



MORE LIFE

St Thomas More
Catholic High School

AUTUMN 2024



STM STUDENTS BORN TO RUN

St Thomas More has always had a strong culture of running, with students running in local competitions whilst at school but also going on to reach English Schools Track and Field finals and beyond. Many of these have continued their passion even after they've left us.

In this issue we celebrate the success of a number of our current, recently joined and former students, on the track, in the field and on the road.

Luke Pichler, Year 12, tells us about becoming the most decorated Northumberland athlete in English Schools history. Charles McManus, who left Year 13 in the summer, looks back on his achievement of running the entire Tyne & Wear Metro Map in a single day. Finally, we hear from James Sturman, Year 10, about the recent successes of our Cross Country team at the regional stage of the ESAA Cross Country Championships.

Read more about these fabulous achievements on page 2.

Luke Pichler and Charles McManus, pictured after their recent successes

ATTENDANCE CHAMP CONSISTENTLY HERE AND MAKING PROGRESS

Welcome back to a new year at St Thomas More, and it is great to see that current attendance figures at STM are significantly above regional and national averages!

The new government initiative, 'Working Together to Improve Attendance', underscores what we already know, that attendance correlates with academic performance, but is also essential for

the development of crucial social skills and a sense of belonging within our school community.

Moving forward, staff will continue to monitor attendance, offer assistance and implement support where required. We ask that families maintain open lines of communication with school, as these are invaluable to ensuring we meet the needs of our community.

- Mr Flynn, Assistant Headteacher

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RUNNING @ STM



LUKE PICHLER, COMBINED

I compete in combined events, where I represent Blyth Running Club, Northumberland and England. I have had a very successful season, winning 2 national bronze medals indoors and outdoors in long jump this year, and a bronze medal at the English schools 100m hurdles. To cap off my season, I took bronze at the English schools combined events final in the Octathlon (8 events), bettering my own Northumberland record, and being selected to represent England later this term.

After a successful season representing the county, I am now the most decorated Northumberland athlete in English schools history. I am currently ranked 4th in the UK for combined, 8th for long jump and 8th for 100m hurdles.

As I move into the under 20 age group, my goal is to earn a team GB call up to compete in combined events (Decathlon), which would make me the first Northumberland athlete to do so. - Luke Pichler, Year 12

CHARLES' METRO RUN

On Sunday 15th September, Charles McManus, who left Year 13 in the summer, took on the challenge of running to each of the 60 stations on the Tyne and Wear Metro network, a total of 125 km or 77 miles, in under 24 hours. Alongside his support runners, including current Year 13 student Elliot Moore and ex-pupil Jonny Worrall, who left in 2022, Charles completed his challenge in 17.5 hours!

Charles (pictured on the right below with Jonny and Elliot) started at South Hylton station in Sunderland at 3am, completing the Sunderland and South Shields lines before heading up through Newcastle to the airport. He then doubled back to run the coastal loop through North Tyneside, and back into Newcastle, arriving at Monument at 8.45pm.

Charles completed the challenge in memory of his Dad, who died in 2017. His fundraising has been split between the Brain Tumour Charity and St Oswald's Hospice. If you would like to support him, please visit his page here.



PAST ATHLETES

Past STM athletes include Ross Murray, who was 6th in the 800m semi-final at London 2012, English School XC and Athletics Champion. Jack Beverly, Jack McNally, Sarah Kewley, Susan Folurunso, Anna Fitzpatrick and Rhys Brunton all competed at English Schools Track and Field Finals. Jared Flanery is now giving back to the sport as a UK Athletics Official Starter, while Molly Craig has set up her own running club at university to inspire others. - Mrs Plummer, PE Dept

CROSS COUNTRY

On the 8th of October, we competed in the School Cross Country cup. I finished 1st for the Inter Boys Team (Year 9 and 10), helping my team to 2nd place. The Senior Boys (Years 11-13) finished 3rd against some very strong competition. Despite the torrential rain, it was a great race by the whole team to get us through to the next round, fingers crossed we can get to nationals this year.

- James Sturman, Year 10



GERMAN EXCHANGE TO OER-ERKENSCHWICK



During the week-long trip to Oer-Erkenschwick, Germany, twenty four Year 10 students and two Year 13 students experienced many things. We took a trip to Cologne with a visit to the Lindt Chocolate Factory, we went to the Football Museum in Dortmund, but we also attended lessons in our German exchange partner's school and spent time at home with them and their families.

