



St Mary's RC Primary School

Key Information for New Reception Intake

Pupils' Welcome:

Welcome to St Mary's RC Primary School. We are incredibly proud to present our school to you, as we think you and your family will love the next seven years here with us. The pupils at St Mary's are very special. We love to learn, to play and to worship together, and we celebrate what is special about each one of us. Our teachers are fun and inspirational, and we know that we are safe and cared for. Furthermore, our community is incredibly unique: we have a parish community which is made up of three churches and we have partner schools all over the world. Here at St Mary's, we know that your child will be encouraged challenged, motivated and – most of all – loved. We look forward to welcoming you in to our school family.

(Drafted by St Mary's Pupil Council).

Headteacher's Welcome:

It is my great privilege to welcome you to the family of St Mary's, Whickham. St Mary's RC Primary School, which first opened its doors in 1972, is so much more than just a school; we are a hub of education, faith and community, which welcomes all and strives to develop the unique, God-given gifts and talents of all our pupils with an ethos underpinned by love.

Personally, I have had the honour of teaching at this school over the past seven years, and more recently, living within the parish of St Mary's for the past three. It is with absolute assurance therefore that I can say that the pupils, staff and wider community are truly remarkable. Not only do pupils at St Mary's achieve educationally – with academic performance comparing highly favourably against local and national benchmarks – they also develop in to respectful, responsible, resilient young people, with a diverse range of gifts and talents – whether sporting, musical, dramatic, artistic or otherwise – which have been fostered and honed by skilful and committed teachers who care deeply for the children they work with.

I trust that you will recognise for yourself how special our school and parish community is here at St Mary's, and look forward to sharing a bright future together with you and your family.

Yours in faith,

Joseph Wheatley
Headteacher

A Short History of the School:

Catholic Education began in Whickham in the house of Mr and Mrs McWilliams of Eleanor Terrace. Father Walsh came up from Dunston and gave instructions to the children who attended the County School. Anyone who wanted their children to go to a Catholic School had to send them to Sacred Heart, Byermoor, St Philip Neri's, Dunston or St Joseph's, Blaydon.

When Father Pickering founded the parish it was with the intention of founding a school also, but it was not until 1970 that Mr Edward Short, the Minister for Education, instructed Miss Alice Bacon (Parliamentary Secretary to the D.E.S.) to inform the Bishop that the new school had been put on the Design List.

On March 31st, 1971 Minto Construction Company started to build. Not long after the commencement, Mr Matlock, the quantity Surveyor, died. Then Minto Construction went bankrupt.

New plans had to be drawn up and it looked as if the school would be delayed indefinitely, but Providence intervened. Mr Rossi, the architect, was a college friend of the chief architect at the D.E.S., whose mother lived in Whickham. An excited Mr Rossi rang up and said, "The D.E.S. Architect has come to Whickham today and is coming to the presbytery tonight." So all the correspondence was duly signed that night, saving, probably months of delay.

After a long illness, Mr Rossi, the Architect, died and Mr J. Temple, who was a fellow architect with Mr Rossi, left the firm, but the phoenix arose from the ashes with the help of Mr Wilt McCann, the new architect. The building firm of Mr Reg Hattam of Birtley took over the project and the school opened in all its glory on April 10th 1972.

Head Teachers:

Mr Leo Mason 1972 - 1985

Mr Arthur Burke 1985 -1998

Mrs Mary McMillan 1998 -2015

Mr Joe Wheatley 2015 onwards

(History courtesy of Thelma Rix: Looking Back at Whickham, 2016).

Our Core Mission & Values:

As our School Mission Statement states: St Mary's aims to develop the skills and talents of all its pupils, in a nurturing family environment which has Christ's living example of love at the heart of everything we do. As a thriving Catholic Christian school community, we have a unique and privileged position in living out this Mission: facilitating outstanding learning opportunities for our pupils; promoting values of empathy, tolerance and respect; being a living embodiment of 'church' for our wider school community.

Our Vision:

A Vision of Growth from St Catherine of Siena:

“Be who God means you to be and you will set the world on fire.”

The vision of St Mary's RC Primary School is as a hub of excellence in all we do: Educational Excellence, in our Teaching and Learning, in the formative Faith experiences we help facilitate for our pupils and wider school family, and in the way in which we strive to build God's Kingdom in our local and global community, piece by piece. By each member of our school family being encouraged, supported and inspired to live and work to the absolute fullness of their potential, our school will continue to be a beacon of educational, spiritual and community excellence for all to see.

Our Commitments:

As a community dedicated to excellence and growth in all we do, we commit to striving towards being the absolute best we can be. As a learning community, we have the highest expectations of our pupils, and as such, hold ourselves to account by the highest standards. Our home school partnership aims to outline the commitments we make towards one another, in order that we may best meet the needs of all pupils in our school. As a learning community, we strive to work as closely as possible with the parents and carers of our young people, as initial educators, to support and encourage educational, social, moral, physical and spiritual growth and development. Through choosing the family of St Mary's for your child's education, you are choosing to enter in to a partnership which strives to support, encourage, empathise and enable, and one of which we hope to all be proud.

Practical Information:

The School Day

Daily Routine	Timings
Start of school day	8:55am
First morning session	9:00am – 10:30am
Break Time	10:30am – 10:45am
Second morning session	10:45am – 12:00pm
Lunch time	12:00pm – 1:00pm
Afternoon session	1:00pm – 3:15pm (KS1 afternoon break time at 2:15 – 2:30pm)
End of school day	3:15pm

School Uniform

At St Mary's we have hold high standards of pupil appearance and uniform; we believe strongly that pupils feel better about themselves and their school when they have a neat, tidy appearance. The school uniform is as follows:

- Boys—Grey trousers, pale blue polo shirt; royal blue sweatshirt with school logo; black shoes.
- Girls—are able to wear a blue checked dress during summer months. Girls can wear navy blue trousers or skirt/pinafore, pale blue polo shirt; royal blue sweatshirt or cardigan with school logo; black shoes. All uniform should be clearly labelled. Velcro fasteners are preferred to laces for practical reasons.

St Mary's uniform (embroidered sweatshirts, cardigans, polo shirts, PE kit, fleeces and coats) is available through our school supplier Mick Martin Promotions.

Jewellery (apart from a watch) and make-up (including nail varnish) should not be worn in school. Earrings are not permitted at any time (as a matter of health and safety) and should be taken out before the start of the school day – even if you choose to have your child's ears pierced during the school term.

PE Kits

The PE kit for all pupils is royal blue sports shorts a yellow St Mary's PE t-shirt (both available through our uniform supplier).

PE bags are provided by school. All items of PE and sports kit should be clearly named. PE kits can be brought into school and left for a half term then taken home to be washed. Pupils should bring trainers all year round.

School Dinners

Every child in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, in state-funded schools, will be offered a free school lunch. Children are encouraged to try new foods, to use cutlery correctly and to develop table manners when eating. Lunch time is a sociable experience for the children, and teachers support this aspect of child development through conversation and promotion of good manners.

Pupil Premium Funding

The 'Pupil Premium' is direct government funding for schools designed to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress whilst in school, regardless of their socio-economic background. A sum of money is given to the school for each pupil on role who is currently or who has ever been in receipt of means tested 'Free School Meals' (as opposed to the Universal Infant Free School Meals). There is also a small amount of funding given for any pupil with a parent currently serving in the British Armed Forces and for any child 'looked after', either in foster care or in Local Authority care.

Your child may eligible for pupil premium funding if you or your partner receive one or more of the following:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job-seekers Allowance
- An income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,100

If you think that your child may be eligible to qualify for pupil premium funding please do not hesitate to contact a member of the school office team. This funding, if eligible, will be received each year that they remain at primary school, regardless of how your circumstances may change.

Attendance

At St Mary's we set high standards for punctuality and attendance. Pupils should be in the school yard by 8:55am, with a trusted adult. Pupils are the responsibility of that adult until the bell goes at 8:55am – at which time pupils are asked to line-up in their respective Year groups. Mr Wheatley (or another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will then come in to the yard and bring pupils in to school.

Pupils arriving after the rear Key Stage doors have been closed must report to the Main Reception.

Punctuality and attendance have a direct link to attainment and well-being in school. As such, we urge parents/carers to ensure that their child is in school, on time, each day, and that absences are kept to an absolute minimum. As a school we set targets for attendance each year; if your child falls below 90% attendance in any one half-term, school will be in contact to discuss reasons for this, and to support your family in ensuring that your child's attendance improves.

Absences

School should be notified immediately by telephone, if your child is not attending school. A message can be left with the school office from around 8am. As we operate a first day response policy, if we have not been informed of a child's whereabouts by 9:30am on the first day of absence, we will contact all emergency contacts provided, to ensure that we know your child is safe and well. Failure to comply will result in an unauthorised absence mark and potential further investigation. Evidence, such as a doctor's note, may be requested for extended absences from school.

