



SCHOOL UPDATES

ADVENT:

The theme of the first week of Advent is 'Hope'. In school, pupils have been looking ahead, with hopeful optimism, to Jesus' coming at Christmas in many ways: sharing in the story of Jesus' birth by taking home their class' travelling crib; singing carols; sharing in a special Collective Worship; learning about the different ways in which we as Christians prepare ourselves during Advent. In these, and many other ways, we begin to ready our hearts to welcome Jesus anew on Christmas day, and are encouraged to find time for stillness and quiet in our lives so that we may talk openly to God our heavenly Father and to give Him the opportunity to call us back to Him. Over the coming weeks, as we journey towards the joy and festivity of that special day, we pray that we may all make space in our busy lives for God and the gifts He wishes to bring to us at Christmas. Come Emmanuel, come.

SCHOOL FUNDING CRISIS:

If you haven't had a chance to do so yet, please support schools in Gateshead by signing the following petition (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/232220>). Please also ensure that you 'confirm' your email address after having completed the petition (check your 'trash' if no email appears in your inbox) otherwise your contribution to the petition won't stand. At present there are 18,347 signatures; 2,412 of these are from Blaydon constituency – but this represents only 2.73% of constituents. Ask your friends, family, colleagues and neighbours to sign the petition, and share as far and wide as you can so that our MP, Liz Twist, has the mandate to go and make a noise on our behalf in Westminster.

For those of you who are interested to read further about the issues facing schools at present, a blog on the Schools North East website (<https://schoolsnortheastblog.wordpress.com/2018/11/29/black-holes-not-potholes/>) has been written by one of our Gateshead Heads which is well worth a read.

As ever, I sincerely appreciate to time, efforts and energy in supporting our school and many others.

Thank you.

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

ATTENDANCE:

YEAR GROUP	AUTHORISED ABSENCE (%)	UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE (%)	OVERALL (%)
RECEPTION	2.7	0	97.3
YEAR 1	2.8	0	97.2
YEAR 2	0	0	100
YEAR 3	1.6	0	98.4
YEAR 4	0.6	0	99.4
YEAR 5	0	0	100
YEAR 6	3.2	0	96.8
AVERAGE	1.6	0	98.4

Well done for a great week of attendance and especially to Y3 For attaining 100% attendance this week, and Y5 for a maintaining 100% attendance for two weeks in a row!

CHANGES TO TIMETABLE (SWIMMING AND MUSIC TUITION):

Please note that there will be no swimming on Thursday 13th December, but we will be going swimming as usual on Thursday 20th December.

All violinists should bring their instruments to school on Tuesday 11th December and Thursday 20th December as there will be no lessons on Thursday 13th December or Tuesday 18th December.

There will be no String Orchestra now until January.

There will be no guitar lessons on Tuesday 18th December.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CHRISTMAS PLAYS:

As you will be aware, we will be sharing our Christmas performances with you this week (please see weekly timetable below).

Doors will be opened approximately 15 minutes before each performance, and the Friends of St Mary's will be on hand with photos of the pupils in their costumes and raffle tickets for the Christmas raffle on sale. No tickets are required for these events, and entry is free. All performances will take place in the school hall, and in line with school policy, photography and video will not be allowed during any performance.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT:

We will be preparing for the joyous celebration of Christmas with a couple of special events in the last week of term. Firstly, we have our 'Carols by Candlelight' service, which has become a highlight of the festive season at St Mary's, on Tuesday 18th December. **In a slight change from our original term dates, the service (held at St Mary's RC Church) will now begin at 2pm**, and should last no more than one hour. As such, pupils will be ready as normal at the end of the school day. The parish car park will be closed on the evening of the 18th, so we would ask that regular users of the car park find somewhere else to park on that day.

We will also be celebrating whole school Mass on Friday 21st December, at 9:30am. Following Mass, we would like to invite all present back to school for seasonal refreshments and the drawing of the Friends Christmas raffle. Just as with the Carols by Candlelight service, we would like to encourage as many of you as possible to come along as possible, so that we may all prepare for our Lord's coming this Christmas with renewed joy and hope in our hearts.

THEATRE VISITS: Years 1-6 will be attending 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' at the Theatre Royal on Thursday afternoon, whereas pupils in Reception class will be attending 'The Three Bears at Christmas' at the Northern Stage on Wednesday. Lunch will be served as normal for the children on both days. We anticipate arriving back at school at around 5pm on Thursday – however, we will keep parents/carers informed of our ongoing ETA via eschools/text message.

Nb. Pupils must come to school in full school uniform, and pupils should not bring any sweets, snacks, drinks or money for either performance. A bottle of water and a small bag of sweets will be gifted to each child by the Friends of St Mary's.

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY – DATE CHANGE:

Children will now be invited to come in to school in their own clothes, sporting a Christmas jumper (should they own one) or other festive gear on **Thursday 20th December** (not Friday 14th December). A donation of £1 per family will go to the Diocesan Youth Ministry Team to help support their continued work with the young people of our Diocese.

REMINDERS

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S:

Raffle – Thank you to all those who have been so generous in their donations for this year's raffle. Please could any unsold tickets be returned to school by 10.12.18 so that they can be redistributed. Many thanks.

"Thirsty Thursday" - The Friends will continue to sell yummy hot chocolate in the school yard each Thursday from 3pm to help ward off the winter blues.

DIARY DATES (10.12.18 – 14.12.18)

MONDAY –	Dress rehearsals (all costumes needed in school)
TUESDAY –	9:30am Y1/2 Performance 1 1:30pm Y3/4 Performance 1
WEDNESDAY –	9:30am Y3/4 Performance 2 Reception Class trip to the Northern Stage to see 'The Three Bears at Christmas' 1:30pm Y1/2 Performance 2 6pm Y5/6 Performance 1 (all pupils to go home at the end of the school day and return to school by 5:45pm)
THURSDAY –	NO SWIMMING 9:30am Y5/6 Performance 1 Y1-6 trip to the Theatre Royal to see 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'
FRIDAY –	10am Reception and Y5 Nativity