

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

This morning, years 3 & 4 went to Hexham Abbey to experience the wonders of the live music performance at the Hexham festival of Music & Arts-THE CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS by Camille Saint-Saëns. The concert was given by a top line-up of instrumental soloists with narrator, led by pianist, Caroline Page. The children really enjoyed this timeless musical tale and were a credit to St. Mary's with their amazing behaviour!

This afternoon, it was lovely to invite our families into school to join our annual MacMillan Cancer Care Coffee Afternoon. Parents & carers had the chance for a cup of tea and catch up (& cake!) before the end of the school day. Thank you for your generous donations of cakes and treats for this event, all funds raised will be going to MacMillan Cancer Care one of the largest British charities, providing specialist health care, information and financial support to people affected by cancer.

During our coffee afternoon, we were inviting parents to express an interest in joining or supporting the PTA. We have also emailed a Microsoft Form today with parents/carers to gather interest and support for the PTA. We rely on parent/carer involvement to continue hosting whole-school events for the children, and parental support is needed to make these possible. We'd love to have more members involved in shaping our school community.

Finally, just a reminder that next Friday at 9.30am we are having our whole school Welcome Mass for our new Reception children, the mass will be held in St. Mary's Catholic Church. All families are welcome to join us for this event.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



PRAYER TO FIGHT CANCER

God Almighty, bestow cancer patients with your love to comfort their weary body and spirit. As they struggle physically and mentally, give them the courage to fight even harder. We believe in you, dear God, your compassion, your mercy, and your immeasurable love; we pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus.

NURSE PATT



Weekly PTA Cake Winner
Bodhi





REMINDER

First Reconciliation and Holy Communion Preparation 2025/2026

Following the summer break, our parish community of Hexham, Haydon Bridge and Bellingham will begin to prepare children for First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Holy Communion. This programme of preparation is open to all baptised Catholic children in Year 4 and above. The programme will consist of approximately 8 sessions at St Mary's Church, Hexham, starting in September 2025. Please contact the school office for a form.



Hello Yellow Day is a national initiative led by the charity YoungMinds to raise awareness and support for children and young people's mental health. It's a chance for schools across the country to show that mental health matters and to help break the stigma around talking about it. By wearing something yellow, we're joining thousands of others in sending a bright and positive message of hope and support.

On **Thursday 10th October**, children are invited to wear their usual school uniform along with one item of yellow – this could be something simple like yellow socks, a hair band, or a badge. We'll also be holding a cake stall during the day to raise funds and celebrate together, so children may wish to bring 50p to purchase a cake. Donations of cakes and baked goods will be gratefully received for this event.

School Photographer

We will be using the wonderful Unscripted team again this year for our photographs. They will be in school the morning of 5th November.

Cake Raffle

If your child would like the chance of winning the weekly cake, please bring £1 to the school office on a Friday morning. If any parents would like to donate, please contact the school office and Mrs. Forster will provide a date.

Reminder: Please bring coats!

As the weather turns cooler and more unpredictable, please ensure your child comes to school with a coat each day. We want all children to stay warm and dry during outdoor play and learning activities.

Thank you for your support!

Spooky Tickets

Mrs. Stoves will be selling the PTA Spooky Disco tickets under the school canopy on the following days-

Thursday 2nd October - 8.30am & 3.10pm.

Friday 3rd October 3.10pm.

The price is £3 or siblings 2x £5. Cash only please.



Wellbeing Club

We are pleased to introduce a new Wellbeing Club run by Mrs. Stoves, taking place on Friday mornings from 8:20 to 8:40am Y2-Y4. This club offers children a calm and positive start to their day, focusing on activities that support emotional wellbeing. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, and a new group of children will be selected each half term. If your child isn't successful in joining the first group, please don't worry – there will be future opportunities to take part.



Shoe Box Appeal

Over the summer holidays many children will be getting new school shoes. Please can we ask that any shoe boxes are retained and brought into school at the start of the autumn term. We are hoping to take part in Operation Christmas Child during the autumn term, it would be great to have lots of boxes to get started with.



Parents Evenings

We would like to invite parents into school to look at your child's books in the week before our autumn parents evening. School will be open for parents and children from 3.20-4:00pm on Tuesday 14th and Thursday 16th October (Please note the 16th is a change of date from the 15th to accommodate the PTA disco). Children will have their school books on their desks to show their grown-ups all their hard work so far this term. Parents Evenings will be held on Monday 20th and Wednesday 22nd October. Details on how to register for these events will be given nearer the time.

School Meals

If you would like to take a look at the new Summer Garden Kitchen menu, please use the following link-
<https://stmaryshexham.bwcet.com/parents/school-meals/>



Packed lunches

We would like to remind parents/carers that St. Mary's Catholic First School is a **nut-free school** due to children in our care who have severe nut allergies. To help us keep all pupils safe, please ensure that no nuts or nut-containing products are included in your child's packed lunch or snacks. This includes items such as:

- -Peanut butter
- -Nut-based cereal bars
- -Chocolate spreads containing hazelnuts (e.g., Nutella)
- -Cakes or biscuits with nuts

Even trace amounts can pose a serious risk, so your vigilance is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your continued support in keeping our school a safe environment for all children.

Snacks & drinks

The School Fruit & Vegetable Scheme is a government program that entitles all pupils in Early Years and Key Stage 1 to a piece of fruit or vegetable, each school day. Children in Key Stage 2 are permitted to bring in a healthy snack for break if they wish (no chocolate bars & sweets do not constitute as healthy snacks). Children are permitted to bring in a labelled water bottle into school each day, containing water only. Fizzy drinks are not permitted.

Uniform

It has been lovely to see all the children looking smart in their school uniforms. Trainers are not permitted (except for KS2 on Mondays for PE). Thank you for your cooperation with this. Black Nike trainers do not constitute as school shoes. **Please can children bring in a waterproof coat to school each day, the weather can be changeable and we like to get the children outside as much as possible.** ORDER ONLINE – www.saltouk.com /Email – enquiries@saltouk.com/Tel – 01661 835240

Universal Free school Meals

Currently, pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 are entitled to a free school meal thanks to a different government funding scheme known as universal infant free school meals (UIFSM). If your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2 and is eligible for free school meals We urge parents to still register because school will receive the extra pupil premium funding. In school, none of the children are aware of who is on FSM or not as they all access their lunch in the same way.

Your child might be eligible if you access:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- See gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals.

Pupils who are registered for free school meals don't have to eat them. If you're eligible but you want your child to have packed lunches you should still register because the school will receive the funding which can support your child in other ways. At St. Mary's Catholic First School, we receive an extra £1515, for every eligible pupil who is registered for free school meals. This extra money could make a real difference to the quality of education we offer.

Penalty Notice Information for Families

Since 2024, the government introduced legislation regarding the issue of Penalty Notices to address attendance concerns. There is a "National Framework" which introduces consistency in the use of Penalty Notices across England by introducing a national threshold at which they are considered. This will be met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (5 school days) within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. For further information please see our website 'Attendance' page: Attendance – St Mary's First School, Hexham (bwcet.com)



School Admissions -

Middle School 2026

The admission portal to apply for your child's place at Middle School will open on Friday 12th September. The portal will close on 31st October 2025 and you are advised to make an application as soon as possible.

Reception Starters 2026

Online Admissions Portal for First and Primary school admissions will be open on the 1st of November 2025. https://schadm.northumberland.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en

(You need to register as a new user if you haven't used the Portal before. If you've forgotten your password, click on forgotten password link) - (for late applications see below). You must complete an application for a place in a Reception class even if your child attends the school nursery or pre-school setting.



Mini Vinnie's - Miss Baird (Y1-Y4)	Mini Vinnies will now take place on a Wednesday lunch time to accommodate more pupils joining the club.
Games Club - Miss Eccles (Y1-Y2)	Monday Lunch Time
Computing - Miss Carr (Y2-Y4)	Tuesday Lunch Time
Colouring Club - Miss Wright (Y1-Y4)	Wednesday (3.15-4.00pm)
Dance Club - Mrs Hogg (Y1-Y4)	Thursday (3.15 - 4.00pm)
Multi Skills - Miss Stoves (Y2-Y4)	Friday (8.15am-8.40am)
Wellbeing Club - Mrs Stoves	Friday 8.20-8.40am. See info above

Clubs and activities on offer in school during this term



Class Masses

Throughout the year each class has the opportunity to attend Mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church. Mass is lead by our Parish Priests Fr Jeff and Fr. Paul. Class Masses are usually held on Fridays at 9:30am and all parents/carers and families are welcome to attend theses events. Please see rota below for details of dates for each class.

