St Michael's School

Society of St Pius X

Burghclere - July 2025

Peregrination & Purpose

Boarding House trip to the Welsh coastline

Another year completed, another letter to send to all our precious families, benefactors and friends. St Michael's continues its journey and so does each one of its pupils and families.

Some pupils will not return next year. They have completed their studies and embark on the next leg of their educational journey. They take with them, we hope and pray, a solid academic formation which will serve them well in their future endeavours.

More importantly, they have learned to navigate a somewhat perilous world which bubbles with societal change, armed conflict, economic challenge and intellectual and moral doubt.

St Michael's will always seek to provide its pupils with a clear compass so that they do not become lost on their jouney through life. Pupils learn that life is, in reality, very simple. We have been made by God to know, love and serve Him so that we may be happy with Him for eternity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the path to God and the Catholic Church is where we find Him.

The journey will not be easy. Life is tough. Our pupils learn to value of effort and perseverence. They have been given, some five talents, some two, some one which they must multiply and make fruitful so that the Lord and Master can call them good and faithful servants.

Resilience is the key to perseverance. Purpose is the key to resilience. St Michael's is a purposeful place where teachers, staff and families work tirelessly to ensure that all our pupils are able to acquire courage and fortitude to remain faithful to their baptismal vows, for their own good and the good of others.

Our families are so grateful to all those whose sacrifices allow us to continue to prepare souls for life in the world and in heaven. But our indebtedness is nothing in comparison to God's gratitude. *« Whatsoever you do for one of these little ones, you do to Me. »* We all know that God will not be surpassed in generosity. What a loving welcome our benefactors will receive when they meet their Maker!

Fr John Brucciani, Headmaster

Staff Changes for September 2025 - *R. Malliff, head of secondary*

St Michael's finds itself in a rather unique situation as we end the 2024-25 academic year. Over the last six years or so, turnover has been extremely low at the school. Unlike most schools up and down the country that experience the annual churn of staff and the desperate scramble to find suitable replacements for the new school year, St. Michael's has been blessed with a stable staffing structure for several years. Nonetheless, circumstances have coalesced this year meaning five members of staff are leaving, three due to well-earned retirement and the other two due to planned career changes. We also have the recent announcement of Fr. O' Hart's departure to Dublin this summer.

In the Maintenance Team, **Ted Jackson** and **Clive Martin** are retiring after many years of faithful service and significant contributions to the renovation works that have taken place over the last eight years. Richard Hutchinson has been appointed as head of the Maintenance Team next year. Mr. Hutchinson is currently working with Clive and Ted in the smooth transition of duties.

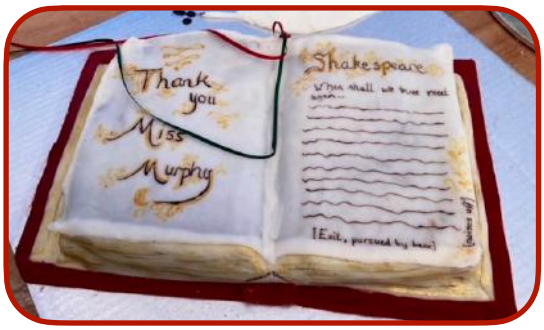
Philip Kane has come to the end of his three year term as PE Teacher and Boarding Assistant. Mr. Kane is staying in the local area for work, and we hope he will be in a position to remain involved with the school band next year. His brother, Joseph Kane, who has been shadowing Phil for the last year, will step up into the role of PE Teacher and Boarding Assistant from September.

Two senior members of staff are also leaving this year. **Jacinta Murphy** will be undertaking a long-planned year-long sabbatical in France. Miss Murphy has been at the school for 14 years, first as a primary school teacher, then as English Teacher and Head of Humanities. **Jayne Roch** is retiring after a highly successful career in education, 17 years of which has been at St. Michael's. Jayne has been Head of Sciences for the last 7 years. Both Mrs. Roch and Miss Murphy have played a pivotal role in the development of the school in recent years, helping to lead staff in their professional duties and making a significant contribution to the lives and achievements of students. Both will be remembered fondly by former and current students and by all the people they have worked with at the school.

