



MORE LIFE

St Thomas More Catholic High School

CHRISTMAS 2024

HELENA SWITCHES ON CHRISTMAS

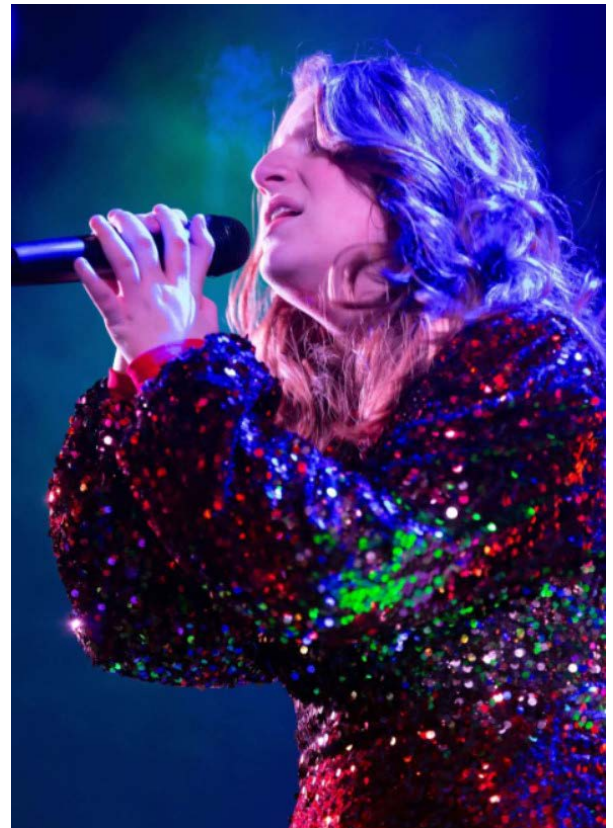
Earlier this year I applied to compete in Trinity's Got Talent 2024, a competition for people of all ages in the North East. I was so excited when my application was accepted as it gave me the chance to perform solo. There was a cash prize but the winner also got to perform alongside 2023 'The Voice' winners Hunni at the Christmas Light Switch on.

On the day of the event I was so anxious seeing the level of the performers and other vocalists, but I made it through the heats and on to win the final; I could not believe it when they announced my name. A month before I had lost one of my music mentors, Georgia Tate, and her partner, in a motorbike

accident, and I donated my prize to the fundraiser set up in their memory. The money, which will fund a Music Hub to give access to music clubs, has gone on to raise over ten thousand pounds.

On the 21st November I performed to hundreds of people who had gathered in Trinity Square for the Christmas light switch on. They did my hair and make up, I had backing dancers and it was all very professional. I felt like a celebrity. I loved meeting Hunni, and they have promised to keep in touch. I could not have asked for a better day and I know Georgia would have been proud of me.

- Helena Cameron, Year 8



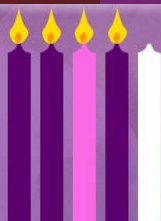
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ADVENT CHARITY

"The conductor raises his baton, the choir takes a collective breath."

#TinyAdventPoems remind us that Advent is a time of waiting in anticipation. It is also a time for charity, and students have been doing their best for the following:

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Sixth Form
 <p>Supports individuals (and families) suffering from incurable illnesses in the North East.</p>	 <p>Gives a pilgrimage holiday to disabled children or children who have faced life's difficulties some respite.</p>	 <p>Supports individuals (and families) suffering from incurable illnesses in the North East.</p>	 <p>Foodbank Appeal for North East.</p>	 <p>Christmas Foodbank Appeal based in North Shields.</p>	 <p>Foodbank Appeal for North East.</p>



EXAM TIPS, INSPIRING HISTORIANS AND AN EXCELLENT BREAKFAST!

Every year the History department take a group of Year 13 students to London. They get the opportunity to listen to a Tudor Historian Tracy Borman discuss Henry VII and then get exam tips from a senior examiner. We once again enjoyed the excellent musical 'Six' and then back to our comfortable rooms at the Premier Inn. The next morning, we were up bright and early after an excellent breakfast, to visit the Tudor marvel that is Hampton Court.

