

MORE ROCK



St Thomas More
Catholic High School

EASTER 2024



AND WE SHALL TEACH
ROCK...
TO THE WORLD!

On Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th March, the school returned to the stage for the first time since Covid, with the epic tale of Dewey Finn and his class of misfits, battling to stick it to the man through the medium of Rock & Roll. Full report inside.

“I’ve discovered that I love acting and being on stage. The whole cast have grown so close to the point where we are like one big family! This experience has shown me what my true potential is and I take pride in this. I had an amazing night.”
-Helena Cameron, Year 7



SCHOOL OF ROCK 'STICKS IT TO THE MAN!'



School Of Rock is the first STM musical production since Covid. Despite this, the spark and energy injected into the entire process by the staff and continued through the students has been truly exciting.

The musical has allowed students from Year 7 through to Year 13 to unite in the school community through a joint love and passion for singing, dancing and acting. Weekly after-school rehearsals have formed new friendships, allowed for musical and acting development but most importantly, a drive to come into school everyday and engage with opportunities offered.

The motivation beacons from School Of Rock has

been extended into other studies within school, positively impacting the students and their engagement with school. Individuals involved have truly shone, highlighting the immense talent of STM students.

The dedication from those involved is something to be recognised and has been reflected by the positive reaction from the audience, and praise from each other.

Staff including Mrs Sinclair, Ms Hodgson, Mrs Gleeson, Mr Jones, Mr Chidambaram, Mrs Diamond and Michael must be praised for their time and hardwork to support our new multi-yeargroup extended family.

- Brooke Pyle, Year 13

“Being in the pit band for the musical was honestly one of the best experiences I’ve had; it’s something that will stay with me forever.”
- Cody Latimer

“The friends I have made and the memories I will keep forever. Sometimes when you feel alone and upset or are having a bad day, your team will lift you up!”
- Ava Appleby

“It was an emotional rollercoaster with its ups and downs, but I have made plenty of new friends and most of them aren’t even in my year group! I can’t wait to see what will happen next year!”
- Max Milburn

“I have learnt so much and picked up so many new skills thanks to all of the wonderful teachers and staff involved in the show. I have also found my love for dancing again.”
- Eloise Chandler

“School of Rock was an honour to be a part of. As my time at STM comes close to an end I am so proud to say I was a part of this production.”
- Sam Gibson

“Being on stage is exciting and scary, but when everyone feels the same it makes it so much better. I know the friends I have made will stick, and the growth in my confidence will always be a reminder of School of Rock!”
- Daisy Bamford

ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE;

Social action is something that I believe in wholeheartedly, and the last few months have seen yet more examples of our students being at the very heart of a number of current issues, and letting their voices be heard. We at St Thomas More are very proud of the work they are doing and the changes they are bringing about.

SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING CAMPAIGN GOES NATIONAL!

The Tyne & Wear Citizens Schools-based Counselling campaign, recently adopted as a national campaign by the National Citizens UK institution, seeks to get fully-accredited counsellors into all schools across England, bringing schools in line with their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The campaign started from pupils in St Thomas More when they were asked "What works well for you in terms of your mental health?" Without a counsellor, school staff who aren't necessarily trained to degree level would only be able to try and tackle the student issue

themselves, or go on to refer to CAMHS where there are waiting lists for up to 2 years.

With a school counsellor, students who can't be helped by their teachers and who can't access CAMHS, would be able to be seen in the comfort of their own school during the school day. We are very lucky to have a full-time school counsellor at St Thomas More, and our students are very passionate about making this a reality for all schools in the country.

TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH

- Helen Keller

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Children's Mental Health Week took place at the beginning of February and our Mental Health Action Team – made up of pupils from across all year groups in the school – planned two actions around the theme of "My Voice Matters".

The first was a whole school PSHE session completely planned and facilitated by our students using Google Meet. The lesson contained activities exploring three statements linked to positive mental wellbeing: "Get Talking", "You Are Not Alone" and "Every Problem has a Solution".

Our second action of Children's Mental Health Week, was a Mental Health March to the office of our constituency MP, Sir Alan Campbell. We wanted to thank him for his support of our Schools-based Counselling Campaign and to ask him



to keep it on the agenda for the Labour Party in the run up to the next General Election. A group of students from Year 7 up to Year 13 walked in the pouring rain from St Thomas More to his office in North Shields town centre to meet with him and share our walk mantra: "Mental health matters! Counsellors are important!"

