



SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS

WELCOME BACK:

Dear Parents, Care-givers and all members of the St Mary's family,

Welcome back!

What a wonderful first week it has been. It has been so uplifting to open our doors once again, to welcome back our pupils and to see the site full of the buzz of learning and the usual rhythms of daily life at St Mary's. I would like to offer a sincere thank you to you all for your efforts in preparing your children for their return to school at the start of our new academic year.

One notable highlight has been how wonderfully our new Reception starters have coped with their first days in school, and we look forward to sharing in the initial steps of their school journey over the coming term.

As well as welcoming our new intake, we have also welcomed two new members of staff in Miss Carolan (Year 3 Class Teacher) and Mrs Shenton (Early Years Teaching Assistant). I am delighted to have them both as part of our staff team, and know that you will go out of your way to make them feel welcomed and valued in their respective roles.

Over the upcoming days and weeks, we will, I am certain, have lots of good news and important notices to share with you, so please as ever, make sure to read the weekly News Bulletin carefully and get in touch if further explanation or discussion is ever required. Our weekly bulletin and other important communications will be sent by email via our *Arbor* system, so please get in touch with the school office as a matter of urgency if you are experiencing any difficulties accessing *Arbor* or in receiving school communications.

The first News Bulletin of the year is a bit of a bumper edition! Though I apologise profusely in advance that it may require several sittings to get through it all, I would ask that all parents and carers carefully read the information enclosed to ensure that you are aware of everything that is going on at the very start of the year. Without wishing to take the shine off what has been a fantastic first week back, it is also important to note that we have had some low-level infringement of our school rules; whereas we know that much of this will have been inadvertent, I do ask that all parents/carers refresh their knowledge of certain school policies and expectations and take the necessary action in line with the guidance given.

Thank you, as always, for your co-operation and support. It's great to be back!

Yours in Faithful Optimism,

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

IMPORTANT DATES/TASKS THIS WEEK:

- New parents login to *Arbor* platform (<https://stmw-bwcet.uk.arbor.sc/?/home-ui/index>) (you should have received an email with login instructions already – please check ‘junk’ folders and contact school office with any further issues).
- Make a note of your child’s PE days for the term; pupils to wear PE kit on correct day this week.
- Y4 swimming lessons to commence this week.
- Tennis after-school club to begin on Monday (11.9.23); no gymnastics this week – this will begin on 22.9.23.
- Sign your child up for their flu vaccination here: <https://www.northumbriaimmunisations.co.uk/Forms/Flu> using the school code NB149053.
- Please make sure all uniform and other items coming into school are clearly labelled.
- Please pay all lunch monies in advance via *Arbor* (<https://stmw-bwcet.uk.arbor.sc/?/home-ui/index>) – Years 3-6 only.

ARBOR:

Arbor is our school Management Information System.

It will be used for the following:

- Storing pupils’ personal information and contact details.
- Recording attendance information.
- Recording attainment and pastoral information (school use only).
- One-way communication from the school office to parents (weekly News Bulletin and other notices).
- Parent payments (school meals, trips, peripatetic lessons etc).
- Issuing of weekly homework tasks (**to begin wb/11.9.23**).

It will not be used for the following:

- Two-way communication between school staff and parents.
 - All parent communication should come through the school office via email to info@stmw.bwcet.com or telephone to 0191 4205828.

We are exploring two further uses which may be used in the future:

- Shared calendar.
 - At the moment, diary dates will continue to be issued via the weekly News Bulletin.
- Recognition and reward.
 - Communications with parents regarding pupils’ positive behaviour and achievements in school.

Pupil information check

Please could all parents check the following information via *Arbor* (<https://stmw-bwcet.uk.arbor.sc/?/home-ui/index>) and make any necessary changes:

- Pupil details
- Pupil contact details
- Pupil dietary and medical information
- Parental consent for school activities*

* Please note, 'Sex Education' refers to the school's delivery of Relationships, Health and Sex Education as defined within [statutory guidance](#) for all pupils and our [school policy](#). As a school, we do not teach beyond the expectations of the statutory expectations of the National Curriculum for Science, so default 'consent' is recorded for all pupils.

MEDICAL FORMS:

Further to the Arbor check, please ensure school has been made aware of any changes/updates regarding your child's medical needs; this can be done by completing a medical form (available from the school office). Please also ensure that all medication in school is up to date for the new school year.