Father O' Hart has been assigned a new post by the District, becoming Prior in Dublin. Father has had seven highly fruitful years at the school, which includes two successful Ofsted judgements as Housemaster and a key role in the building of the new church next to the school. He will be missed by students, staff and parishioners alike. Our prayers and good wishes go with Father, Jayne, Jacinta, Phil, Ted and Clive.

With these changes, there will also be new arrivals in September. Eric Friar returns to the school after two years with the Clere School, one of the local secondary schools in Newbury. Mr. Friar will assume the role of Science Teacher and Head of the Sciences Department. Mary Clarkson also joins as English Teacher and Head of the Humanities Department. Both are fully-qualified teachers who bring a wealth of teaching experience with them and insight from different educational settings. I know both Eric and Mary are excited about the opportunity to step into senior teaching roles at the school, and we look forward to welcoming them in September.

Finally, we welcome Fr. Bevan, who will be joining the school during the summer and who will take on the role of Housemaster. Father is currently working in a school in America. We look forward to his arrival and no doubt fruitful time at the school.



The best book her pupils have ever enjoyed - all made of cake!

Annual Prizes & Colours

Secondary School	
Excellence Humanities *(Warwick Prize)*	Paul M.
Excellence Sciences *(O'Connor Prize)*	Paul M.
Most Improved Languages	Florence J.
Most Improved RK	Nicholas N.
Most Improved Humanities	Luke S.
Most Improved Sciences	Alberto D.
Most Improved Maths	Helena T.
Most Improved Languages	Mikolai J.
Best Physical Education	Francis Cz.
Best Progress Physical Ed.	Hamish M.
Highest Annual Merit Tally	Jack W.
Best Michaelean	**Joseph Mars.**

Secondary School Competitions	
Best Sportsman (Football)	Paul M.
Best in Goal (Football)	Alberto D.
Top Scorer (Football)	Oscar W.
Best Sportsman (Rugby)	Philip J
Most Improved (Rugby)	Jack W
Top Scorer (Rugby)	Luke S.
Table Tennis	Paul M.
Pool Champion	Joseph Mall.
Chess Winner	Paul M.
Badminton Winner	Luke S.

2024-25 House Winner
BURMA

As of September 2025, the school house will receive new names and new patrons! The old house names will remain in place to identify the different Cadet Sections.

St Patrick *St George* *St Andrew* *St David*

The following students have been awarded

Half-colours

Spiritual

Luke, Joseph Mar., Philip, Talal & Jack, *for achieving rank of Senior Acolyte*

Behaviour

Francesca, Florence, Joseph Mar., Joseph Mal. & Nicholas A. *for over 250 merits in the school year.*

Physical

Francis Cz. *for achieving an exceptional time in a 5km run*

Full Colours

Academic

Jack - *for achieving the highest tally of merits across the year.*

Spiritual

Paul M. - *for assiduity in voluntary attendance at Holy Mass.*

What Next? Careers after GCSE's - *Mrs Roch, Head of Science, Year 11 Form Tutor*

Since September 2013, we've seen changes in the law requiring all young people to stay in education, training, or employment with training until they turn 18. While we at St Michael's don't currently offer post-GCSE qualifications, this makes it even more important that we prepare our Year 11 students for the exciting opportunities that await them beyond our school gates.

We recognise that choosing what comes next can feel overwhelming for both students and families. That's why we've made it our priority to guide our Year 10 and 11 students through this transition. In our PSHE lessons, we work closely with students to build their confidence in applying for places, help them understand how to request references, and teach them how to create compelling CVs that showcase their strengths. We also provide practice interviews so they can feel prepared and confident when the time comes.

