

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2025

Dear parent/carer,

We've had a truly out-of-this-world week celebrating Space Week! The entries to our competition were absolutely phenomenal – we were blown away by the creativity, effort, and high standard of work from all our pupils. It was incredibly difficult to choose a winner, so every child who entered has been awarded a certificate and a small prize to recognise their fantastic contribution. Well done to everyone who took part!

On Wednesday, the PTA Spooky Disco was a huge success! The children looked amazing in their spooky outfits and had a brilliant time dancing and celebrating together. A massive thank you to Mrs Stoves and the PTA for organising such a fun and memorable event – your hard work is truly appreciated.

This week, it has been lovely welcoming parents into school to look through books with your children. The children absolutely love sharing their learning with you, and it's wonderful to see their progress and the pride they take in their work.

Next Thursday, we'll be rounding off the half term with our Celebration Assembly, where we'll be recognising all the children's hard work and awarding prizes for attendance. We're so proud of everything they've achieved this half term!

Next week, we will be supporting the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal by selling poppies and a selection of commemorative items in school. This is a wonderful opportunity for our school community to come together and honour those who have served and continue to serve in the Armed Forces. Please see the price list below.

Have a lovely weekend,
Mrs. Oakes

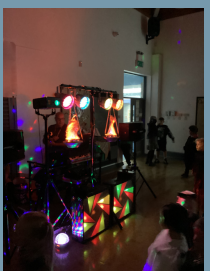


THANKSGIVING PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father,
We are thankful for all Your blessings,
goodness and mercy on us.
We are thankful for all the people in
our lives who make our life meaningful
and beautiful. Thank You for watching
over us and getting us all here safely.
Let Your blessings be upon everyone
here today. May we be protected and
all our prayers be answered.

In Jesus mighty name.

Amen



Weekly PTA Cake Winner
Loriea F



REMINDER

SPACE WEEK: 'Living in Space' Homework Competition 🚀

We've been blown away by the creativity and effort shown by our pupils in this year's Space Week homework challenge! 🌟🌟🌟

The Winners were

Reception - Adayln C

Y1 - Kobe C

Y2 - Fraser W

Y3 - Nathan W

Y4 - Gracie B



Homework

A reminder that today (Friday 17th November) is the last day of homework before half term. Children will still have their reading/phonics book over half term. Homework will resume on Friday 7th November.

Basketball Opportunity with Shooting Stars North East

We're delighted to share that Anthony Forrester, founder of Shooting Stars North East, will be visiting our school on Friday 14th November to work with children in Years 2 to 4. Anthony brings a wealth of experience, having spent seven years as the Primary Age Specialist at Newcastle Eagles. Now based in Hexham, he's keen to connect with local schools and share his passion for basketball. During his visit, he'll lead engaging sessions where every child gets a ball and a chance to enjoy the sport in a fun, inclusive way. He'll also speak during our whole school assembly and hopes to introduce evening coaching opportunities for interested pupils. We're excited to welcome him and explore how this could enrich our sports programme. On the 14th November, Year 2 can change into their PE kit in school. KS2 can come to school wearing their school PE kit.

Jubilee Celebration Day

Jubilee Celebration Day is on 21st November. This day is part of the Holy Jubilee Year celebrated by the Catholic Church, focusing on themes of hope & community. To mark the day, school will celebrate Mass on Friday 21st November at St. Mary's Church at 9.30am (all families are welcome to join us for mass). As part of our Jubilee celebrations, we are delighted to invite parents and carers to join us in school for another special art activity with their child on **Wednesday 26th November 2:00-2:45pm**. The art activity will be a wonderful opportunity to share in the spirit of the Jubilee, celebrate our school community, and create lasting memories together. We look forward to welcoming you into school and sharing this special time with you and your child.