German school was very different to English school. Lessons were forty five minutes long but they had six lessons per day and the day started at 8am. There were differences in the foods they ate (such as Bratwurst or Döner), and they spent loads of time with their families, going outside for walks or to nature reservations. We also had a reception with the Mayor of Oer- Erkenschwick and experienced 'Tag der Deutschen Einheit' – a bank holiday for the day of German unity.

It was a fantastic trip and all of us would love to visit Germany again one day! Danke und tschüss! – Elena Coxon and Daisy Watson, Year 10.

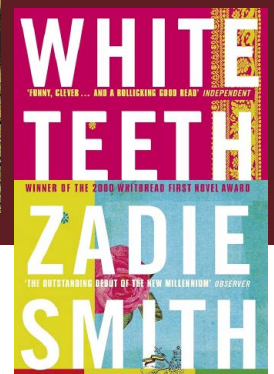
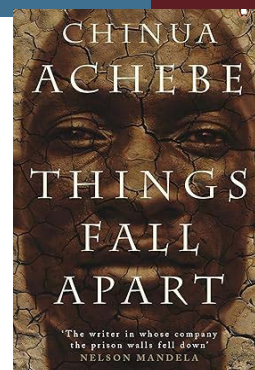
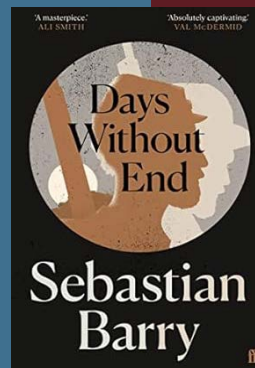
NOVELS THAT HAVE SHAPED OUR WORLD

Stories have the power to change us. So, in each edition of the newsletter this year we are going to share some recommendations of novels, written over the last 300 years, that we believe reflect the way books help to shape and influence our thinking. The recommended reads will be organised into themes and include everything from children's classics to popular page turners.

- Miss Wilson, Head of English

NOVELS ON IDENTITY

- Beloved* - Toni Morrison
- Days Without End* - Sebastian Barry
- Fugitive Pieces* - Anne Michaels
- Half A Yellow Sun* - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- Homegoing* - Yaa Gyasi
- Small Island* - Andrea Levy
- The Bell Jar* - Sylvia Plath
- The God of Small Things* - Arundhati Roy
- Things Fall Apart* - Chinua Achebe
- White Teeth* - Zadie Smith



GCSE SUCCESS IN FRENCH, SPANISH AND POLISH



This summer, a number of St Thomas More students who are lucky enough to speak other languages fluently at home successfully gained GCSEs in French, Polish and Spanish.

Congratulations to Cian (GCSE French), Dominic, Julia, Natan and Samanta (GCSE Polish) and Isabella (GCSE Spanish) who all achieved very strong grades in their exams (including three Grade 9s). They all put in a lot of extra time and effort outside of lessons and at home to make sure they were as prepared for these as possible. Well done on your excellent achievement!

Taking a GCSE in a home language is an excellent way of celebrating languages spoken at home, as well as gaining a recognised qualification, particularly if they can speak the language fluently already, have good literacy skills and are prepared to put in the extra effort required. If your child is interested in taking a GCSE in their home language, they should speak to their Languages teacher or Mr Hill. - Mr Hill, MFL dept



"Doing Spanish as an extra GCSE was great because I can go into Year 11 knowing I have already gained a qualification - it has taken away some of the stress" - Isabella

"Doing GCSE Polish was a nice way to recognise my background and the language I can speak at home. I now feel more confident for the rest of my exams next year" - Natan



BIOLOGISTS... NATURALLY!