Our goal is to ensure that when our students leave St Michael's, they're not just academically prepared but also equipped with the practical skills and confidence to take their next steps with enthusiasm and success.

We start this important journey right at the beginning of Year 11 with a dedicated PSHE session where we explore together the wealth of possibilities that open up after GCSEs. We introduce our students to the various pathways available to them - from A-levels at schools and colleges, to BTechs and T-levels, and the exciting world of apprenticeships. In addition, the priests are always happy to talk to and advise pupils who are discerning a religious vocation. Pupils are always encouraged to talk to their families about their possible next steps before we help them to research institutions and available courses. Once Open Days and Evenings have been attended, we then help pupils with their application forms and interviews. Most pupils have their next step sorted well before the GCSE examinations begin in early May, which leaves them free to concentrate on gaining the qualifications they need at the correct level to move on with their chosen path.

Over the last three years pupils have taken the following next steps: 6 studying A levels at colleges near to their family homes; 5 studying A levels/BTech courses at schools near to their family homes; 1 studying a level 3 diploma at a local college; 2 beginning level 3 apprenticeships; and 3 returning to their home countries to study. Over the last 5 years we have had past pupils who have completed degrees, or degree equivalents, in General Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Medicine, Mechanical Engineering, Adult Nursing and Occupational Therapy – to name but a few. We also have several past pupils who are now serving as ordained priests.

Lab Coat Competition

Every two years Baylab, the educational arm of Bayer PLC on Green Park in Reading, runs a competition to design a lab coat. A theme is given, this year robotics, along with a template and the best entry overall wins a range of prizes including having their design printed on a lab coat. Years 7 and 8 were given an opportunity to enter a design for the competition as an optional homework; several pupils entered. The winners, whose designs will be sent off to Baylab for entry into the competition, were Florence and Nicholas A.

HOWEVER - their coats were nothing compared to the magnificent artwork displayed on a coat decorated by former pupils and gifted to Mrs Roch for her retirement !

During the cold, blustery month of March, Years 7 and 8 enjoyed a warm, colourful trip to the Living Rainforest in Hampstead Norreys. The focus of the day was to study plant and animal adaptation and marvel at God's amazing creation. The sloth 'Cinnamon' was in great form and everyone got to see it feed when it came down from the canopy.

Other fabulous finds were the poison dart frogs, the iguana and 'Luigi' a yellow-knobbed curassow (a big black bird who enjoys strutting around). Discoveries of microhabitats within the leaves of plants and musings on the challenges of plants reaching for light whilst also coping with competitive biodiversity around them, made for a very interesting trip.

Many thanks go to Mrs Roch for organising!

School Council 2025

Our School Council has a representative elected from each class. Their job is to bring to School Council meetings ideas and issues raised by the pupils in their form and to work on projects set by the school.

The main focus this year, apart from menu suggestions (!) has been raising money for the Lenten Charity: « *The Immaculate's Child Care Centre* » in Nairobi's shanty town, Kenya. In the poorest, most derelict environment, the puckered walls of the dusty building carry this inscription: « *Your child, our treasure.* » The quasi-orphanage is under the spiritual and material care of the SSPX.

The school council organised a Bake Sale and a Treasure Map competition, where the person who chose the correct square won a basket of edible goodies (for consumption after Lent!). The winner Mrs Sudlow. The amount raised was a very pleasing £251, which Father doubled and sent along to Kenya. Many thanks to all who supported these activities.

On the last day of lessons, years 8 & 9 had an art day based around a visit to Sandham Memorial Chapel here in Burghclere. The day started with the pupils learning about the life of Stanley Spencer and the inspirations for his 'chapel of experiences'. They then walked up to Sandham Memorial Chapel and had a guided tour of the paintings.

