



St Mary's Catholic First School Newsletter –
Friday 1st March 2024

We love, we learn, we live.



Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back, I hope you all had a restful half term break. During Lent, the staff and children of St. Mary's are going to 'Act' by taking part in CAFOD's annual 'Big Lent Walk'. The Big Lent Walk is an annual challenge where we walk up to 200 miles over the 40 days of Lent and get sponsored to raise money to help people fighting extreme poverty globally: [Big Lent Walk Challenge 2024 | CAFOD \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). Over the next 5 weeks in school, we will be aiming to walk an average of about 5k a day for the duration of Lent-as you can see from the images below, we have already started this week! Children, families and parishioners are also encouraged to take up the challenge and include any walks they do outside of school too. During the last week of the Spring Term, the whole of St. Mary's school will conclude the Big Lent Walk Challenge by walking several laps around Sele Park.

Our target this year is to raise £150 for CAFOD. All donations can be made via our donations page by following this link: [St Mary's Catholic First School Fundraising Page is fundraising for CAFOD](#) please feel free to share this link with family and friends. All donations would be greatly appreciated!



Just a reminder that Thursday 7th March is World Book Day. Children are welcome to come into school dressed as their favourite story characters on Thursday 7th March. We will be celebrating books throughout the day, and we will be enjoying a visit from Cogito Books where we can use our World Book Day vouchers to get a new book to take home.



Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs. Oakes



World Down Syndrome Day

St. Mary's is taking part in the Down Syndrome Sunflower Challenge for World Down Syndrome Day 2024! Just like sunflowers, every child grows and blooms uniquely. This challenge for Nurseries and Primary Schools serves as a beautiful metaphor for the diversity and individuality that makes each child special. Today (March 1st), every child at St. Mary's is going to Start the Sunflower Challenge by planting their own sunflowers, watching with excitement as their sunflowers grow and flourish over the next three weeks. On the 21st March, we will be asking the children to come to school wearing a yellow item (to represent their sunflower).and donating £2 to Down syndrome UK. The children will be able to bring home their 3-week-old sunflower plant on the 21st March.

Easter Bonnet Parade & Big Lent Walk

As previously mentioned, during the last week of the Spring Term, the whole of St. Mary's school will conclude the Big Lent Walk Challenge by walking several laps around Sele Park. The children will get the opportunity to make their Easter bonnets during school the week before the parade (week beginning 18th March) so that they can wear their bonnets as they complete The Big Lent Walk. Parents and parishioners will be invited to join us on our walk, which will take place on the morning of the last day of the Spring Term (Thursday 28th March)
Please can we ask parents/carers to send Easter Bonnet making materials in with their child in a named bag in readiness for their bonnet making session during the week of the 18th March.

Winning With Numbers

Letters went out before half term regarding our new approach to maths homework - 'Winning with Numbers'. Children have been using this in school since the start of this academic year and are very familiar with the programme. Winning With Numbers (WWN) is described as the 'phonics of number' as it focuses on number - the most important parts of mathematics. Many parents joined us before half term, for the 'Winning with Numbers' Parent Sessions where we launched this with parents. Instead of weekly maths homework sheets, moving forward children's maths homework will now be centred on WWN. On a regular basis (daily is possible), children should log on and complete at least 10 questions for number which their teacher will have set for them. There are short teaching videos to accompany the questions, making it easier for parents to support children in their learning. The daily WWN bitesize maths should be quick, and the children should increase in their automaticity as they progress.
To accommodate any parents who were unable to make the previous two sessions we are delivering a third online session on Wednesday 13th March at 5:00pm. Please let the office know if you would like to receive a link for this parent session.

Universal free school meals - All pupils in reception, year one, and year two are entitled to a free meal, without having to apply for this option.

Eligibility for free school meals - The government has made amendments to the eligibility criteria since April 2018. This is to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Schools/Meals.aspx>

School Meals

Our menus are carefully developed, to appeal to children and provide the perfect balance of essential nutrients – and to offer them the chance to try a few dishes they may not have tried before. They are freshly prepared and cooked in-house each day, following our BWCET Garden Kitchen Menu.



Just a reminder, all menus are available via the school website: [School Meals – St Mary's First School, Hexham \(hexhamstmarys.uk\)](#)

Mini Vinnies

Mini Vinnies meetings will take place this week on Monday 4th March and Monday 25th March. Our meetings will finish at 4:30pm.

Mission Statement Value Award Winners:

If you would like to celebrate your child's achievements out of school and would like us to give them a mention in Celebration Assembly on a Friday, then simply fill out one of the Mission Statement Value Cards that have been sent home with your child or ask for one at our school office. We love to hear about all the children's wonderful achievements, both in school and out!

Class			
Reception	Jay	Alfie R	William
Year 1	Nathan	Jenson	Austin
Year 2	Luca	Heidi	Riley
Year 3	Archie	Ava	Ruby
Year 4	Zach	Alfie	Kaylin





St. Mary's Class Attendance	
This Week's Winners: Year - 3	
<u>Reception</u>	97.06%
<u>Year 1</u>	98.18%
<u>Year 2</u>	97.22%
<u>Year 3</u>	99.09%
<u>Year 4</u>	94.55%

Attendance Ladder



Diary Dates

World Book Day (Children can come to school dressed as their favourite story character)	 Thursday 7 th March
Year 3 and 4 Mass at St. Mary's Church 9:30am-Parents/carers welcome to join us.	Friday 8 th March
Year 1-Celebration of the Word 9.30am in school hall (All parents/carers invited to attend)	Wednesday 13 th March
WWN Parent Workshop-Virtual-5:00pm	Wednesday 13 th March
Year 1 & 2 Mass at St. Mary's Church 9:30am-Parents/carers welcome to join us.	Friday 15 th March