YEAR 12 PLESSEY WOODS

In the summer term, A level biologists visited a variety of different habitats. We spent one day at Plessey Woods, Bedlington and the another at Brown's Bay, Cullercoats. These allowed us to see real life applications of our biological knowledge. We investigated the distribution of freshwater shrimp in the river and the distribution of seaweed species on the rocky shore. Collecting data throughout both days

allowed us to later analyse the findings and use statistical tests to determine significance. Although the weather wasn't great, everyone achieved competency in all of the skills that are required. - Esha Khan, Year 13

BRITISH BIOLOGY OLYMPIAD SUCCESS

Before the summer, 22 Year 12 Biology students participated in the National Biology Olympiad, competing against schools across Wales, Ireland, Scotland and the rest of England. The competition consisted of an hour-long multiple choice paper covering a variety of topics; it was a valuable experience to talk about in future applications and interviews. Our



students who took part received a mix of commended/highly commended certificates, with 5 achieving Bronze certificates (Georgie Bentham, Yasmine Lau, Seamus Gregor, Izzy Dutton and Ben Wade), 2 Silver (Jamie Goodwin and myself) and a singular Gold award (well done to Joyce Misa!). The Olympiad was a fun challenge using a mix of Biology knowledge and logic to get the correct answer; a great opportunity when it comes your way next year! - Aaron Lucas, Year 13



ENGLISH LITERATURE VISIT TO THE ROBINSON LIBRARY

As part of our English Literature studies, we recently had the opportunity to visit Newcastle University Library, where we expanded our research and gained access to resources that were otherwise unavailable within school.

The day began with a guided tour of the library, where we were introduced to their collection of books, journals and articles as well as taught how to navigate through them and find what we needed, both on the shelves and on the computers. Having access to these materials is important for our NEA as it gives us the opportunity to expand on our points and provide an academic insight into our chosen topics. We were also given library cards that will allow us access to the library following our visit.

A particularly special aspect of the visit was being given access to their World War I collection, which includes letters, photographs, and medical records of local soldiers. The opportunity to hold, read, and discuss pieces from the collection opened a window into the lives of real local people, some of whom were very close to our age. - Semira Kilic, Year 13

“EVERYONE DESERVES A CHANCE TO FLY”

On Wednesday 2nd October, Music students and a handful from choir and orchestra were invited to attend a performance of the leading West End show, Wicked, at the Sunderland Empire Theatre. This retelling of the 1939 film 'The Wizard Of Oz' follows the upbringings and unlikely friendship of Galinda and Elphaba (known to most as The Good Witch and The Wicked Witch Of The West). The story itself is a kaleidoscope of tragedy, comedy and drama with the integrated message of self acceptance and embracing your own quirks and talents.

We were immediately astounded by the lighting and glamorous set makeup, which we quickly realised was only a foreshadow of the incredible production to come - it was truly magical! It is safe to say that everyone in the audience was captivated by, in the words of one of our students, "the outstanding vocal talent" of the leads and ensemble alike, paired with expertly coordinated dancing on top of tremendous acting. All in all, we had the BEST afternoon out, and thank the Music Department immensely for the opportunity! - Megan Neasham-Mcmanus, Year 12



GEOGRAPHERS EXPERIENCE THE NORTH

YEAR 9 HOLY ISLAND



Holy island is definitely one of the best school trips on offer! We went on many of Mr Murray's famous walks, had a disco, sung until we lost our voices, played hide and seek in the catacombs, we even had a sports day where we dominated the wheelbarrow race.

Our favourite day by far was the day we went to the sand dunes in the pouring rain. We rolled down them and raced to the top, then when we got back it was a race to the showers. That evening, we had a disco where we sang some more and everyone was forced into the dance circle at some point. Special mention for Niall's disco outfit, check the Geography corridor for photographic evidence!

We all loved Holy Island and want to thank everyone who made the trip possible!

- Alexa Hastie and Eloïse Chandler, Year 10

YEAR 13 LAKE DISTRICT

On Monday 23rd September, the Year 13 Geography class made our way to the Lake District. First stop Go Ape in Grizedale, where we all had an amazing time and Mr Murray and Mr Logie showed off their superb landing skills on the zip wire.

When we arrived at Ambleside Youth Hostel, it was time to start our revision. We were so lucky to have warm, sunny weather so we consolidated our knowledge sitting at the lake shore looking out onto an amazing view. A couple of hours of revision later we were ready for some food at the Water's Edge Hotel which was lovely.

After a well needed sleep we were ready for more, we woke up early and enjoyed some breakfast followed by some more revision activities. We started our journey back with a stop off in Glenridding where we got on a boat to Howtown to start our '5 Mr Murray Mile' walk back to Glenridding, the views again were stunning! We were all ready for a sit down and nice scenic drive back to North Shields after a fun filled couple of days in the Lakes! - Lucy Fitzpatrick, Year 13



YEAR 7 QUAYSIDE

Before the summer, all of Year 7 went to the Quayside for an exciting Geography field trip. First we went to the Ouseburn to see the animals at the farm. There were some lovely views to see, and so much to do. Then we walked down by the river and did some challenges, for example how many cars and pedestrians we could spot, a survey of what the buildings are used for and who could get the most honks from the drivers. After lunch in Trinity Square we walked back down, past the Swing Bridge and sat outside the Baltic for a bit, answering more questions on our worksheet. After a lovely day, we walked across the Millennium Bridge, back to the bus on our way back to school. And that was our day.

- Isabel Gallagher & Freya Adams, Year 8





YEAR 11 AMBASSADORS

I am incredibly proud of our Year 11 Ambassadors this year, who have truly excelled in their roles this term. Their dedication and enthusiasm shone brightly during the Year 6 Open Evening, where they welcomed students and their families, sharing insights about our school community. Additionally, they have been great role models in supporting our Year 7 and 8 students during morning registration, fostering a sense of belonging and guidance. Their commitment to helping others exemplifies the spirit of our school, and I am grateful for their hard work and positive impact!

- Miss Allen, Student Council Coordinator



Angel
ABRAHAM
wants everyone to feel included and represented.



Jamie
ADAMS will be someone people can talk to if they're struggling.



Enya
ARMSTRONG will help younger students feel welcome at St Thomas More.



Dannii
BASILAN will be someone lower years can rely on.



Alfie BEADLE wants to put his teamwork skills to good use.



Apollo
BEATTIE will help this year's Year 7 feel better than they did in Year 7.



Luke CASSIDY believes you should treat others as you want to be treated.



Alison
CONWAY will be a friendly face to younger years.



Georgia
DIXON will help those who needs someone to talk to.



Lewis DOWSE will help younger years overcome challenges and worries.



Dylan EVANS is helping introduce students to the school.



Lennon
FERGUSON wants to be a role model for the school community.



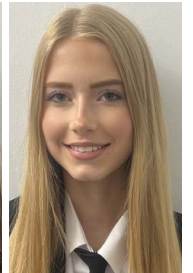
Eaven
FERNANDO likes to listen and be kind to people.



Eloise FERRY will help others reach their full potential.



Madeline
GARDENER will help younger students gain confidence.



Ellie GRAHAM will be there for those who need help or someone to talk to.



Hannah
HENDERSON will encourage all students to get involved in opportunities.



Rachel
HIBBERT will help people feel supported and be a friendly face.



Alice
HODGSON wants everyone to have a good experience.



Alfie HOWIE wants to represent our brilliant school!



Ava HUGHES will help younger students develop confidence.



Meg LAI will use her experience to support those facing difficulties.



Ella LAU will help people in younger years.



Seren LOGUE will inspire change and support her younger peers.





Carolin LUKE will help make positive change around school.



Stephanie MCGREGOR will create a welcoming environment.



Jacob MISA will do what he can to help.



Grace NELSON will make sure everyone has a good time at STM.



Thomas NOLAN will work in a team to help others.



Christopher PEARCE will ease the Year 7 transition to high school.



Diya REGI is passionate about helping others.



Sonia SANDHU will help everyone, especially the Year 7s.



Leah SHORT will be a role model for Year 7 to look up to.



Eleanor SIMPSON will be the support she needed in Year 7.



Lexi-Jo STONEHAM will help younger years be confident.



Lois TURNBULL will help Year 7 achieve their best at STM.



Heidi WATSON will help teach acceptance of neurodiversity.



Natan WESOLOWSKI will foster a positive school community.



Harvey WILKINSON will help others.



YEAR 9 AMBASSADORS

All students who wished to be considered for Year 9 Ambassador had to write a letter of application. The standard was very high and we had the largest number of applications ever. 48 students were chosen, who all have exceptional behaviour, 100% attendance, and will make great ambassadors. - Mrs Martin, Head of Year 9



"I already have experience working with younger children. I encouraged them to join in, to play fairly, and to most importantly have fun, which I took great joy in doing."

"I would set a good example to younger pupils. I am always there for my peers and support them as much as I can through tough times. I believe my friendly personality would help make younger pupils feel comfortable to talk."



