

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

On Wednesday, Year 4 celebrated 'International Day of Peace' with a whole school Celebration of the Word in the school hall. The children all read and sang beautifully. It was lovely to welcome parents and carers into school for this event.

Wednesday afternoon became a bit noisier in school, as Year 3 started their half term instrumental music sessions with music teacher Dan Ward. The children are learning to play the djembe (jem-bay) a traditional African drum that originates from West Africa. It is shaped like a large goblet and played with bare hands. The djembe is known for its rich, vibrant sound and is often used in group drumming to create rhythms that are both energetic and expressive. Playing the djembe helps children develop coordination, listening skills, and a sense of rhythm, while also introducing them to the musical traditions of other cultures.

Next week, we would like to invite all families into school on Friday 26th September from 2.45pm, to our annual MacMillan Cancer Care Coffee Afternoon. Children will remain in class until 3.15pm, giving parents carers the chance for a cup of tea and catch up before the end of the school day. Following pick-up, parents/carers are welcome to bring their child back into the hall to purchase a cake. Entrance to the coffee afternoon will be via the fire doors at the rear of the hall. We are asking for 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 upcoming coffee afternoon, we will be inviting parents to express interest in joining or supporting the PTA. We'd love to have more members involved in shaping our school community.

We are delighted to share that St Mary's has been awarded the Computing Quality Mark by the National Centre for Computing Education. This recognition celebrates the high standard of computing education delivered across our school. The award reflects our commitment to providing pupils with a rich and engaging computing curriculum that develops essential digital skills, encourages computational thinking, and prepares them for the ever-evolving digital world. A huge thank you to Miss Carr our computing lead, and to all staff for their continued efforts in embedding high-quality computing teaching throughout the school.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



Prayer for Peace

Dear Jesus,

Please help us put others first by seeing how special everyone is.

Help us bring our own peace to the world to care for those in need.

Let us think of everyone for the common good and to follow in your footsteps.

Amen.



Year 4 Celebration of the Word



Weekly Cake Winner - Phuc



REMINDER



MacMillan Cancer Care Coffee Afternoon

On the afternoon of Friday 26th September from 2.45pm, we would like to invite all friends and families of St. Mary's to our MacMillan Cancer Care Coffee Afternoon. We will be asking for 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.

Hexham festival of Music & Arts-THE CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS by Camille Saint-Saëns

Years 3 & 4 have been invited to Hexham Abbey to experience the wonders of live music performance on Friday, 26th September, starting at 11.00 am. The concert will last one hour and will be given by a top line-up of instrumental soloists with narrator, led by pianist, Caroline Page. The timeless musical tale in an exciting new arrangement! The Festival will receive external funding making this a free event for all. Pupils will be escorted from school and will wear their school uniform and will need a waterproof coat.

Well being 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. 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.

Reception Welcome Mass

On Friday 3rd October at 9:30am we have our Reception 'Welcome Mass' at St. Mary's Catholic Church, welcoming our new Reception pupils into St. Mary's. All parents and carers are invited to attend this service.

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!

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 Wednesday 15th October. 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.

Clubs and activities on offer in school during this term

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 below

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 these events. Please see rota below for details of dates for each class.



26 th September	Y2 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
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

Wellbeing Club - Friday's 8.20-8.40am Y2-Y4

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.



Wednesday 17 th September	Year 4 Celebration of the Word, 9.30am in school hall. All parents/carers welcome.
Friday 26 th September Key Stage 2 Festival of the animals	Years 3 & 4 visit Hexham Abbey at 11am to participate in musical event.
MacMillan Cancer Care Coffee Afternoon	Friday 26 th September in school hall. Parents/carers only from 2.45pm. Pupils to join from 3.15pm. Donations of sweet treats appreciated.
Friday 3 rd October	Reception Welcome Mass 9.30am in St. Mary's Catholic Church. Whole school event, all parents/carers invited to attend.
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 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	Loriea	Lochlan	Millie
Year 1	Bodhi	Felicity	Bea
Year 2	Elizabeth	Jay	Elsie
Year 3	Evie	Beauden	Phuc
Year 4	Kaicey	Riley	Phoebe



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year - Y1,Y3 &Y4

Reception	98.86%
Year 1	100%
Year 2	98.61%
Year 3	100%
Year 4	100%



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 guides empower and equip 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 by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SNAPCHAT

With over 900 million active monthly users and billions of 'snaps' sent each month, Snapchat is a popular messaging app among children and young people. It allows users to share fun, spontaneous pictures and videos with friends and family while using playful filters. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures, videos and messages are only viewable for a short period of time.

13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**
Snapchat's use of artificial intelligence (AI) includes features like the 'My AI' chatbot and AI-powered filters, offering interactive experiences that can be fun but also pose risks. These risks may include unfiltered or inappropriate responses, promote unrealistic standards, and collect personal data that can be used for targeted advertising or other purposes.
- SCREEN ADDICTION**
Snapchat boasts user engagement and daily use with features like streaks (daily Snapchat exchanges between you and a friend). These streaks can become a goal in themselves, leading to excessive use and distraction from other activities. The number of streaks can also become a source of pressure or competition, leading to stress or anxiety.
- SEXUATION**
Because Snapchat disappears messages, users may feel more confident to send or receive explicit or inappropriate content. This can lead to sexual harassment or exploitation, especially for young people. The app's disappearing messages feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images or videos, which can be used for blackmail or other purposes.
- SNAPCHAT+**
Snapchat+ is the platform's premium subscription service, offering early access to new and exclusive features. In June 2025, Snapchat introduced a new tier called 'Snapchat+', giving subscribers access to a range of benefits and AI-powered features for playing, creating, and sharing snaps. These premium features may encourage users to spend money to access exclusive content, increasing the risk of overspending or feeling pressured to make in-app purchases.
- ACCESSIBILITY**
Snapchat is now accessible from a web browser, meaning children can use it on a laptop or tablet without downloading the app. This can make it harder to monitor, reduce the effectiveness of parental controls, and increase the risk of inappropriate communication or exposure to inappropriate content.
- INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT**
Some content on Snapchat isn't suitable for children. The platform's search for group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could yield age-inappropriate results. The app's disappearing messages feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images or videos - so seeing, and potentially sharing, inappropriate content continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

Advice for Parents & Educators

- ACCESS THE SNAPCHAT FAMILY SAFETY HUB**
Created with guidance from Common Sense Media, Snapchat has developed a Family Safety Hub that explains how the app works and how to use its in-app protections for teens. It is recommended that you review this guidance before allowing a child to download Snapchat. Remember, the app is only intended for children aged 13 and over.
- ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS**
Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you nurture an open dialogue. Talk about apps and social media before letting children sign up. If they're logged into an account, encourage them to tell you immediately. Talk openly and non-judgmentally about sexting, emphasizing its inherent risks. Furthermore, explain how popular 'challenges' on the platform can have harmful consequences.
- BLOCK AND REPORT**
If a stranger connects with a child on Snapchat and makes them feel uncomfortable by pressuring them to send or receive unwanted or inappropriate images, the child can block the person and report the account to Snapchat. There are options to state why they're reporting that user, with a tailored reporting action under the 'Harassment and Sexual Content' category. In this category, there's the option to report a user for 'Sexual Content' or 'Harassment'.
- USE PRIVACY SETTINGS TOGETHER**
Set down with the children in your care and explore Snapchat's privacy settings as a shared activity. You can help them adjust who can contact them, view their stories, or use their location. Encourage them to regularly review these settings, especially after app updates or changes in their friendship group.

Meet Our Expert
Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various educational papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

#WakeUpWednesday The National College

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

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Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 17.03.2025



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