

# ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back, I hope you all had a lovely summer. It has been lovely hearing about what the children have been up to over the holidays.

This summer, Jacob (Y3) and Felicity (Y1) have supported their mum's (Julia) training for a life-changing challenge—climbing Mount Kilimanjaro! Together, they've completed the Allendale mini challenge (10 miles), hiked High Cup Nick (7 miles), tackled mountains in the Lake District, and explored many local trails in Northumberland. Julia will be joining 15 incredible women, to raise funds for Chameleon Buddies—a charity supporting women and girls in Eldoret, Kenya, living with stomas or childbirth injuries. Their goal is to raise £90,000 to build a dedicated stoma and continence wing at Gynocare Women's Fistula Hospital. We have attached the QR below (or see Julia) if you wish to donate to this good cause. Good luck Julia!

Next week, we would like to invite parents into school before the end of the school day to attend our curriculum workshops so that you can find out useful information to help and support your child this year. There will also be some safeguarding updates that parents will be made aware of during the sessions. Please see further details below.

It was lovely to meet our new Reception children, new starters and their families this week. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to the St. Mary's family. Starting school is such a special time; a time for new experiences, new friends, and a step towards greater independence for your child. We look forward to sharing in your child's learning journey throughout their time at St. Mary's.

Wishing you all a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



## Back to School Prayer

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your help as we begin this new school year. Allow us to experience Your presence in the many blessings You put before us. Open our eyes to the new challenges and exciting opportunities that this new school year brings. Amen.



Please help me reach my  
**£3000 target**  
Make a donation with **JustGiving**



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**WELCOME  
BACK TO SCHOOL**



## REMINDER

### **Year 3 & 4 Swimming**

First swimming session is Monday 8th September. Can all Y3 & Y4 pupils come to school in their school P.E kit. Please ensure they have swimwear, towel and a pair of goggles. Children will be asked to remove all earrings and jewelry prior to swimming. Payments are now live on Arbor under 'school shop'.

### **Reading Books & Homework**

All children in years 1-4 are currently completing their Star reading assessments and will be issued with a reading book. Reading books and homework will commence on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September**, more information on reading and homework will be given at the Parent Curriculum Workshops next week. Following this, the Homework Policy will be shared with all parents/carers. All children In Reception and Year 1 will bring a Read, Write Inc phonics book home. Please complete and sign your child's Reading Record when you have listened to them read.

### **Parent Curriculum Workshops**

Next week, parents are invited into school slightly earlier to participate in our curriculum workshops to find out more about the curriculum your child will cover this academic year and how you can best support them. There will also be some informative safeguarding information being shared at these sessions. As the workshops are during school hours, the children will be supervised elsewhere in school to make the events accessible to more parents. All sessions will finish before the end of the school day.

Workshops are as follows:

- Early Years (Reception)-Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2.30-3.15pm
- Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2)-Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2.45-3.15pm
- Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4)-Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2.45-3.15pm

**If you are unable to attend the workshops and would like to hear the information, please contact the class teacher to arrange a convenient time.**

### **Extra-curricular clubs**

Please see below information regarding extra-curricular clubs and activities on offer in school during this term.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Year 4 Celebration of the Word**

We would like to invite you to participate in Year 4's International Day of Peace Celebration of the Word marking International Day of Peace on Wednesday 17th September . Year 4 will be leading the prayer & worship in the school hall at 9.30am on 18th September. All parents and carers are invited to attend this event.

### **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.

### **Wild Passport**

Every Tuesday, all pupils in years 1-4 will continue to take part in WILD Passport sessions. Wild Passport is an outdoor learning curriculum with fully realised progressive skills. The WILD Passport provides children with weekly outdoor learning opportunities, taught by outdoor education experts. As such, we advise that children in years 1-4 have a pair of wellingtons and/or some sturdy walking boots, a waterproof coat & spare set of clothes (left in school) in preparation for this. We also suggest sending the children in with a spare set of clothes (to remain in school), just in case they get muddy or wet during their session!

## First Reconciliation and Holy Communion Preparation 2025/2026

Following the summer break, our parish communities 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.

## 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](http://www.saltouk.com) /Email – [enquiries@saltouk.com](mailto: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](http://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)



### **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.



### **Online applications - 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 - W/C Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September**



Mini Vinnie’s - Miss Baird (Y1-Y4)	Dates TBC (3.15-4.00pm)
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)



12 <sup>th</sup> September	Y4 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
19 <sup>th</sup> September	Y3 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
26 <sup>th</sup> September	Y2 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
3 <sup>rd</sup> October 9.30am Church	Reception Welcome Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
10 <sup>th</sup> October	Y1 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
7 <sup>th</sup> November	Y4 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
14 <sup>th</sup> November	Y3 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
21 <sup>st</sup> November	Whole school Jubilee Day Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
28 <sup>th</sup> November	Rec and KS1 Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	Whole School Christingle Service St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am

