of educating me and making me feel more confident.” Another described it as “a powerful, useful and necessary training day.”

The Working Parties will now regroup and look over the feedback in order to move forward and address the outstanding issues.

If you witness or fall victim to any form of prejudice or discrimination, then please inform a member of staff or email [safe@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:safe@stmacademy.org.uk).



# NEWS AND EVENTS



## ALEKS NOMINATED FOR EXAM BOARD AWARD

Aleks Szymczak, who left STM in the summer, has been nominated by Pearson Exam Board for "Exceptional performance" in her A level Biology exams. The course is sponsored by the Salters company, who consider the work of the top performing learners and award prizes each year. We very much look forward to hearing the outcome and wish Aleks the best of luck. Aleks is currently studying Medicine at Jesus College, Cambridge University.

- Mrs Woodman, Biology

## MASS FOR ALL SAINTS

St Thomas More students led a wonderful Mass at St Joseph's Church in North Shields to mark the Feast of All Saints. The students showed great reverence during the Mass, where they led the music, readings and offertory service. This also marked a further development in school links within Tynemouth Priory Partnership as they will be visiting and leading Mass in one of the Partnership Churches every week. Fr. Chris provided a warm welcome for the students and gave an excellent homily which clearly engaged and moved the students.

It was a real joy to see the students interact with the local parishioners, who were very happy to see the students engaging with their faith. They clearly upheld the school's Mission Statement to follow the example of Jesus in their worship during Mass, but also in their work to prepare for it and the relationships they have built with each other, the parishioners and their faith.



- Michael Thompson, Chaplain



## YEAR 9 NETBALL WINNING STREAK

Currently, the Year 9 Netball Team are on a winning streak in the North Tyneside Under 14 Netball League. We are undefeated and have been playing really well as a team. Year 9 after school netball practices have been very well attended and it's great to see so many people getting involved. Many members of the club are also playing for netball clubs locally. We are very excited for the rest of the season and all new members at netball practice are welcome! Come along on a Wednesday night after school.

- Hannah Henderson and Faith Ubah, Year 9

## YEAR 7 CLASS CHARTS WINNERS

The following Year 7 students have made a fabulous start to their STM career by achieving the highest number of positive points on class charts in their form class since September. Congratulations to these students for their excellent achievement:

Back row (left to right): Megan Marlborough, Maggie Stead, Liz Micheal, Paras Chopra. Front row (left to right): Daria Kurosz, Emily Grace Walker, Katy Amis, Addison Johnson

- Mrs Martin, Head of Year 7



## UKMT MATHEMATICAL OLYMPIAD FOR GIRLS

On 28 September I took part in the UKMT Mathematical Olympiad for girls, along with Mishama Sony, Shantel Suneesh, and Aaryn McDonald-Brown. The five challenging problems are designed to be intense and, despite there only being five questions, it took two and a half hours to complete. The opportunity to participate in this challenge and represent girls in STEM was extremely rewarding as it is vital we encourage girls in Maths and Science subjects. As A-Level Maths students it was invaluable for us to put our knowledge into practice and push ourselves that little bit further with these types of problems. I achieved a merit and Aaryn a distinction, certificates only given to the top scoring candidates across the UK.

- Annabel Holliman, Year 13

# MORE NEWS AND EVENTS



## THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES SO WE COULD BE FREE

As a marine cadet I attend weekly sessions at the unit in Monkseaton, where we are taught drills (marching), particularly for Remembrance Day. We are also taught the importance of looking our best (shine, belts, buttons, shoes etc) and how to follow instructions. At this time of year we wear a poppy on our caps to symbolise the flowers that grew on the battlefields after World War I ended.

We are proud to represent the front line of the marine service (and all military divisions), learning to respect those who came before us. On Remembrance Sunday representatives from the Army, RAF and Navy joined us, each laying a wreath at the cenotaph. (an empty tomb or monument, with names engraved on the side, erected in honour of those whose remains are elsewhere). This year was particularly significant as it is forty years since the end of the Falklands War, where many service men and women lost their lives.

- Rose Jackson, Year 10

## PERFORMING ARTS WORKSHOP

A few weeks ago, Sunderland University came in to do a dance workshop with the Year 12-13 Performing Arts students. Not only did we learn and perform a dance to university standard, we also got to learn about the opportunities available to Performing Arts and Dance students after completing A-Levels.

Rachel, a dance teacher and choreographer from the university, taught us a musical theatre/jazz dance inspired by 'West Side Story'. Throughout the workshop we were able to experience what dance is like at university, from the advanced choreography to the amazing prospects.

Isla Morrin, Year 12, revealed that it was 'very interesting to hear about the opportunities that Sunderland University offers' as well as expressing that she thought it was 'great to get a taste of the experience'. Millie Rowe, Year 12, added that it was 'challenging and engaging', but also stressing how much she enjoyed the 'comfortable and creative environment.'

Thanks to Rachel and Sunderland University, the Performing Arts students gained an invaluable insight into the professional qualities needed to pursue a career in the arts. The compelling workshop experience left the students inspired to potentially take up Dance at university, as well as eager to try out other workshops in the future.

- Mrs Roberts, Performing Arts



## PINK DAY RAISES ALMOST £1300

On Friday 21st October our Sixth Form revisited our favourite annual event: Pink Day! Raising money for Breast Cancer Research has become a rite of passage for STM Sixth Form students. This year our Charities Committee, led by its chair Victoria Peleva, hosted our general bake sale and teacher raffle. There was also a notable contribution from Year 13 Business students, who sold cans of pop, sweets and gathered donations (see left). Whilst successfully raising £1276.10, Sixth Form students also participated in the day by dressing in all shades of pink, from pyjamas and slippers to party dresses and face glitter. Students and staff revelled in the day, adding to the vibrant atmosphere.

