

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2025

Dear parent/carer,

To mark Armistice Day, Year 3 lead a poignant whole school Celebration of the Word on Tuesday, reflecting quietly and respectfully on the sacrifices made by others. Throughout the day the children took part in a thoughtful range of activities to help them understand and honour the significance of the day. As part of their creative learning, Reception decorated biscuits with poppy designs, combining remembrance with a hands-on activity. During Wild Passport, pupils in years 1-4 crafted a beautiful poppy cross, symbolising peace and respect. These activities helped the children engage meaningfully with the theme of remembrance in a way that was both age-appropriate and heartfelt.

As it is Anti-Bullying Week, the children started the week wearing odd socks to celebrate individuality and kindness for Odd Socks Day. Each day this week, the children have focused on a 'thought of the day' and have participated in activities related to anti-bullying. We have spent time exploring our STOP acronym poster as part of our anti-bullying work:



We've discussed what bullying looks like, why it's important to speak up, and how telling a trusted adult can help keep everyone safe and happy. The children practiced ways to ask for help and shared ideas about kindness and respect. Our aim is to empower pupils to feel confident in reporting concerns and to understand that everyone has a role in creating a caring school community.

We were delighted to share that Anthony Forrester, founder of Shooting Stars North East, visited our school today to work with children in Years 2 to 4. The children participated in an engaging basketball session where every child had a ball and a chance to enjoy the sport in a fun, inclusive way. The children were also introduced to evening coaching opportunities for interested pupils.

Finally, we were lucky enough to receive a special visitor to school on Wednesday, despite his busy schedule, Pudsey Bear dropped into school to thank all the St. Mary's children for their fund raising efforts. Today, the children have looked amazing in their spotty, Pudsey related outfits and have spent time discussing the significance of Children In Need day. A huge thank you to everyone who donated! Your kindness will make a real difference, as all contributions will be given to Children in Need. Together, we are helping to support children and young people across the UK who need it most.

Best wishes, Mrs. Oakes



★ A Prayer for Children in Need



Dear Lord,
We lift up all children who are in need today—those who are hungry, lonely, or afraid.
Surround them with Your love and protection.
Bless those who care for them and guide us to be a source of kindness and hope.
May every child know they are valued and cherished.
Amen.



Celebrating individuality and kindness



Shooting Stars Basketball



Armistice Day

Pudsey Visit



PTA Cake Raffle
Winner-
Max



Y3 Armistice Day - Whole School Celebration of the Word



Mini Vinnies Food Bank Collection

This half term Mini Vinnies have been called to action to help support those less fortunate within our local area. Therefore, the children have decided it would be fantastic to collect food items and toiletries for our local food bank. Any donations of items for this fantastic cause would be greatly appreciated. Miss Baird will deliver the items to the food bank during the week beginning Monday 8th December.

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'.

Key Stage 2-Tyne Rivers Trust-

On Friday 28th November, years 3 & 4 are participating in a fully funded learning session with the Tyne Rivers Trust interactive river model based at the Queen's Hall, Hexham. Thanks to funding from the Reece Foundation, the interactive model of the Tyne catchment helps pupils explore how climate change affects river systems. Featuring flowing water, rainfall zones, and interchangeable parts, the model demonstrates how land management techniques—like leaky dams, tree planting, and peatland restoration—can slow water flow and reduce flooding. It highlights how upstream actions impact downstream outcomes, encouraging thoughtful discussion on natural flood management and climate resilience. Children will attend the event during the afternoon, returning to school for the usual home time.

Christmas Class Advent Celebration of the Word

On the morning of Thursday 4th December, we would like to invite parents into classes to participate in the children's RE Advent topic Celebration of the Word. These are short classroom-based celebrations where the children, gather, listen, respond and say how they will 'go forth' with their Advent mission. The children love seeing their parents/carers in class, so please join us if you are available. Timings are as follows: • Year 1: 9.30-9.40am • Year 2- 9.40-9.50am • Year 3-9.50-10.00am • Year 4- 10:00-10:10am • Reception-10:10-10:20am

Christmas Fair

On Thursday 4th December, the PTA are holding a Christmas Fair in the school hall. Families are invited into the hall from 2.45-3.15pm (before the children are dismissed at 3.15pm). Once children are dismissed, families can return to the fair with their children to look at the stalls. Donations for tombola items, cuddly toys, gift bags, toys, books etc. would be greatly appreciated, just drop off at the main school office.

