

**IMPORTANT DATES/TASKS THIS WEEK:**

- Parent/carer consultations this week:
 - Tuesday – Y2
 - Wednesday – Y6
 - Thursday – Y3
 - Friday – Reception

A number of appointment times have been rearranged so please check the final times via the Arbor site/app.

As ever, if you anticipate that you will require a longer appointment to discuss a particular issue with your child's class teacher, this should be arranged via the school office for an alternative date/time.

- Reception class, Year 1 and Year 2 will be visiting Whickham Library over the next few weeks. Staff would be very grateful for any parent/family helpers to come along for the sessions. Those able to help out should email the school office (info@stmw.bwcet.com). Dates for the sessions are (9:30am departure from school):
 - Reception – Wednesday 28th February 2024
 - Year 2 – Wednesday 6th March 2024
 - Year 1 – Wednesday 13th March 2024
- Y5 Bikeability sessions begin on Thursday 29.2.24 – see note below.
- We require volunteers for our 'Big Lent Walk' on the morning of Tuesday 26th March. If you are able to help out, please email the school office (info@stmw.bwcet.com).
- All pupils taking part in our new multi-sport club on a Wednesday and Thursday should come in to school in their full PE kit on that day (apologies for the miscommunication to Y3 parents last week).
- There will be no Y6 homework club before school on Wednesday 28th March.
- Please read the **staffing update** contained within this week's News Bulletin.

SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS**SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT:**

Please see attached a helpful parent/carer guide around 'Supporting Children's Mental Health.' The guide comes from the *National Online Safety* website which has some great resources for parents/carers: [Online Safety in International Schools: Supporting Parents \(nationalcollege.com\)](https://www.nationalcollege.com/safety-in-international-schools-supporting-parents)

ATTENDANCE REMINDER:

Please be reminded that any request for leave of absence must be made **at least 10 days prior** to the anticipated absence.

Please refer to the school's [Attendance Policy](#) and the Local Authority statutory guidance for [attendance](#) and [holidays during term-time](#) before considering any request. Thank you.

LENT 2024:

This week, in our first Monday Celebration of the Word, pupils were reminded that throughout the season of Lent, we are called to make small changes in our lives which will – collectively – make a big difference in

our school, local community and wider world. Through our giving, action and prayer, we ready ourselves for the joyous celebration of Easter, and we pray that this will be a holy season of preparation for us all.

Lenten Events:

- We will be collecting donations for the Gateshead Food Bank. Donations should be sent in to school by Friday 8th March.
Pupils are asked to bring in donations of any of the following priority items: dried pasta, tinned produce, long grained rice, tomato purée, crisps, biscuits, jam, cereal, squash, tomato ketchup, mayonnaise, sugar, teabags, coffee, biscuits, spray cleaner, washing up liquid, laundry powder/liquid, feminine hygiene (especially tampons), antiperspirant, toilet rolls, shampoo, toothpaste.
- We will be celebrating Whole School Mass at 9:30am on Thursday 21st March 2024.
- On Tuesday 26th March, we will be taking part in a whole-school 'Big Lent Walk' and will be raising money for CAFOD – the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. We will write more in coming weeks about the event, but donations for the sponsored event can already be made here: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/whickhamstmarys-cafod-walk-2024>.
- Pupils will be leading special Celebrations of the Word during Holy Week (the last week of term).

Y5 BIKEABILITY:

Y5 Bikeability sessions begin on Thursday 29.2.24. Pupils taking part should come in to school in their PE kit with a waterproof jacket and gloves (if required). Pupils must bring their own bike and helmet. Bikes should be walked through the school gates and will be stored on the school playground during the school day. Bikes must be collected at the end of the school day.

WORLD BOOK DAY AT ST MARY'S:

We will be taking part in our annual 'World Book Day' celebration on Wednesday 6th March. The theme for this year's event is 'Read Your Way'. As such, we would like to invite pupils to come in to school 'dressed their way' in celebration of all things literary. This could be: fancy dress of a favourite character/book/word; wearing cosy clothing ready for a bedtime story; anything else that pupils come up with as a way of celebrating the day. Pupils will be taking part in a range of activities over the day to show how much we love reading, and books in general, at St Mary's.

STAFFING UPDATES:

We are delighted to report that our new school Senior Administration Assistant, Miss Morrison, will be taking up her new post on Monday. Miss Morrison visited school on Friday to meet all our classes, and she is very excited to be joining us. Evidently, there will be an induction period over the coming weeks as Miss Morrison becomes acquainted with all the school's systems etc, so please continue to bear with us – as you have been doing so wonderfully – over this transitional period.

As ever, non-urgent communication to school should be directed via our office inbox (info@stmw.bwcet.com). Please phone to speak with someone if you require a more immediate response; should you receive an 'out-of-office' message, please just leave your details and someone will get back in touch as soon as possible. The school office hours continue to be 8:30am-3:30pm.

We would also like to inform all parents/carers that we will be losing several staff members at the end of the Spring Term. Mrs Ledger, our Assistant Headteacher/Year 4 class teacher and Miss Carolan our Year 3 class teacher have been successful in gaining positions elsewhere. Mrs Ledger will be building on 11 wonderful years of experience at St Mary's as she moves in to a more senior leadership post whereas Miss Carolan has sought a position nearer to home. Mrs Norman, our longstanding Teaching Assistant will be

retiring after 18 years of dedicated service at St Mary's, and we will also be losing Mr Rybski who has been providing 1:1 TA support on a supply contract since September.

A bit like buses, we have seen a number of (*we are keen to stress, unrelated*) departures from school in recent months! In spite of the obvious sadness in losing such wonderful staff and colleagues, we are excited and hopeful as we move in to this period of recruitment. Should you know anyone who is keen to find out a bit more about the roles that we have advertised at the moment or those we may be looking for in the near future, please encourage them to get in touch with Mr Wheatley for an informal chat.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Following recent feedback from a parent/carer survey, we have removed the St Mary's watermark from the school News Bulletin. As ever, all feedback is good feedback, and we are keen to work with you, as partners, to ensure that information is as easy to access for all.