

ST MARY'S NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2026

Dear parent/carers,

This week, our Year 2 children lead a special Celebration of the Word to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. We focused on sharing themes of kindness, mutual respect, and the importance of standing up for others which is all part of our British Values. A fantastic effort Year 2, well done!

We were delighted to see so many parents and carers in school this week taking time to look through the children's work in readiness for next week's Parents' Evenings. The children were very proud to showcase their learning, and we appreciate your continued support.



On Monday 9th February at 9.30am, we warmly invite all parents and carers to join the whole school in the hall for Reception's Celebration of the Word, marking Children's Mental Health Week. Parents and carers are asked to enter via the hall fire exit door for this event. The 2026 theme, Belonging, focuses on helping children and young people feel safe, valued, accepted and connected within their friendships, school and wider community. Throughout next week, the children will take part in a range of activities designed to reinforce positive environments where they can confidently say, "This is my place."

Next week, On Wednesday 11th February at 9.30am, the whole school will be attending Mass at St Mary's Church with a Lenten focus. As the school will be on half term when Lent begins, this Mass will provide an opportunity for the children to reflect and prepare for the season together. All families are very welcome to join us for this special celebration.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



Prayer For February

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for Your love and guidance as we enter February,
Please guide and protect my family, friends, and me throughout this month. Help us to reflect Your love in our actions and thoughts, and provide strength and comfort to those in need. May we remember Your greatest act of love through Jesus Christ and share that love with others.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Y2 Celebration of the Word
Holocaust Memorial Day



Year 2-Pupil-led
Celebration of the Word
this week



Year 3
Peer Mentor
Training
-Session 2



Careers Week & Careers Showcase – 2nd–6th March



We are excited to be holding our first Careers Week, running from Monday 2nd to Friday 6th March, giving children the opportunity to learn about a wide range of jobs, skills and future pathways.

Throughout the week, children will take part in a variety of engaging activities, including career-focused assemblies, class discussions about different jobs, and learning about the skills and qualities needed for different roles. We have also arranged for a wide range of visitors to come into school, who will talk to the children about their own careers and lead interactive workshops, helping pupils to gain real-life insight into the world of work.

The week will culminate in our Careers Showcase **on Friday 6th March, when children are invited to come to school dressed as the job or career they aspire to**. On the day, the children will complete a creative “Day in the Life” activity, exploring what their chosen role involves and the skills needed to succeed.

We are really looking forward to an inspiring week that promotes aspiration, curiosity and meaningful conversations about future careers.

Parents Evening & Interim Reports

Parents Evenings will be held on **Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th February**. A copy of your child’s interim report will be sent to you through email on Thursday 12th February after school.

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.

Schools Festival Book Orders

Enjoy the magic of reading at home with brilliant books by our school’s festival authors. Anyone attending our school’s festival can order these books at a special discounted rate and have them signed by the author (all except Storytelling & Crafts and Liz Fost event). To order yours, follow the links below to our website. All books will be made ready for collection on the day. Please get your order in by Tuesday 10th March and let us know the name of your child and their school in the checkout.

The Lion Inside – <https://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/product/the-lion-inside-by-rachel-bright>

Hank Goes Honk – <https://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/product/hank-goes-honk-by-maudie-powell-tuck>

Alice With A Why – <https://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/product/alice-with-a-why-by-anna-james>



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.



Shrove Tuesday Pancake's - Tuesday 10th February



Ash Wednesday Fishy Lunch - Thursday 12th February

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)

Extra-curricular Clubs

Clubs will be running next week, all clubs will remain the same after the holidays.

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



A huge well done to Nathan for receiving Hexham's Betis Team Trainer of the Week and Coach's Player of the Match. What a fantastic achievement and a well-deserved recognition of his hard work and commitment. 🌟



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.

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

Olivia	Esmee
Frankie	Ashton
Riley	Luca
Leo	
Heidi	

**Y4 Maths
Superstars-
Scoring full
marks in this
week's times
tables
challenge!**



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 February	Whole school Lent Mass at St. Mary's Church-all families welcome to join us for this event.
Wednesday 11 th & Thursday 12 th February	Parents Evening & Interim Reports (3.30-5.30pm). Appointments on Arbor will close at 9pm today, Friday 6 th February. If you are having a problem booking, please contact the school office.
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 Friday 6th March	National Careers Week. On Friday 6th March, children are invited to come to school dressed as the job or career they aspire to.
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	Lara	Loriea	Lottie
Year 1	Alexander	Eli	Monica
Year 2	Aanika	William	Myles
Year 3	Eabha	Grace	Jacob
Year 4	Olivia	Ashton	Leo



St. Mary's Class Attendance Winners- Well done - Reception	
Reception	100%
Year 1	99.38%
Year 2	95.68%
Year 3	97.22%
Year 4	98.41%

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)



10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators Supporting Safe Use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly woven into young people's digital lives. It can offer some educational benefits and day-to-day assistance; however, it also raises concerns about misinformation, privacy, fairness, and safety. This guide provides parents and educators with practical strategies to support young people to navigate AI tools responsibly, and to use them safely and with discernment.