If you can help out on the day please contact the school office.

Each class will be having their own stall, the class teachers will send out more information.

Santa Dash

On **Friday 5th December**, children can come to school wearing their school uniform, exchanging their usual school jumper/cardigan for a Christmas jumper if they wish. As the children are taking part in a Santa Dash fun-run that day, we also recommend that children also bring their trainers into school too (Reception & KS1 can use PE trainers kept in school). If anyone has donations of pre-loved Christmas jumpers that they would like to donate to other children in school, then please deliver these to the main school office in time for our 'Clothes Swap' on the 26th November.

Nativity Performances

We are having two repeat performances both at 9.30am in the school on **Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th December**. Information on tickets will be sent out in the coming weeks.

Christmas Jumper Day (Save the Children) & School Pantomime Trip

On **Thursday 11th December**, children can come to school wearing their usual school uniform along with their Christmas jumper as it is Christmas Jumper Day. We are asking for a donation of £1 for the charity 'Save the Children'. The children will also be visiting the Queen's Hall in the morning to see the pantomime Red Riding Hood at the Queen's Hall.

Christmas Lunch

On **Wednesday 17th December** we are having our school Christmas lunch in school. Children who are not usually on school dinners will be permitted to purchase this meal for the one day, whilst remaining on packed lunch for the rest of the week. If your child is usually on packed lunch but wishes to have a Christmas dinner, please let the office know as soon as possible and before Friday 29th November. Children are permitted to wear their school uniform, exchanging their usual school jumper/cardigan for a Christmas jumper on this day if they wish.

Christingle Making & Christingle

Families are invited into school early (2:45-3:15pm) on **Wednesday 17th December**, for a cup of tea and to make their own Christingle in readiness for our Christingle service on **Thursday 18th December** at 9.30am in St. Mary's Catholic Church. School will provide all the resources, but if you do have any spare red ribbon, sweets, oranges and/or birthday cake candles feel free to bring them along. We will be taking donations for Save the Children too (feel free to wear your Christmas jumper!) for anyone who wishes to contribute.

Friday 19th December

Friday 19th December is the last day of the autumn term and in line with the Hexham Partnership St. Mary's will be closing at the earlier time of **1.30pm**.

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.

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)

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
Well Being Club Mrs Stoves (Y1-Y4)	Friday 8.20am
Colouring Miss Carr (Y2-Y4)	Friday lunch



Class Masses

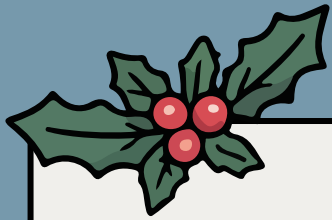
Throughout the year each class has the opportunity to attend Mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church. Mass is lead by our Parish Priests Fr Jeff and Fr. Paul. Class Masses are usually held on Fridays at 9:30am and all parents/carers and families are welcome to attend these events. Please see rota below for details of dates for each class.

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


November Dates



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.
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.



December Dates

<p>Thursday 4th December</p>	<p>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. Donations needed - Tombola items, cuddly toys, gift bags, toys, books etc.</p> <p>If you can help out on the day please contact the school office.</p> <p>Each class will be having their own stall, the class teachers will send out more information.</p> <p>Class Advent Celebration of the Word. Parents welcome to join their child(ren) in class to participate in their end of Advent RE topic celebration. (Timings outlined above)</p>
<p>Friday 5th December</p>	<p>Santa Dash-Children can wear school uniform and Christmas jumper/Christmas accessory if they wish. Children will need trainers for this event.</p> <p>Flu Vaccination team in school.</p>
<p>Tuesday 9th & Wednesday 10th December</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Thursday 11th December</p> 	<p>Christmas Jumper Day (& usual school uniform)- Save the children-suggested donation £1.</p> <p>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 21st November. This will secure your child's place on the trip.</p> <p>Bag2School Collection 8am - can all bags be brought to the school office by Wednesday 10th December.</p>
<p>Wednesday 17th December</p>	<p>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 21st November. This payment secures your child's place on the trip. (U movie TBC)</p> <p>Christmas Lunch day- After the Forum Cinema trip. <u>Pupils are welcome to wear their usual school uniform along with their Christmas jumper if they wish.</u></p> <p>Christingle Making for parents/carers 2.45-3.15pm in school hall. Time for a cuppa and a catch up too!</p>
<p>Thursday 18th December</p>	<p>Whole school Christingle service in St. Mary's Catholic Church 9.30am-all families welcome to join us.</p>
<p>Friday 19th December</p>	<p>Last day of autumn term. School closes early at 1.30pm.</p>



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Catherine	Millie	Teddie
Year 1	Bea	Caleb	Rachel
Year 2	Layton	Myles	Aanika
Year 3	Mikey	Dexter	Jenson
Year 4	Heidi	Gracie	Ashton



**St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners-
Well done Y1 & Y3**

Reception	99%
Year 1	100%
Year 2	97.78%
Year 3	100%
Year 4	98.57%



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 & 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)



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI-GENERATED VIDEOS

AI-generated videos are increasingly difficult to spot and easy to share. From fake news clips to deepfake abuse, children and young people face new risks every day online. These videos can imitate real people, spread false narratives or even generate harmful content from scratch. Understanding these dangers is crucial for schools and families who want to protect children in a fast-evolving digital world.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- DEEPPAKE ABUSE CONTENT:** Shockingly, artificial intelligence is now being used to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM). These synthetic images and videos are a form of digital abuse, often generated by manipulating real children's photos, including areas shared innocently online. Recently, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has identified a strong rise in this disturbing trend. Whether real or AI-generated, this content causes lasting trauma – and its creation or possession remains a criminal offence under UK law.
- EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION:** AI-generated videos can be used to provoke strong emotions, including fear, anger or guilt. Fake footage of crying children, injured animals or burning buildings may be created purely for clicks, donations or political influence. Children may feel upset or powerless, unaware that what they are watching has been digitally invented to manipulate their reactions.
- DISINFORMATION:** AI-generated videos can spread false news, making it harder for children to separate fact from fiction. Fake clips may be used to produce misleading or persuasive material that appears authentic. If they don't realize it's fake, children may accept false content as truth.
- IMPERSONATION AND SCAMS:** With just a few photos or voice clips, AI bots can impersonate someone's appearance or speech. This makes it easier for scammers or bullies to create fake videos of children, teachers or celebrities. These impersonations can be used for fraud, harassment or humiliation – and can spread quickly through social media or group chats, due to the viral potential of video, in particular, on social media.

BLURRED REALITY: Regular exposure to fake content can erode a child's trust in real-world evidence, if everything can be faked, they may begin to question genuine videos – including actual abuse or injustice. This is known as the 'liar's dividend', where real harm is dismissed as fake news. It can discourage victims from coming forward or speaking up.

USED FOR BULLYING: Deepfake technology is already being used by peers to create embarrassing or insulting clips or appearances. These videos can be edited to appear as though a child said or did something that never did. Once shared, they are almost impossible to delete completely. AI-generated bullying adds a new layer of harm that is deeply personal and difficult to prove.

TEACH HOW IT WORKS: Explain to children that videos can be faked – and show them how. Demonstrating side-by-side examples of real vs AI-generated clips, where videos seem too good to be true, or where the audio doesn't match the video, can help build awareness. Discuss how faces, voices and even movements can be copied by machines, and how the technology reduces trust and builds confidence in navigating digital content safely.

TALK ABOUT TRUST: Always keep lines of communication open. If a child sees something upsetting or uncomfortable, they should feel safe discussing it without judgement. Create an environment where they know they will not get in trouble for asking questions. This also helps you step in quickly if harmful content has been shared. Trust is vital and needs to be nurtured.

ENCOURAGE CRITICAL QUESTIONS: Help children question what they watch. Who made this? Why was it made? Is it trying to persuade me? These habits encourage digital thinking, especially where videos seem too good to be true, or where the audio doesn't match the video. Encourage children to ask questions, and that the initial approach should always be one of skepticism.

STRENGTHEN PRIVACY SETTINGS: Advise children not to share voice notes, selfies or personal videos on public platforms. All tools often toggle privacy settings on by default. Use privacy controls to limit who can see their content and turn off facial recognition where possible. Fewer public images means fewer opportunities for misuse.

Meet Our Expert: Brendon O'Keefe is a headteacher and digital education consultant with over 15 years of experience in education. As Director of Digital Strategy across multiple schools and an adviser to The National College, he specializes in digital safety, PREVENT, and pastoral care.

Wake Up Wednesday | The National College

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 02.12.2023

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



www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com



@stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham