

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 23RD OCTOBER 2025

Dear parent/carer,

As we come to the end of Autumn 1, we want to take a moment to celebrate the incredible effort and enthusiasm our children have shown throughout the term. Their hard work, resilience, and positive attitudes have truly shone through, and we couldn't be prouder of them.

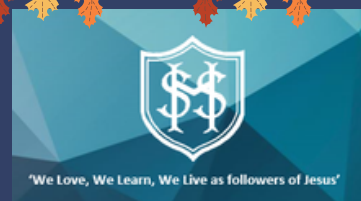
We hope you enjoyed meeting with your child's teacher during Parents' Evening this week. It was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on their progress and achievements so far, and we're sure you saw just how much they've grown—both academically and personally.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Miss. Eccles for all her amazing work covering Mrs. Stansfield's maternity leave. Her dedication and care have made a real difference, and we wish her every success in her new teaching post. Mrs. Stansfield has been in school this week, working alongside Miss. Eccles and we look forward to welcoming her back after the half term.

We are once again proud to support Operation Christmas Child, a heartwarming initiative by Samaritan's Purse that delivers shoeboxes filled with gifts to children in need across the globe. Families are welcome to fill a whole shoebox with small toys, school supplies, and hygiene items—or simply donate individual items (Please see below for suggested items). These contributions will be combined to create complete shoeboxes, ensuring every donation helps make a child's Christmas special. Please bring donations to school by Friday 14th November. Thank you for your generosity and for helping us spread joy this festive season!

Thank you for your continued support. We're looking forward to an exciting Autumn 2!

Mrs. Oakes



Reception carving pumpkins and making Autumnal pictures



Well done everyone for such amazing attendance this half term.

Our 100% Attendance Prize Winner is George.C





REMINDER

Homework

No homework set for the holidays. 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-rc-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**.





Shoe Box Appeal Reminder

We're supporting the Shoe Box Appeal again this year!

Collection Week starts Monday 17th November. If you're preparing a shoe box, we kindly ask that you bring it to the school office by **Friday 14th November** so we can get everything ready in time for collection.

Your generosity helps make a big difference—thank you for your support!



 Operation Christmas Child Class Suggested Donations	
Reception	Toys: Small cuddly toys, dolls, toy cars, small musical instruments, yo-yos, skipping ropes, balls, small puzzles etc
Years 1 & 2	School Supplies: Pens, pencils & sharpeners, crayons/felt pens, stamps & ink pad sets, writing pads/notebooks, solar calculators, colouring/picture books etc Hygiene Items: Toothbrush, bars of wrapped soap, comb or hairbrush, flannel etc
Years 3 & 4	Other Items: Hat, gloves, scarf, cap, socks, T-shirt, flip-flops, hair accessories, jewellery set, wind up torch.
	Please do not include the following items: Toothpaste, sweets, lotions and liquids; used or damaged items, war-related items, seeds, gum, chocolate or food items, medicines, aerosol cans, sharp or fragile items.

School Meals

If you would like to take a look at the Winter & Spring 25 Garden Kitchen menu, please find our school menu's on the school website. We come back on week 3.

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.

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)	Wednesday Lunch
Singing Mrs Stansfield (Y1-4)	Tuesday lunch
Games Miss Wright (Y1-Y4)	Wednesday 3.15-4pm
Regenerators Miss Stoves (Y2-4)	Thursday lunch
Dance Mrs Hogg (Y1-4)	Thursday 3:15-4pm
Colouring Miss Carr (Y2-Y4)	Friday lunch



**Updated clubs and activities for next term.
Clubs will start w/c Monday 10th November.**

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





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
Thursday 6 th November	KS2 Hockey Skills- Please can all children in years 3 & 4 come to school wearing their school PE kit.
St Mary's Church Children's Liturgy	St Mary's RC Church, Hexham. The next session is on Sunday 9th November and all children are welcome to join us. Please note the change of Mass time for this day as it is Remembrance Sunday – Mass will be at 9.30am . We look forward to seeing you and your children then.
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.





Value Award Winners



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Jasmine	Catherine	Adalyn
Year 1	Caleb	Orla	Bodhi
Year 2	Felix	Penni	Alfie L
Year 3	Hazel	Raffy	Freddie
Year 4	Leo	Esmee	Luca



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year 4	
Reception	98.57%
Year 1	98.41%
Year 2	92.06%
Year 3	99.29%
Year 4	100%



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)



The infographic is titled 'What Parents & Educators Need to Know about FORTNITE'. It features a central illustration of a Fortnite character. The infographic is divided into several sections:

- WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**: Discusses always online play, in-game costs, virtual violence, and social interaction.
- ALWAYS ONLINE**: Explains that Fortnite is a single-player, offline mode in Fortnite, it can only be played online. Internet access can sometimes be an issue when you're out and about, both in terms of connectivity and using up data.
- IN-GAME COSTS**: Fortnite is free to download and play but it does offer various additional purchases - limited time cosmetics, skins, music tracks, LEGO items, and battle passes. Children can feel pressured to spend money on in-game items.
- VIRTUAL VIOLENCE**: There's no shooting that Fortnite is intended to be a cartoonish game and there are frequent content warnings to lighten the mood.
- DISCUSS SAFE SOCIAL INTERACTION**: Talk with children about who they're playing with online. Coordinate play times with the child's friends for screen time. A regular visitor to the app Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety.
- SET SPENDING LIMITS**: Fortnite's rotating store is a not-for-subtle mechanism for coaxing players into buying 'loot' - other items before they disappear for weeks or months.
- MEET OUR EXPERT**: Ulysses Coombes is an experienced freelance writer and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for over 20 years.
- THE NATIONAL COLLEGE**: Logo for The National College.

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