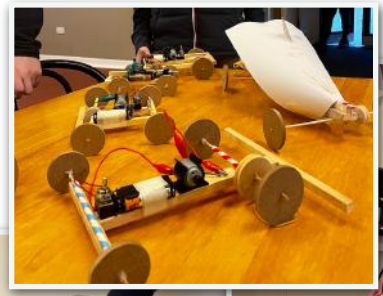
Back at school, each pupil chose a painting that they liked and explained why this particular painting appealed to them. Then, with the help and guidance of Mrs Pearce, they chose a portion of one of the paintings to recreate. Some pupils worked alone, others in pairs or groups. The result was a variety of sketches and paintings recreating Spencer's work. We hope to display some of these in the future.

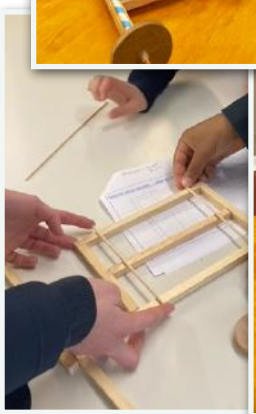
STEM CLUB

This term's STEM Club focused on a project to build motorised vehicles. Our students worked in pairs to construct their first vehicle, test it, and then discuss improvements to make it more reliable, faster, or better able to travel in a straight line. They then applied these ideas to construct a modified second vehicle.

In the final week, each pair had the opportunity to enter one of their vehicles into a time trial over 10 meters. Krystian and Mikolaj won the time trial, while Laurence and Alberto received recognition for their excellent collaboration throughout the project.

The students approached the challenge thoughtfully and supported one another well during the process.





Humanities - *Ms Jacinta Murphy, English*

Although Pygmalion is commonly taught at both GCSE and A-Level, the text has many features which entitle it to a place on the KS3 curriculum: the setting is familiar, both as to time and place; the plot line lacks excessive complexity; the characterisation is delicious; finally, the themes can be studied indepth at an older age, or merely touched upon in Junior Secondary. The play was chosen to offer a pleasing and stimulating contrast to the previous term's work on dystopian fiction. A range of comments from students, below, show how deeply these 12- and 13- year old students can engage with an adult play, with several making insightful comments on play structure, author's intent, characterisation, and staged versus read versions. Incidentally, the summer term saw all four students below writing GCSE-level passage analyses- and scoring very highly.

On April the 3rd of this year I happened to watch a performance of Pygmalion by the highly esteemed George Bernard Shaw. Events unfolded like this: all students attending the play had to undertake an hour or so of prep. But, to be honest, most of us, agog with excitement, did little work. Next was the car journey, a merry affair filled with jokes, prayer and music. Finally, we arrived at the place where we were to dine, McDonalds! Home to all sorts of sumptuous delicacies considered (wrongly) by most to be "unhealthy". Students proceeded to the Oxford Playhouse, bringing with them sweets and chocolate of all kinds to feast on with ill-concealed delight throughout the play.

Apart from this deplorable circumstance (which dampened my spirits considerably as I suffered the pain of having no sweets) the play was excellent. When all the audience were carefully settled in their seats, the lights turned off and the beautiful story unfolded.

At first, we observed the flower girl Eliza earning her money on the streets of London and meeting the erratic yet lovable Professor Higgins and his more reasonable companion Colonel Pickering. Next, we watched Eliza venture into the house of Higgins, meet the housekeeper Mrs Peace and learn the ways of the house. Later, we saw- after the interval- how Eliza, angered at Higgins, blows up. Waiting with bated breath, we expectantly watched as the play ended in a crashing crescendo of human emotion. Filled with the wit of the play, we proceeded tiredly to our cars and began the journey home.

I had enjoyed reading and studying Pygmalion and was hoping it [the enacted version] would be good. The play helped to give me new vocabulary which I could then use in my writing. Also, the play was entertaining as it reflected real life (for instance, the rich treating the poor in the way they do.) I was disappointed when they left out important scenes.

