



*'Together we strive for excellence, inspired by the joy of the Gospel.'*

## Welcome Back - January 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you all enjoyed a restful and joyful break and that the new year has begun well for you and your families. On behalf of everyone at school, I would like to warmly welcome you back as we look ahead to a new term and an exciting start to 2026.

As always, our commitment remains unwavering: we continue to work tirelessly to ensure the very best education and experiences for all our children. We are incredibly proud of our school community and are very much looking forward to what the year ahead will bring.

This half term alone promises to be a busy and inspiring one. We are excited to be taking part in the RSPB National Birdwatch, giving children the opportunity to engage with wildlife and develop a deeper appreciation of the natural world. We also look forward to hosting our very own Winter School Olympics, celebrating teamwork, resilience, and physical wellbeing. In addition, children will be involved in the Peter Rabbit 'Tales on the Tyne' project, an imaginative and enriching experience in support of St Oswald's Hospice. We will, of course, share further details about all these events through our newsletter and via Arbor.

Our key priorities remain firmly focused on curriculum development, ensuring high-quality learning across all subjects, alongside creating further opportunities beyond the curriculum that enrich children's experiences.

Alongside this, we continue to emphasise the importance of attendance and punctuality. Being in school, every day and on time, has benefits that reach far beyond academic learning — it supports wellbeing, friendships, confidence, and long-term success.

As always, I would like to thank you sincerely for your continued support and partnership. Working together makes a real difference for our children.

I look forward to the year ahead and all that it will hold. Here's to a wonderful, joy-filled 2026.

Kind regards,

Mr Craig

## Stella Radio

The Wednesday Word Stella FM is once again up and running. Thanks to Miss Hall and Mr Patterson along with our Year 6 hosts, Logan and Molly as they delivered a reflection on New beginning's based on this coming weeks Gospel. Please click on the image to take the opportunity to join us in prayer and reflection. It's the perfect opportunity to take a moment for yourself.



## Bishop Wilkinson Celebration Day

On Thursday 15th January, Bishop Wilkinson will be providing all children from Reception to Year 6 a free school meal. This will give all children (including those on packed lunches) the opportunity to try the school dinners. The cooks serving pizza and pasta with potato wedges, sweetcorn and a salad bar. Please inform the school office if your child would normally have a packed lunch but would like to try the school lunches on this day.



"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today.

Let us begin."

Saint Teresa of Calcutta



## Safeguarding Reminder

Safeguarding the children in our care is one of the school's main responsibilities, one that St Mary and St Thomas Aquinas take very seriously.

As you are already aware from previous updates, our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mr Craig. You can speak to him by phone, make an appointment via the school office, or catch him when he's outside greeting/saying goodbye to children, if you ever have a concern. We also have our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in school, Mrs Bennison (Assistant Headteacher/ Year 2 class teacher and senior leader), Mrs McDonald (Year 4 teacher) and Miss Foster (School Business Manager).

If you are unable to speak to Mr Craig, you can speak to Mrs Bennison or any other member of staff about your concern (s).

The school has an updated Safeguarding policy, that can be found on the school website, or paper copies can be requested from the school office.

All staff receive annual safeguarding refresher training, as well as other training throughout the year on key areas, including record keeping and reporting. Our school also has a termly visit from our Safeguarding Consultant, who completes an audit of the school's safeguarding and identifies any future improvements or training needs.

### Why do parents need to know this information?

- To reassure you that we take keeping our children safe in school very seriously at St. Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas.
- It's good to remind parents/carers of the key members of staff, in case new parents did not know who they were.
- To highlight the continual work that the school puts into keeping our children safe in school.

## Attendance

During celebration assembly on Friday, we have been celebrating whole class attendance and each week the class with the highest attendance will receive our Attendance Trophy, well done to **Year 6** who won the trophy this week.

| Week beginning: Monday 5th January 2026 |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Year group                              | Attendance percentage |
| Reception                               | 97.04                 |
| Year 1                                  | 94.44                 |
| Year 2                                  | 95.79                 |
| Year 3                                  | 96.63                 |
| Year 4                                  | 96.77                 |
| Year 5                                  | 99.31                 |
| Year 6                                  | 98.41                 |

## Year 5 Enrichment Day

The children from Year 5 have the opportunity to attend an Enrichment Day at St Thomas More on Saturday 31st January. Letters have been distributed to the children this week and will need to be handed into the school office by Wednesday 21st January if your child is interested in attending this event.

The day will focus on activities related to Humanities and Languages. During the day, students will have the opportunity to take part in a range of activities linked to History, Geography, and French.



## Year 5 Class Assembly

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January there will be a Year 5 class assembly in the school Hall, parents and carers are welcome to attend. 9.10. a.m.



Class Assembly

## Spotlight Celebration

Please tell us about all of the wonderful 'extras' you do outside of school. This could be an achievement at a club or an activity you have enjoyed. From Karate gradings to dog walks, we would love to share your highlights with everyone. Here are a few highlights of the half term break from our staff.



At a family get together, Miss Pearson met Jess her niece's cocker spaniel puppy for the first time. She is 4 months old and she tried desperately to keep her!



Mr Craig enjoyed a lovely family walk on Alnmouth beach in Northumberland at the New Year.



Mrs McDonald and her family spent a wintry day at Beamish, Arabella loved spotting the mischievous elves in the forest!



Miss Steel's dog, Honey, on Christmas Eve wearing her Christmas pyjamas.

