



# St Thomas of Aquin's High School

## In Focus Newsletter ~ October 2017



Dear Parent/Carer

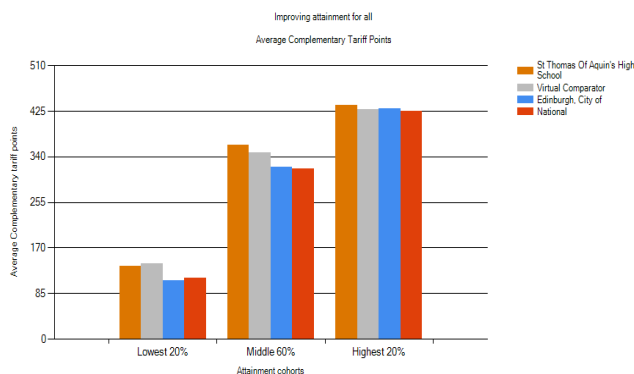
I extend a warm welcome to all pupils, parents, and staff to the October edition of In Focus.

It was a pleasure returning to the school in August to the exam results achieved by our pupils. The school exams results were good and they show the school is enhancing its reputation as a learning community which delivers for so many pupils. I will be completing a school attainment report for the City of Edinburgh by the end of October and this will be shared with the Parent Council in due course. I will ensure that a copy of the report is placed on the school website.

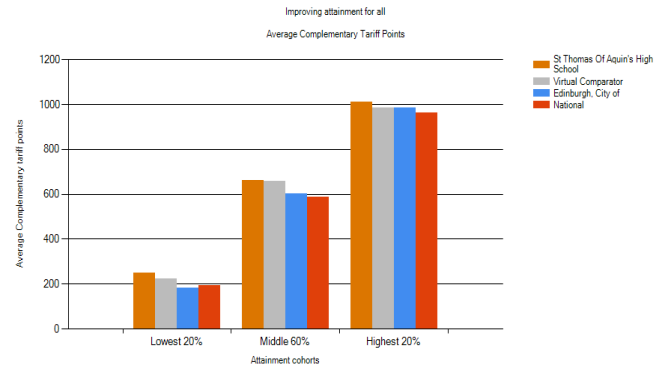
All Scottish Secondary Schools are compared to a Virtual Comparator school. The virtual comparator consists of a sample group of school pupils from schools in other local authorities who have similar characteristics to the school pupils at St Thomas'. For each St Thomas' pupil, ten matching school pupils are randomly selected based on gender, additional support needs, stage of leaving school (S4, S5 or S6) and the social context in which they live (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). These characteristics were selected due to their significance in explaining differences in the attainment and destinations of school pupils in Scotland.

Please find below S4-S6 attainment graphs which exemplify the high academic standards produced at St Thomas'. Please note that the average complimentary tariff point is a measure which helps compare pupils in different schools who undertake differing numbers of qualifications in S4-S6 due to the school curriculum model. The complimentary tariff measure provides additional reassurance for schools and parents that the attainment data presented provides a meaningful basis for reflection and self-evaluation.

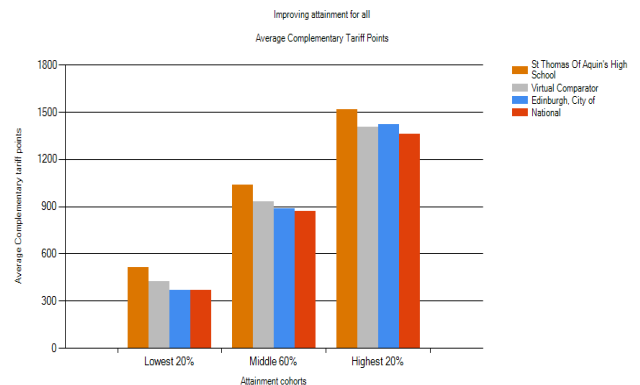
### S4 Attainment



### S5 Attainment



### S6 Attainment



The school has started the 2017-18 session well with last year's plan analysed and evaluated and naturally laying the foundations for this year's school improvement plan. Both plans are now on the school website. The school is embedding the Better relationships, better learning, better behaviour staged intervention model and I would like to thank the continued work of Ms Whiffen and Ms Quigley for this. Through the strategic leadership of Ms Jean-Pierre, the Key Adult programme will be implemented in October and I would like to thank Mr Whyte and Ms Taylor for their work so far. Along with Mr Patrick and Ms Kelly's work on Equalities, the school has produced systems and procedures which will universally support learning and teaching at St Thomas'.