(Miss Murphy's note: This pupil's observant comment should provide a good springboard for discussing adaptations, film versions, and directors' choices in various media…)

We recently went to view the play Pygmalion in the wonderfully situated Oxford Playhouse. The play, I learned- after studying it in class- was fabulously entertaining and amusing in itself, but it was really brought to life by being acted. In class, the play was like a two-dimensional image, which was enhanced and made three-dimensional when it was enacted. I am pleased that we studied it, though, because it helped to explain some of the formal, unusual language and references.

For our classics trip we went to **Chedworth Roman Villa** in the Cotswolds. We had a guided tour of the ruins which included seeing the flowing spring that served as a water supply for the people living at the villa, we were informed about the hypocaust system (underfloor heating), as well as seeing lots of beautiful mosaics and having an explanation of the detailed bathing process.

After the tour we got to create our own small mosaics and we found it very detailed but satisfying!

Following lunch surrounded by the scenic hills of the Cotswolds, we examined some artefacts such as pieces of pottery and animal bones left over from lunch centuries ago!

We were also taught how to make tesserae which are the little pieces of stone that make up a mosaic.

Primary Phase

Celebrating Achievement: Level 3 Teaching Assistant Qualification

Over the past year, I have been working towards my Level 3 Teaching Assistant qualification as part of an apprenticeship programme. This experience has been incredibly valuable, helping me grow in confidence within my role and deepening my understanding of how best to support the children I work with so they can truly thrive.

Achieving a Merit in my final qualification is a great personal achievement that I am immensely proud of. After all the changes and challenges that arose throughout the year, I am so very pleased. I have become more flexible and resourceful in my role, and more able to support both colleagues and pupils.

It has been both a rewarding opportunity and a proud milestone in my professional journey. I'm excited about continuing to develop my skills and to contribute further here at St Michael's.

I am truly grateful for all the support and encouragement I have received throughout this journey. A special thank you to my amazing colleagues—especially Mrs Webb and Miss Waddelove—for their constant guidance, encouragement, and prayers from everyone along the way.

Ann Nalumansi, Teaching Assistant

Today we travelled by train from Newbury to Reading to see the Bayeux Tapestry. We went to see the replica because the original is in Rouen in France. The tapestry shows Edward the Confessor dying, Harold being crowned, the Battle of Hastings and William the Conqueror getting blessed by Bishop Odo.

Harold needed help and promised William could be king , but he did not keep his promises so when William found out Harold was king, he was angry and started gathering an army to invade England. The tapestry shows ships, soldiers and equipment being gathered in preparation of the battle. William gathered 700 ships and 15,000 professional soldiers to attack England.

Harold had to March from Yorkshire to fight William. Harold was shot in the eye and William was crowned king and ruled England.

The tapestry was made by 35 Victorian women who were thought to be the best Weavers in England.

By Edward Year 3

Mrs Joyce's daughter, first responder, popped in on her way from a long night shift. It is every child's dream to explore the inside of an ambulance!

During Lent, the Primary School raised ***an incredible £912*** *for the St Vincent de Paul Society: Little sacrifices, a bake sale and a very successful « sponsored silence ». Pupils kept silent the entire day, to the delight and astonishment of the staff. A brilliant and soothing initiative! Well done, primary!*

Infants learning how to catch a bus!

Mrs Webb's Prize Day Speech to Parents

It has been a busy year! We have performed poetry, written adventures, cooked delicious food, designed amazing vehicles and bridges, learnt to solve problems with numbers, visited awe-inspiring cathedrals and performed on the stage.

All of these activities, as well as the day-to-day reading, writing and arithmetic, are all part of the children's journey to know, love and serve Our Lord.

I want to thank the dedicated primary team. The teachers work tirelessly, often unseen, to make the Primary School thrive. They willingly give up their non-teaching time to work 1:1 with those who need extra support. They clean the classrooms and toilets without complaint. Thank you, dear teachers.

It has not always been an easy year. Each year, the children present us with a particular set of challenges.

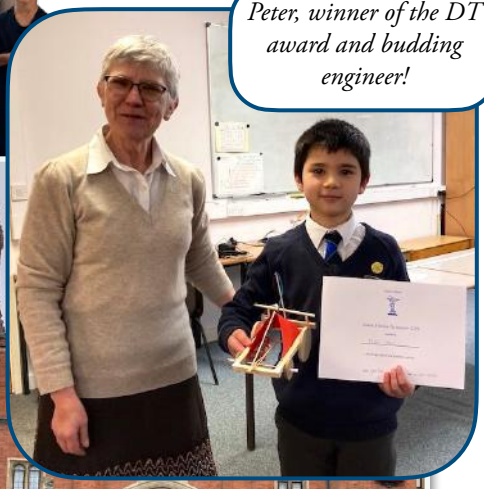
This year, our challenge was to get the children listening and following instructions. Instructions do not require a discussion. When home and school work together, great things can be achieved.

I brought my neighbour to the summer fair last weekend. All afternoon happy faces politely greeted, chatted or smiled at us. Children ran around content and happy, creating a joyful atmosphere. My neighbour was struck by the joy and sense of community. Children being children, looking like children, not glued to mobile phones. She compared it to something out of an Enid Blyton story. It struck me how truly blessed we are, to have a thriving St. Michael's community, united in our Faith, working together, home and school and parish, to create a culture steeped in virtue. This is the fruit of 33 years of St. Michael's School. Our school benefactors are never forgotten and are remembered in the children's prayers.

Children, value and love St. Michael's! It is a privilege and a blessing to be educated for this world and for the next.

Now to our leavers: You are leaving the safety of the Primary School. Take what you have learned and continue to do your best in the senior school and beyond. You will still wear the armour of St. Michael. Pray to him for the strength to be good, to work hard and be polite. Be an example to the others who have not had the advantage of RE lessons with Fr. Steele, of Holy Mass during the week and of learning the Angel virtues. Be angelic, neighbourly, gallant, endure … and listen!

The Pied Pier of Hamelin drew endless laughter from the audience. The children played and sang to their hearts' delight!



Peter, winner of the DT award and budding engineer!

Saying goodbye to Ms Murphy, who taught in primary for seven years before becoming Head of English & Humanities in Secondary.

Sergeant Christian, ready for action

Vintage 2025!

Sergeant Christian, aided by his faithful colleagues (NCO's Kane P & Kane J, David S & David M and Harry), continues to deliver first class training and formation to our Cadet Corps. He works closely with Fr Holden who visits each term to check things over. The Cadet Corps is an important component of St Michael's educational plan. Cadets learn valuable personnel and team skills. They learn how to sort themselves out, how to « rough it », how to « make do ». Most importantly, the cadet activities gently force cadets to push themselves and to persevere. In a world with so little resilience, a cadet has a much better chance of coming out on top. THANK YOU to Fr Holden, Sergeant Christian and all the team for their sterling work.

The Summer Fair offers the opportunity to demonstrate the difficult art of marching in parade. The boys look so sharp in their band uniforms, courtesy of Mr Newton, our faithful patron and friend. The children are mesmerised as the cadets march in, to the sound of drums and fifes. Bravo to Mr Kane for managing to turn a group of unmusical cadets into a marching band! And how we love the uniforms!

Opposite, the « Blank Stars » prepare for their first overnight camping trip. Kit inspection, then off we go. The sacks were as heavy as their carriers!

Yet another round of maintenance. This, we hope and pray, is the last major repair and renovation job we have to complete for years to come.

The great chimney stacks that tower over the White House have long been leaking, causing damage to ceilings and walls on the top floor. They were patched up a few years ago, waiting for the chance of proper restoration. The District has kindly advanced the funds for definitive repairs to be carried out: elaborate scaffolding and complete pointing of all the bricks. Four chimney stacks, two the size of small houses!