"If chosen as a Year 9 ambassador I pledge to strive to be more like Jesus in my work, worship and relationships."

"I would like to offer help and support to those with disabilities. At STM I have learnt that disability does not affect people's ability to do anything. I would like to encourage others to see this too."

"I remember how nerve-racking and intimidating it was to start at STM. The previous ambassadors were very patient with me and my friends. I would like the opportunity to provide that for a new set of students."





RIGHT TO LIFE

RE DEBATE ON EUTHANASIA

Pupils at St Thomas More love nothing more than engaging in debate. At the start of term pupils in Year 11 debated the proposition "Euthanasia should not be legalised". They were all excellent and it hopefully developed their argument skills for the extended answers on the GCSE paper. - Mrs Borwick

After an hour-long preparation and discussion within our groups, we were brought to the hall in which we would be having our

debate. The proposing side (my rivals) went up first and presented their argument, then my team stood up and made our argument. Afterwards, we had a brief intermission where we discussed counter-arguments and questions. What followed the intermission was like witnessing a pack of hyenas fighting over the last bone. The opposition had very strong arguments and questions and quite frankly I was surprised at how riled up everyone was getting. After some argumentative ping pong, we took a vote and found that it had really helped with understanding how to structure a proper argument and lay down the facts. It also happened to be incredibly fun as it encouraged some people to be more confident in speaking up. I would give this lesson a 10/10, totally recommend!

- Ava Rosser, Year 11



"Did you know the chances of you being born is 1 in 400million? Everyone is put on this earth for a reason, whether you believe its by God or not, and therefore we believe euthanasia should not be legalised."

FURTHER RECOGNITION FOR THE WORK OF 'SAMANTHA'S LEGACY'

12 years after losing my sister, former STM student Samantha Madgin, to knife crime in 2007, we launched 'Samantha's Legacy'. Our vision was to educate young people on the dangers of knives and to share Samantha's story, giving insight into the devastating effects of knife crime. Over the years we have found ourselves involved in so much more. In 2020 we fought to bring the impactful Knife Angel statue to Gateshead, we have starred in an emotional EastEnders episode, produced several educational documentaries and have recently launched



Samantha's Retreat,

working with and supported by Northumbria Police. Our current project is 'Our Sam', teaming up with Wild Roses theatre group to produce an impactful theatre production of Samantha's story, our story.

We do not expect nor ask for recognition for the work we do, but it does widen our audience and gives us the strength and determination to do more. In 2021 we received the Prime Minister's 'Point of Light' award, receiving a letter from Boris Johnson. Our most recent recognition was being invited by the Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear to attend His Majesty's Royal Garden Party. To stand united in Buckingham Palace with many honourable people including the King and Queen themselves was truly overwhelming.

- Carly Barrett, STM Mentor



FIIGHTING FOR THE



SHORT BACK AND SHIELDS

Short Back & Shields are an up-and-coming band who consist of three Year 13 students from St Thomas More and their friend; they play Alternative/Indie rock. They have already released two songs on Spotify, Youtube and Apple Music and on the 12th of October, they released two new songs titled 'Bring Him Home' and 'Something Real'! You can support this brilliant local band by following them on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and by following them on Spotify. They post updates on upcoming gigs and new releases so keep your eyes peeled! - Caden and the band

To find out more about the band, click on the 'I Love North Shields' logo to see an article from May this year.



EX-PUPIL SUCCESSES

As always, we love sharing the stories of ex-pupils who have gone on to do interesting things. We loved hearing the story below, and would urge anyone who has an interesting story to contact us at alogie@stmacademy.org.uk to share it with the school community.

DANIELLE McCULLOUGH 2006 - 2010

My life at STM was one of a kind. I grew up in foster care and was not the best-behaved pupil. However, had STM not stuck by me the way that they did, I never would have made it to where I am today, a fully qualified Registered Veterinary Nurse.

I was 29 when I realised this would be my passion so I went back to college, worked hard and finally qualified. I always knew I liked animals and would take any opportunity to stop people and ask to stroke their dogs. Now, I get to do that every day by helping all animals the best that I can. STM, my foster mum and my own little family made it possible for me to do my dream job.



NEXT ISSUE CHRISTMAS 2024

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 @STMRCA