Regenerators Clothes swap

After the huge success last year, our Regenerators club are organising an in-school clothes swap as part of their whole school recycling mission. If you are having a clothes sort out over half-term, the Regenerators would appreciate any donations of unwanted / preloved children's clothes. On **Wednesday 26th November 2:45pm** (following on from the Jubilee art afternoon), parents/carers will be invited into the school hall and take whatever clothing they would like. **We are especially looking for donations of any pre-loved Christmas jumpers in advance of Christmas jumper days in December.** This is a FREE event which our Regenerators hope can help reduce clothes waste. Please can any clothing donations be brought to the main reception clearly labelled as 'Clothes Swap'.

Scholastic Book Club

Our new Scholastic Book Club is up and running! Go to <https://schools.scholastic.co.uk/st-marys-rs-ne46/digital-book-club> to browse the latest books and order online. For every £1 you spend on this month's Book Club, our school will earn 20p in Scholastic Rewards.

Please place your order online by **November 14th, 2025**.

Your child will be coming home this week with a booklet where you can purchase books online using the QR code.



Shoe Box Appeal

We're hoping to take part in Operation Christmas Child and it would be wonderful to have lots of boxes ready to get started. If you have any spare around the house, could you please bring them to the school office. Thank you for your support! 📦❤️

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

Parents Evenings are scheduled to take place next Monday (20th Oct) & Wednesday (22nd Nov), parent/carers have had the opportunity to book a slot for this. The main focus of this Parents' Evening will be to share how your child has settled into the new school year, including their learning, friendships, and overall wellbeing. Any issues, please contact the main office (01434) 603 791.

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
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 will change when we return back to school

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.

7 th November	Y3 & Y4 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
14 th November	Cancelled -Y3 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am. Y3 attending with Y4 on the 7 th Nov instead.
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

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC FIRST SCHOOL
HEXHAM



SCHOOL OPEN MORNING

Come and discover what makes our school such a special place to learn and grow. Meet our amazing teachers, explore our classrooms, and experience first hand what we have to offer.

**WEDNESDAY 15TH & 22ND
OCTOBER 2025**

 9.30am – 11.30am
  Hencotes, Hexham, NE46 2EE

-  School tour available
-  Family-friendly activities & snacks
-  Interactive learning zones

FOR MORE INFORMATION

RSVP NOW
info@smfs.bwcet.com
 01434 603791






ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION

-  **Wristbands £1**
-  **Reflectors 50p**
-  **Pin Badges - £3.00**
-  **Paper Poppy - Donation Stickers 20p**



22 nd Oct Open Morning	School is open for prospective parents of Reception 2026 parents/carers and any other pupils wanting to visit. Contact main office for further information.
Monday 20 th & Wednesday 22 nd October	Parents Evenings - Appointments were 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
Monday 3 rd November	School starts for Autumn 2. Doors open 8.40am
Wednesday 5 th November	School Photographer
Monday 10 th Nov	Odd Socks Day-Start of Anti-Bullying Week runs from 10 th -14 th Nov, aimed at celebrating individuality & embracing differences. No donations required, just school uniform and odd socks to be worn on Monday 10 th November.
Tues 11 th Nov	Y3 Armistice Day Celebration of the Word in school hall 9.30am. Parents/carers welcome to join us for this event.
Friday 14 th November	Shooting Stars Basketball Assembly and coaching-Years 2-4. Pupils to wear PE kit for the sessions. Year 2 can change in school. KS2 can come to school wearing their school PE kit and/or change in school if dressed for Children In Need.
Friday 14 th November	Children In Need-Raising money for disadvantaged children & young people around the UK. (Scholastic Book Club Ends- all orders will be sent to school and handed out.)
Fri 21 st Nov	Jubilee Celebration Day-Parents/carers welcome into school from 2-2.45pm to support their child(ren) in art activity. Further information to follow.

**SAVE
THE DATE**

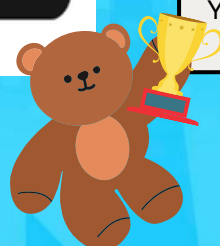
Mon 17th-Fri 21 st Nov	Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box appeal-Collection Week
Wed 26 st Nov	Jubilee Celebration Day-Parents/carers welcome into school from 2-2.45pm to support their child(ren) in art activity. Further information to follow.
Wed 26 th Nov	Regenerators Clothes Swap in hall 2:45pm-parents/carers only. (Follows on from Jubilee Art Afternoon)
Friday 28 th Nov	Key Stage 2-Tyne Rivers Trust Learning Trip.
Thursday 4 th December	Christmas Fair in school hall. Parents/carers invited from 2.45pm (children remain in school until 3.15pm) Following school pick-up, children can attend the fair with parents/carers after school.
Tuesday 9 th & Wednesday 10 th December	Nativity performances at 9.30am in school information. Further information to follow nearer the time, just to allow parents to book time off work if needed. Just a reminder that on the 10th December, there will be no parking in the church car park due to their Mass.
 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.
Wednesday 17 th December	Forum Christmas Movie Trip £8.00 per pupil. For whole school. Payments are now live on the Arbor app, can the trip be paid no later than 21 st November. This payment secures your child's place on the trip. (U movie TBC)



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Adalyn	Teddie	Archie
Year 1	Felicity	Bodhi	Keegan
Year 2	Erin	Layton	Aanika
Year 3	Noah	Eabha	Olivia
Year 4	Ollie	Phoebe	Kaicey



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year 3	
Reception	97.78%
Year 1	93.75%
Year 2	88.89%
Year 3	100%
Year 4	92.06%





Unscripted Photography

We're so excited to be invited back to your school for another round of gorgeous portraits! It's always a pleasure to capture the joy and personality of your wonderful children, and we're looking forward to creating more beautiful, natural photographs of your favourite little people.

Please note: There's a small twist this year – only children who are registered for photographs will be photographed.

So if you'd like to take part, please make sure to complete the registration in advance.
Thank you again for having us – we can't wait to see you all soon!

How to register: Register by 2nd Nov 2025

Registration can be accessed one of 2 ways!!

a. Scan the QR code (below)

or

b. visit www.unscripted.gotphoto.co.uk and use password: SMFS2025

Registration just takes less than a minute, just register your child's name and class and don't forget to choose your photo options (individual, sibling, individual and sibling, or sibling-only) and you'll receive a confirmation email once successfully completed.



SMFS2025

St Mary's Safeguarding Information

Pupil Support & Safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Lead- Mrs. Oakes

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

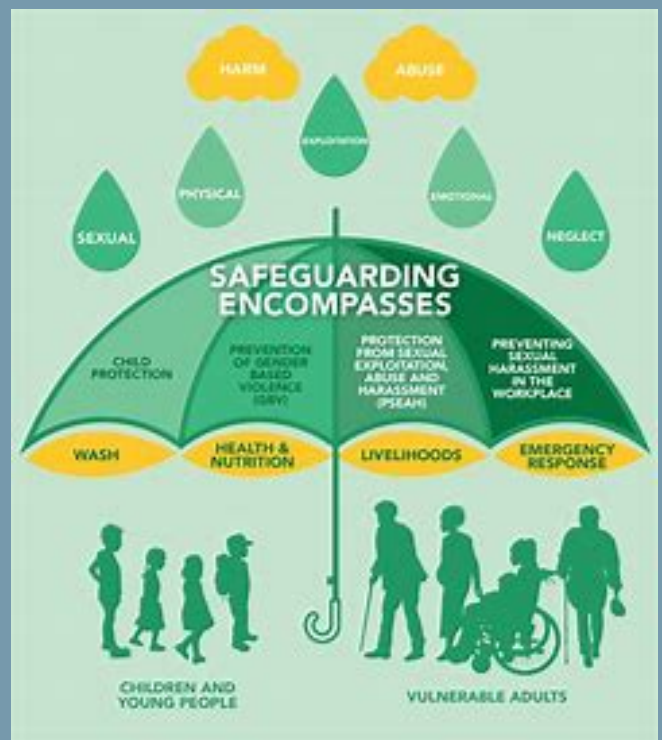
Assistant Safeguarding Lead-Mrs. Stoves

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 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 MEMES