3 rd October 9.30am Church	Reception Welcome Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
10 th October	Y1 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
10 th October	Hello Yellow Day - see info above
5 th November	School Photographer
7 th November	Y4 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
14 th November	Y3 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
21 st November	Whole school Jubilee Day Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
28 th November	Rec and KS1 Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
Thursday 18 th December	Whole School Christingle Service St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am



Thursday 2 nd October	Spooky Disco Tickets being sold at 8.30am & 3.10pm by Mrs Stoves (Under Canopy)
Friday 3 rd October	Reception Welcome Mass 9.30am in St. Mary's Catholic Church. Whole school event, all parents/carers invited to attend. Spooky Disco Tickets being sold at 3.10pm by Mrs Stoves (Under Canopy)
Friday 10 th Oct	Hello Yellow Day-Children wear school uniform as usual with a yellow accessory e.g. hairband, socks etc. There will be a cake stall in school, donations of cakes would be appreciated. Children can bring 50p to purchase a cake.
Tuesday 14 th & Thursday 16 th Oct 3.20-4pm.	Look at Books sessions Parents/carers to look at books in advance of parents evening. Please note change of date from Wednesday to Thursday to accommodate the PTA disco.
Wednesday 15 th October	Spooky Disco 3.15pm-4.30pm. - Children attending the disco will remain in school at 3.15pm and change into home clothes or a costume. Please note- No scary masks or props allowed. £3 per child. Siblings 2x £5.
Monday 20 th & Wednesday 22 nd October	Parents Evenings - Details to be sent out nearer the time.
Thursday 23 rd Oct	Last day of autumn 1 for pupils. School closes at 3.15pm.
Friday 24 th Oct	Teacher Training Day-School closed to children.
Mon 27 th Oct-Fri 31 st Oct	Half Term Holiday
Thursday 11 th December	Queen's Hall Whole School Panto - Red Riding Hood. Payments of £10.50 are now live on the Arbor app, found under 'Trips'



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Jasmine	Archie	Teddie
Year 1	Rachel	Alexander	Orla
Year 2	Suzannah	Alfie L	Josie
Year 3	Dexter	Frankie	Florence
Year 4	Frankie	Savva	Leo



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year 1,2,3 & Reception

Reception	100%
Year 1	100%
Year 2	100%
Year 3	100%
Year 4	91.96%



St Mary's Safeguarding Information

Pupil Support & Safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Lead- Mrs. Oakes

Deputy Safeguarding Lead-Miss. Baird & Mrs. Stansfield

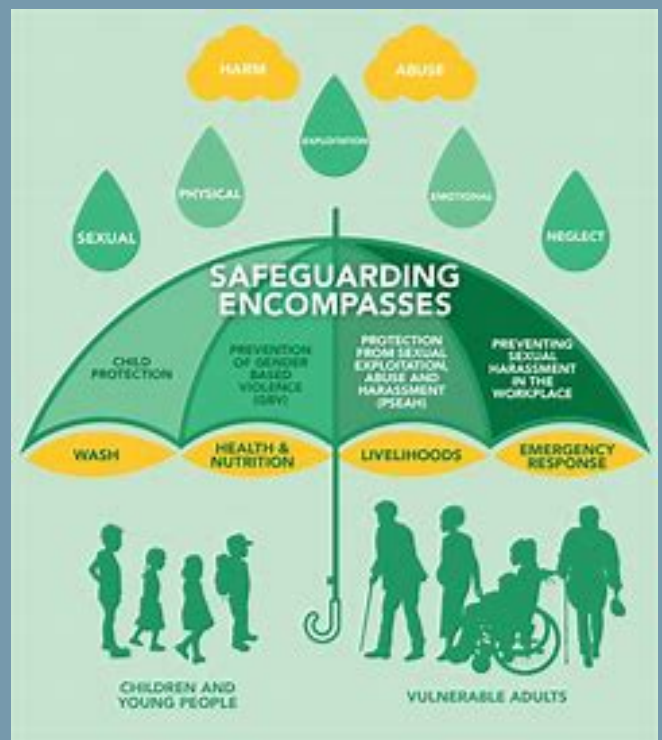
Assistant Safeguarding Lead-Mrs. Stoves

SENDCo/Assistant SENCo-Mrs. Stansfield (Maternity), Mrs. Oakes & Mrs Stoves

Please remember that we are here to support you and your child at any time. You can contact us via the main office (01434 603791) or by email (info@smfs.bwcet.com)

Operation Encompass

St. Mary's is an Operation Encompass school, run in partnership with both Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Police. The project, which commenced in April 2015 aims to support children who are affected by domestic abuse. Operation Encompass aims to support children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse. Witnessing domestic abuse is really distressing for a child or young person, who often see the abuse, hear it from another room, see a parent's injuries or distress afterwards or can be physically hurt by trying to stop the abuse. Please visit the Operation Encompass for more information: Home : Operation Encompass & support services: Northumberland-Support-Services.pdf (bwcet.com)



At the National College, our WakeUpWednesday guide empowers and equips parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered via National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, facts and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about YOUTH VIOLENCE

Youth violence affects one in four children in the UK, but it doesn't have to. When parents, carers, and educators understand the risks, they're better placed to support young people. The right support, mentoring, therapy, and guidance can help young people affected by violence to feel safe, manage conflict, and make positive choices.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH VIOLENCE

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT SERIOUS VIOLENCE?

