

# ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 23RD JANUARY 2026

Dear parent/carers,

On Monday, we marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day, children across the school learned about the life and powerful message of Dr Martin Luther King Jr., exploring his belief in fairness, equality and kindness for all. Through thoughtful discussions and creative activities, pupils reflected on his dream of a better world and what this might mean today.

The children then worked together to create a whole-school display, sharing their own hopes and dreams for a kinder, fairer future. These included messages about friendship, respect, peace and looking after one another. The display stands as a powerful reminder that, like Dr King taught us, everyone has a voice and each of us can help make the world a better place.

Just a reminder that St. Mary's will be taking part in National Careers Week, which runs from 2nd-7th March. This nationwide initiative is designed to inspire young people by introducing them to the wide range of careers available and the skills needed for the future. If you are willing to come into school to talk about your career, or know friends or colleagues who would be happy to share their experiences with the children, please get in touch with the school office. Your support will help inspire our pupils and broaden their horizons!

On Monday 26th January, we will be commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day as a school community. Year 2 will lead us in a special Celebration of the Word, giving us time to pause, reflect and remember. All families are warmly invited to join us in the school hall at 9.30am (entrance via the rear fire doors). We look forward to sharing in this important time of reflection with you.

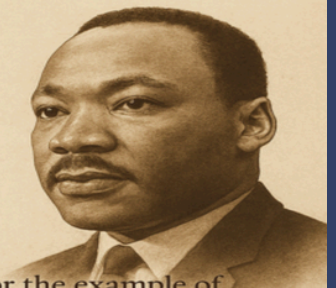
Best wishes,

Mrs. Oakes



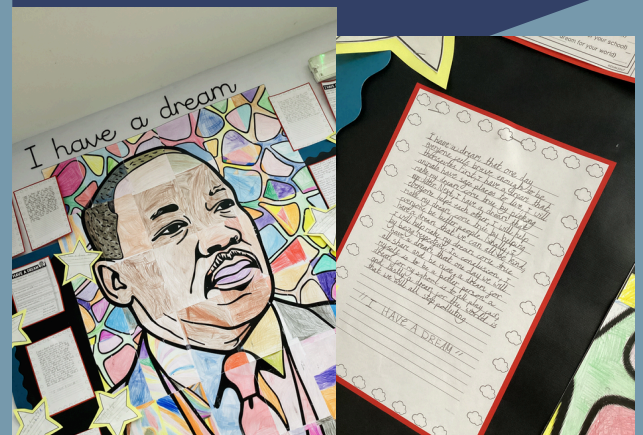
Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January-Martin Luther King Day

## MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY



Dear God,  
Thank you for the example of  
courage, kindness, and hope  
we remember today.

Help us to treat everyone with  
fairness, to stand up for what is right,  
and to use our words and actions  
to build peace in our school and  
our world. Amen.





### **Celebration of the Word Year 2 & Reception**

On Monday 26th January 9.30am, we would like to invite all parents/carers to join the whole school in the hall for Year 2's Celebration of the Word to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 9.30am, we would like to invite all parents/carers to join the whole school in the hall for Reception's Celebration of the Word to mark Children's Mental Health Week.

For both events we ask parents/carers to enter via the hall fire exit door.

### **Parents/carers to look at books & Parents Evenings**

We would like to invite parents into school to look at your child's books in the week before our mid-year parents evening. School will be open for parents and children from 3.20-4:00pm on **Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February**. Children will have their school books on their desks to show their grown-ups all their hard work so far this year.

Parents Evenings will be held on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 12th February**. Details on how to register for these events will be given nearer the time.

### **World Book Day Celebration**

On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March we will be celebrating World Book Day! Children are invited to come dressed as their favourite book character and share the joy of reading. We'll also be welcoming Cogito, our local independent bookstore, for a special story time session. Pupils will have the chance to use their World Book Day vouchers to choose a book and continue their reading adventures at home.

### **Hexham Bookfest**

We are excited to share that Hexham Book Festival is taking place in March, offering a wonderful opportunity to celebrate reading and storytelling. The festival features a range of events for all ages, including author talks, workshops, and family activities designed to inspire a love of books. St. Mary's have secured the following visits for our pupils to attend workshops:

Reception on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am: Hank Goes Honk by Maudie Powell-Tuck  
Yr 1 & 2 Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am: The Lion Inside by Rachel Bright  
Yr 3 & 4 Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 1.30pm: Alice with an A why by Anna James

Payments of £2 are now live on the Arbor app. all payments must be paid online.

### **Extra-curricular Clubs**

Please see the attached list of extra-curricular clubs on offer this half term.

If the club is before or after school, please contact the office to book a place. If the club is at lunchtime class teachers will sign pupils up.

### **Homework**

All children In Reception and Year 1 will bring a Read, Write Inc phonics book home. Please complete and sign your child's Reading Record when you have listened to them read.

### **Swimming**

Swimming for years 3 & 4. All KS2 children to attend school wearing their P.E. kit on Monday's. **The Spring swimming payments are live on Arbor under 'School Shop'.**

### **PTA**

#### **Cake Raffle**

From January, our cake raffle will be the last Friday of each month. The next cake raffle will be Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

#### **BE YOU Coffee Afternoon- Sleep Clinic Parents Workshop, Monday 26th January**

Held in school hall from 2.20pm with Mrs Stoves. All parents/carers welcome to attend.

### **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](http://bwcet.com))



<b>Mini Vinnies</b> Miss Baird (Y2-Y4)	Wednesday Lunch
<b>Singing Club</b> Mrs Stansfield (Y1-Y4)	Tuesday Lunch
<b>Craft Club</b> Miss Wright (Y1-Y4)	Tuesday 3.15-4pm
<b>Lego Club</b> Miss Carr (Y1-Y4)	Wednesday Lunch
<b>Regenerators</b> Miss Stoves (Same pupils as last term)	Thursday Lunch
<b>Dance Club</b> Mrs Hogg (Y1-Y4)	Thursday 3.15-4pm
<b>Wellbeing Club</b> Mrs Stoves	Friday 8.20am

## FEBRUARY HALF TERM. SPORTS ACTIVITIES

🚩 **FULL OF BEANS HOLIDAY CLUB** 🚩  
February half term at Hexham First School.

★ **What's in Store?**  
A fun filled, high energy clubs designed to boost confidence, develop teamwork, and support your child's personal growth – all while having a blast! Your child will enjoy a wide range of exciting activities. **Dodgeball, Football, NERF, Basketball, Gymnastics, cricket & much more !!**

Bookings can be made via our website  
[www.fullofbeansfitness.co.uk](http://www.fullofbeansfitness.co.uk)

Email: [johnpaul@fullofbeansfitness.co.uk](mailto:johnpaul@fullofbeansfitness.co.uk)  
Telephone: 07561 439035  
Facebook: [FOBNorthEast](https://www.facebook.com/FOBNorthEast) Instagram: [@fobne](https://www.instagram.com/fobne)

**Year 1 to Year 8**  
Packed lunch & drinks required

**COST**  
£45 for 3 days or  
£20 per day

**LOCATION**  
Hexham First School  
NE46 1JD

**DATE**  
Tuesday 17th  
Wednesday 18th  
Thursday 19th  
9am till 3pm

**CHILDREN'S**  
ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION  
PROUD TO BE A MEMBER

Our coaches all hold professional qualifications and an enhanced DBS. Expert and qualified instruction in a safe, non-competitive environment. We go out of our way to ensure a personal and special day.



## **Church 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.

Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> January	Y2 Class Mass
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> February	Reception & KS1 Class Mass
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	Whole School Lent Mass
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	Y4 Class Mass
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	Y3 Class Mass
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	Y2 Class Mass
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	Reception & KS1 Class Mass



Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> January	Year 2 Celebration of the Word-Holocaust Memorial Day 9.30am in school hall. All families welcome to join us in school hall for this event.
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> January	<b>BE YOU</b> Coffee Afternoon- Sleep Clinic Parents Workshop held in school hall from 2.20pm with Mrs Stoves. All parents/carers welcome to attend.
Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup> & Wed 4 <sup>th</sup> February	Parents/carers to look at books after school prior to parents evening 3.20-4pm.
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> February	Reception-Celebration of the Word- Children's Mental Health Week 9 .30am in school hall. All families welcome to join us in school hall for this event.
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> & Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> February	Parents Evening & Interim Reports (3.30-5.30pm). Parent's Evening 10 minute appointments will be live from 7pm on Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> January, these will close at 9pm on Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> February.
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> February	Last day of Spring Term 1 for pupils-school ends 3.15pm
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> February	Teacher Training Day- School closed to pupils
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February	School will Reassemble
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	World Book Day-Pupils come to school dressed as their favourite book character. Storytelling visit from Cogito books.
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> & Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Hexham Bookfest</b> for all year groups- Payments of £2 are now live on the Arbor app. All payments must be paid online.



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Lottie	Robson	Teddie
Year 1	Alexander	Felicity	Orla
Year 2	Suzie	Erin	Isabel
Year 3	Olivia	Evie	Dexter
Year 4	Kaciey	Olivia	Gracie



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done - Year 4	
Reception	96.67%
Year 1	99.38%
Year 2	96.3%
Year 3	97.78%
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 & 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 ROBLOX**

Roblox is an online platform where users can play and create games known as 'experiences' made by other users. Roblox has a large UK audience. ITV News has reported that millions of people in Britain use the platform regularly, with children forming a significant proportion of its users. The sheer scale of it makes it extremely difficult to moderate effectively, creating risks for unsupervised children.

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

- A PLATFORM RATHER THAN A GAME**  
Roblox differs from traditional video games in that it hosts millions of user-created experiences rather than a fixed set of developer-produced content. Each experience is vetted by its creator rather than independently age-rated in advance, as is the case with retail games. With millions of user-created experiences, moderation is largely automated which means that inappropriate content may reach younger players and have a harmful impact.
- RISK OF ADDICTION**  
Roblox encourages repeated and extended play. Many experiences are made of short tasks, rewards, and progression systems that give players reasons to keep playing for longer periods of time. Some games also use rewards, daily rewards, or timed events to encourage frequent logins. These designs can make it difficult to stop playing. Spending long periods online may affect sleep, schoolwork, or other activities if boundaries are not in place.
- COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER USERS**  
Roblox includes text and voice features that allow players to chat in shared game spaces. While the platform uses automated filters and moderation tools, media investigations have found that inappropriate and potentially harmful messages can still get through. There are risks that children could be targeted by groomers. In response, Roblox has announced changes to how chat works. The platform plans to use facial age-estimation technology to restrict chat contacts between adults and children they do not know.
- MATURE CONTENT**  
With much of Roblox's moderation automated through AI and creators a self-certifying suitability, inappropriate content frequently appears on the platform. Some experiences may include content intended for older players. While Roblox has tools to restrict access based on age settings, these systems are not always perfect. Younger players are likely to encounter content you may deem unsuitable.
- IN-GAME SPENDING**  
Roblox is free to play, but many experiences and cosmetics include optional purchases using Robux, the platform's virtual currency, to get advantages in games. This business model is common across online games, but reporting has highlighted cases where children have spent large amounts of money unintentionally or without understanding the real-world cost.

**Advice for Parents & Educators**

- USE PARENTAL CONTROLS**  
Roblox's parental controls provide an important starting point. Linking a child's account to an adult account allows parents to apply spending controls, limit communication features, and review recent activity. Regular supervision, use of parental controls, and conversations with children about what they see online can help reduce the risk of exposure to inappropriate content.
- PLAY TOGETHER WHERE POSSIBLE**  
Playing Roblox with a child can help adults understand the types of experiences available, how moderation works, and how children interact online. This shared engagement can also make it easier for children to raise concerns if something feels wrong. Parents and educators should monitor all games played on Roblox due to its self-rating nature.
- CONSIDER LIMITING OR DISABLING CHAT**  
Although Roblox is introducing tighter age-based chat restrictions, some parents and educators may prefer to disable chat entirely for younger children. Children can still play games while communicating with friends they know through other supervised platforms.
- ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS**  
Many Roblox experiences are creative and age appropriate, and for many children, the platform is an important way to socialize with friends. Rather than banning it outright, parents and educators should talk openly with children about online safety, spending, and how to respond to inappropriate behaviour.

**Meet Our Expert**  
Alan Martin is a technology journalist who has written for publications including Wired, TechCrunch, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.

**Wake Up Wednesday**  
The National College

See full reference list on our website  
@wake\_up\_weds | www.thenationalcollege | @wake.up.wednesday | @wake.up.weds

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### 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](mailto:vicki.collins@northumberland.gov.uk)



[www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com](http://www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com)



[@stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham](https://www.facebook.com/stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham)

# Themed Lunch Dates



## Shrove Tuesday Pancake's

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February



= Happy =  
**Pancake**  
**Day!** 🍓

## Ash Wednesday Fishy Lunch

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February



+

**Ash**  
Wednesday