Y3&Y4 Swimming	Swimming starts Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> , payments are now live on Arbor under school shop'
Year 4-First Holy Communion Preparation	Starts September 2025 contact office for more information
Wild Passport	Sessions commence for years 1-4-Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> September
Curriculum Workshops	EY-Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> 2.30pm-3.15pm KS1-Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> 2.45pm-3.15pm KS2-Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> 2.45-3.15pm
Reading Books & Homework sent home	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> September
Year 4 Celebration of the Word	Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> September 9.30am in school hall. All parents/carers welcome.
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 <sup>th</sup> September in school hall. Parents/carers only from 2.45pm. Pupils to join from 3.15pm. Donations of sweet treats appreciated.
Reception Welcome Mass	Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 9.30am in St. Mary's Catholic Church. Whole school event, all parents/carers invited to attend.
Look at Books sessions	Parents/carers to look at books in advance of parents evening: Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> Oct 3.20-4pm.
Parents evenings	Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October. Details to be sent out nearer the time.



## Value Award Winners

Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Jamine	Adalyn	Teddie
Year 1	Kobe	Sienna	Luna
Year 2	Fraser	Layton	Erin
Year 3	Freddie	Noah	Hazel
Year 4	Ollie	Gracie	Leo



Every student. Every day.



### St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners-

#### Well done Year - Reception, Y1 & Y3

Reception	100%
Year 1	100%
Year 2	94.44%
Year 3	100%
Year 4	98.98%



# 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)



### 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

## RECOGNISING & MANAGING STRESS

According to recent studies, over 60% of young people report feeling regularly overwhelmed – with stress impacting their learning, emotional wellbeing and social connections. If left unaddressed, stress can lead to more serious concerns such as anxiety, depression or disengagement. This guide offers ten practical, evidence-based strategies to help children and young people recognise, manage and recover from stress in healthy ways.

- SPOT THE SUBTLE SIGNS**  
Look out for changes in mood, behaviour, or energy levels, such as irritability, withdrawal, or frequent headaches. These may indicate that a child is feeling overwhelmed. By talking into these signs and offering to talk, you can help children feel heard and supported before issues escalate.
- KEEP CONVERSATIONS FLOWING**  
Make time for open, informal check-ins – whether it's during car journeys, over dinner, or in quiet classroom moments. Let children know it's okay to talk about what's bothering them. Regular, low-pressure conversations create a safe space where emotions are validated, not dismissed.
- MAKE MOVEMENT PART OF THE DAY**  
Physical activity can dramatically reduce stress. Encourage wholesome, enjoyable activities children genuinely enjoy – from team sports to dancing around the kitchen. Even simple acts like stretching or walking the dog can help us all unwind.
- SUPPORT HEALTHY SLEEP PATTERNS**  
Poor sleep makes stress harder to manage. Establish a calming bedtime routine that avoids screens before bed and promotes winding down, such as reading or listening to music. Consistent sleep hygiene helps reset mood, enhance concentration, and boost emotional resilience.
- PRACTISE MINDFULNESS**  
Mindfulness doesn't have to mean long periods of meditation. A few slow breathers before lessons or short family meditation sessions before bed can make a real difference. These simple habits help children ground themselves, reduce emotional reactivity, and build inner calm over time.
- SET DIGITAL BOUNDARIES**  
Excessive screen time, especially before bed or on social media, is linked with higher stress levels. Set clear expectations for when and where devices can be used and suggest screen-free zones like the car, during work, or board games to promote digital balance and reduce overstimulation.
- NURTURE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**  
Strong relationships act as a buffer against stress. Whether it's a trusted adult, a sibling, or a good friend, ensure children have people around them they can talk to and spend quality time with. Help them build these bonds through shared activities and meaningful interaction.
- PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION**  
Set realistic goals and praise effort, not just outcomes. When children feel pressured to be perfect, stress naturally follows. Celebrate small wins and help them reframe setbacks as learning opportunities. This helps build confidence and reduces the fear of failure.
- TEACH EVERYDAY PROBLEM-SOLVING**  
Use real-life scenarios to build resilience. Encourage children to brainstorm, consider possible solutions, or if they choose a plan of action, practise it. These habits give them a sense of control and reduce the helplessness that often accompanies stress.
- BE THE MODEL THEY NEED**  
Children notice how adults respond to challenges. Model healthy coping strategies such as taking breaks, asking for help, or calmly expressing frustration. By showing how you manage stress constructively, you help normalise these behaviours and encourage children to do the same.

Meet Our Expert  
Anna Bateman is Director of Health Education Ltd, Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Legal Trust, and lead expert for mental health at The National College. Anna specialises in strategic mental health solutions for schools, supporting educators and families to improve resilience, emotional literacy, and overall wellbeing for children across the UK.

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### 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](mailto:vicki.collins@northumberland.gov.uk)



[www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com](http://www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com)



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