



SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS

WELCOME BACK:

It is with great joy that I write to welcome you all back to a new school year at St Mary's. I trust that you have all enjoyed a *somewhat* restful Summer – whatever that has entailed – and that you, like the St Mary's team, are looking forward to another successful and rewarding school year.

We have of course welcomed our new cohort in to Reception Class, and we look forward to playing our part in helping them continue to learn and grow over the coming weeks and months. We welcome all our new families – whether their child has started in Reception Class, or indeed further up the school – with open arms; I hope that you and your children will be happy here as part of our family at St Mary's, and I look forward to getting to know you all and celebrating shared successes with you in the future.

As with every new year, we hit the ground running, and don't look back until Christmas! I've attached a list of diary dates for the upcoming Term, but please be reminded that there will always be alterations and additions as the weeks progress, and that these will be found within the News Bulletin that will be produced each week. We will continue to use our eSchools system and school website to circulate the weekly News Bulletin and share our diary dates, and as ever, if you are experiencing difficulties with this, please get in contact with the school office.

I would also urge you to attend the annual Curriculum Information Evening, due to be held at 5pm on Monday 24th September. At this event, you will have a chance to meet your child's class teacher, to have a look around their new classroom, and to receive valuable information about the upcoming school year. It would be wonderful to see as many of you there as possible as we embark on what I'm certain will be an incredibly successful year for us all.

I look forward to sharing in a fruitful and fulfilling year with you and your families; and as ever, if there's anything at all you would like to chat with me about over the coming weeks, please don't hesitate to get in contact.

God bless,

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

ATTENDANCE:

A huge thank you to you all for ensuring that pupils have been in school, on time, on the first week back. Our whole-school target for attendance this year is 97%, so continued and renewed efforts from us all will be required to meet this aim! This week, attendance and punctuality has been great – so keep up the good work (especially when the darker mornings set in!)

DATA COLLECTION FORMS:

Please check and return the data collection forms sent home in your child's blue bag this week. It is vitally important that we have up-to-date information for all contacts for safeguarding purposes. Privacy notices can be found on the school website to explain how your personal information will be stored and used by school.

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS:

Please find enclosed in your child's blue bag, information about our vacant Parent Governor post. Please return the attached nomination form if you would like to put yourself forward or get in contact with Mr Wheatley if you would like any further details.

RECEPTION CLASS OPEN MORNING:

For anyone who has a child who will start school in September 2019, there is an open day on Tuesday 15th October. There will be two sessions, one starting at 9:30am, and one at 1:30pm; each session will consist of a tour of the school, to see the school in full swing, and an opportunity then to have a chat with Mr Wheatley and ask questions you may have about the school or the admissions process. Please spread the word to other interested parties, and if you are unable to attend on this day, please just get in contact with school to arrange a mutually convenient alternative. Applications for children who attend Duckpool Pre-school, or whose parents/carers have already expressed interest in applying for a place at St Mary's, will receive a pack outlining the admissions process, and copies will be available at our open day.

SECONDARY ADMISSIONS:

Pupils in Y6 will have received a letter regarding Secondary Admissions on Monday. Please be reminded that the deadline for the online application is 31st October 2019. Please feel free to get in contact with the Gateshead School Admissions team, or indeed the school office, if there is anything you would like to discuss about the process.

PE:

All pupils will begin full PE lessons from next week. Pupils will need full PE kit in school including trainers (apart from Reception Class – until notified otherwise). School hoodies can be worn for PE sessions. Days for PE this year are as follows:

Reception: Wednesday

Year 1: Thursday

Year 2: Thursday

Year 3: Wednesday

Year 4: Tuesday

Year 5: Thursday

Year 6: Thursday

SWIMMING:

This year, Years 3 and 4 will also be attending swimming on a Thursday morning (starting Thursday 12th September). All pupils will need to bring a swimming bather (no board shorts) and towel, as well as goggles (if needed). This year, all pupils are required to wear a swimming cap for lessons; a cap will be provided for all pupils and must be sent in with swimming kit each week. All pupils well enough to be in school (bar pupils with a serious injury – *such as a broken wrist etc*) are expected to go swimming; pupils will not be permitted to stay in school, or sit on the poolside, due to illness.

REMINDERS

UNIFORM:

A reminder, at the start of a new school year, about the high standards we have for school uniform. Please support us in this aim by ensuring that all children are coming to school with:

- Appropriate footwear (ie. black shoes – no trainers);
- No jewellery apart from a watch (ie. no earrings – even taped);
- Appropriate hairstyles (ie. any hair at shoulder length must be tied back; no braids; no die or 'extreme' styles; no shaved hair shorter than a grade 3; no over-sized 'JoJo bows' or bandanas in hair).

Particular concerns at the start of this year include earrings, braids and bracelets. Please ensure that none of these are worn to school (even if they have only recently been done).

Our full school uniform requirements are available to view on the 'Parents - School Documents' area of the school website (www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk).

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.

Parking/Dropping-Off

I would ask – in the interest of pupils' safety, that nobody attempts to park/drop-off on any of the yellow lines or no-stop zones on Duckpool Lane. Similarly, cars should not be parked dangerously near to junctions, or double-park on any of the adjoining streets to Duckpool Lane. **It is the responsibility of all road users to ensure the safety of our children** – please take this in to the most serious consideration when planning your journey to/from school each day.

MEDICAL FORMS:

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.

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.

MOBILE PHONES:

If any pupils in Years 5 or 6 are required to bring a mobile phone with them to school for safety purposes (ie. they arrive/leave school by themselves), please could parents/carers complete a mobile phone consent form (available from the school office or school website); all mobile phones must remain switched off while on school grounds, and be handed in to the school office first thing in the morning.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS:

At present, these are the clubs on offer to pupils at St Mary's:

- Monday – Tennis (KS1 and 2)
Starting Monday 9th September; spaces available for the upcoming Term.
- Tuesday – Happy Feet dance (KS1 and 2)
Starting Tuesday 10th September; spaces available for the upcoming Term.
- Thursday – Irish Dancing (KS1 and 2)
Starting Thursday 12th September; Spaces available for the upcoming Term.
- Friday – Gymnastics (KS1 and 2)
Starting Friday 13th September; enquire at the school office if you would like to register your interest.

Anyone interested in starting one of these clubs for the first time, please contact the school for more details.

DOGS ON SCHOOL PREMISES:

Please be reminded that dogs are not to be brought on school grounds without the expressed permission of the Headteacher. This includes dogs on leads, being carried, or tied outside of the main entrance etc. Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS AWARD:

As you will be aware, St Mary's currently holds an accreditation from Unicef that acknowledges that, as a school, we are committed to teaching all our pupils about their rights. A Rights Respecting School is one which has demonstrated a clear commitment to teaching and promoting the rights of all children as laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and which is actively engaged in campaigns, social action and charitable projects. We currently hold Level 1 of the award which demonstrates that:

- St Mary's is explicitly embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in its policy, practice and culture.
- St Mary's is continually auditing and reviewing targets.
- St Mary's can see the positive impact of RRSA actions on children and staff, and also on the school's ethos, practice and environment.
- St Mary's is promoting knowledge and understanding of the Convention throughout our school community.
- Children at St Mary's are beginning to see themselves as rights-respecting global citizens and advocates for fairness and children's rights locally and globally.

As a school, we recognise the Rights of all children (Article 2 of the UNCRC), and believe that it is our role to ensure that pupils are developed in all ways to reach their absolute fullest potential (Article 29). Over the coming year, we will report further on the school's progress as a Rights Respecting School via our weekly News Bulletin; you can also follow our progress via our Twitter feed (@whickhamstmarys).

FREE SCHOOL MEALS:

If you think that your child may benefit from accessing free school meals for your child (that is if parents' annual gross income is less than £16 190 or you are in receipt of Universal Credit) please contact the support team at Gateshead Council to discuss your personal situation. As well as the benefit of free school meals, comes access to further funding for school through the Pupil Premium. For every child who has ever received Free School Meals, the school receives funds to promote learning and progress for that child each year for the remainder of their school career; in the primary school this is presently £1320 per child per year.

With the introduction of Universal Free School Meals in the Early Years and KS1, we have seen a significant drop-off in the numbers of pupils who are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding (which is triggered after parents/carers complete an application for Free School Meals). Though as a parent/carer you will only feel the financial benefit of completing these forms from Y3 upwards (once your child is no longer eligible for KS1 Universal Free School Meals), your child could be missing out on thousands of pounds worth of additional support which is designed to help your child make more rapid progress in their learning.

If you think that you may meet the criteria for 'Free School Meals' – irrespective of your child's age – I would urge you to complete the attached application form (sent out to all families) and return the Benefit's Service at Gateshead Council. For more information, please phone 0191 4333729 to speak to someone from the team, or indeed phone the school office – we'd be more than happy to help.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GREAT NORTH RUN:

A huge good luck to all pupils and members of our wider school community who will be taking part in the Junior and Great North Run. We would love to hear any stories of sporting or charitable success to share with our wider community, so please get in touch to let us know if you have any news to share!

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S MEETING:

The Friends of St Mary's are having our first meeting of the school year on THURSDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 9am (straight after drop-off). Please pop along to support us. For anyone that isn't aware of what we are or what we do. We are a mix of parents, friends and family who work with the school in order to support our children, school and community in fundraising events for school and charitable causes as many other things including organising a summer picnic, Mother's Day sale and Easter egg competition. Any new members always welcome – there might even be a sweet treat to entice you!

MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING:

On Friday 27th September, The Friends of St Mary's will be hosting and taking part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning with all donations going to Macmillan Cancer Support. Invitation is open to everyone, so please bring as many friends and family along and join us in the school hall from 9-10.30 for a cuppa and slice of cake. We are asking you to lend your support by baking or buying a cake to sell on the day (there will also be an opportunity to buy a slice on the yard from 3pm); you can find plenty of ideas and inspiration at www.coffee.macmillan.org.uk. We look forward to seeing as many people as possible on the day.



SMS

NEXT WEEK (9.9.19 – 13.9.19)

MONDAY –

First string orchestra session for Y4.

First Tennis club session of the year (after-school).

TUESDAY –

All pupils to attend the Tour of Britain stage in Whickham (please keep an eye on the weather forecast to ensure your child has appropriate clothing).

Guitar and violin lessons to begin.

First Happy Feet session of the year (after-school).

THURSDAY –

Practical Pedestrian Session 1 in Y3.

FRIDAY –

Whole School Mass (9:30am at St Mary's RC Church – all welcome).

NO GYMNASTICS.