CONVENTION OF THE NORTH

Last month, a group of students from the Mental Health Action Team attended the Convention of the North at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds. They were the only young people representing the North East of England. The team engaged with powerful figures including MPs, Mayors, business leaders, academics and policy stakeholders through presentations, questions and networking sessions. Our students presented and shared personal testimony on our Counselling campaign, which caused many of the public figures to sit up and listen to a practical solution to a large and complicated issue.

- Michael, Chaplain



NEWS AND EVENTS

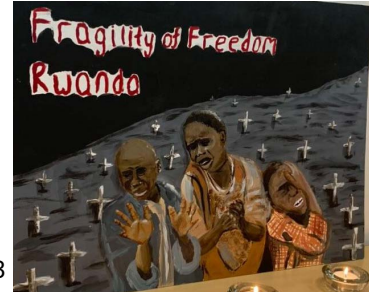


BIOLOGY OLYMPIAD

The British Biology Olympiad is a nationwide competition that runs every year. It required us to recall all of our core Biology knowledge and use our problem-solving skills in order to answer a series of challenging questions. From doing it in Year 12 and now in Year 13 I would say that it has highlighted to me the importance of analytical thinking as well as time management and attention to detail. Despite the challenge, I would recommend all enthusiastic biologists to take part. - Asitha Anil, Year 13

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EVENT - "FRAGILITY OF FREEDOM"

In January, a group of Sixth Form students attended North Tyneside's Holocaust Memorial Event on the theme of 'Fragility of Freedom'. Sam Gibson represented STM, making a speech about the resilience of people in the Holocaust, building on what he had learnt on his trip to Auschwitz. Caitlyn Davies also created a piece of artwork depicting the Rwanadan genocide. Rob Smith, one of the organisers, described the day as "a fantastic opportunity to come together under the ethos of tolerance, kindness and mutual support". - Rachel Bennett, Year 13



YEAR 8 GIRLS NORTH TYNESIDE NETBALL CHAMPIONS

On the 11th of March, we attended the Year 8 North Tyneside Netball tournament. The first match was against John Spence, which was a tight game until Evie-Rose McKay scored, making it 1-1. We beat Norham 6-0, Kings Priory 2-0 in a hard game, then another close one against Marden High, which we won 3-1. Our final match was against Marden Bridge. This was the deciding game, we win this match we win the tournament, lose and Marden High come out on top. It was 1-1 until the last 30 seconds when Romy Nathan scored the deciding goal to give us the win in the game, and the tournament by one point. - Lowenna Trevena & Emma Clarke, Year 8

YEAR 10 GIRLS QUALIFY FOR THE NEXT LEAGUE

A few weeks ago, our U15 girls netball team played in two tournaments against some of the best teams in the area. After a nail-biting win against RGS in the tri-area cup, we needed to win the last match against Newcastle School for Girls, but we faced tough defence and strong shooters. We were neck and neck until Liv scored a last minute winner on the final whistle. In the North Tyneside tournament, our two teams finished first and third. Our successes this season are down to Mrs Johnson, who even came in to lead us to victory on her days off. - Poppy Bloomfield, Maddie Gardner and Alison Conway, Year 10



PROM SHOP EVEN BETTER THAN LAST YEAR

Prom Shop was once again a resounding success this year! Launched two years ago to cultivate community spirit, sustainability, and accessibility, the Prom Shop has exceeded all expectations! With unwavering support from dedicated staff, parents, and carers, along with a remarkably generous donation of breath-taking dresses from the brand DressMeZee, anticipation for Prom night among Year 13 students has reached an all-time high! - Mrs Anderson, RE

YEAR 11 GIVE UP THEIR FRIDAY NIGHT FOR GEOGRAPHY

On Friday 15th March, 44 Year 11 students boarded the minibuses for an intensive 24hour revision trip ahead of their forthcoming GCSE exams. Students played pass the parcel with Geography case studies, learnt how to write the perfect 9-mark answer, and Mr Murray even managed to get them out for a walk along the beach. Students found the trip incredibly valuable and a lot of fun! - Mr Logie, Geography



MORE NEWS AND EVENTS



MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE TO THOSE IN NEED

A massive thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas Foodbank appeal. On the final day before Christmas, we took two minibuses and two cars full of food and amazing Sixth Form students to the Salvation Army. They used it to cater for 60 vulnerable members of our local community and to help put together 400 gifts bags (which they were running out of supplies for until we arrived). Seeing their operation first hand is really sobering and makes you realise what we sometimes take for granted. - Mr Clifford, Assistant Head of Year 13