Memes may look like simple jokes, but for many teenagers, they form a shared cultural language. Quickly created and reworked, they spread across social media platforms as images with text or short videos. Nearly eight in ten teenagers share memes (79%, YouGov), making them part of daily life. While memes encourage creativity and participation, they can also spread misinformation or reinforce harmful stereotypes.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- SPREADING MISINFORMATION**
While memes help to communicate complex topics, they can also spread misinformation. Memes may sensationalise current events, present false facts or biased viewpoints, especially around health, politics, or current events and, as they're designed to be shared quickly, young people may not question their accuracy.
- EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT**
Memes are widely circulated, and not always age-appropriate, meaning young people may encounter explicit language, sexual content, or graphic imagery, even without searching for it. As memes spread fast on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, it's nearly impossible to filter them completely.
- MASKED MESSAGES**
Some memes are designed to be confusing or layered with hidden meanings, making them hard for parents, and sometimes, even young people to understand. Online groups often create these memes to 'pull the funny jokes', but they can sometimes conceal offensive, harmful, or misleading content.
- HIDDEN HARMS & LOSING SENSITIVITY**
When serious topics like violence, racism, or mental health are turned into jokes, children and young people may become less sensitive to these issues over time. While a funny meme may seem light-hearted, it can carry messages that belittle certain groups, encourage risky behaviour, or mock personal struggles. Repeated exposure through memes can make harmful behaviour seem normal or less important. Over time, this can blur their understanding of what is funny versus what is disrespectful, harmful, or damaging to themselves and others.
- PERMANENT DIGITAL FOOTPRINT**
Unlike spoken jokes, memes leave a trail. Created or shared online, they can resurface later and be misunderstood, even if intended as harmless. Once online, memes may be copied, saved, or spread beyond a young person's control. Digital actions can follow them into their future, shaping how they are perceived by peers, teachers, or even employers long after the original meme has been shared.

Advice for Parents & Educators

- ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS**
Talk regularly with young people and try to understand their online world. Discuss what they find funny about the memes, and why. By listening without judgement, you can 'ground' them if they come to you if they see something harmful. Open dialogue helps children and teens think critically about the messages behind memes rather than simply accepting them at face value.
- TEACH DIGITAL LITERACY**
Help children and young people learn to question where information comes from and whether it's reliable - developing media literacy skills prepares young people to understand and navigate through their future online lives. They might make counter-claims based on sharing or creating a 'highly original' example of positive memes that celebrate creativity without hurting others. Fostering empathy, respect, and kindness in digital spaces will help become more aware of promoting a safer, more supportive online culture.
- MODEL HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**
Show children and teens positive online behaviours, such as taking breaks from screens, avoiding overnight scrolling, and engaging in offline activities. Setting clear screen time at home can help to reinforce healthy boundaries and reduce the risks of overuse. By modelling balanced technology use, adults can help children and young people see that digital entertainment, including memes, should be just one part of life.
- FOSTER EMPATHY ONLINE**
Remind children and young people that memes should never come at someone else's expense. Encourage them to think about how one might make another person feel before sharing or creating a 'highly original' example of positive memes that celebrate creativity without hurting others. Fostering empathy, respect, and kindness in digital spaces will help become more aware of promoting a safer, more supportive online culture.

Meet Our Expert
Dr Cristina Moreno-Almado is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Culture at Queen Mary University of London. She specialises in memes, online networks, and youth culture, examining how digital spaces shape identity and everyday life.

WakeUp Wednesday The National College

@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: 15.10.2023

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