Farewell Father O'Hart

St Michael's School is VERY grateful to Father for his sterling work over the past seven years. Since 2018, he has been an amicable, reliable, humorous and hard-working colleague who has maintained the school boarding house on a sure footing and provided unwavering priestly and sacramental support to the school, parish and beyond.

The priestly community will probably best remember him not so much for his piety, reliability and general usefulness (everything one could wish for in a colleague), but for his genius when it comes to making things work properly! Father's mechanical engineering background (he is an MSc, 1st cl.) has not only saved huge amounts of money in installation and energy bills but has also brought stability and efficiency to all the moving mechanical parts of a large property.

Most of all, Father O'Hart was instrumental in helping to guide and monitor the construction of our beautiful church. We worship in a church which, without him, would not have seen the light of day.

Everyone at St Michael's is grateful to Father for his generous and competent work. We wish him God's grace as he embarks on a new chapter in his priestly vocation. He has been appointed superior of our Dublin Priory. An Irishman returns home!

Fr O'Hart will be replaced by Fr Bernard Bevan, a familiar face here at St Michael's. He was ordained in 2022 and has served in the US at La Salette Academy since his ordination. The two Fathers will be hard at work this summer to ensure a smooth and effective handover.

Community outing in February. We had a great time exploring the Riviera around Nice, France. The SSPX has a priory there, with a beautiful church. Not as good as the Church of St Michael Archangel, however.

Financial Snapshot

These charts show how dependent St Michael's is on our benefactors' charity. They are compiled from the financial data of the last ten months (August 2024 to June 2025).

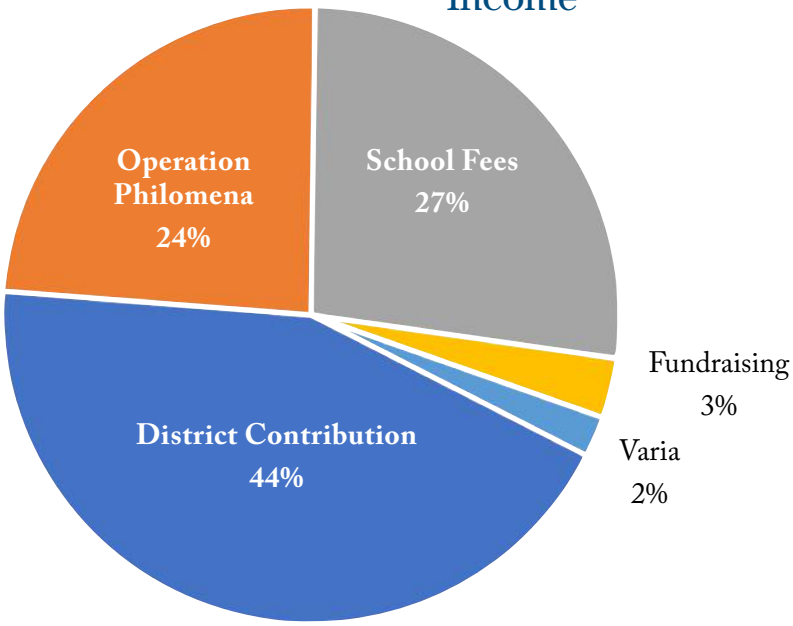
From a worldly perspective, St Michael's is doomed to failure and collapse. For every £1 we receive in fees, the school must find an additional £3. But from a heavenly perspective, we are forced to utterly rely on Divine Providence.

Some will say that this is, in the longterm, simply unsustainable (I say this to myself often). But it has always been so, and God has ALWAYS provided.

