



## SCHOOL UPDATES

### ADVENT:

This Sunday, we celebrate the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, or *Gaudete Sunday* as it is also known. It is a time to remember that, though our preparations during Advent call us to 'reconnect' with God and to reflect on the habits, routines and behaviours that can so easily distance us from our Father's love, it is also a time of joy and happiness. As we light our rose candle, we can allow ourselves a momentary flutter of what lies in store on Christmas day, a day in which Christians and people of good faith the world over unite in joyous celebration of Jesus' birth. This week in school, we've had many reasons for joy during what has been a true celebration of laughter and song, of family and community, of happiness and excitement. May we take this joy in our hearts as we continue to journey towards that special day, safe in the knowledge our Lord, God, Jesus Christ loves us and calls us all to share in the beauty of his birth. Come Emmanuel, come.

### CHRISTMAS PLAYS:

Well, what a week of shows we've had! It has been amazing to see all our pupils showcasing their acting, singing and dancing as part of our annual Christmas plays. We've had off-key Robins, Donkeys called Steve and a rather grumpy Christmas tree – not to mention some beautiful depictions of the infant birth. A huge thank you to all those who have been involved in preparing our pupils for their plays: parents/carers, grandparents, friends, family and of course staff. We've also had a couple of special visits to the theatre this week with Reception Class enjoying *The Three Bears at Christmas* at the Northern Stage, and then Years 1 to 6 making our annual trip to the Theatre Royal to see *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Luckily, no members of staff were dragged on stage this year – which came as a huge relief to Mr Colling and Mr Wheatley! All in all, it's been a fabulous week at St Mary's (though I think we're all in need of a well-earned rest this weekend!).

### 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        |
| <b>AVERAGE</b> | <b>1.6</b>             | <b>0</b>                 | <b>98.4</b> |

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### KEY STAGE PARTIES:

Next week, KS1 (Reception – Y2) will be having their Christmas party on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December, and KS2 (Y3 – 6) will be having theirs on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December. You will have received a letter from your child's class teacher about what your child has been asked to bring. Children are able to come in their party clothes for the day, but please ensure that choices of clothing and footwear are appropriate for a day at school – ie. no high-heeled shoes, no make-up/earrings – and that your child still has suitable outerwear to wear at playtime. Thank you.

#### 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 18<sup>th</sup>, 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.

#### CAR PARK CLOSURE:

The Parish car park will be closed to school users all day on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

*Nb. There is a funeral at 9:15am at St Mary's Church on this day, so we would advise that you use the Main Entrance (Duckpool Lane) to enter school as there will be vehicles accessing the car park before the start of the school day.*

#### REMINDERS

##### SPRING 2018:

Please be reminded that all pupils will return to school for the Spring Term on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January**.

##### CHANGES TO TIMETABLE (SWIMMING AND MUSIC TUITION):

Please note that we will be going swimming as usual on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> December.

All violinists should bring their instruments to school on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> December as there will be no lessons on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

There will be no String Orchestra now until January.

There will be no guitar lessons on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

##### 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.

DIARY DATES (17.12.18 – 21.12.18)

**NO AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS ALL WEEK**

MONDAY –

Duckpool Pre-school Nativity

KS1 Christmas Party

TUESDAY –

Carols by Candlelight (2pm, St Mary's RC Church; all welcome)

WEDNESDAY –

KS2 Christmas Party

THURSDAY –

Christmas Jumper Day (£1 per family)

Christmas Dinner (payments to be made via SIMS Agora – even for children who will be having a 'one-off' school dinner)

Y3 and 4 Last Swimming Lesson of the Term

FRIDAY –

Whole School Mass (9:30am, St Mary's RC Church) – followed by refreshments at school; all welcome!

'Toy Day'