A recent study surveyed over 10,000 young people affected by violence, asking them to identify the reasons for their involvement in violence. The most common reasons were due to a perceived characteristic of the victim (e.g. race, religion, sexuality, gender, or gang or school rivalry), and being provoked, while not all young people have these issues, many lack the emotional regulation skills needed to manage provocation.

WHAT ARE SIGNS A YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK?

Children and young people often express that something is wrong through behaviour rather than words. Be alert to signs such as sudden mood changes, secrecy around friendships, excessive phone use, unexplained injury, unexplained absence from school, aggression, going missing, or substance use. They may not be associating with other people. These behaviours can indicate underlying issues that can lead to violence.

ONLINE INFLUENCES

Social media plays a powerful role in normalising and escalating violence. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram can expose young people to harmful content often shared by influencers. Many see violent material that distorts reality, leading to fear and desensitisation. A recent study found 70% had seen real-world violence online, and 65% felt less safe in their communities. Alarmingly, 38% said it made them more likely to carry a weapon. Online conflict can often spill into real life, with serious and sometimes tragic consequences.

WHEN IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

For children and young people in England and Wales, the hours between 4pm and 6pm - just after school - carry a particularly high risk for serious violence. This can stem from conflicts that escalate during the school day, online arguments, or simply moving through vulnerable areas on the way home. Understanding this risk helps us support safer travel and routines. Our recent report found that over one in three young people don't feel safe in the area they live in, and 18% don't feel safe walking the streets.

WHY MIGHT A YOUNG PERSON CARRY A WEAPON?

Young people may carry weapons due to fear, threats, peer pressure, or a false sense of protection. Many young people tell us they feel unsafe and carry weapons 'just in case', while others may be influenced by social media, peers, or criminal activity. Some don't realise it's illegal and therefore it seems subject.

WHERE IS VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

Violence often happens in certain places. Busy areas like transport hubs carry a risk simply because lots of people gather there. Other hotspots, like places linked to drug activity, attract those more likely to be involved in violence. Some areas become risky due to poor supervision, such as under-resourced public spaces. Understanding where violence tends to occur helps us guide young people safely through their communities and advocate for better support and safer spaces.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT STAYING SAFE

Choose a safe moment for the conversation, emotionally and physically. If a child is upset or angry, help them express their feelings. Listen actively without judgement, even if what they share is difficult. Avoid interrupting and offer advice when the time feels right. If you worried, you're not alone, support is available.

HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND CONSEQUENCES

Young people can be searched by police or teachers if suspected of carrying a knife or weapon. If found with a knife, they could face arrest and a criminal conviction can result in a criminal record, even being present during a violent assault. Encouraging a 'thinking' or 'planning' mindset, always call 999. These steps help protect children and the wider community.

AVOID CONFLICT & MANAGE ESCALATIONS

Encourage young people to consider the 'Safe 1's' - Trust instincts, Take a breath, and Talk to a trusted adult. When triggered or provoked, they may react from their 'survival brain', unable to think clearly about the consequences. Taking a breath helps calm, and helps them hear their 'thinking brain'. Remind them that moments pass, and seeking support from trusted adults builds resilience and safer decision-making.

REPORT INFORMATION

We all have a role in preventing violence. If a child shares concerns, you can act. For educators, it's important to follow your school's safeguarding procedure. Other adults can report anonymously through Fearnet or Comms4groups, and speak with other parents, the school, or local police through 101. If someone is in immediate danger, always call 999. These steps help protect children and the wider community.

Meet Our Expert
The Ben Kinsella Trust is a UK anti-knife crime charity educating young people through interactive workshops, awareness campaigns, and community resources. Visit: benkinsella.org.uk

#WakeUpWednesday The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/youth-violence>

@wake_up_weds /www.thenationalcollege @wake.up.wednesday @wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 24.09.2025

Online Safety

Northumberland County Council, in partnership with the Solihull Approach, offer free access to online courses expertly designed for parents, carers, grandparents and teens living in the region. All schools in Northumberland are in a pre-paid area for emotional health resources hub:

<https://inourplace.co.uk/northumberland/>

This means parents can access a range of online support to better understand children's emotional health, brain development and wellbeing.

For more comms material and information you can contact vicki.collins@northumberland.gov.uk



www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com



@stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham