

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

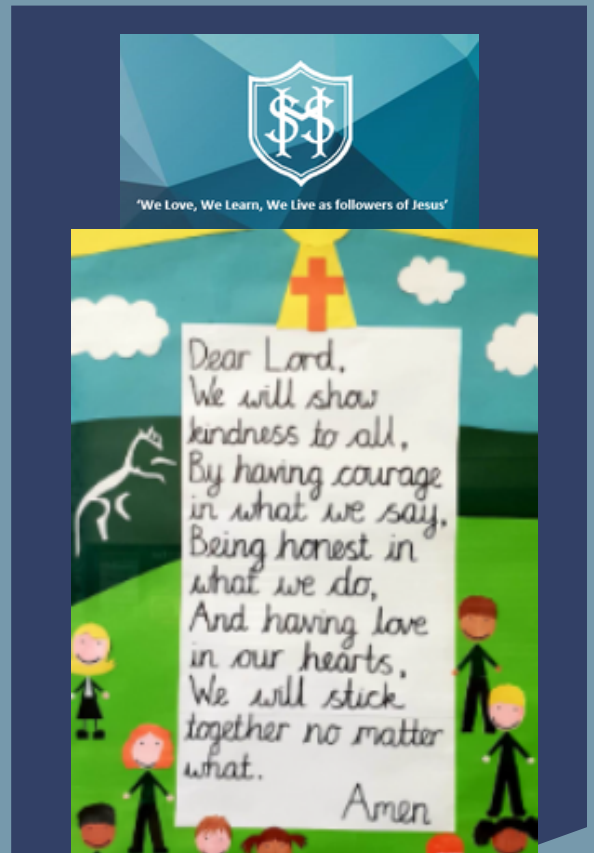
Today, we all participated in our Reception 'Welcome Mass' at St. Mary's Catholic Church. The children participated in Mass with reverence and enthusiasm, demonstrating excellent behaviour and a deep understanding of the occasion. It was especially lovely to be joined by parents, carers, and members of the parish community, which made the celebration even more special.

Next week is 'Space Week' and this year's theme is 'Living in Space', and we're inviting all pupils to take part in an exciting design challenge! Your mission is 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'll be exploring space-related topics in our science lessons next 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!

Next Friday is Hello Yellow Day. 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. On Friday 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. By wearing something yellow, we're joining thousands of others in sending a bright and positive message of hope and support. 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.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



Weekly PTA Cake Winner- Nathan Y3





REMINDER

Good Luck Julia!

At the start of the week, we sold the leftover cakes from Friday's MacMillan Cancer Care coffee event, at break time and the donated the money to Jacob (Y3) and Felicity's (Y1) mum (Julia) who is climbing Mount Kilimanjaro! As previously mentioned, Julia is 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. Just a reminder of the QR code below if you wish to donate to this good cause. Good luck Julia!



RSHE Parent consultation

As part of our ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), we are currently reviewing our RSHE policy and curriculum. We would greatly appreciate your feedback on our updated approach, particularly in relation to key decisions around the teaching of specific topics.

To support this, we have already shared the following documents to parents/carers (via Arbor):

- A draft version of the updated RSHE Policy
- A letter outlining our curriculum provision for RSHE and details on how parents/carers can access these resources
- A Microsoft Teams form for you to submit your feedback

The consultation period will close on **Thursday 9th October**, and we warmly invite you to share your views during this time. Thank you for your continued support.

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 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 (UFSM). 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.

10 th October	Y1 Class Mass St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am
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

6th-10 th Oct	Space Week-enter the competition-deadline is 13 th Oct (further information above) Prizes to be won!
Friday 10 th Oct	Hello Yellow Day-Children wear school uniform as usual with a yellow accessory e.g. hairband, socks etc. There will be a cake stall in school, donations of cakes would be appreciated. Children can bring 50p to purchase a cake.
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 - Details to be sent out nearer the time.
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
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'

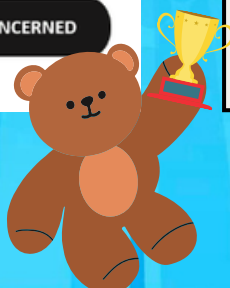


Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Lara	Charlotte	Millie
Year 1	Lola	Charlie	Eli
Year 2	William	Felix	Isabel
Year 3	Jacob	Austin	Mikey
Year 4	George	Frankie	Olivia



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done Year 2

Reception	94.95%
Year 1	97.66%
Year 2	100%
Year 3	97.21%
Year 4	92.06%



St Mary's Safeguarding Information

Pupil Support & Safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Lead- Mrs. Oakes

Deputy Safeguarding Lead-Miss. Baird & Mrs. Stansfield

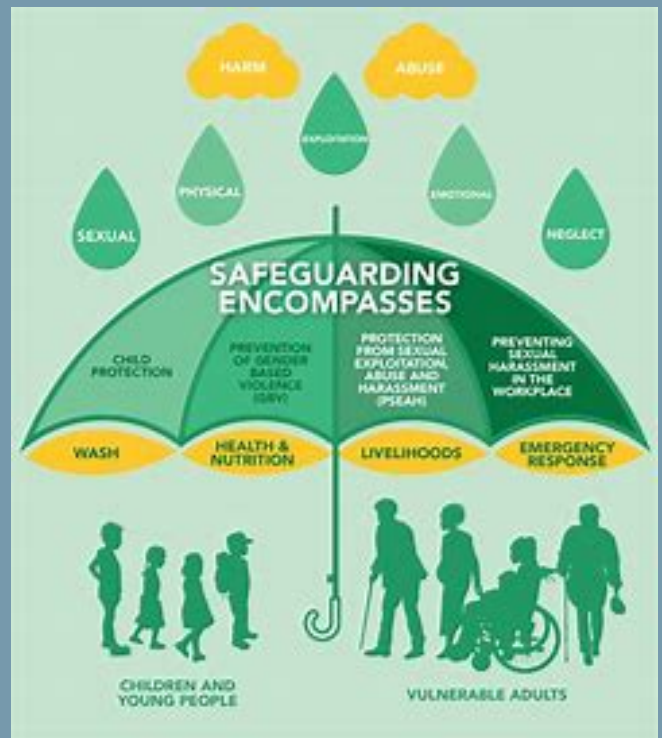
Assistant Safeguarding Lead-Mrs. Stoves

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.org.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about EA SPORTS FC 26

Our guide looks at the risks surrounding EA Sports FC 26 and our top tips to minimise them. This marks the third year since EA left the FIFA licence, and the game is mostly unchanged from last year. While Kick-Off mode is great for playing with friends and Career Mode allows players to fulfil long-term ambitions as a manager or player, Ultimate Team remains the main draw for many players – and it can get out of hand in terms of how much money players can invest.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AN ANNUAL RELEASE SCHEDULE

As with the case with the last two EA Sports FC games and the FIFA series before it, the franchise rolls out once a year with updated squads and new features. This can make it expensive to keep up with new participants when so many dedicated players are keen to get their hands on the latest edition.

VOICE CHAT

Voice chat can be enabled across all platforms, meaning young people can speak to anyone they play with or against. While it can be switched off, some children will be drawn to speak to their friends while they play. This also means they may encounter strangers much older than them, which can expose them to inappropriate language or behaviour.

IN-GAME PURCHASES THROUGH ULTIMATE TEAM

Ultimate Team is the big draw for EA Sports FC, letting players spend real money on packs that they can use to build a squad of the world's best players. They're not always easy to obtain, and new, improved versions of packs will be regularly added as limited-time offerings. Young people could feel pressured into spending money and experience fear of missing out.

SCAMMERS IN ULTIMATE TEAM

Ultimate Team is managed by EA itself, but that hasn't stopped scammers from looking to dupe players out of money and in-game coins. Some scammers sell their accounts, which is a violation of EA's terms of service, while others will 'sell' coins – something the developer is still working to crack down on. Some try to gain access to other's accounts, potentially giving them access to payment information.

POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION

While EA Sports FC is potentially addictive, thanks to its fast-paced gameplay and mimicking of the real-world skill and general of football, Ultimate Team's focus on limited-time rewards and the lottery of winning packs can make it feel closer to gambling than gaming, which may lead to addiction and impulsive spending of money.

Advice for Parents & Educators

PREPARE FOR ANOTHER GAME IN A YEAR

The annual release cadence aligns with the return of the school year, and can be a great way to incentivise good behaviour at the start of term. If children are enjoying themselves and progressing in a new year at school, or even particularly well behaved in the summer, EA Sports FC 26 could make a great reward.

MONITOR VOICE CHAT

As in-game chat is open, be sure to adjust the settings in EA Sports FC 26 to lock it down, if children need to chat with their friends, while they play, consider setting up a safe space for them to talk, to allow them to play without fear of outside.

LIMIT SPENDING

If you're worried about children accidentally spending real money in Ultimate Team, whether in game or on the EA Sports FC companion app, don't link a payment card to their account. Beware that links can be a mountain to climb, and the dopamine hit of opening flashy packs with slick animations means one purchase can lead to another very quickly. It's also worth adding a prepaid card if you'd prefer them to make their own choices with their budget.

BE VIGILANT

As with last year, there are ways to keep scammers at bay. Ensure passwords are locked down, and consider using a password manager application to keep them secure. EA will never contact players through the game itself, so be vigilant with incoming messages, and block and report suspected spam. EA will contact players by email if needed, but they will never ask for usernames or passwords. Players should also avoid buying in-game currency from unofficial websites – doing so can lead to accounts being banned and could cost players money in the process.

Meet Our Expert

Lynell Coombes is an experienced freelance writer and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for seven years. A regular visitor to the App Store for her new book, she's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. She's also a tech and fitness writer and has been published in sites including iD, TechRadar, and Parenting.

Source: Reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.org/guides/ea-sports-fc-26>

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 03.10.2025

www.wakeupwednesday.org The National College

www.thenationalcollege.org @wake.up.wednesday @wake.up.weds

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



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