RUNNERS REPRESENT NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY

On Saturday 18th March, James Sturman, Joseph Duthie-Brown and I were selected to race in the English Schools Cross Country Championships in Pontefract, West Yorkshire. It was an amazing experience just to be selected for the largest junior distance race in the country, competing against the best runners in the UK. Massive thanks to Mrs Plummer for giving us these opportunities, to Mrs Collins for helping out and to Mr Hitchcock, who dedicates many of his evenings to specifically train us! We are already excited for next year and hope other aspiring athletes can join us! – Elliot Moore, Year 12



YEAR 12 GEOGRAPHERS ON THE BEACH AT DRURIDGE

On the 6th of February, the Year 12 Geography class took a trip to Druridge Bay to practise our fieldwork skills for our upcoming NEA, including measuring wave frequency and investigating sand dune succession. This also gave us deeper understanding of the Coasts topic that we are currently studying. After a fun-filled morning, Mr Murray took us to Blyth to get fish and chips and an ice cream before heading back for afternoon lessons! - Lucy Fitzpatrick, Year 12

MY CLIPPER ADVENTURE by MRS ROBERTSON

Now that I have had some time to reflect on my fabulous trip I am still struggling to believe it really happened. On arriving in Cape Town in early November, I was swept up in the excitement of being part of the Clipper fleet; we had the opportunity to take in all the tourist attractions such as going to top of Table Mountain and make the sobering journey to Robben Island. Once I had completed my refresher training it was time to board the boat and set sail across the Southern Ocean. This is the most remote ocean on the planet, where outside of my crew mates the nearest companions were on the International Space Station.



We had a reasonable first week and enjoyed good winds but the second week brought the big seas of the notorious 'Roaring Forties'. The ocean swells were bigger than buildings and wind speeds reached 70 mph. As we continued to sail South and approach the ice line, we all battled with the challenges of 24 hour watch keeping and living on a 70ft boat with 22 other people. The camaraderie was fantastic and everyone supported each other to keep ourselves safe, well fed and motivated. The days sped by and we were delighted to find ourselves in 3rd place as we changed course to head North and began to enjoy some warmer weather. I have memories of the night watches where I had to be on deck as waves crashed over our heads but I also have memories of sunny days on deck where the sailing was easy and we played music and ate endless quantities of biscuits.



22 days after we set sail, our arrival in Fremantle, Australia was unforgettable and very emotional. My daughter was waiting to greet us along with many other supporters. Our podium finish of 3rd place gave us plenty to celebrate in the week that followed. I had mixed emotions as I waved the fleet off to start the next stage of the Round the World Race; my time on Dare to Lead tested my resilience to my absolute limits so part of me was relieved to be staying on dry land but I was a little wistful that my adventure was over. - Mrs Robertson, History



IN NEED OF A HOBBY?

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES REPORT

St Thomas More students continue to engage in a wide range of extracurricular activities each week, and their enthusiasm is truly commendable! The increased attendance is a testament to their dedication and the hard work of our fantastic staff who organise and run these activities. Recent successes include:

- Our Year 7 NUFC Foundation programme and our Year 8 Brilliant Club with Newcastle University have been met with great enthusiasm and have provided our students with valuable learning experiences.

- Last half-term, a total of 540 pupils attended extra-curricular clubs. Year 11 were top of the list thanks to all their hard work in revision sessions, with Year 7s a close second. We would especially encourage more students in Years 8, 9 and 10 to take part in the super opportunities offered.

- the number of free bagels provided has been steadily rising, with a total of 365 bagels munched last week alone. Remember free bagels are available every morning in the dining hall.

- the Science Department is combining breakfast with revision for our Year 11 students, providing twice-weekly before school sessions, with trays of bagels.



The benefits of extracurricular clubs are numerous. They provide a platform for



students to pursue their passions and interests outside the regular curriculum, they foster a sense of camaraderie and teamwork among peers, they promote social interaction and they build lasting friendships. Supporting your child in pursuing their interests and passions can have a significant impact on their academic progress as well as their self-confidence.

To find out more about what we offer, please check the website at www.stmacademy.org.uk/extra-curricular-enrichment/. - Mr Flynn, Assistant Headteacher

“At Thursday film club we enjoy watching films and spending time with our friends. Our favourite so far has been Evan Almighty!” - Emily, Sophia and Anoushka, Year 7

“Food Tech club teaches a good skill to have for the future. We made brownies last week which were amazing, so I made them again on Saturday and my family really enjoyed them too!” - Toby, Year 9

“Science club is really good fun, trying lots of different experiments. I have really enjoyed finding out more about space!” - Ollie, Year 7

“I really enjoy football club! I have learnt lots of new skills and enjoyed playing other schools. I have also made lots of new friends from other classes.” - Hannah, Year 7



COFFEE WITH THE HEAD

I was recently invited to 'Coffee with the Head', which is one of the highest rewards you can get in school. Students from each yeargroup are nominated and two students from each year are selected each month. You could get nominated for lots of things like representing the school, being a role model or settling into the school well and having a good attitude. I was nominated for having entirely positives on class charts and working hard in lessons.