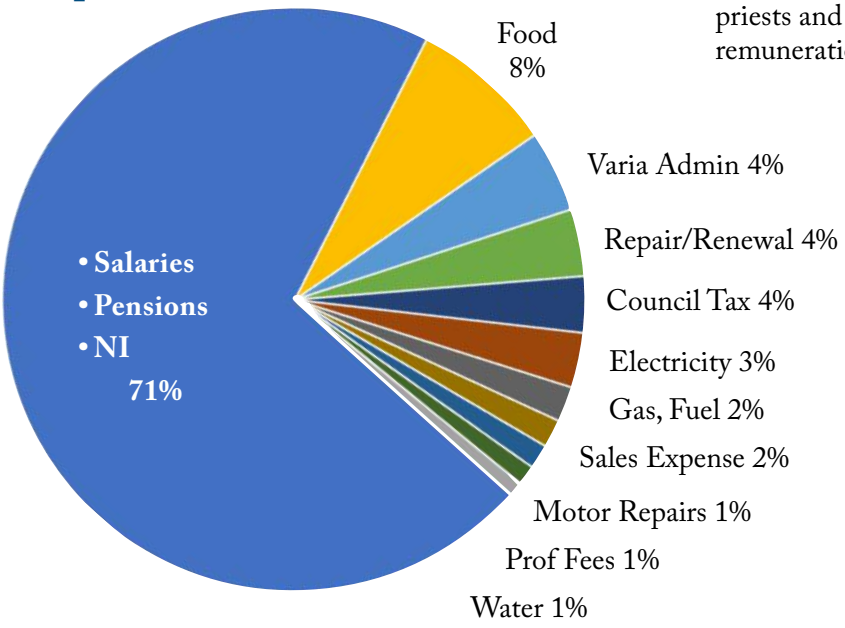
Our families are extremely grateful for their benefactors. They include those hidden souls who sacrifice themselves for their children in their family prayers.

We must be grateful also to the District House which so generously allows us to operate despite the loss. No penny is wasted.

Income



Expense



By far our greatest expense is providing our pupils with highly qualified teachers and staff to teach and care for them. These figures do not include the priests and brothers who receive no financial remuneration for their work.

Over the past several years, Fr O'Hart's mechanical engineering skills have more than halved our energy costs!

We run as tight a ship as possible. God blesses our efforts. The parish continues to grow as families come to benefit from the availability of the sacraments and a good school for their children.

These charts are visible proof of the miracle of St Michael's School. All the efforts and sacrifices of so many unknown souls have allowed for the Catholic Education of hundreds of children. Our growth defies all worldly expectations. It pays to trust in God!

Congratulations !

… to Joseph for obtaining his BEng First Class Honours degree in Aerospace Engineering from Swansea University. A marvellous accomplishment. Joe completed his A-Levels here at St Michaels's in 2018. He is currently continuing with a MSc which he will complete in Sept. 2025.

… to another Joseph who is about to become a chartered tax advisor. He recently won the ***Ronald Ison Medal*** in one of his exams (highest mark in the country). He was also winner of the ***Jean Jesty Prize*** for the best overall performance for candidates under 21. Joseph completed his GCSE's in 2020. His 6th form college wrote to St Michael's to congratulate us for sending them such a gifted pupil!

… to Nikolas for obtaining his BEng in Media Technology from the Deggendorf Institute of Technology in Bavaria. Nikolas completed his A-Levels here at St Michaels's in 2019.

Boarding House Galore

Full boarders have experienced some thrilling weekends this year. In addition to the fantastic walks in the local countryside, they have been treated to a Welsh camping trip, visits to Oxford, Portsmouth and London, local choral concerts and a Royal Opera House rendition of the ***Nutcracker!***

After their GCSE exams, year 11s left with Fr O'Hart on the now traditional Snowdon Trip. Three days of traveling, walking, climbing and eating! Nothing better than the good, healthy outdoors and the late night conversations with Father, as the boys prepare to leave the safety of St Michael's for the big, wide world.

Each morning, several boys are assigned to prepare and serve the early masses. They must learn what to respond, where to be and how to assist the priest as he offers the Holy Sacrifice. It is a tremendous privilege to be able to serve Mass. Our boys are able to bring their skills to their local chapels and pass on precious knowledge and experience. What school in GB offers this experience?