Such a significant sum is astounding given the current cost of living crisis; it is gratifying to be part of school community that is consistently empathetic and charitable. Several Year 12s were integral in making Pink Day a success this year and I have no doubt they will be equally as successful and creative next year.

- Tasiyah Chowdhury and Angela Demian, Year 13



# YET MORE NEWS AND EVENTS



## BREAD AND BUTTER THING

The Bread and Butter Thing is a charity where you can get three bags of shopping (a cupboard bag, a fridge bag and a veg bag) for £7.50. Each week there will be a variety of different things. The food is leftovers from big supermarkets that is still good to eat. The bags are accessible to anyone who signs up. Every week, on a Monday, Michael the Chaplain will take 4-6 Year 8 students across to St Aidan's Anglican Church (across the road from school) to help pack the bags. The students love it as it gives us an experience for the future and the adult volunteers who work there are really nice.

If you feel that this is something that would benefit you, anyone can sign up at [www.breadandbutterthing.org/](http://www.breadandbutterthing.org/) to receive food bags for £7.50.  
- Molly Allan, Millie Allan, Anna Thirlaway and Ava Kennedy,

## CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

A number of students from Years 7 to 11 took part in a creative writing workshop where they enjoyed the opportunity to be creative and original in their writing. Winners of the Christmas Creative Writing competition will be announced before the end of term, and extracts from the best entrants will be in the Easter issue of More Life. - Ms Wilson, English



## CROSS COUNTRY

This year's Cross Country season started in September with our Year 8 boys finishing first in the English Schools Cross Country Cup, qualifying for the Regional finals. All the boys ran well, just missing out on a place in the National Finals.

On to the North Tyneside Championships, we had 54 students running on a freezing cold day and each one of them ran their socks off. Podium finishes came for Matthew Henderson, Year 7, Katie Otterson, Year 8, and Charles McManus, Year 12, who all finished first in their categories, and Megan Marlborough, Year 7 and Elliot Moore, Year 11, who finished second in theirs. We are now eagerly waiting the team results. Well done to all athletes involved.  
- Mrs Plummer, PE

## A LEVEL ENGLISH TRIP TO LONDON

We began our trip to the amazing capital by making our way from King's Cross station on a not-so-sunny afternoon. The first stop of the day was the Tate Modern Art Gallery on the South Bank, followed by a trip to Shakespeare's Globe (see below), which we had all heard about since Year 8! We were given a tour and heard the amazing stories about the English legend and how the popular venue ran so well. After a packed day, with some of us starting to moan about being hungry, we had some time to walk along the South Bank for an hour to soak up the sights. I was expecting nice Christmas markets until we turned a corner and accidentally walked into a movie premiere for Will Ferrell's movie 'Spirited', where we met and shook hands with the man himself. Yes, if you take English Language A Level, you will meet Hollywood stars! We were VERY late for the restaurant that night, however Miss McHugh and Miss Warland could not be angry, just jealous! To top off the amazing time we attended a lecture about English Language the following day which was so helpful in bringing to life the theories we learn in class. Overall we loved the trip to London and had the best laugh!  
- Ava Armstrong, Year 13



# ELOÏSE CHANDLER SUPER-VET IN TRAINING

This autumn, I had the amazing opportunity to have a hands on experience with animal therapy at the St Anthony of Padua Community Association, a social care charity based in Walker. This links to my dream of becoming a vet one day so when this opportunity came up I was very eager to experience it.

St Anthony's is a wonderful charity which helps elderly people, often focussing on those with dementia, limited mobility or who feel alone. This animal therapy consisted of introducing puppies to a group of elderly people. We encouraged them to engage with the dogs, hopefully improving mobility and mental health.

During my visit I chatted with some of the service users. It was lovely to hear them recalling stories of the dogs they owned as children. They all engaged really well in the activity. I enjoyed participating in this therapy session with this group. It was lovely to see the participants interact with the puppies. It was also very interesting to see how a day care centre for elderly people operates.

- Eloïse Chandler, Year 8



## EX-PUPIL SUCCESSES

It is always our hope that our students leave us equipped with the skills needed for success, even if the path to success is not clear at the time. Below is a fantastic example of a student who has found her calling via a different path to the one she planned. If you or a member of your family would like to feature in a future issue, please e-mail [alogie@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:alogie@stmacademy.org.uk).



### ZARA SCOTT 2007-2014

Leaving Sixth Form I wasn't sure what the world had in store for me. I didn't get the grades I needed, but it turns out that is not the end of the world. I hoped to stay in Newcastle, but ended up moving to London to study Geography, then did a Masters in Environmental Water Consultancy in Leeds, focussing on flood risk management.

I currently work for Camden Council as a Climate Resilience Officer, where I lead our first Climate Resilience Plan, which will look to prepare and protect our communities and environment from the impacts of flooding, heatwaves, and drought. In addition to this, I work on a variety of projects across Camden to reduce the effects of extreme weather events, and I work with communities to raise awareness about the the climate crisis.

My love of Geography began with my GCSEs, but I had no idea how far it would take me. I will always be grateful to STM, particularly the Geography Department; without their support and guidance, I would not be in a job that I love.

## NEXT ISSUE EASTER 2023

Address: Lynn Rd, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE29 8LF

Phone: 0191 258 8340

Email: [info@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:info@stmacademy.org.uk)

Newsletter: [alogie@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:alogie@stmacademy.org.uk)

If your circumstances change and you need support: [familysupport@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:familysupport@stmacademy.org.uk)

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