You join Mr Watson and discuss why you have been nominated, and what you enjoy both inside and outside of school. As you discuss these topics refreshments are available and you are invited to share your experiences with the other students. This was a really interesting experience and a good way to talk about what we enjoy about school with Mr Watson and compare experiences with other pupils. I am very proud to have been selected.



- Megan Marlborough, Year 8

YEAR 7 AUTHOR VISIT DAN SMITH



On Friday 15th March, we welcomed author Dan Smith to St Thomas More to continue our World Book Day celebrations. Dan spoke to all of Year 7 for an hour, sharing stories from his childhood adventures around the world, including swimming with wild river dolphins in Brazil and travelling alone back to Britain to go to boarding school at the age of 7! He explained how all these experiences, as well as his love of film, shaped his creativity and desire to write. Dan introduced our students to his diverse range of books, from Viking revenge adventure 'She Wolf' to thrilling sci-fi mysteries like 'Boy X' and the war-time ghost story set in the North East 'Nisha's War'. Year 7 students then asked Dan questions for over 15 minutes, showing how much they enjoyed his talk.

Dan then went on to lead an hour-long workshop with 30 keen creative writers from Years 7 and 8, who had gained a place in the workshop by writing 'what happened next' in the opening chapters of a range of Dan's books. Our students hugely enjoyed Dan's writing prompts and the discussions he led.

Sophie Burgess in Year 8 said, "He read us a bit of his scary story and told us about how he was inspired. Then we made the start of our own scary story." Alice Slowikowska in Year 7 said, "It went well because I got to say my thoughts and write a bit of a story." Lily Guest in Year 8 said "It was great! I really enjoyed it and Dan Smith was so kind".

Dan said after the creative writing workshop, "The group had lots of brilliant ideas, were willing to have a go, and did some excellent writing. You can definitely be proud of them all."

Well done to all of Year 7 for making our visitor feel so welcome, and especially to our creative writers for taking on this opportunity with wonderfully positive attitudes.

- Mrs Cantwell-Ahmed, English Department



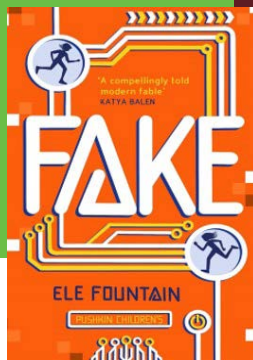
"Don't go in the school.

That was the only rule Mrs. C gave us. We could go anywhere else - the town, the woods, but not the old school on the hill. It would be the perfect location for a horror film - cracked windows, dust everywhere, there was even rumoured to be a ghost spotted there..."

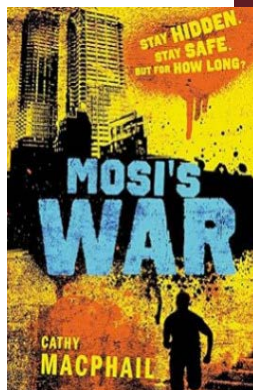
Extract from Emily McGuiirk, Year 7

RECOMMENDED BY STAFF:

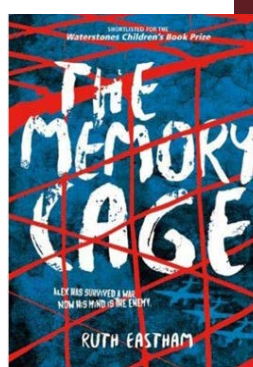
Mr Miles recommends 'Fake' by Ele Fountain: I'd recommend this book because it is a compelling exploration of truth, identity, and the power of determination. If you like stories about the power of technology, ethical dilemmas, and life-saving secrets you'd particularly like this book.



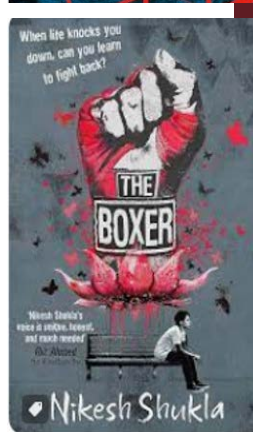
Mr Joyce recommends 'Mosi's War' by Cathy MacPhail: This is an easy read on a difficult, thought-provoking subject. The chapters are short which makes it ideal for the start of lessons. It is about a Somali boy who is seeking asylum in Glasgow when something sinister happens. Mosi and his friend Patrick must decide what to do!