Max Godfrey concluded that the most valuable part of the trip was the chance to "ask questions to a professional and respected historian. Additionally, we then received exam technique advice, which was useful for understanding exactly how to pick up marks."

Ben Ledger added, "for me the best part of the trip was our visit to Hampton Court. Alongside the stunning renaissance and baroque architecture, it was incredibly interesting to see how the palace functioned as both a home and a seat of power for English monarchs. I also enjoyed visiting the Tower of London, though we regrettably did not manage to steal the crown jewels, to our collective disappointment. Five stars." - Mrs McCabe, History Department



INSPIRING POSSIBILITIES IN THE WORLD OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS



The trip concluded on a high note with a dazzling evening performance of The Lion King at the Lyceum Theatre. The awe-inspiring production, with its stunning visuals and powerful storytelling, was a perfect way to celebrate creativity and collaboration, values that resonate with the STEM spirit.

Students returned to school eager to share their experiences and newfound knowledge. For many, it was not only a memorable visit further afield but a glimpse into the possibilities that their futures may hold.

- Mrs Flynn, ICT Department

"We all really enjoyed the London trip for business as it was an educational experience. Going round and doing all the sightseeing made us look at London with a positive outlook and realise it is a very beautiful city. The STEM conference educated us on careers and made us realise there are thousands of different paths you can take; it showed us our career paths can change throughout our lives as we aren't just stuck doing one job for the rest of our life. The three of us are very thankful to the teachers and the school for this opportunity."

- Grace Campbell, Sienna Mullarkey and Olivia Richardson, Year 11

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PINK DAY 2024

The school celebrates Pink Day each year to show support and raise awareness for Breast Cancer Now. All of the Sixth Formers wore something pink, some people came in dresses and shark outfits and funny costumes that were pink. We also had students in Sixth Form putting pink glitter on students' faces.

Mrs McMillan made ribbons and bracelets with the breast cancer symbol on and students went round to members of staff and Sixth Form to sell them to raise donations. A raffle was also held with the chance to win a cake as the prize, thanks to Abigail Tindle's mam for the cake (pictured to the right and won by Mr Murray!) There was also a cake stall held in the dining hall to raise more donations.



Mrs Borwick, who supports the students in organising Pink Day each year, said "Thank you to everyone who helped us make this Pink Day the best ever - the sense of community on the day was very strong indeed. I wanted to let you know our final total for the day was an amazing £1192.04!!!"

- Phoebe Jeremiah, Year 12

SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTION

On Election Day we had a really great experience, as it gave us a really good sense of responsibility and made us feel like we were really involved in the St Thomas More community. On the day of the election we helped make the day run smoothly and kept things in order. We were role models for the younger years and we loved helping people vote, which we think is very important for each student! It was also great to work as a team with the other Ambassadors!

- Isla Spark & Holly Parker,
Year 9 Ambassadors



They may have left STM in the summer, but Lucas Brown and Josh Bennis continue to campaign for action with Tyne & Wear Citizens by sharing their stories.

In November, we travelled to London to speak at a conference calling for action on mental health. Present was Professor Vincent Rougeau, President of the College of the Holy Cross - a Jesuit Law School in the USA. Prof Rougeau shared insights into his life and faith and was hugely inspiring. His dad was also a lawyer during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. I wish we had had a few hours to talk to him!!

Lucas and Josh shared personal testimony about how their involvement in Sixth Form boosted their self-confidence, gave them the courage to do public speaking, and step outside of their comfort zones. Both boys are attending Northumbria University and getting on really well. This was a reminder that even once our students leave our school or Sixth Form, the experiences they had with us really do hold weight in their lives and their identities.

- Michael,
School Chaplain



Tyne & Wear citizens UPDATE



SPRECHEN SIE DEUTSCH?



Frau Fisher, who was there to witness their success, said they were absolutely fantastic, and she was particularly proud of the way that Joe picked up and commented on an argument made by one of his opponents. Mrs Hallam commented that this was "a huge win against previous winners! Three rounds to go!"

TEACHER EXCHANGES

This term has been a busy one in the German Department. We have had a German student, Medina, doing an internship with the department for six weeks. She says, "I've spent my time engaging in German conversation classes with students, observing a variety of different lessons, and helping the Sixth Formers prepare for their debate. Working with the students has been both rewarding and impressive due to their enthusiasm and talent for language learning. The MFL department has been particularly welcoming, so I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn amongst such dedicated staff and students."



We recently took part in a German Debate against Watford Grammar School for Boys (previous winners of the competition) on the topic: "Should environmental education courses be compulsory in schools?" And we won! Whilst it was a challenge arguing convincingly in German, we had a lot of fun and it really developed our language skills. From start to finish, we had the help of a German university student – Medina - who gave us advice and feedback on our speeches and helped us to understand the subtleties of using the German language in an argument - it was very informative.

During the debate, we took turns against the other team to present our points, and after over 20 minutes of deliberation the Goethe Institute for German found us to be the winners! We will go on to the next round in January.

We'd like to say thank you to Medina, Frau Fisher and Frau Ritchie for all their help to prepare us for the debate and I'd like to thank Lily, Sam and Scarlett, my fellow team members for their excellent German arguments. We can't wait for the next round!
- Joe Eggett, Year 12

In addition, Miss Finn received funding from the UK German Connection to spend a week in our partner school in Germany. "During my visit, I was lucky enough to see many special Advent traditions, including St Nicholas celebrations. On the 5th December, parades take place all across Germany to celebrate the bringer of gifts. Children put out boots to find them filled with treats the next morning (if they've been good of course!). Students then send chocolate St Nicks to each other (and to some lucky teachers) with a small note, which are delivered in lessons on the 6th December."

"It wasn't all about St Nicholas treats and Christmas markets though! I received a really warm welcome from my German colleagues, and students were very curious about me and STM, particularly those excitedly applying to take part in our next exchange! The visit underlined how privileged we are to have such a strong connection with our partner school."
- Frau Fisher and Frau Finn, MFL Dept

WINTRY READS



The Christmas holidays are a great opportunity to curl up with a good book. The School Library has a new collection of Wintry Reads, aimed at Year 7 but which could be enjoyed by big kids of any age!!

Pictured is a small selection, for the full list please head to the school website.

- Miss Edwards,
School Librarian



PILGRIMS OF HOPE

In October and November, Year 8 pupils attended the annual Retreat at the Youth Village. The Youth Village is a dedicated youth centre run by the Youth Ministry Team, an organisation set up by the Catholic Diocese to give young people an opportunity to learn, reflect and deepen their relationship with their faith.

We had a great time exploring the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope", which is the theme Pope Francis has given to the whole church for this year's Jubilee Year. We relaxed, played games, socialised with our friends, and even got out for a couple of walks in the chilly autumn air. We reflected and spent time in prayer and got to know new people in our year group.

Emily and Isobel in 8T wrote: "The retreat was fun. It was a good way to leave all of the drama behind. We learned a lot about different peoples' journeys to the UK." Harry, Coleson, Josh and Harrison, also 8T, added: "We really enjoyed the activities through the day with our group leader Andreas and we enjoyed the food." - Michael, School Chaplain



10 NOVELS ON THE THEME OF FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP

Ten novels exploring the good, the bad and the ugly side of family relationships, and the power of friendship. From Flora Poste sorting out the doomed Starkadders in Stella Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm*, to a young boy fighting evil with the help of his grandmother in Roald Dahl's *The Witches*, this list has something for everyone.