I was exceedingly impressed by the personnel involved in the 2016-17 S6 Leadership. The work of James Rennie, Head boy; Sophie Drury, Head girl; Alice Francis-Freeman, Depute Head girl and Itihad Ahmed, Depute Head boy, along with the House Captains produced a great year of activities and charity work. I am looking forward to working Michael Gray, Emma Simpson, Natalia Rucka, and Liam Moorhouse and the House of Captains of 2017-18 in building upon the very good work of last year.

During 2017-18 I am leading the school community through a refocus of our vision and values. Staff, the Pupil Council, and members of the Parent Council have already shared their views and parents attending both Award Ceremonies were given the opportunity to share their vision and values for the school community. Please email me, via the school admin email account, if you wish to share your vision and values for the school.

Parents may well be aware of two incidents that the school community experienced between August and October. The community suffered several malicious fire alarms which were dealt with through system refinements – the locking of the main door at break and lunchtimes, a number of Fire screechers being placed over key fire points, as well as pupil assemblies focussing on the health and safety issues relating to such inappropriate behaviour. I do hope parents will join me in speaking with their children about the seriousness of the malicious fire alarms. The week before the October break, a member of the public was allegedly verbally abused by a small number of St Thomas pupils on a Tuesday lunchtime. On receiving information of this event, I personally phoned the member of the public and apologised on behalf of the school community. The school worked with the Police investigation and with support from the Integrated Support Team and the Religious Education Faculty, all pupils at the school were led through Hate Crime assemblies and lessons. I believe the school is an inclusive, compassionate and outward looking community and we should not tolerate such behaviour nor should we be defined by the event on the Tuesday lunchtime. I am asking all parents to speak with their children about the expected high standards of behaviour before and after school and in between break and lunchtime.

Before I end my Acting Head Teacher welcome I would like to pay tribute to Bill Fraser who retired on Thursday 12 October. Bill worked at St Thomas' for many years as the technician in the Craft and Design Department. On behalf of the school community, I wish him all the best in his retirement and thank him for all his work with pupils over the many years he worked at the school. As we say goodbye to Bill, we welcome Mr Miles Carter to the school as a permanent English Teacher. I wish Mr Carter all the best in the coming years at St Thomas'.

Finally, the 2017 Senior and Junior Awards ceremony have been a great success this year. I would like to thank Ms Gardner for her strategic leadership and management of the events along with the many other staff who were integral to the success: Ms C Kelly, Ms Patrick, Mrs Gilroy, Ms Hunter, Ms Bowman, Mrs Ritchie, Mr Rizza and the entire PE Staff, as well as the many staff who supported the event on the night. The school was very fortunate to welcome Nick Eardley, BBC Reporting Scotland Political Reporter and former pupil of St Thomas', as the key note speaker to the Senior Awards evening. It was unfortunate that Nick could not personally attend due unforeseen political events, however his recorded speech was inspiring and I hope parents, pupils, and staff present at the evening enjoyed his pupil-centred vision. The school community welcomed Mr & Mrs McCloskey, Father and Mother of Ms Jacquie McCloskey to experience the first Science award given to pupils in celebration of Ms McCloskey's work at St Thomas'. The school also paid tribute to the former Head Teachers, Mr Barbour and Mr Dames who passed away this year. Mrs Dames attended the event and it was lovely to speak with her before and after the ceremony. Finally, I was very impressed

by the achievement of so many of our pupils in a variety of sporting, volunteering, charity, and attainment areas at both award events and I am looking forward to 2018 already.

**Christopher Santini**  
**Acting Head Teacher**

### **Dyslexia Awareness Week**

Dyslexia Awareness Week will run from 7-13 November 2017, with the theme 'Positive About Dyslexia'. Various activities will run throughout the city; there will be displays of relevant resources in our own school library and a staff coffee morning to raise funds for dyslexia-related materials.