- 1 DEMYSTIFY WHAT AI REALLY IS**
Children encounter AI in most online places, including games, streaming platforms, and school tools. Explain that AI uses patterns from past data to make decisions, but it doesn't think or feel like humans. Use age-appropriate examples, like how recommendation algorithms on YouTube or Netflix work, to build understanding and prevent false beliefs about AI being all-knowing or alive.
- 2 TALK ABOUT RISKS OF MISINFORMATION**
AI can create convincing false information, including deepfake videos, photos, and fake texts. Encourage children to think critically about what they see and read. Teach them to double-check information using reliable sources, to look at images and videos carefully, and to use an adult if something doesn't seem right.
- 3 DISCUSS DATA AND PRIVACY**
Explain that AI systems learn by analyzing lots of data, sometimes including personal information. Help young people to be mindful of what they share online and why protecting personal data matters. Model good habits like reading app permissions together or reviewing what's collected by voice assistants like Alexa or Siri.
- 4 ENCOURAGE CREATIVE USE OF AI**
Support children, when using AI tools, to explore ideas, make art, or build projects. This fosters confidence, imagination, and independent thinking. When children use AI creatively, rather than just passively consuming it, they are more likely to stay engaged and make thoughtful choices.
- 5 USE AGE-APPROPRIATE AI TOOLS**
Not all AI platforms are suitable for children. Choose tools designed for education or creativity, with clear safety policies. Review terms of use and privacy settings, and help children use them in age-appropriate ways. For example, some chatbot romance conversations but should only be used with guidance and boundaries in place.
- 6 USE AI TOGETHER**
Exploring AI tools together can help children understand how they work and spot potential issues. Try co-writing a story with an AI writing assistant or experimenting with an AI art tool. This encourages curiosity, helps you stay informed about the latest AI tools, and allows you to reinforce safe and respectful use while modeling critical thinking.
- 7 SET BOUNDARIES FOR AI USE**
Establish when, where, and how AI tools can be used, just as you would with any digital technology. For example, you might agree not to use AI tools for homework or school assignments without permission, or to avoid unsupervised use of voice assistants. Consistent boundaries help manage overuse and misuse.
- 8 WATCH FOR OVERRELIANCE**
Some AI tools, like homework help apps, may be tempting shortcuts. Encourage children to use AI to support their thinking, not replace it. Celebrate effort and process over perfect answers. Reinforce that mistakes are part of learning and that relying too heavily on AI can limit real understanding.
- 9 TEACH DIGITAL ETHICS AND LITERACY**
Help children explore how AI works, where it might be biased, and why ethical thinking matters. Building digital literacy alongside ethical awareness ensures children engage with AI critically, not just passively. Help young people to understand that not all people use AI for legitimate purposes, and that AI benefits from certain biases, talk about algorithms, echo chambers, and the importance of journalism on daily life.
- 10 STAY CURIOUS AND INVOLVED**
AI is developing rapidly, and staying informed helps you support the young people in your care. Follow trusted sources for updates and news. If a child brings up a new AI trend or tool, take the opportunity to learn about it together. Showing interest builds trust and strengthens digital resilience.

Meet Our Expert
Home to the world's largest CPD library for educators, The National College has transformed the way educational establishments go about developing their workforces and ensuring compliance. Our three memberships help all phases and types of setting raise standards, save time, reduce risk, and build a culture of improvement.

WakeUp Wednesday
The National College

@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



www.stmaryshexham.bwcet.com



@stmaryscatholicfirstschoolhexham

The poster features a vibrant, cartoon-style border. It is filled with various Easter-themed elements: colorful Easter eggs with patterns like stripes, polka dots, and wavy lines; bright orange carrots with green tops; and several flowers in shades of pink, white, yellow, and blue. The background is a light, neutral color, making the colorful border stand out.

Easter

FAIR

Friday 27th March

3.15pm

School Hall

Chocolate Tombola

Face Painting

Candy Floss

Hook a Bag

Name the Teddy

& Lots More