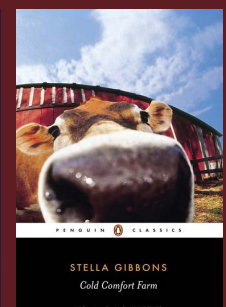
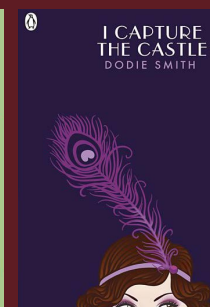
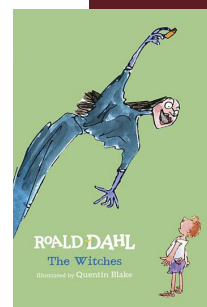
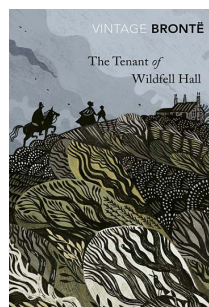
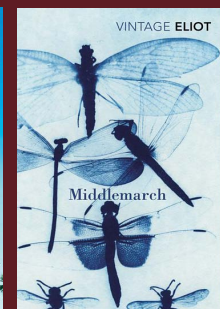
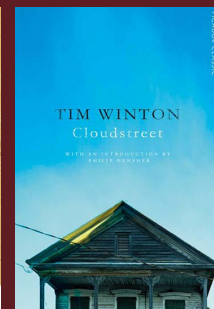
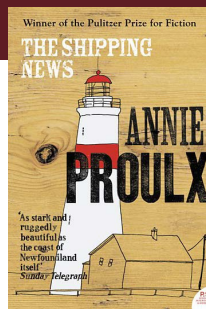
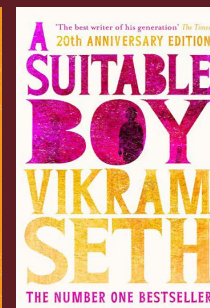
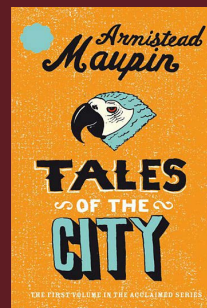
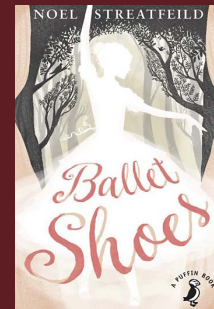
- A Suitable Boy by Vikram Seth
- Ballet Shoes by Noel Streatfeild
- Cloudstreet by Tim Winton
- Cold Comfort Farm by Stella Gibbons
- I Capture the Castle by Dodie Smith
- Middlemarch by George Eliot
- Tales of the City by Armistead Maupin
- The Shipping News by Annie Proulx
- The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Bronte
- The Witches by Roald Dahl



SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION WITH BISHOP STEPHEN

In July, I had the honour of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, a milestone that marked a significant step in my spiritual journey. The ceremony took place at St Cuthbert's church in North Shields, led by Bishop Stephen and surrounded by my family and friends; there was a profound atmosphere of joy and support.

Preparation for this moment began in May, when we engaged in a series of classes, encouraging meaningful discussions about our personal beliefs and experiences. Building connections with my peers made the experience so special, as we talked and supported each other. This day reinforced my sense of belonging in the community I had been brought up in. This was the real start of our spiritual journey and we all look forward to what our future in the church will look like. - Daisy Bamford, Year 10



NEWS AND EVENTS

YEAR 9 BASKETBALL STARS

At the end of November, myself and other boys on the Year 9 Basketball team participated in a game of CVL! (Central Venue League) I hope you'll be happy to hear because we won all four games, winning by a lot of points for each game. All that practice on the back yard is paying off! - Jacob Santoyo, Year 9



DNA PROFILING BY A LEVEL BIOLOGISTS

Upon arrival at the Life Sciences Centre, students completed a quick experiment to discover whether or not they had the dominant TAS2R38 gene, better known as the 'bitter gene'. Some students gagged at the taste, however others like me couldn't taste anything and we were going to find out why using PCR and gel electrophoresis.

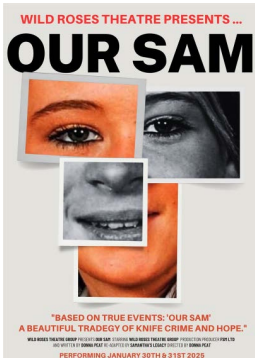
Heading down to the lab students got suited up with gloves, goggles, and lab coats before extracting a sample of their own DNA by centrifuging a test tube of saliva. After adding primers, free nucleotides and DNA polymerase, we made millions of copies of the specific DNA region using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). A fluorescent tag was then added to samples using micropipettes so they would be visible under UV light. Students with at least one copy of the dominant form of the gene had some ability to taste PTC and other bitter flavours found in vegetables like broccoli and cabbage. Students with 2 dominant alleles were supertasters and found the taste extremely bitter! - Martha McIntosh, Year 13

UKMT MATHS GIRLS OLYMPIAD

At the end of September, we sat the UKMT Maths Girls Olympiad along with Lauren Hastie and Annabel Whitehead (Year 12). This challenge was for Further Maths students and it is our second time competing. The challenge is designed to encourage more girls to take part in Mathematics and consists of five, multiple-part problems which are intended to cover a challenging range of topics. Three of us were awarded Merits while Annabel was awarded a Distinction. The Olympiad was an invaluable experience for us to think outside the box when solving a problem. This will help us in our A-level studies and beyond, as we prepare for university.



- Izzy Dutton and Nicole Lai, Year 13



OUR SAM - A 'POWERFUL, EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED DRAMA'

In recent issues of the newsletter, I have shared some of the work I have been doing with 'Samantha's Legacy', the charity we set up in memory of my sister, who was murdered in 2007. Over the past few months I have been working on a play called 'Our Sam', which will be performed at Whitley Bay Playhouse in January. Tickets can be purchased via Whitley Bay Playhouse's website.

The play follows the devastating ripple effects of this senseless act of violence on her family, friends, and community. It explores themes of grief and lost potential. The narrative is framed through flashback scenes recalled prior to the tragedy, highlighting the irreversible impact of knife crime.

- Carly Barrett, Learning Mentor

LESSONS FROM AUSCHWITZ

On 12th November we went on the 'Lessons From Auschwitz' programme trip to Krakow. Before we went, we took part in an orientation seminar where we learnt about some of the families in the Holocaust, to individualise them and remember them not just as a statistic. We discussed what the Holocaust was and how it affected families from all over Europe. The next part of the programme was a trip to Auschwitz 1 and Birkenau camps. We met with students from other schools in the North East and had guided tours of the memorials and museum. Many of the displays were really harrowing, including seeing photographs and the book of names. It was also really informative and we came away with a more insightful perspective. The day ended with a memorial led by Rabbi Andrew Shaw, who voiced his fears of rising antisemitism and reminded us of how this behaviour should be stopped before it becomes something more serious. We look forward to sharing our experience with others. - Amelia Cerisola and Joe Eggett, Year 12



EXTRA-CURRICULAR

Many of our students participate in a variety of activities outside school hours. Here we look at some recent successes of three of our students:

LILI WRIGHT EQUESTRIAN EVENTING

As an experienced rider, in October this year I bought a 16.1hands (just over 2 metres tall) grey, part Irish, part Appaloosa horse named Kyle. I have since ridden with the Morpeth Hunt on their opening meet as well as other hunt meets where trail scent is used – so no foxes are put at risk. During hunts we reach high speeds galloping and jumping fences and hedges well over one metre high.



As a fourteen year old, I have been competing against adults and experienced jumpers in show-jumping events, where we have been placed fourth and sixth - I love our success! I love spending my weekends exercising Kyle in the Northumberland countryside and generally forming a working bond with him. It is my hope to continue competing with him as well as having fun recreationally.

Anyone wanting to get into this sport, we have some really good riding schools in the area. I learned to ride at Murton Equestrian Centre and there is Stepney Bank Stables in Byker and Firtree Farm in West Moor. I hope to take GCSE PE in Year 10 and 11 and to use horse riding as one of my sports!

- Lili Wright, Year 9

LEWIS STUBBS KICKBOXING

We would like to introduce you to new world champion Lewis Stubbs. Lewis has just returned from Carrara in Italy, where he has been competing in the Unified World Kickboxing Championships. This was a fantastic experience for him, doing what he has been training for over the past four years.



Two bronze, two silver and a gold is not bad for a first timer. He had some hard battles, especially in the 16-18 category, where he was beaten in the final by two points to an eleven-time world champion. He is destined to be a multiple world champion himself if he keeps up the hard work and enthusiasm he has for the sport. An unbelievable achievement. Please congratulate him on his success!

- Mr Rayson and Mr Stubbs



EVIE MAUGHAN CROSS COUNTRY

I represent Wallsend Harriers and I race in the Harrier League. I recently represented St Thomas More for the first time and I came third. I was proud to qualify for the next round. At the age of 10, I showed my first interest for running. Ever since then, I have never lost interest in the sport.

At first I was nervous but when the whistle blew for the race my nerves went away. I always give 100% effort in every race and training session.

I always encourage people to do the sport as it keeps you active instead of being bored in your room. It's also good for keeping healthy and happy. I love cross country and it is always fun to get a bit muddy. It is often freezing but I get warm fast once I am running.

My dream is to run for England in cross country, which I will work hard to achieve over the years. I believe everyone should follow their dreams big or small. - Evie Maughan, Year 7



As we have reported in previous issues, our boys teams are also having a fantastic year. In November our Senior boys (Hugh Fenwick, Elliot Moore, Zac Brannon, Isaac Pottinger, Jonny Gaukrodger and Joe Eggett) qualified for the English Schools National Finals in Leeds, which will take place on Saturday 1st March 2025. This is an incredible achievement, they will be racing against the fastest cross country teams in the country! The boys have been training really hard to achieve this; some of them are coached by Mr Hitchcock out of school, so lots of credit must go to him too. - Mrs Plummer, PE Department



CAITLIN CONTINUES TO IMPRESS

Having completed my A-Levels at STM this summer, I am now at Northumbria University studying Sport & Exercise Science. I was thrilled to receive this NU Allstars Scholarship award for leadership. The scholarship has given me the opportunity to speak to incredible people, has helped financially, and has also been a springboard to work experience in Sports Analysis with the FA. I want to thank all the STM staff, especially Mr Burnett, Mr Clifford, Mrs Hallam and Mrs McMillan, as without them I wouldn't have been able to achieve all that I have so far! I am deeply grateful for this recognition and I am excited for the future opportunities it will create for my career and personal growth! - Caitlin Sales, 2017 - 2024.



EX-PUPIL SUCCESSES

In this issue, we celebrate the ongoing success of some of our most athletic ex-pupils. Whatever path they have chosen, we are always on the lookout for ex-pupils to feature, as early as the Easter issue. Please contact alogie@stmacademy.org.uk.



ABIGAIL LEMBERGER

2008 - 2015 After leaving STM, I attended William Woods University in the state of Missouri in the USA on a tennis scholarship.

I graduated in 2018 with my undergraduate degree in Exercise Science and a minor in Criminal Justice, then did a masters in Athletic Administration whilst working as a graduate assistant in strength and conditioning. After three years working as an assistant tennis professional at Old Hawthorne Country Club in Columbia, Missouri, I returned to my old university in 2023, initially as an assistant coach. In 2024 I was offered the chance to take over the program as head coach of both the men's and women's teams. St Thomas More provided me with the platform I needed to become a successful leader and follow my dreams of working in sport. I have fond memories of participating in PE and sports clubs and some of my favourite memories are playing on the Netball and Rounders teams, as well as my A level classes for PE.

As a student bursting with energy (perhaps a little too much at times, according to some of my teachers!), sport was my outlet and the key to keeping me focused both in and out of the classroom. Running quickly became my passion and the sport where I truly excelled. I was fortunate to have the unwavering encouragement and support of STM throughout my time there. In Sixth Form particularly, the school ensured I had the flexibility to balance training alongside my studies, which made all the difference.

After leaving STM, I embarked on an incredible journey as a professional athlete, travelling the world and ultimately competing for Team GB in the 1500m at the London 2012 Olympics, a truly unforgettable experience that remains a highlight of my life. Now retired from professional athletics, running is something I still enjoy but purely for fun. These days, my career has taken me into Destination Marketing at Tripadvisor, where I help tourist boards design and execute impactful digital campaigns.

ROSS MURRAY

2002 - 2009



NEXT ISSUE EASTER 2025

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