Unauthorised Absence (eg. Term-time Holidays)

As a school we aim to maintain high levels of pupil attendance at all times and hope that you will support us in this aim. As such, in line with statutory guidance from the Department of Education, our Governing Body has agreed that no 'holidays' will be authorised, no matter what the reason for the holiday. Evidently, this does not affect time out of school for medical or dental appointments/religious observance/agreed educational pursuits/compassionate leave (e.g. in the case of family bereavement), which we would not class as a 'holiday'. May we remind you that persistent absenteeism may result in an investigation and possible fines issued by the Local Authority or school.

Medication

Please note that we are advised by Gateshead Local Authority not to administer medication to a child. If a child is deemed unwell enough to require medication, there is an expectation that they will be kept off school. If they are recuperating and need lunchtime doses, parents can make arrangements to call in to oversee this. Named inhalers can be left with the class teacher providing the child is able to use them independently. This also applies to the application of sun cream.

Longstanding, serious ailments, which requires specific care or support, will be reviewed in line with school policy to ensure the needs of all individual children are met, and that access to education is not impeded by a medical

condition.

Home Time Arrangements

Please stand at the wall above the steps until all Reception class have lined up. Then you should come to collect your child from the line. They will not be permitted to leave the line to go to meet you, until the class teacher has taken a final head count and invited parents/carers to collect their child. This way we know that each child has been collected safely. Do try not to block the stairway or access to the line queue area, as this can make the class teacher's job more difficult. Small Saints Out of School Club provide us with a list of pupils who will be collected at the end of school; please inform us, by ringing the school office, if your child will be collected by an other than you adult (relative, friend, child minder etc) – particularly should this change part way through the school year.

Parking

As with most Primary School, parking at St Mary's is at a premium. As a 'Park Smarter' school, we encourage families, who are able, to walk, cycle or scoot to school, or indeed to use public transport.

For those who choose to drive, we are lucky to have the use of the parish church car park (at the rear of school – off Dockendale Lane). This is not a school car park, however, and is realistically only designed to hold around twenty vehicles safely. If you choose to use this car park, please drive carefully (as it is also the main entrance/exit for school pupils) and park responsibly.

The car park at the front of school is for staff and visitors only. It should not be accessed before or after school – however, if your child needs to be picked up/dropped off throughout the school day for whatever reason, this will be the only point of access in to the school.

If you are unable to get a space in the church car park, and must 'park and ride', out of respect for our neighbours, and more importantly the safety of our pupils, please do not park your car on Duckpool Lane – even where there are no yellow lines.

Fire Drills

We are required by law to carry out a Fire Drill once a term. You may want to prepare your child by talking about an alarm system (noise level) and the reasons behind it. It is impossible to say when the drills will take place.

School Bus Service

A public bus service operates to and from school. Please ask the school office for details of fares and routes.

Communication

Open channels of communication between home and school are essential. As you will appreciate, messages may often be misconstrued if passed on through more than person. As a school, we try to keep formal lines of communication as clear as possible for parents:

- A weekly News Bulletin will go home each Thursday with important information and dates.
- The school website – including Class Blogs – is updated regularly.
- We operate an emergency text messaging service for parents who have provided us with a mobile phone number.
- In any individual case, a phone call or face to face meeting is encouraged.

Parents/carers are advised to refrain from using social media to discuss school issues (in line with our Social Media Policy). Primarily, this is to safeguard pupils, staff and other parents; it is also our experience that issues are dealt with much more effectively by phone or in a face to face meeting.

'Blue Bags'

Blue bags (for homework and home-school correspondence) and PE Bags are provided by school. Blue bags will be sent home on Thursday and should be returned no later than the following Tuesday – although Monday is ideal. Library books and home readers must be returned before another is issued.

Equipment

School provides all resources and equipment that your child will need throughout the day. Children are often invited to bring in books and artefacts relating to our topics, as well as any other experiences they may like to share with us (show and tell etc). If your child brings home pieces of equipment (eg. counters, jigsaws etc), don't worry – it does happen, and your child won't be in trouble! Please just return them to school, so that all the children may benefit from the resource.

Please note, toys are not allowed in school. They can cause lots of problems at playtimes if they are misplaced or break.

