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St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School



School Handbook

I am delighted to welcome you and your child to St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School.

We pride ourselves in living out the Gospel Values and encourage our young people to do the same.

With the largest catchment area in the city, we are a very diverse school and we serve communities from Drumchapel and Knightswood, through Yoker and Whiteinch and all the way into the city centre.

The success of our school relies heavily on the partnership we enjoy with you as parents and carers. By working together; communicating regularly and sharing our goals and expectations, we will go through your child's secondary education together. We have a very committed staff team who strive to ensure they know your child well and work hard to ensure their needs are met.

In this handbook you will find all of the information you should need but, if there is anything else you need, please do not hesitate to get in touch or check our website.

Claire McNally
Head Teacher

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Vision, Values and Aims

Our School Vision

We are a culturally inclusive Roman Catholic school where there is a deep commitment to each young person in our care. Every person in our community – pupils, staff, parents/carers & partners – is listened to, included and valued. By honouring the teachings of Christ, we will ensure that all our young people are witnesses who are equipped to promote healthy mental and physical well-being whilst developing their spirituality and discovering and exploiting their God-given talents to achieve excellence emotionally, morally and intellectually.

Our School Values

Curiosity Love Equality Aspiration Respect

#BeCLEAR

Our School Aims

To support:

- ensure all young people are supported and nurtured and help them to see and achieve their limitless potential

To serve:

- provide opportunities for our community to celebrate our faith, pray and worship
- develop the spiritual formation of our school community through the shared experience of prayer and liturgy
- ensure that all members of our community develop their understanding of and commitment to citizenship. As servants of the Lord, our young people will contribute to our school community; the local community around us and across the city; and to the global community.

To teach:

- create a curriculum which meets the needs of all learners, characterised by the highest standards of learning and teaching
- present opportunities for learning which are engaging, varied, challenging and supportive

To achieve:

- facilitate opportunities for all learners which support them to achieve their greatest ambitions beyond school

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School Information

You can cut out the following information and keep it on your fridge or take a photo on your phone so it is always handy.

St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School
112 Mitre Road
Glasgow
G14 9PP
Phone: 0141 582 0280
Email: headteacher@st-thomasaquinas-sec.glasgow.sch.uk
Website:
<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/gc/stthomasaquinassecondaryschoolglasgow/>

Background Information

- co-educational school
- Roman Catholic
- Stages taught: S1-S6
- Current roll: 1163

School Staff

Our full staff list is updated every August and can be found on our school website. The Senior Leadership Team is as follows:

Head Teacher	Mrs Claire McInally
Depute Head Teacher	Mrs Laura Farrell
Depute Head Teacher	Mr Stephen Henry
Depute Head Teacher	Ms Claire Meehan
Depute Head Teacher	Mrs Orla Ritchie

The Depute Heads have year group responsibilities which change each year so please check the website for details of which year your child will have.

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Transition from a primary school to St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School

We realise that moving from primary to secondary school can be daunting so we work hard with our colleagues across our five Learning Community primary schools. This involves meeting your child in class, working with your child in online lessons delivered in their primary class and culminating in visits to our school. Your child's school shares information about what they have been working on; what they enjoy about learning and where they need to develop further skills.

A significant number of our pupils attend primary schools that are either not in our area or not in our Learning Community. Families are welcome to submit a Placing Request to our school and can contact us if you would like more information. When our list of pupils is confirmed, we make every effort to ensure that pupils from outwith our Learning Community are included in all Transition events – including those aimed at parents and carers. Further information on how to make a placing request can be found here: [Placing Requests - Glasgow City Council](#)

If your child has an Additional Support Need or is feeling particularly anxious about transitioning into secondary, we have an enhanced transition process which is organised by the Depute Head with responsibility for Transition and Miss Power, our Principal Teacher of Support for Learning. Your child's school will put your child forward for this and this could include extra meetings with you as parents/carers and/or additional visits to St Thomas Aquinas Secondary to ensure we have a full picture of their needs.

The School Day

Monday/Wednesday/Thursday

Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5/Lunch A	Period 5/Lunch B	Period 6	Period 7
8.45 – 9.35	9.35 – 10.25	10.25 – 10.40	10.40 – 11.30	11.30 – 12.20	12.20 – 1.05	1.05 – 1.50	1.50 - 2.40	2.40 – 3.30

Tuesday/Friday

Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4/Lunch A	Period 4/Lunch B	Period 5	Period 6
8.45 – 9.35	9.35 – 10.25	10.25 – 10.40	10.40 – 11.30	11.30 – 12.15	12.15 – 1.00	1.00 – 1.50	1.50 - 2.40

Pupils in S1 are not permitted to leave the school campus at any time. Pupils in S2-S6 may leave the campus at lunchtime only.

