

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today, we all participated in Hello Yellow Day. A national initiative led by the charity YoungMinds to raise awareness and support for children and young people's mental health. The children wore their one item of yellow alongside their school uniform. By wearing something yellow, we've joined thousands of others in sending a bright and positive message of hope and support. We also held a cake stall during the day to raise funds and celebrate together. Thank you for the donations of cakes and baked goods we received for this event.

We know how much the children enjoy sharing their learning with you, and we would like to warmly invite parents and carers into school next week to look through their child's books ahead of Parents' Evening. Classrooms will be open after school on Tuesday 14th October and Thursday 16th October from 3:20pm to 4:00pm. This is a lovely opportunity to celebrate the progress your child has made so far this term, we hope you'll be able to join us.

After the half-term break, we are delighted to welcome back Mrs Stansfield, who will be returning to her role as Year 2 teacher & SENCo following her maternity leave. We know the children will be excited to see her back in the classroom. At the same time, we will be saying goodbye to Miss Eccles, who has done an amazing job during her time with us. Her dedication and care have made a real difference, and she will be greatly missed by staff, pupils, and families alike. We thank her sincerely for all she has contributed to our school community and wish her every success in the future.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



A Prayer for Hello Yellow - World Mental Health Day

Loving and compassionate God,

Today, as we wear yellow to shine a light on mental health,

We pray for all who feel overwhelmed, unseen, or alone.
May they find comfort in knowing they are valued, loved,
and never forgotten.

Grant strength to those struggling in silence,
Hope to those who feel lost,

And peace to those battling inner storms.

Help us to be beacons of kindness and understanding,

To listen without judgment,

And to support one another with open hearts.

May this day remind us all that no one walks this journey
alone,

And together, we can create a world of empathy, care,
and healing.

Amen.

Let this prayer inspire hope and solidarity, as we stand
together for mental health awareness. ♥



Weekly PTA Cake Winner - Adalyn



REMINDER



Space Week

This week in school we have been participating in 'Space Week' and this year's theme is 'Living in Space', just a reminder that we have invited all pupils to take part in an exciting design challenge, to create a space habitat where humans could live on the Moon. Think carefully about what people need to survive and how those needs could be met in a lunar environment. You can either draw, bake or build your design—perhaps creating a 3D model using recycled materials. Don't forget to include a short description explaining your creation. To inspire the children's ideas, we have been exploring space-related topics in our science lessons this week. There will be prizes for the most creative and well-thought-out entries, so let your imagination soar! All entries must be submitted by **Monday 13th October**. We can't wait to see your imaginative ideas take off!

Spooky Disco

We're looking forward to our Spooky Disco on Wednesday 15th October, running from 3:15pm to 4:30pm. Children should bring their costume or home clothes to school in a named bag, ready to change into at the end of the school day. Please note: no props or masks are allowed. During the disco, children will enjoy a hotdog, drink, sweets, and a biscuit. If your child has any specific dietary requirements, please inform the school before Wednesday 15th October. Children not attending the disco will be dismissed via the main entrance at 3:15pm, while those attending will be dismissed by their class teacher from their usual exit points at around 4:30pm.

PTA

Thank you to all the parents and carers who have signed up to join our PTA following the recent recruitment drive. Your support is greatly appreciated, and we're excited to work together to enrich our school community. We're especially looking forward to your help at the upcoming Spooky Disco—it's always a highlight for the children! Following the event, Mrs. Stoves, our PTA Chair, will be in touch to arrange a meeting where we can share ideas and plan new ways to raise funds for the school. If you weren't able to sign up but would still like to support us, please know that you're always welcome to get involved. Every helping hand makes a difference!

School Photographer

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



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 children may have been bought 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.

Cauliflower Cards

This year we are taking part in the Cauliflower Christmas Card project again. The children will complete their card designs in school during their art lessons and bring them home on Monday 13th October so that orders can be placed online. We kindly ask that all artwork is returned to school by Friday 17th October.

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 find our school menu's on the school website.

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 Lunch Time
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.

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



'As part of Year 3's PSHE topic on 'Health and Wellbeing', we explored our personal strengths and transformed them into positive affirmations. The affirmations serve as reminders that even when things don't go as planned, there is always something positive to hold on to.'



