



3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

**Re: Spring Term Week 5 Headteacher Update**

I am pleased to share that our Year 11 Parents' Evening, conducted virtually last Thursday, saw a robust turnout. Your active participation in this event is greatly appreciated, and we are thankful for the feedback provided through the parental voice questionnaire distributed by Mr Maidment. Your insights play a crucial role in shaping our school family and enhancing the educational experience for our children. In the upcoming weeks, we will compile and publish the gathered information on our website at the usual address, which can be found [here](#). Thank you for your ongoing support.

I would like to share a very personal account from Mr Walker, our Head of PE. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2024, just a few days after his son's 10th birthday, Mr Walker was diagnosed with cancer. After noticing a lump on the side of his neck in late November, further tests and scans confirmed he had Stage 2 cancer of the tonsils and throat, which had spread into the lymph nodes. From the outset, he was told that his cancer was curable, but the treatment would be, in their words, "brutal." His journey began with surgery in March to remove the primary cancer from his tonsils, tongue, and throat, followed by chemotherapy and 30 sessions of radiotherapy at The Christie throughout April and May. In September, a further operation was needed to remove additional cancerous lymph nodes from his neck. Throughout this ordeal, he was fortunate to be under the care of an incredible team of surgeons, doctors, and nurses, whose dedication and expertise quite literally saved his life.

As a private person, Mr Walker found this journey both physically and mentally overwhelming. He leaned heavily on a close circle of family and friends, to whom he will always be indebted. One source of invaluable support has been MENTORS (Manchester Ear Nose and Throat Oncology Recovery Support), a group based at Wythenshawe Hospital that provides a vital community for patients and their families. Comprising doctors, nurses, dietitians, speech therapists, and fellow patients, MENTORS offers a safe space to listen, share experiences, and regain confidence in life after treatment. The healthcare professionals involved devote an extraordinary amount of their own time to organising support groups and events for those facing head and neck cancer.

In recognition of the care he has received, Mr Walker wants to give something back. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, just over a year since his first operation, he will be taking part in the Nantwich 10K to raise money for MENTORS. Many staff from St James' will be running alongside him to support this fantastic cause. While MENTORS do not have a JustGiving page, donations can be made via [www.wearementors.net](http://www.wearementors.net). Any contribution, no matter the amount, would be deeply appreciated, and he is aiming to raise over £1,000 in total. Thank you for taking the time to read Mr Walker's story, and I hope you will join us in supporting him and this incredible charity.

As we reflect on yesterday's Gospel from Luke; *"The child grew, filled with wisdom"* we are reminded of our role in guiding and nurturing the young people in our care. At St James', we are committed to helping our children grow not just in knowledge, but in wisdom, character, and faith. Through their experiences in the classroom, in service to others, and in their daily interactions, we encourage them to develop the values and virtues that will shape them into compassionate and resilient individuals, ready to make a positive impact in the world.



# ST JAMES'

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

I hope you have a lovely week. If you need anything, please do not hesitate to get in touch  
[headteacherpa@stjamesheadle.co.uk](mailto:headteacherpa@stjamesheadle.co.uk)

Yours faithfully

Mr A Pontifex  
Headteacher



With God  
all things are possible

Matthew 19:26