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School Term Dates

The most up to date information on school term dates for Glasgow schools can be found here: [School Term Dates - Glasgow City Council](#)

Pupil Absence

Your child's success in school relies on being in class and working with our expert staff team as well as their peers. Pupils should be present in school every day unless they have a planned appointment or are unwell. Please inform us if your child will be absent – where possible, this should be done as early as possible on the first day of absence. We use Groupcall (a text messaging service) to inform parents/carers if their child is not in class. All unexplained absences will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken. All absences should be reported on the GCC Pupil Absence Reporting Line on 0141 287 0039. This line is open from 08.00 until 15.30 every week day. Alternatively, you can report an absence using on the online form on the GCC website here: [Pupil Absence Reporting - Glasgow City Council](#)

Medical & Healthcare

Staff from NHS Scotland attend school for a range of reasons. These include supporting young people with specific health conditions by appointment and administering vaccinations to the wider school population. Parents and carers will always be informed of such visits by letter.

If a young person becomes unwell during the school day, they might require to be sent home. It is essential that you keep us up to date with your contact details should we need to get in touch with you – or any other emergency contacts – as a matter of urgency.

If your child has a medical condition, please ensure that you note this on the annual data check (you will be issued with in August) so this can be logged. In addition, if your child requires medication during the school day, you must complete the appropriate consent form. Please request this from the school office.

Emergency School Closure

In the rare event when it is not possible to open the school or if the school has to close in the event of an emergency, we will do all we can to make sure that you are fully updated by using letters, text messages, the school website, social media and the local media.

Schools may be affected by, for example, severe weather, interruption of transport, power failures or difficulties of fuel supply.

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School Dress Code

Our school uniform is very important to us as it promotes a sense of school identity, shared values, self-confidence and a shared sense of community. The uniform is actively supported by our pupils, parents/carers and the Parent Council and is of great benefit to our young people.

Our school uniform is:

- School blazer
- White shirt
- School tie (Senior tie available for pupils in S5/6)
- Black skirt (of appropriate length) or trousers
- Black shoes/trainers
- Black cardigan or jumper

Please note that there are specific items which are not acceptable as school uniform and these include hats/caps, leggings/sports leggings, jeans, shorts, hooded tops and garments with logos. **Pupils wearing any of these items will be required to remove them or return home to change into acceptable school uniform.**

Our school ties are available from the school office and our blazer supplier visits the school on an annual basis. You can look at their website on <https://www.stevensons.co.uk/>

If your child wears a hijab or durag please ensure that it is black or a plain colour in line with our school uniform policy.

PE Kit

All pupils will participate in PE several times per week. This can be on campus, at Scotstoun Leisure Centre or on our rugby pitches in Jordanhill. As a result, please ensure that your child has a waterproof garment with them on days when they have PE. Our PE kit comprises of:

- Black shorts/tracksuit bottoms/sports leggings
- Trainers
- STA sports top (available from Stevensons Uniforms)

No football tops/colours are permitted and all pupils should be appropriately covered for participating in PE which means no cropped tops or tops which reveal shoulders.

Please note that all jewellery should be removed for PE. Students who are not participating in PE are still required to change as they will assist in the activity by refereeing, keeping scores or distributing equipment. This ensures that they still participate in some way in the learning and do not miss out on vital knowledge and understanding of the course.

Clothing & Footwear Grants

Parents/carers who are in receipt of benefits including Income Support, Job Seekers' Allowance (Income Based), Working Tax Credits (check link below for thresholds), Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Universal Credit (check link below for thresholds) will normally be entitled to monetary grants for footwear and clothing for their children.

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Information and application forms can be found here:

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17885>

School Meals

Our school provides a lunch service which offers a variety of meals and snacks within the Fuel Zone. A mid-morning service is also available. Special diets for young people with medical requirements can be provided. Please get in touch with the school office to let us know if that is required.

Young people who prefer to bring a packed lunch are accommodated in the Social Area.

Please note that pupils in S1 are not permitted to leave the campus at any point during the school day. Pupils in S2-S6 are allowed to leave the campus at lunchtime only.

Children and young people of parents/carers receiving Income Support, income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Working Tax Credits (check link for thresholds), Universal Credit (check links for thresholds) and income-related Employment and Support Allowance are entitled to both a free snack at interval and a free school meal at lunchtime. Information and application forms can be found here: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17885>

Transport

The education authority has a policy of providing free school transport to all young people who live outwith a certain radius from their local school by the recognised shortest walking route. This means that the provision of transport can be reviewed at any time. Parents/carers who consider that they are eligible can find an application form here: [Free School Transport for Catchment School - Glasgow City Council](#)

Communication with Parents/Carers

In St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, we strongly encourage all parents to become involved in the education of their children. We are always keen to listen to suggestions for new ways of stimulating parental interest. We contact parents/carers in a range of ways including:

- Newsletters – once a term we send out a link to a newsletter which shares all of the successes and achievements of our young people and includes any key information that may be required
- Letters – further information which requires a response may be sent in a letter form
- School website – any letters that are issued are also shared via a link to the website at [St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School – The Official Site for St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](http://StThomasAquinasSecondarySchool.glowscotland.org.uk)
- Twitter – our school twitter feed (@StThomasAqSec) is updated daily with news, key information and photos/videos of our pupils learning
- Text Messaging – You may receive text reminders about events/school closures/etc

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- Xpressions App – we will share details of how to sign up to this app to receive regular updates from school
- Meetings – Parents and carers are welcome in the school to discuss any aspect of their child's development and progress. To avoid disappointment, please call ahead to make an appointment.
- Parents' Evenings – at least once per year parents/carers have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers to discuss progress, learning and next steps

Parents and carers are welcome at other events throughout the school year e.g. workshops, information evenings, performances, award ceremonies, religious events and assemblies. The newsletter and twitter will keep you informed.

Strong communication links between home and school ensure parents and carers are confident to address any concerns they may have about their child's education with pastoral care staff and the senior leadership team.

Emergency Contact Information

At the start of each school session, parents and carers will be issued with the annual data check form. Please ensure that this is completed and returned to the school. It is also important that you let us know if there are any changes to your contact details including phone number and email address or to those of any of your child's emergency contacts.

Data Protection – use of information about children and young people and parents/carers

We collect information about children and young people attending school (and also about parents/carers, emergency contacts provided in the annual data check) to allow us to carry out the Council's functions as the education authority for the City of Glasgow. This may sometimes involve releasing personal information to other agencies as part of the Council, particularly in relation to child protection issues or criminal investigations, and it may also be used for research purposes (see the link below regarding this).

Information held by the school is, in legal terms, processed by Glasgow City Council. The Council is registered as a data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018 and all personal data is treated as confidence and is only used in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the General Data Protection Regulations, and the Information Use and Privacy Policy approved by the City Council. For more information on how we use personal information, or to see a copy of the Information Use and Privacy Policy, see <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=18010>

Education specific privacy statement can be accessed at:
<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=22069>

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Appointments During School Hours

If your child has an unavoidable appointment during the school day, please give them a letter for their pastoral care teacher to ensure that they have permission to be absent from class.

Comments and Complaints

In St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, we aim to have positive relationships across our school community. However, if you have a comment or complaint about any aspect of school life, please contact the Head Teacher in the first instance.

Glasgow City Council complaints procedures are available at:

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/complaints>

Customer Care Team
Customer & Business Services
Glasgow City Council
City Chambers
Glasgow
G12 1DU

Tel: 0141 287 0900

Email: customercare@glasgow.gov.uk or education.customerservices@glasgow.gov.uk

The above website also includes information on data protection and freedom of information.

Curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence 3-18

Curriculum for Excellence aims to raise standards of learning and teaching for all 3 to 18-year olds. It aims to help prepare children and young people with the knowledge and skills they need in a fast-changing world. As part of Curriculum for Excellence, all children from pre-school to the end of S3 will receive a rounded education known as a Broad General Education (BGE). Curriculum for Excellence is all about bringing real life into the classroom and taking lessons beyond it.

In line with their Curriculum for Excellence entitlement, pupils learn in all 8 curricular areas until the end of S3.

Expressive Arts	Health & Wellbeing	Languages	Mathematics
Religious & Moral	Sciences	Social Studies	Technologies

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There is also a focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills across every subject area as well as Skills for Learning, Life and Work as young people prepare for their adult lives. In addition, learning takes place in the following ways:

- Inter-disciplinary experiences (working across a range of subjects to link learning)
- Learning through the ethos and life of the school
- Opportunities for personal achievement

The Senior Phase S4-S6

The Senior Phase offers opportunity for specialisation leading to qualifications. Young people aged 15 plus will have a wide range of opportunities to experience learning and achieve qualifications to the highest possible level during their senior phase.

