



SCHOOL UPDATES

WELCOME BACK:

Welcome back to you all at the start of the new term. I trust that everyone has had a restful and enjoyable Christmas and a great start to 2019. It's always a privilege to welcome our pupils back to school and to share in their palpable joy and excitement in catching up with friends and in sharing tales of their winter breaks, and this week has been no exception!

On Tuesday, during our first collective worship of the year, I spoke to the children – following the Feast of the Epiphany – of how we can learn from the example of the Magi. Recognising God's call by way of a new star in the sky, these gift-bearing, wise men – so we are told – set out on an arduous journey, fraught with unexpected twists and turns, filled with hope, optimism and above all faith – totally assured in the knowledge that a journey illumined in God's light, in spite of challenges along the way, would be filled with reward and grace. As we set out on a new year at St Mary's, we too should be filled with this same encouragement and certainty that God will provide. We look forward together to sharing in the many successes and celebrations that the year will bring, but more than that, we look forward to travelling the journey alongside you and your families, and for sharing those little, incidental moments of magic that can only come from working with children.

In this, the first News Bulletin of the year, you will find news of the upcoming term as well as some reminders of policies, practices and pleas we have in school – not to nag or moan, but rather to encourage us all at the start of the year to set out as we mean to go on in maintaining the very high standards we have here at St Mary's. I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation, and would like to take the opportunity, as ever, to make myself available over the coming term – by phone or in person – if there should ever be a need or concern you wish to discuss with me personally.

I trust that this will be an incredible year for us all.

God bless.

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

ATTENDANCE:

YEAR GROUP	AUTHORISED ABSENCE (%)	UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE (%)	OVERALL (%)
RECEPTION	0.8	0	99.2
YEAR 1	5.2	0	94.8
YEAR 2	1.3	0	98.8
YEAR 3	3.2	0	96.8
YEAR 4	0	0	100
YEAR 5	1.7	0	98.3
YEAR 6	1.6	0	98.4
AVERAGE	1.8	0	98.1

Thank you for a great start to the year – let's see if we can keep it up! Well done especially to Y4 for maintaining 100% attendance this week.

ADMISSIONS:

A polite reminder that the deadline for admissions in to Reception Class 2019-20 close on **January 15th 2019**.

CHANGES AT DUCKPOOL PRE-SCHOOL:

It is with both sadness and optimism that we write to inform you that Susan Cameron and Julia Fawzi, who have managed and lead Duckpool Pre-school for over a decade, will be moving on to new opportunities at the end of this academic year. We would like to thank Susan and Julia for the roles they have played in leading a wonderful pre-school provision which has prepared so many of our pupils over the years to make a positive and successful transition in to school. Their unwavering dedication, tireless commitment, humour and friendship will be missed by all members of the wider St Mary's family, and we wish them well in their future adventures.

This change marks an exciting opportunity for the pre-school, and I am delighted to inform you that Jacqui Sordy, who has been working at Duckpool for a couple of years, has been appointed the new Pre-school Manager. Jacqui will be supported by Joanne Porteous who has also been appointed as Deputy Manager. We would like to offer our support and encouragement to both Jacqui and Joanne in their new roles, and look forward to sharing in the continued success of the pre-school with them and their team.

REMINDERS

UNIFORM:

Please be reminded that pupils should continue to be supported to dress in accordance with the school's 'Uniform Policy and Dress Code', which can be found on the school website (<http://www.whickhamstmarys.org.uk/school-policiesdocuments.html>).

Whereas we can appreciate the desire for children to wear newly acquired jewellery and hair accessories upon returning to school after the Christmas break, we would like to remind parents that the aforementioned policy doesn't allow jewellery of any kind (other than a watch) or excessive hair adornments.

Moreover, we would ask that all shoulder-length hair is tied back and fringes cut above the eye-line, and that cropped hair is never shorter than a grade three. 'Tramlines' or designs shaven in to a haircut are also not permitted.

PUNCTUALITY:

Please ensure that all children are in school before 8:55am. KS1 and 2 doors are closed at 8:55am for registration each day, and pupils arriving after this time must sign in via the electronic Inventory system by the Main Office. Persistent poor punctuality will be tracked and – where necessary – the issue raised with parents/carers. We know that the effects of persistent issues with punctuality and attendance will have a detrimental impact on a child's ability to learn and make progress, and as such, is something that we track very closely.

PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF SEVERE WEATHER:

Without wishing to pre-empt any ill-effects of the supposed return of the, "Beast from the East," a polite reminder that the procedure in the event of snow or severe weather conditions is as follows:

- School will remain open unless you are advised otherwise.
- In the very unlikely event of a school closure, an email, text message and tweet will be sent out from school (please ensure school have your up-to-date email address and mobile phone number), there will be a note on the front page of the school website and local radio stations will be informed.
- In the more likely event that snow may affect your journey to school, please take sensible precautions: if it is possible to walk please do, and set off in plenty of time; keep school informed of your whereabouts - particularly if you are likely to be late; ensure that your child is prepared for the elements, with changes of shoes (and clothes if necessary) brought in to school with them.
- Parents/carers will be made aware of updates/ongoing developments via the same channels of communication.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MASS:

Apologies for this being the second change of date in a week, but the first whole school Mass of 2019 will now be on **Thursday 17th January** (9:30am, St Mary's RC Church).

VISIT OF DEANNA VAN DER VELDE:

Next week, we will be welcoming Deanna Van der Velde from the United Hebrew Congregation, Gosforth in to school to talk to children. A great friend of the school, Deanna will be teaching the children about the Jewish festival of Purim, as well as sharing with Years 5 and 6 her mother's story in preparation for Holocaust Memorial Day (27th January).

In a couple of weeks, Y3 will also visit the Synagogue to further their learning about the Jewish place of worship following on from their learning from our World Faith Week last term.

DIARY DATES (14.1.19 – 18.1.19)

MONDAY –

1st Tennis session of the new term

TUESDAY –

D Van der Velde visit to school

1st SATs Booster session for Y6 (3:15-4:15pm)

WEDNESDAY –

EYFS multi-skills event for all pupils in Reception Class; all pupils to come in to school in PE kit, tracksuit and trainers, with a water bottle (approximate return to school: 3:30pm).

THURSDAY –

Whole school Mass (9:30am, St Mary's RC Church)

FRIDAY –

1st Gymnastics session of the new term