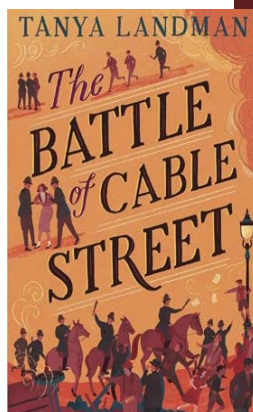
Miss Dalrymple recommends 'The Memory Cage' by Ruth Eastham: Once I started reading this book, I couldn't stop. There are so many different threads to the story, Alex's relationships with his brother and Grandad, the family secret, Alex's past, they all weave together beautifully. An emotional rollercoaster of a book.



Mrs Szoltysek recommends 'The Boxer' by Nikesh Shukla: I warmed instantly to the main character who has a lot going on in his life and who turns to boxing to help him find out who he is. Chapters are short and it was a definite page turner. I'm not particularly a boxing fan so don't let the title put you off. This is so much more than a book about boxing.

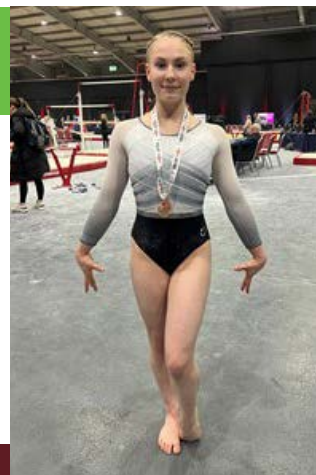


Mrs. McCabe recommends 'The Battle of Cable Street' by Tanya Landman: As a teacher I love what the author says at the start of the book... 'Facts are itchy, awkward things that can make you feel sweaty and uncomfortable. If I've learned one thing in my life it's that most people prefer pretty lies to ugly truths. But maybe you're not like most people. Maybe you're one of the brave ones?' I want my students to be brave and face facts head on!



LAURA WINS VAULTING BRONZE

I am an Elite Artistic Gymnast training at the City of Newcastle Gymnastics Academy for 20 hours a week, competing on the floor, bars, beam and vault. On the 2nd March I travelled to Telford to compete in the Senior English Championships. I achieved a personal best score overall, coming 18th in the country and won a bronze medal on the vault, my favourite piece of apparatus. This competition qualified me for the Senior British Championships on the 16th March in Liverpool. It was a great experience in a huge field of amazing gymnasts and the highlight was coming 13th on vault with my personal best score. I am grateful to have been able to compete in Liverpool again and excited for future events. - Laura Nelson, Year 13



EX-PUPIL SUCCESSES

This is your chance to show off all that success we knew you were capable of when you left us all those many (or not so many) years ago. If you or someone you know would like to feature in our ex-pupil section, no matter how big or small your success, please contact alogie@stmacademy.org.uk.

BETH TIPPINS

2009 - 2016

After I left STM, I took two gap years (I was indecisive about what I wanted to do!) and eventually completed a degree in Performing Arts at Sunderland University. I trained as an opera singer during this period and after I graduated from SU I was accepted into the Guildford School of Acting, where I've just completed a two year Masters in Musical Theatre with merit.

I now live in Hampshire and am currently performing in multiple music projects, running my own choir, and am helping to mould the future brains of music as a teacher (shout-out to Miss Hodgson for providing some much needed inspiration). I still remember causing havoc in the Music department with my A Level class, playing pranks including the infamous "Haydn Seek"!



CARLY BARRETT (née MADGIN)

2002 - 2010

For me, success is reaching your aims and finding your purpose in life. While I was a pupil at STM, my life took a traumatic turn at the end of Year 11 and my aims in life became a distant memory.



Struggling through three years of Sixth Form I had given up on all my hopes and dreams. However, being in a school environment that supports its pupils is what I remember and is the reason I wanted to be part of it all again. One significant part of my story, my Amazon Rainforest fundraising Expedition in 2009, was a turning-point in my life that would not have been possible without the support of STM staff.

My aims in life became clear again years after leaving school. I got married and had children, then began my academic journey all over again, studying Criminology and Sociology at University and launching Samantha's Legacy, our charity that raises awareness of knife crime.

My success in life has been finding my purpose. I believe that purpose is to use my heartache, my tragedies and my experiences to support others and to make a difference. I am honoured that I am now able to do this in the school that was once there to support me.

NEXT ISSUE SUMMER 2024

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