## Spotlight Celebration



Mrs Bennison enjoyed exploring the woodland on New Year's day

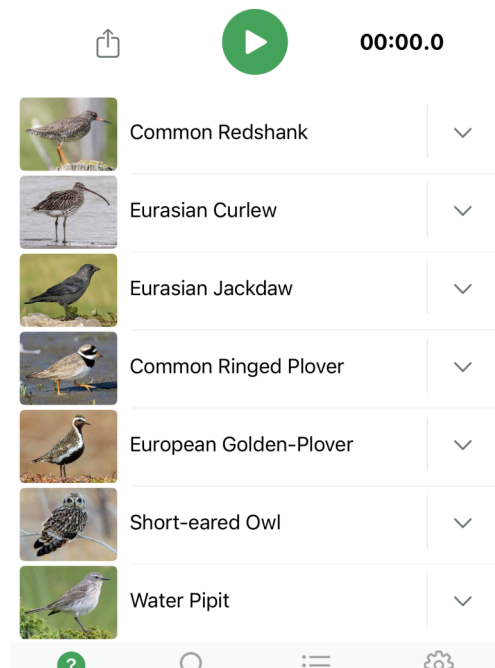


Miss Hall took Lola and Baxter to meet Santa, they were very excited!

## Spotlight Celebration



During the holidays, Mrs Bowden visited Holy Island. Whilst there she used a bird app to identify the many different birds that she could see and hear, including curlews, water pipits and a short-eared owl.



Mr Reay also enjoyed a walk along Alnmouth Beach last weekend!  
Followed by a lovely seafood feast at the Fish Shack in Amble.

## Spring Term

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> January    | Year 5 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                      |
| Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January   | Year 6 Sats parents meeting - 4 p.m.                           |
| Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January     | Reception Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall |
| Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> January    | Yea 4 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                       |
| Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> February     | Year 2 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall    |
| Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> February | Ash Wednesday Service 9.05 a.m.                                |

### Half Term Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March   | Year 1 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall |
| Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> March  | Year 3 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                   |
| Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> March | School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church                             |
| Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March   | Year 5 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall |
| Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> March  | Reception Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                |
| Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> April  | School Mass (Easter) 9.05 a.m. in Church                    |

### Easter Holidays Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April until Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026

## Summer Term

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April | School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church                             |
| Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> April | Year 5 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church                             |
| Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> May    | Polling Day - Inset Day                                     |
| Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> May      | Year 4 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall |
| Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> May    | Year 1 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                   |
| Thursday 21 <sup>nd</sup> May   | School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church                             |
| Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May     | Pentecost Parade  |

### Half Term Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026

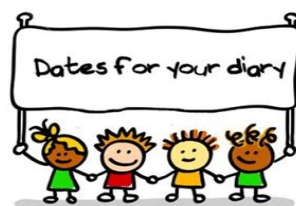
|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> June    | Inset Day   |
| Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> June  | Year 6 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church   |
| Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> June | Year 4 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church   |
| Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> June   | Year 3 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall               |
| Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> June  | Year 2 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall                                 |
| Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July  | Year 1 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church   |
| Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> July  | Year 2 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church   |
| Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> July   | Year 6 and Reception Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall |
| Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> July | School Mass (Leavers) 9.05 a.m. in Church                                 |
| Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> July | Year 6 Leavers Production   |

### Summer holiday Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July until Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2026

#### Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August - Bank Holiday

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 - Staff Inset

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2026 - Staff Inset



# TAKE THE PLUNGE INTO WEEKLY LESSONS

Give your child the gift of confidence and safety in and around the water with Better Swim School.

50% OFF INITIAL PAYMENT



Join weekly lessons with Better Swim School and get 50% off your first payment with code SCHOOL50.



**Better Swim School**

Terms and conditions apply. Offer open to new customers only for school children aged between 4 - 12 years. Offer ends on 07/08/2026. Full terms at [better.org.uk/offer-terms](https://better.org.uk/offer-terms). Better is a registered trademark and trading name of GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited), a charitable social enterprise and registered society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit & Societies Act 2014 registration no. 27793R. Registered office: Middlegate House, The Royal Arsenal, London, SE18 6SX. Inland Revenue Charity no. XR43398.



**BETTER**



## GATESHEAD WEST UNIFORM SCHEME



We sell surplus stock on Vinted as gwusne - please buy online if it is easier.

Did you know?

We now have a GWUS donation bin behind Barmoor Hub (NE40 3AG) near Ryton. Yay! It is right next to the skate park.

### Who are we?

We are a registered charity, operating in Gateshead West since 2021.

We provide good quality preloved and brand new school uniforms to our community

from our site in Blaydon - St Cuthbert's Community Hall NE21 5PT.

We operate on a pay-what-you-feel basis.

### 2026

#### Jan/Feb Markets...

Fri 2nd Jan 3:30pm to 5pm.

Sat 10th Jan 9:30am to 11am.

Sat 17th Jan 9:30am to 11am.

Mon 26th Jan 6pm to 7pm.

Fri 6th Feb 3:30pm to 5pm.

Sat 14th Feb 9:30am to 11am.

Sat 21st Feb 9:30am to 11am.

Mon 23rd Feb 6pm to 7pm.



[www.facebook.com/gatesheadwestprelovedschooluniform](https://www.facebook.com/gatesheadwestprelovedschooluniform)

<https://www.gatesheadwestuniformscheme.org.uk>

[contact@GatesheadWestUniformScheme.org.uk](mailto:contact@GatesheadWestUniformScheme.org.uk)

and find us as gwusne on Vinted