Please note, medical forms are for serious and persistent medical conditions, for which we would need to store medicine in school and administer in case of an emergency.

READING ROUTINES:

As a school, we have revised our school reading routines as part of our English Reading and Phonics Curriculum. We continue to use the *Read, Write inc* scheme for pupils (starting in Reception Class) who are learning and mastering the 40+ phonemes (sounds) and corresponding graphemes (ways of writing these sounds) in the English language. For the first hour of each day, children working through the programme will be grouped with others working at the same *Read, Write inc* stage as this is proven to be the most efficient way for children to make progress in their early reading.

Your child may have already spoken at home about routines being slightly different this week, but please note that pupils will continue to build on their previous attainment as outlined in end of year reports.

Further guidance regarding home reading routines and support with helping struggling or reluctant readers will be shared with parents in the coming weeks.

PARENTS' APPOINTMENTS:

We will be changing our plan for parent consultations over the coming year meaning that parents will be invited in to talk with their child's class teacher earlier in the term.

In the Autumn Term, the focus of the appointment will be:

- How your child has settled pastorally into their new class.
- Review of attainment and targets from Summer Term 2023 and any particular transition considerations.
- How you can help your child's ongoing learning at home at the start of the new year.

The dates for the Autumn Term Parents' Appointments will be as follows:

DATE	CLASS
Tuesday 26 th September	Year 6
Wednesday 27 th September	Year 2
Thursday 28 th September	Year 5
Monday 2 nd October	Year 4
Tuesday 3 rd October	Year 1
Wednesday 4 th October	Reception
Thursday 5 th October	Year 3

Details outlining how to sign up for your appointment will be issued in due course.

PE:

Pupils from Years 1 - 6 will have two PE slots each week. We have endeavoured to ensure that there is at least one day in between each session to account for any necessary cleaning of kit.

The school PE kit forms part of the expected uniform for all pupils; **it is not optional for pupils to wear alternative kit as a preference.** Pupils should come into school in their full PE kit (including suitable training shoes) on designated PE days. All pupils should wear royal blue PE shorts or plain navy jogging/tracksuit bottoms (not leggings). Just as with school uniform, all items of PE and sports kit should be clearly named.

Alterations to PE days will be communicated weekly via the News Bulletin, so please be sure to check each week and make a note of any changes.

Pupils' PE days will be as follows:

Reception – Friday

Year 1 – Tuesday and Thursday

Year 2 – Wednesday and Friday

Year 3 – Monday and Wednesday

Year 4 – Thursday (PE and swimming both on Thursday)

Year 5 – Tuesday and Thursday

Year 6 – Wednesday and Friday

SWIMMING:

This term, Year 4 will be attending swimming on a Thursday afternoon.

Pupils should bring their swimming kit in a small, clearly named drawstring or carrier bag. Pupils should bring a swimsuit (no long boardshorts), a towel and – if they can confidently put one on without adult assistance – a swim cap. Pupils may also bring their own goggles. Pupils will be using the changing room facilities before and after their lesson.

Pupils will travel by coach to and from Dunston swimming baths.

Pupils' first swimming lesson of the year will be on **Thursday 14th September.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

ADMISSIONS:

The admissions window for Reception and Year 7 intakes September 2024 is now open. Prospective parents for Reception 2024 can apply online here: <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2796/Primary-school-admissions>. The deadline for applications is **15th January 2024.**

We would also encourage parents/carers of our Y6 cohort to apply for their child's secondary place as soon as possible. Applications can be completed online here: <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2797/Secondary-school-admissions>. The deadline for secondary admissions is **31st October 2023.**

Further information can be sought from the school admissions team: 0191 433 2757/ 0191 433 2756 schooladmissions@gateshead.gov.uk.

UNIFORM:

A reminder, at the start of a new school year, about the high standards we have for school uniform. Our full school uniform requirements are available to view on the 'Parents - School Documents' area of the school website (www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk).

In particular, please remember that school shoes should be:

- Black leather (or 'polishable' leather substitute).
- Fastenable (strap or laces).

For clarity, the following would not be deemed suitable for school:

- Black trainers (sports brand/designed as a training shoe).
- Anything with an 'open-toe'.
- Loose fitting 'loafer' style shoe.
- Anything with a heel or platform.
- Lightweight 'knitted' material.
- Anything that could be classed as a 'fashion shoe'.

Please also ensure that all items of clothing are marked with your child's name; we have already recovered brand new items of clothing from various areas around school for which it has been impossible to identify the rightful owner as they are unnamed. Please also remind your child that it is their responsibility to look after belongings and ensure that they return home with everything they brought to school in the morning.

HAIR AND JEWELLERY:

We would also ask that all parents ensure that their children are sent in to school each in line with school policy. Expectations are outlined in the school's Uniform Policy and Dress Code.

Please ensure that pupils are not sent in to school with earrings; all earrings must be taken out before the start of school irrespective of how long since the piercings were made.

Shaved hairstyles should be no shorter than a grade 3 and 'tramlines' or designs should not be shaved in to pupils' hair.

Pupils' hair should not be dyed (even 'natural' colours); please ensure any dyed hair is not re-dyed from this point.

We would also ask that coloured hair braids are removed from hair.

REQUESTING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

A polite reminder about requesting leave of absence for your child; any parent wishing to remove their child from school (for whatever reason) is asked to complete a request for absence form explaining the reasons for the leave of absence, and to return it to school in good time. School will respond with a set letter explaining whether the leave has been authorised or not. Please remember, Governmental guidelines (amended in 2013) are very clear that leave of absence may only be granted in very exceptional circumstances, and it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to consider each case on an individual basis. Request forms will be available from Mrs Noble in the School Office or from the 'School Documents' page of the school website (<http://www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk/school-policiesdocuments.html>).

CONSENT FOR MOBILE PHONES OR LEAVING SCHOOL WITHOUT AN ADULT:

Parents/Carers of pupils in Years 5 or 6 must inform school if they would like to their child to walk home without adult supervision. Written consent must also be provided if a child is to bring a mobile phone in to school. Consent forms can be collected from the school office or downloaded here from the school website as outlined previously.

FLU VACCINATIONS:

If you would like your child to receive the flu vaccination this year, you must sign up via a new online platform here: <https://www.northumbriaimmunisations.co.uk/Forms/Flu> using the school code NB149053. Pupils whose parents/carers have signed up via the online platform will receive their vaccination on 14.11.23.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS:

Currently, there are no places for *Happy Feet* or Gymnastics. Registration of interest can be made for pupils in Years 1-6 by contacting the school office.

There are spaces for tennis on a Monday, and pupils in Y3-6 are invited to register their interest. Places will be allocated and communicated to parents. Priority will be given to older year groups in the first instance.

Payment should be made in advance of your child taking up their place/at the start of each new term.

Payment to be made as follows:

Tennis (online here: <https://wdtvenues.co.uk/blaydon#2b464774-b2e3-4983-872f-2c737f240692>);

Gymnastics and Happy Feet (as instructed by club leads).

GREAT NORTH RUN:

We would like to wish lots of luck to all those taking part in the Mini, Junior or Great North Run events this weekend.

We would like to say a special good luck to Mr Colling who will be taking part in both the 5K road race on Friday and main event on Sunday!

Pupils who have taken part in either the Mini or Junior runs may bring their medal in to school on Monday to share their success with others.

EDUCATION SUNDAY – 10th SEPTEMBER:

This Sunday, we celebrate Education Sunday: a day on which we give thanks for all those who volunteer and work in our nurseries, schools and places of learning.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the gift of Catholic schools.

Thank you for all those who have given their talents to educating our young people. Through the challenges they encounter each day, lead them to an ever-deeper appreciation of the sacred duty to which you have called them.

Thank you for all those who contribute to the efficient running of our schools; support staff, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, governors and chaplains. We thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Thank you for all those who lead our Catholic schools. May they be people of integrity so that they can be witnesses as well as teachers. We pray that the schools they lead will become places where our young people can experience your love in their lives.

Thank you for our pupils. May your love strengthen and nurture them through the influence and example of those who care for them. We pray that through their time at school they will flourish and grow to discover who you have called them to be.

We make this prayer through your Son, Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord,

Amen.

SCHOOL MASS:

We will be celebrating our first school Mass of the year on Thursday 21st September. Pupils in Years 1-6 will be in attendance and all are welcome to come along and help us commemorate the start of the year with a celebration of the Mass.