Send in child with Easter bonnet making materials to make Easter bonnets.	Week beginning 18 th March (or before)
Parents to look at Books 3:20-4pm	Tuesday 19 th & Wednesday 20 th March
 <p>More information to follow.</p>	Thursday 21 st March
'Blast Off With Books' Breakfast Session- School Hall 8.15-8:40am	Friday 22 nd March
Whole school Lenten Journey to the Cross Celebration-St. Mary's Church 11am-Parents/carers welcome to attend.	Wednesday 27 th March
Easter Fair after school-School hall	Wednesday 27 th March
The Big Lent Walk-whole school-Sele Park & Easter Bonnet Parade 9.30am	Thursday 28 th March
Last day of Spring Term	Thursday 28 th March
Easter holidays	Friday 29 th March-12 th April
Start of Summer Term	Monday 15 th April 8:40am
Y4 Moor House Trip 9 th & 10 th May	The final payment balance of £103.87 for the Moor House Adventure trip is now on Arbor. Regular payments can be made to clear the balance up until 26 th April. Please ensure all outstanding payments are made on Arbor by Friday 26th April 24 . Many thanks.

Safeguarding

This month our E-safety theme is 'Managing Online information'. The children discuss how not all information online may not be real or true.

Please take a look at the following information and advice for parents and carers on supporting your child in discussing 'Managing Online Information': [Educational Resources - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

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 & 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 (parentcontact@smfs.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. Formally delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

Top Tips for Supporting Children Who Are EXPERIENCING BULLYING

In a DfE survey, 36% of parents said that their child had been bullied in the past year, while 29% of secondary school headteachers reported bullying among students. Public Health England states that young people who maintain positive communication with their family were less likely to experience bullying – so it's important that parents, carers and educators know how to talk to children about bullying.

- 1. WATCH FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES**
Children who are experiencing bullying may become quiet, withdrawn, or anxious. However, they may also act on the pain and anger that they're feeling. A shift in attitude towards their existing friends (or not mentioning them any more at all) or avoiding to new friendships which seem to have different could also be warning signs. It's important to be alert to such changes and talk to your child about them if they occur.
- 2. THINK THINGS THROUGH**
Before acting, ask yourself if this is the right time and place to address concerns about bullying. Might your worries trigger strong feelings – perhaps from your own experience? – that could discourage your child from opening up to you? You could try discussing what you're worried with another trusted adult who knows your child well.
- 3. BE OPEN AND UNDERSTANDING**
Try to outline to your child the changes that you've noticed in their body language, appearance, behaviour, or tone of voice – and do so without sounding judgemental. Help them to describe what they're feeling – be it anger, sadness, fear or something else – as accurately as possible. If they say they're 'nervy' or do they mean 'anxious' or 'frustrated'? This will help them to understand how they're feeling and why.
- 4. LET THEM SPEAK FREELY**
Use open questions and a welcoming tone to encourage your child to talk. Listen closely and summarise what they've said at appropriate points (ideally without interrupting) to demonstrate that you're understanding clearly. Bullying may have undermined your child's sense of control, and they may feel that you'll judge them, overreact or impose consequences – so the conversation can reassure them being honest with you was the right decision.
- 5. CALL A TIME OUT**
A conversation about bullying could leave both you and your child feeling distressed. It's important to recognise this and pause or postpone moments to calm down. Take deep breaths, enjoy a hot drink or even have a catnap. If they open up to you, while also helping you both feel that you have control over the situation and the emotions that you're feeling.
- 6. STAY INFORMED**
Make sure you know your child's school's definition of, response to and relevant contacts for bullying. This information should be in their anti-bullying policy, which ought to be available on the school's website. Class teachers or form tutors are usually the first point of contact, though there may be dedicated support teams or key workers to help your child, depending on the specific situation.
- 7. PREP YOUR CHILD FOR THE RESPONSE**
Schools' responses to bullying vary depending on whether they're resolving disagreements and arguments, or addressing unintended verbal or physical harm and so on. It's important to work out with your child whether any harm was intentional, how much control they had over the situation and how often such incidents have occurred. Reporting concerns occasionally will get the best outcome for your child more quickly.
- 8. SUMMARISE YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE**
When you contact the school, make sure you've precisely described what your child experienced: what happened, when, where, and who was involved. It will help the school to investigate further, identifying any witnesses, as well as those who were directly involved. It can also help the school to know how your child is feeling and how they'd like the matter to be resolved.
- 9. LIAISE WITH THE SCHOOL**
Any school has a duty to ensure that the members of its community feel safe and included. It's important for children to learn their role in this. The school must determine how best to restore those feelings of safety and respect. It's often best for schools to keep parents and carers informed of any action taken – and for families to avoid taking matters into their own hands.
- 10. CHECK IN FREQUENTLY**
Once the issue has been resolved and the bullying behaviour has stopped, your child may still feel anxious and might need to rebuild relationships or develop new ones. Parents, carers and the school should all keep an eye on how the child is feeling and acting over the following months. Any relevant information should be shared, so that further support can be planned if necessary.

Meet Our Expert
Rob Bostley is the Director of Anti-Bullying Quality Mark-UK, which challenges and supports schools to develop sustainable whole-school approaches to prevent bullying, including working with parents and carers. More than 80 schools in England and Wales currently hold the quality mark.

WakeUp Wednesday
The National College

<https://www.nationalcollege.com>
Source: <https://www.dfe.gov.uk/guidance/2020/03/2020-21-anti-bullying-annual-report>, <https://www.phe.gov.uk/about-us/press-releases/2019/09/19/190919-01-children-mental-health>
<https://www.nationalcollege.com>

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