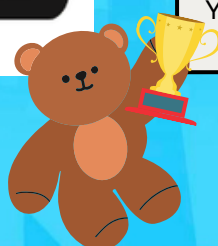
Monday 13 th October	Space Week-enter the competition-deadline is Mon 13th Oct (further information above) Prizes to be won!
Tuesday 14 th & Thursday 16 th Oct 3.20-4pm.	Look at Books sessions Parents/carers to look at books in advance of parents evening. Please note change of date from Wednesday to Thursday to accommodate the PTA disco.
15 th & 22 nd Oct Open Mornings	School is open for prospective parents of Reception 2026 parents/carers and any other pupils wanting to visit. Contact main office for further information.
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.
Monday 20 th & Wednesday 22 nd October	Parents Evenings - Appointments are now available on Arbor, these will be live until 15 th October. Any problems, please contact the school office.
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
Wednesday 5 th November	School Photographer
 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'. The deadline date for payment is Friday 21 st November. This will secure your child's place on the trip.



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Catherine	Robson	Lara
Year 1	Theo	Max	Orla
Year 2	Alice	Myles	Alfie R
Year 3	Grace	Jenson	Lumen
Year 4	Esmee	Gracie	Heidi



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year 3	
Reception	93.33%
Year 1	94.44%
Year 2	92.59%
Year 3	98.33%
Year 4	92.86%



St Mary's Safeguarding Information

Pupil Support & Safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Lead- Mrs. Oakes

Deputy Safeguarding Lead-Miss. Baird, Mrs. Stansfield & Miss. Stoves

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 Wake Up Wednesday 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. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators DEALING WITH TRAUMATIC & CHALLENGING EVENTS

Children and young people may face a wide range of traumatic or challenging events – from bereavement and illness to bullying, family breakdowns, or witnessing violence. These experiences can affect their mental health, behaviour, relationships, and academic progress. With the right support from trusted adults, children can begin to feel safe, rebuild resilience, and develop healthy coping strategies. This guide offers practical and empathetic ways to provide support and promote positive outcomes.

- 1. A PREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENT**
Children who have experienced trauma often feel unsafe or uncertain. Creating routines, setting clear expectations, and maintaining consistency can help restore a sense of security. This structure offers reassurance and helps children feel more in control of their surroundings.
- 2. USE LANGUAGE THAT MATCHES THEIR AGE**
Speak clearly and sensitively, choosing words that are appropriate for the child's age. Avoid overwhelming them with too much information at once. Offer gentle, honest explanations and focus on reassurance, especially when talking about difficult or sensitive subjects.
- 3. TRAUMA AND THE BODY**
Mention briefly that trauma can show up as physical signs, such as changes in sleep, appetite, concentration, or as physical aches and pains. Consider this before blaming behaviour as 'difficult' or 'lazy'. Some children may become withdrawn, while others may be more outwardly challenging. Highlight that there are no 'one size fits all' children's responses.
- 4. AVOID RETELLING OR RELIVING TRAUMA**
Children sometimes get asked to retell or repeat their experience multiple times, creating a balance of when to listen and when to gently redirect can help to avoid unnecessary re-traumatization. Acknowledge, but don't probe for detail unless safeguarding procedures require it.
- 5. AVOID DISMISSING OR MINIMISING FEELINGS**
Seemingly well-meaning comments like 'It's not that bad' or 'You're okay' may shut down children's emotional expression and are often not helpful. Instead, acknowledge what they're feeling, even if it seems small. Validating a child's emotions helps them feel seen and encourages open communication in the future.
- 6. UNDERSTAND HOW THEY'RE FEELING**
Many children don't have the words to express their emotions, especially during distress. Supporting them to name what they're feeling – such as angry, scared or sad – builds emotional literacy. Tools like emotion charts, drawing, or story-making can help externalise feelings in a safe, manageable way.
- 7. BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN RESPONSES**
Children pick up on adult emotions and reactions, often mirroring them. Staying calm, even in challenging situations, helps children feel more secure. Practising your own self-regulation is an important way to model healthy stress management and encourage children to do the same.
- 8. SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**
While many children benefit from everyday emotional support, some will need more specialist help. If symptoms persist, worsen, or disrupt their daily life, consult with school safeguarding leads, a GP or a mental health professional. Early intervention can prevent long-term difficulties and support healthy recovery.
- 9. MAINTAIN CONNECTION**
Isolation can worsen the impact of trauma. Encourage involvement in group activities, praise their efforts, and ensure they feel like a valued part of the school or family community. Meaningful connection with trusted adults and peers builds resilience and a sense of belonging.
- 10. BE PATIENT – HEALING TAKES TIME**
There's no quick fix for emotional recovery. Children may have good days and setbacks, and progress may not always be visible or linear. Your ongoing support, patience, and presence can help them move forward at their own pace, knowing they are not alone.

Meet Our Expert
This guide has been written by Anne Bateman, Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school by integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture, and systems. She has been a member of the advisory group for the Department for Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.

Wake Up Wednesday
The National College

Follow us on social media:
X: @wake_up_weds
Facebook: /www.thenationalcollege
Instagram: @wake.up.wednesday
Twitter: @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: 08.10.2025

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