Throughout S3, there is a programme of pupil support to assist pupils and their parents and carers with course choices for National 4 and National 5 awards. The pupil support programme seeks to advise pupils about:

- The range of courses available
- The pupil's own aptitudes, interests, strengths and weaknesses
- The importance of individual subjects
- Entrance qualifications & career opportunities

In advising pupils about course choices, we adhere to national guidelines and ensure that pupil choices result in their best chance of success.

In collaboration with the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA), we will assess National 1-4 qualifications. Individual courses at National 1-4 levels will not be graded but marked overall as pass or fail.

Courses at the new National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels will continue to include work assessed by the school, but for these qualifications, students will also have to pass an additional assessment (usually a question paper or assignment) which will be marked externally by SQA.

The SQA website www.sqa.org.uk/cfeforparents contains useful information to help you understand national qualifications.

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Courses available in S5 & S6

As an inclusive school, we aim to meet the needs of all pupils in S5 and S6. We have strong partnerships with local colleges, Universities and employers. It is extremely important that senior students set challenging and realistic targets. To that end, we offer a rigorous options programme to support and inform student choice. Opportunities for personal development continue within and beyond the taught curriculum. S6 in particular offers senior pupils a range of opportunities to build leadership, communication and team working skills through involvement in a wide range of school and community events.

Encouraging excellence is central to our aspirations and expectations for all young people.

Religious Observance

Our school is fortunate to have a close link with all of our local parishes. Our Chaplain assists with the faith element of Religious and Moral Education and provides opportunities for liturgical celebrations. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious observance and should inform the school in writing.

In addition, parents and carers from religions other than Christianity may request that their children may be permitted to be absent from school in order to celebrate recognised religious events. Only written requests detailing the proposed arrangements will be considered. Appropriate requests will be granted on up to 3 occasions in any 1 school session.

Useful websites

www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/index.asp

Assessment & Reporting

All young people are assessed both formally and informally throughout the school year. This allows young people and their teachers to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. A variety of assessment methods are used to enable staff to pass on information to parents and carers about the progress of their child. Assessment records are kept by teachers and form the basis of discussion at parents' meetings throughout the year.

Dates of all parents' meetings and the schedule for issuing written reports is included in the school calendar which is issued at the start of term and is available on the website.

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If you have any concerns about your child's progress do not hesitate to contact their pastoral care teacher at any time.

Support for Pupils

The school has a duty to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum, with appropriate support for their needs if required. This applies to the content of lessons, teaching strategies and minor adaptations to the school environment. There are a wide range of factors which may act as a barrier to learning. We are committed to working closely with parents and carers to ensure that they are fully involved in any decisions about support for their children's needs.

Any parent or carer seeking further advice regarding this policy should contact the Headteacher in the first instance.

Further information relating to additional support needs is available on the Glasgow City Council website –

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=18941>

Information on the Glasgow City Councils' Parental Involvement Strategy can also be found at <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17870>

Pupil Support Staff

All staff in St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School have a clear responsibility for the welfare of young people. In addition, all young people are given a pastoral care teacher on entering the school. This provides a vital link between home and school as the pastoral care teacher has an 'all-round' picture of a pupil's progress and general health and well-being. In most cases, a parent's first point of contact with the school will be the pastoral care teacher.

We are fully committed to meeting the needs of all pupils and hold regular meetings at which we plan for those who might benefit from additional support. Full discussion is held with parents and carers and outcomes are planned and agreed in partnership.

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We operate a house system and siblings will always be placed in the same house (unless a change is specifically requested by a family). This means we can build a relationship with you as a family and you always know who you should contact if you need to get in touch. Your first port of call as a parent should be to contact your child's pastoral care teacher. If need be, though, your child's Year Head and the Head Teacher will also be able to address any issues.

House & House Colour	Principal Teacher of Pastoral Care/Head of House
St Andrew - blue	Miss Wilson (acting)
St Columba - yellow	Mr Canning
St John Ogilvie - purple	Mr Hale (acting)
St Kentigern - green	Miss McConnell
St Margaret - red	Mr McGraw (Mon/Tues/Wed) Miss Wong (Thurs/Fri)
Pupils from across all Houses can also be supported by our Principal Teacher of Support for Learning, Miss Power.	

Nurturing City

The Glasgow City Council vision 'towards the nurturing city', puts building positive, trusting relationships at the core of our work. We ensure children, young people and families feel they belong, they are listened to and they are valued by embedding the principles of nurture across our early years, primary and secondary establishments. Staff are trained in attachment and nurture which deepens understanding of child development and enhances effective practice by responding to the needs of all children and young people in a consistent and caring way. Nurture is a universal approach which builds resilience, helping to reduce the impact of adversity. Effective communication and collaboration with parents and carers will build an ethos of partnership working putting the child at the centre, fostering high quality learning contexts.

Each of our nurturing establishments contribute to the development of Glasgow as a nurturing city, creating safe environments which allow our children and young people to flourish by raising attainment and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

In St Thomas Aquinas, we have a dedicated Nurture Room where pupils engage with highly trained staff in order to minimise their fears and anxieties about school and maximise their time in class with positive social relationships.

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Promoting Positive Behaviour

Children's Rights as outlined in the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) are fundamental to a good school ethos. Adults in our school will work with young people to ensure they are aware of their rights and fully respect the rights of others. Therefore, the approach within St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School is to build a positive ethos that demonstrates care and respect for all.

The smooth running of St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School requires a high standard of behaviour from all within it. We appreciate the support of parents and carers in helping us to achieve this. All pupils are required to behave well and respect their own safety and that of others. This is also important on journeys to and from school.

Our expectations are clearly communicated to young people and breaches of discipline are dealt with in line with school policy. In most cases, a quiet reprimand is sufficient but in more serious or persistent cases parents will be invited to school to discuss the issue and agree a course of action.

Home Learning

Regular, effective homework is an important part of the school day. Pupils can note their homework on their ipad and all tasks are shared on the class Teams page online. Homework has many advantages:

- It reinforces work done in class
- It develops good study habits and a sense of personal discipline
- It develops areas of interest that can be followed up later in life and become a leisure pursuit
- It allows parents to see, help and become involved in their child's work

The amount of homework varies in length, nature and frequency depending on the subject. The amount of homework will increase as your child progresses through the school.

Supported Study

This is an important initiative which allows pupils to attend additional classes during lunchtimes, after school and during holiday periods. Large numbers of our staff give generously of their time in this area. Subjects on offer will depend on the staff available to deliver. Pupils will be kept informed of the arrangements on Teams, via the tannoy and on Twitter.

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Parent Council

We have a very active Parent Council that represents the views of all families. All parents and carers are welcome to attend Parent Council meetings and can become members at the AGM in *September*. Parent Council minutes are available on the Parent Council page of the school website and on request from the school office.

Pupil Parliament

Our Pupil Parliament is made up of representatives from each class. This is an important group which ensures that the views of pupils are heard.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We have a wide range of activities that run all week to extend the learning experience. There is a wide range of lunchtime and afterschool activities on offer. The list constantly changes but we keep our pupils up to date with what is on offer.

Good links with community organisations and our Active Schools Co-ordinator are vital for the success of these programmes.

School Improvement

On an annual basis, you will receive a copy of our Standards and Quality report. Copies from previous years are available on the school website. The Standards and Quality report will be used to share the overall exam performance of the school and highlights progress in key curricular areas such as literacy, numeracy and health & wellbeing. Our priorities for improvement are detailed in our School Improvement Plan which is discussed with our Parent Council. Any parent or carer seeking a copy of the plan can contact the school office.

Useful Contacts

Parentzone Scotland is a unique website for parents and carers in Scotland, from early years to beyond school. The website provides up-to-date information about learning in Scotland, and practical advice and ideas to support children's learning at home in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and science. Information is also available on Parentzone Scotland regarding additional support needs and how parents can get involved in their child's school and education. Furthermore, the website has details about schools including performance

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data for school leavers from S4-S6; and links to the national, and local authority and school level data on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Useful websites and contacts

Education Scotland www.education.gov.scot

National Parent Forum of Scotland www.npfs.org.uk

Connect

Connect is a national organisation that provides advice and resources for parents and carers. www.connect.scot

Enquire Scotland

Enquire is a national advice service for families with additional support needs. www.enquire.org.uk

Education Services

City Chambers East

40 John Street

Glasgow G1 1JL

Tel: 0141 287 2000

www.glasgow.gov.uk

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