

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 30TH JANUARY 2026

Dear parent/carers,

On Thursday, some of our Year 3 children began our Peer Mentor Training programme which offers students a valuable opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge needed to support other pupils who may have worries or concerns. Through the training, students will build confidence in key areas including communication, problem-solving, emotional understanding, empathy, and confidentiality. Upon completion, all participants will receive an Entry Level Certificate in Peer Mentoring, provided by the 'Be You' team. There will be further opportunities throughout the year for additional students to take part in this training.



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!

Please note that the Year 2 Celebration of the Word to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, originally planned for Monday 26th January at 9.30am, has been rescheduled. The event will now take place on: **Monday 2nd February 9.30am in the school hall.** We warmly invite all parents and carers to join the whole school for this important occasion, entrance is via the rear hall fire doors.

Just a reminder that next week parents and carers are invited into school from 3.20-4:00pm on Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th to enjoy looking through your child's books and sharing in the wonderful learning they've been doing, ahead of Parents' Evenings the following week

Best wishes,

Mrs. Oakes



A PRAYER FOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Dear God,

Today we remember people who were treated unfairly and hurt because others were unkind.

We remember those who were sad, scared, and lost, and we think about their families too.

Help us to be gentle and kind to everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Teach us to stand up for what is right and to look after one another.

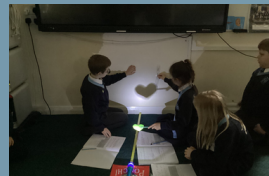
Please help us to choose kindness instead of cruelty, friendship instead of fear, and love instead of hate.

May we always remember, and may we always care.

Amen.

Science! It's been a busy week of brilliant science investigations for our pupils.

Y3 Light investigation



Y4 Amplifying Sounds



Craft Club





Rescheduled -Celebration of the Word Year 2

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Monday 2nd February 9.30am in the school hall

We warmly invite all parents and carers to join the whole school for this important occasion.

Reception-Celebration of the Word

On Monday 9th 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 4th 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 11th and Thursday 12th February**.

Parents Evening & Interim Reports (3.30-5.30pm). Parent's Evening 10 minute appointments will be live from 7pm on today, Friday 30th January, these will close at 9pm on Friday 6th February.

World Book Day Celebration

On Thursday 5th 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 26th March at 10.30am: Hank Goes Honk by Maudie Powell-Tuck

Yr 1 & 2 Wednesday 25th March at 10.30am: The Lion Inside by Rachel Bright

Yr 3 & 4 Thursday 26th 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.



Reading

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 27th February 2026.

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)

Peer Mentor Training

Yesterday, some of our Year 3 children began our Peer Mentor Training programme which offers students a valuable opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge needed to support other pupils who may have worries or concerns.

Through the training, students will build confidence in key areas including communication, problem-solving, emotional understanding, empathy, and confidentiality.

Upon completion, all participants will receive an Entry Level Certificate in Peer Mentoring, provided by the Be You team.

There will be further opportunities throughout the year for additional students to take part in this training.

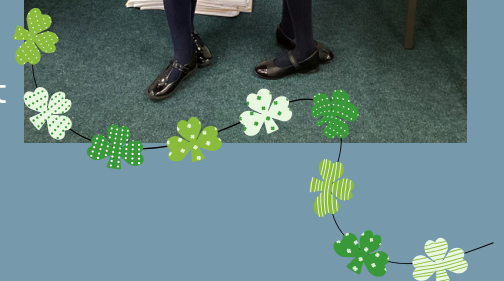
Mini Vinnies Miss Baird (Y2-Y4)	Wednesday Lunch
Singing Club Mrs Stansfield (Y1-Y4)	Tuesday Lunch
Craft Club Miss Wright (Y1-Y4)	Tuesday 3.15-4pm
Lego Club Miss Carr (Y1-Y4)	Wednesday Lunch
Regenerators Miss Stoves (Same pupils as last term)	Thursday Lunch
Dance Club Mrs Hogg (Y1-Y4)	Thursday 3.15-4pm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

Congratulations

We are incredibly proud of two of our Year 3 pupils who recently travelled to Ireland to compete in an Irish dancing competition. This was a fantastic opportunity and a brilliant achievement for both girls.

They each performed amazingly well, showcasing their hard work, dedication, and passion for Irish dance. Even more impressively, both girls brought home silverware, giving us all something wonderful to admire and celebrate in school.

A huge congratulations to both dancers—you are a credit to our school, and we couldn't be prouder of your achievements!





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 these events. Please see rota below for details of dates for each class.

Friday 30 th January	Y2 Class Mass
Friday 6 th February	Reception & KS1 Class Mass — Cancelled
Wednesday 11 th February	Whole School Lent Mass
Friday 6 th March	Y4 Class Mass
Friday 13 th March	Y3 Class Mass
Friday 20 th March	Y2 Class Mass
Friday 27 th March	Reception & KS1 Class Mass



Monday 2 nd February	Re-scheduled-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.
Tues 3 rd & Wed 4 th February	Parents/carers to look at books after school prior to parents evening 3.20-4pm.
Monday 9 th 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 th & Thursday 12 th February	Parents Evening & Interim Reports (3.30-5.30pm). Parent's Evening 10 minute appointments will be live from 7pm on Friday 30th January , these will close at 9pm on Friday 6 th February.
Thursday 12 th February	Last day of Spring Term 1 for pupils-school ends 3.15pm
Friday 13 th February	Teacher Training Day- School closed to pupils
Monday 23 rd February	School will Reassemble
2nd-6 th March	National Careers Week
Thursday 5 th March	World Book Day-Pupils come to school dressed as their favourite book character. Storytelling visit from Cogito books.
Wednesday 25 th & Thursday 26 th March	Hexham Bookfest for all year groups- Payments of £2 are now live on the Arbor app. All payments must be paid online.
21 st March	World Down Syndrome Day
Friday 27 th March	Easter Fair 3.15pm, more details to follow



Class	WE LOVE	WE LEARN	WE LIVE
Reception	Millie	Jasmine	Adalyn
Year 1	Luna	Eli	Bodhi
Year 2	Lizzie	Alfie R	Evie
Year 3	Freddie	Phuc	Florence
Year 4	Esmee	Luca	Frankie



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done - Year 4	
Reception	96.67%
Year 1	96.91%
Year 2	93.83%
Year 3	96.11%
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 MENTAL HEALTH MISINFORMATION ONLINE

A research study by Ofcom revealed that children aged 9-15 increasingly use online platforms like TikTok for mental health advice, with 50% relying on social media for information. Unverified medical content online is concerning, with the potential to cause confusion, anxiety, or incorrect self-diagnosis. This guide provides expert strategies to help parents and educators tackle misinformation effectively and ensure safer digital experiences for young people.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- POPULAR ONLINE SOURCES:** Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are two of the main sources of young people's mental health content. Influencers frequently feature unqualified influencers, contributing to incorrect health advice and overmedicalization. While appealing to young audiences, this content can distort perceptions, and create unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings about mental health conditions.
- RISK OF SELF-DIAGNOSIS:** Social media's misleading content encourages young people to self-diagnose complex mental health conditions. Unnecessary anxiety, or delay essential professional intervention. This has the potential to escalate manageable conditions into more significant mental health issues requiring comprehensive clinical support.
- LACK OF FILTERS:** Social media platforms struggle to filter misinformation effectively, allowing false content to spread widely and quickly. Without proper guidance, young viewers may not discern and from false, potentially misleading information, leading to mental health issues.
- REPLACING PROFESSIONAL HELP:** Frequent reliance on digital content can deter young people from seeking professional mental health care, substituting expert support with unverified online advice. This substitution can prolong illness, compromise recovery, and reduce the effectiveness of future professional interventions, ultimately impacting overall mental health and wellbeing negatively.
- IMPACTFUL PAST TRENDS:** Historically, online mental health misinformation has led to harmful trends, including inappropriate coping strategies or unproven treatments. For example, past TikTok trends on self-harm or anxiety led to increased emergency services, underscoring the risk when misinformation is not promptly addressed or corrected by trustworthy adults.
- MISLEADING CLINICAL TERMS:** Online trends often include the misuse of clinical terms, such as 'trauma' or 'OCPT', making serious conditions seem trivial or inconsequential. Such misinformation can diminish empathy, and lead young people to underestimate mental health concerns, potentially preventing them from identifying real mental health issues in themselves or others.

Advice for Parents & Educators

- MONITOR ONLINE ENGAGEMENT:** Regularly review and discuss a young person's online activity, providing appropriate guidance and evidence-based support. Tools such as parental controls or co-viewing content can help reduce exposure to harmful misinformation, facilitate safer digital habits and informed critical thinking about mental health.
- IDENTIFY RELIABLE SOURCES:** Teach young people to critically evaluate mental health content by checking credentials, source transparency, and evidence-based information. Encourage them to refer to trusted medical or educational platforms and to consult healthcare professionals for diagnoses. This reduces young people's reliance on potentially harmful or misleading online sources.
- SCHOOL-HOME COLLABORATION:** Strengthen collaboration with educators to integrate digital literacy into the school curriculum, emphasizing misinformation awareness. Jointly delivered education sessions on identifying and responding to misinformation can significantly improve pupils' ability to critically assess mental health content, supporting their mental wellbeing effectively both online and offline.
- ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE:** Foster a non-judgemental environment where young people feel comfortable discussing online content. Regularly talking about their online experiences and perceived mental health concerns helps clarify misunderstandings, mitigate misinformation, and builds trust, thereby enhancing their resilience and digital literacy. Model situations where you have sought advice from accurate sources and not solely relied on social media for health advice.

Meet Our Expert
Anna Boteman is Director of Holston Education Ltd, Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust, and lead expert for mental health at The National College. Anna specialises in strategic mental health solutions for schools, supporting educators and families to improve resilience, emotional literacy, and overall wellbeing for children across the UK.

Wake Up Wednesday | The National College

Follow us on social media: @wake_up_weds, @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



www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com



@stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham



Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

Themed Lunch Dates



Shrove Tuesday Pancake's

Tuesday 10th February



= Happy =
Pancake
Day! 🍓

Ash Wednesday Fishy Lunch

Thursday 12th February



✝️
Ash
Wednesday