### **Library**

It has been a busy few months in the Library, with visits to Edinburgh International Book Festival, a celebration of Roald Dahl Day and activities related to National Poetry Day. In August, Mrs Macdonald's S2 class enjoyed a session at EIBF with author Darren Shan. Some S3s heard Philip Reeve and Lauren James talk about 'time', and Ms Laverick's S5 group enjoyed a lively session with The Last Poets. It was a double treat for the pupils, who enjoyed both meeting the authors and savouring the ambience of the Charlotte Square location.

On Roald Dahl Day –13 September – S1 pupils shared their knowledge of the author by taking part in a quiz to determine which of his characters they most resembled, and some older pupils enjoyed reading his short story 'Lamb to the Slaughter'.

The theme for National Poetry Day on 28 September was 'freedom'. S1 and S2 pupils undertook a range of related activities, writing their own thoughts and poems on the topic and making word –collages.

Pupils have continued to review books for Teen Titles magazine, and a group of S2 pupils will feature in the next edition with their interview of author Cathy MacPhail – exciting times!

Some of our S1 Book group members are now busy preparing to compete in the East of Scotland round of the Kids' Lit Quiz at Liberton HS on 1 November, and we wish them good luck.

### **Enterprising Maths in the Lothians**



Jovan, George, Lukah, Joe, Chloe, Gordon, Cameron and Ameen represented St Thomas' in a recent Maths Enterprise competition. They secured 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place out of 36 teams. Both teams were a credit to the school.

As a result, Lukah, Joe, Cameron and Gordon will now go on to represent St. Thomas' in a national completion held in Glasgow on 28 November. We wish them the best of luck!

### S2 Maths Masterclass

The Royal Institute of Mathematics Masterclasses are a series of workshops which are led by experts from industry, academia and education. They offer students in-depth investigations of topics in Mathematics and Statistics, combining theory with interactive exploration. Mariana, Lachlan and Jacob are representing St Thomas of Aquin's over the six-week block.



### Maths Week Scotland

In celebration of Maths Week Scotland, our S1 and S2 pupils were given the opportunity to compete against other schools in an online 'Numeracy Ninja' competition. Shafiya, Marcus and Daniel were awarded a certificate for their achievements. A special congratulation to Juliet who was ranked first place for St Thomas of Aquin's and received a medal. A fantastic effort!

### Social Subjects

S1 pupils have settled in well and are learning about the following topics: Geography of Scotland, Prejudice and Discrimination, The Romans and in Business they have been investigating the brand, logo and marketing of a chocolate bar.

Our S2 pupils have enjoyed learning about South Africa under the Apartheid system and the legacy of Nelson Mandela. They have had the opportunity to watch the film 'Long Walk to Freedom'.

In Geography the focus has been on Rainforest Destruction and some pupils have created superb 3D posters to display their understanding. In History our S2 have been investigating the Cold War and in Business they have been very busy organising the Trade Fair which will take place on 27 October- a great opportunity for them to develop their entrepreneurial skills!

### S2 Techfest

Shona, Morgan, Conor, Francesca and Adam were invited to take part in *Techfest* – a one-day event designed to give S2 pupils an insight into how Mathematics applies to real-life situations. The group participated in a variety of workshops led by experts from the financial service industry. Their teamwork and enthusiasm was congratulated and the group were awarded the most 'Financially Savvy!'



### First World War

Our S3 History pupils have been investigating the First World War and have developed their understanding with a cinema visit to The Filmhouse to see 'Assunder'. They also made delicious cakes to depict 'Life in the Trenches' and will be heading to Edinburgh castle to participate in artefact handling workshop after the October break.



### Mini Trials at Sheriff Court

Some of our Senior Modern studies pupils participated in the Mini Trials at the Sheriff Court and got the rare opportunity to visit the cells and hear about the day to day activities within the court.



Higher Geography pupils visited the Cairngorms in September to gather data for their Assignment. They met with a Park Ranger to discuss issues in conservation in the National Park as well as having a trip up the Funicular Railway. AH pupils also visited Holyrood park to gather data as part of their Geographical Study.



Well done to Ruth Dolan and S4 pupils (Daniel Irvine, Felix Barley, Asha Munro and Dillon Boyle) whose entries to the Tom Hunter Foundation competition 'If I ruled Scotland' was published an e-book. Their entries were chosen out of over two hundred schools that entered. The link to the e-book is <http://www.thehunterfoundation.co.uk/if-i-ruled-scotland/>