School Policies

By signing the Home-School Agreement, you are committing to supporting the Governors of the school in up-keeping the agreed policies and practices of the school. A selection of our school policies can be found on the school website: www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk, and all policies are available to view on request. All statutory documentation, and plenty of other useful information, is also available on the school website.

School Staff:



Mr Wheatley
Headteacher



Mrs Noble
School Business Manager



Mrs Joyce
Reception Class Teacher



Mrs Recchia
Reception Class Teacher



Mrs McTernan
Year 1 Class Teacher



Mrs Sanderson
Year 2 Class Teacher &
Deputy Headteacher



Mrs Beard
TA



Mrs Norman
TA



Mrs Brearton
TA



Miss Melton
Year 3 Class Teacher



Mrs Pomeroy
Year 4 Class Teacher



Mr Colling
Year 5 Class Teacher



Mrs Ledger
Year 6 Class Teacher &
Assistant Headteacher



Mrs Dobson
HLTA



Miss Snowden
HLTA



Mrs Kelly
Lunchtime Supervisor



Mrs Potts
Lunchtime Supervisor



Mrs Kelly
Lunchtime Supervisor



Mrs Harris
Lunchtime Supervisor



Mrs McGurk
Lunchtime Supervisor



Mr Dixon
Site Manager



Mrs Crook
School Cook

Governing Body

The Governors of St Mary's are the employing body of foundation (appointed) and parent (elected) members who are accountable for the running of the school. Information regarding the make-up and responsibilities of the body is available via the school website (www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk).

When a parent Governor's term of office comes to an end, parents will be invited to nominate themselves for election by their peers. When the time comes, if you would be interested in supporting the school in this way, please contact Mr Wheatley of Michael Currie (Chair of the Governing Body) for more information.

Home School Agreement:

Our home school partnership aims to outline the commitments we make towards one another, in order that we may best meet the needs of all pupils in our school. As a learning community, we strive to work as closely as possible with the parents and carers of our young people, as initial educators, to support and encourage educational, social, moral, physical and spiritual growth and development. Through choosing the family of St Mary's for your child's education, you are choosing to enter in to a partnership which strives to support, encourage, empathise and enable, and one of which we hope to all be proud.

Please sign and retain one copy of the agreement for future reference, and return one copy to school.

As a school we commit to:

- Care for your child's safety and emotional well-being in an orderly, secure and loving environment.
- Maintain a Catholic ethos which permeates and inspires the whole life and work of the school.
- Support your child's faith development through prayer, worship, education, social action and catechesis.
- Educate in a way which is challenging, stimulating, enjoyable and innovative.
- Actively encourage links between home, school and parish, as well as our local and global community.
- Encourage your child to do their best at all times.
- Inform parents of their child's progress and discuss individual aims at regular meetings.
- Keep parents informed of updates regularly via pre-determined channels of communication.
- Provide parents with information of curriculum coverage for each year group.
- Contact parents if there are concerns with attendance, punctuality, homework or behaviour.
- Encourage your child to take care of others around them and of their surroundings.
- Provide regular homework, in line with the school policy.
- Support the individual needs of each child to enable them to achieve their full potential.

As a parent/carer, I commit to:

- Support the catholic ethos of the school.
- Support all school policies and practices.
- Ensure my child arrives at school by 8:55am.
- Ensure my child attends regularly, and that I contact the school to explain any absence, in line with school policies.
- Attend Parents' Information and Curriculum Meetings, and keep up to date with school news bulletins and website updates.
- Attend Parents' Evenings to discuss the progress of my child.
- When possible, attend special assembly or Mass when my child's class is taking part.
- Inform school of any health or medical condition your child may have which could impact on your child's attendance, performance or well-being in school.
- Inform school of changes to contact details (i.e. new phone number or change of address).
- Support the school leadership and staff in their role of enabling pupils to reach their full potential.
- To contact and speak to the Headteacher personally if there are issues about which we are displeased.

As a pupil, I commit to:

- Try to be the best version of myself I can be.
- To share what's unique about me with others.
- To try to make progress in my 'Learning' and 'Living'.
- To take responsibility for my actions.
- To follow the school code of conduct:

Remember to be polite

Every day be caring

Show respect to adults and children

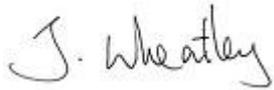
Please walk around school

Enjoy working with others

Classmates are your friends

Treat others as you would like to be treated

Signed School:



Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

Signed Parent/Carer:

Date:

Signed Child:

Date: