



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

## Attendance Matters – Working Together to Reach Our Target

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Stella, we are committed to giving every child the very best start in life, and one of the most important ways you can support this is through excellent school attendance.

This year, our aim is to achieve our DfE attendance target of 97.6%, and we can only reach this by ensuring children are in school every day, whenever they are well enough to attend.

As you know, schools must follow statutory guidance from the Department for Education. This means that all unauthorised absences must be reported to the Local Authority, who may issue fixed penalty notices. This is not a school decision, we are required to comply with this directive. The simplest and most effective way to avoid any concerns around absence is to ensure children attend school consistently and on time.

The benefits of good attendance go far beyond academic progress. Being in school daily helps children develop:

- Strong routines and structure
- Positive learning habits
- Healthy and supportive relationships with peers
- Greater confidence and independence

So far this year, our whole school attendance sits at **96.1%**. While this is a positive start, we still have work to do to reach our **target of 97.6%**. I know that, by continuing to work together, this is absolutely within our reach.

Personally, I would be delighted to see Stella achieve this target by the end of the academic year. It would be a tremendous achievement for our children, our staff, and you—our supportive families.

Thank you, as always, for everything you do to help your children thrive. Let's keep going and make attendance at Stella something we can all be proud of.

Many thanks,  
Mr J Craig  
Headteacher

## Stella Radio

The Wednesday Word Stella FM is once again up and running. Thanks to Miss Hall and Mr Patterson along with our Year 5 hosts, Nate and Martha as they delivered a reflection 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.



## Year 6 Assembly

Our Year 6 children will be presenting their assembly to parents in the school hall on Tuesday 10th February at 9 a.m. All are welcome to attend.



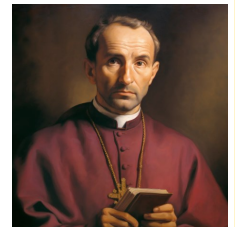
## Ash Wednesday service

Children will take part in the Ash Wednesday service on 18th February.

This will be held in the school hall.



"How good God is! In His goodness He seeks only our happiness."  
St. Alphonsus Liguori



## Children's Mental Health Week - Non Uniform Day for 'Places2Be'

On **Friday 13th February**, as part of our Children's Mental Health Week celebrations, we will be holding a non-uniform day. We invite children to "Dress to Express" themselves by wearing something that reflects their personality, interests, or feelings.

A minimum £1 donation, if possible, would be greatly appreciated. All funds raised will be donated to Place2Be, a charity we have proudly partnered with over the past three years.



## A Remarkable Achievement: Arc of Attrition Success

We are incredibly proud to celebrate one of our parents, Mark Wilson, who has completed the legendary Arc of Attrition, one of the UK's toughest ultramarathons. Not only did he conquer the brutal 100-mile coastal route, but he did so in under 30 hours, earning the prestigious 'Gold Arc Buckle' a distinction reserved for only the strongest, most resilient runners.

This accomplishment reflects extraordinary determination, endurance, and spirit. On behalf of our whole school community, huge **congratulations** on achieving this phenomenal feat. What an inspiring example for us all! Zach and Ella are very proud.



## Children's Cancer North

It's wonderful to see our children wearing their Children's Cancer North snoods and putting them to such creative use. As you can see, two of our Year 5 pupils, Amelia Rose and Fearn, have cleverly used theirs as bobbles and headbands to tie their hair back, staying fully in line with school policy while proudly supporting a fantastic cause. This is a lovely example of kindness, initiative, and community spirit in action.



## 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 2nd February 2026	
Year group	Attendance percentage
Reception	97.78
Year 1	96.43
Year 2	95.40
Year 3	98.32
Year 4	95.70
Year 5	92.71
Year 6	<b>100</b>

## Earrings

Can we please remind parents that children are not allowed to wear earrings in school, earrings are not part of the school uniform. If your child has just had their ears pierced, they should come into school wearing ear retainers or have their ears covered BEFORE they come into school.

## Arbor

Our Year 5 and Year 6 children will be attending residentials this academic year. Payments can be made using the Arbor app. If you need any assistance with this app or generally have a query about the residentials, please contact Miss Green who will assist you.

## Half Term

School will be closed the week of 23rd - 27th February for the half term break.



## Parking at Stonechat Mount

We have been contacted by the Housing Officer for Stonechat Mount, the residential area directly opposite the school entrance at the top of the lane. They have informed us that they have received a number of complaints regarding people using the Stonechat Mount car park and the allocated resident bays near the top entrance during school drop off and pick up times.

They would like us to remind our community that these bays are for residents only. Although signage is in place, cars without permits have been parking there, preventing tenants from accessing their own allocated spaces. This has caused inconvenience for those living in the area.

The housing association have informed us that they are now considering enforcement measures, including clamping and issuing fines to vehicles parked without the appropriate permit.

We kindly ask all parents and carers not to use any Stonechat Mount parking bays at any time, and instead use alternative, appropriate parking when dropping off or collecting children.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in helping maintain good relationships with our neighbours.



**NO PARKING**  
Private car  
park

## SVP Holy Island Summer Camp

Applications are now open for 2026 season.

For those of you not familiar with our camp, it has been running on Holy Island every summer since 1954 and the aim of the camp is to provide a safe and enjoyable week away in a unique location, where children can engage in a variety of mainly outdoor activities, make new friends and get some much needed time away from screens! The 'camp' is a purpose built hostel, with dormitories containing bunk beds for eight children. The maximum capacity is 64 per week (a slight reduction from previous years), and we are usually full up!

The application process is exactly the same as last year, so those of you who applied then will already be familiar with it. The cost for camp is £175 per child, per week. However, they can work with you to agree a payment plan if this would be helpful. Once again, places will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis, so please apply as soon as possible. Online applications can be submitted from their website.

All weeks are 'mixed gender' weeks, i.e. inviting both boys and girls to attend together. Of course, whilst the boys and girls will attend the same week, they will have separate dormitories, toilets and shower facilities. Holy Island Camp is open to children in Year 5 and 6.

Weeks available:

- Week 1 Sat 18th July -25th July
- Week 2 Sat 25th July-1st August
- Week 3 Sat 1st August- 8th August
- Week 5 Sat 15th August-22nd August
- Week 6 Sat 22nd - 29th August

[svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp](https://svp.org.uk/microsite/ozanam-camp) | Email [holyislandapplications@svp.org.uk](mailto:holyislandapplications@svp.org.uk)

## Spotlight Celebration

### Making a V8 engine

Making an engine was so hard but it was something I could just power through. Some of it I did myself. My dad help me with my engine too. I decided to make this engine to help me become an engineer and it was so much fun. To make it, I had to buy a kit which came in lots of small pieces in one big plastic slab. Once we separated the pieces, we assembled the engine. Well done Maisie.



At her annual karate club presentation, Zoe received an award for - Continued Improvement Commitment and Potential. Well done and good luck for her Dan grading later this year.



Katie came 3rd overall for the winter Show Jumping starters league.



We would love to see more achievements, works of art or an event that you are proud of. Please send them to [hgreen@smtb.bwcet.com](mailto:hgreen@smtb.bwcet.com)

## Spring Term

Tuesday 10th February Year 6 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall  
Wednesday 18th February Ash Wednesday Service 9.05 a.m.

### Half Term Monday 23rd February to Friday 27th February 2026

Friday 13th March Year 1 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall  
Tuesday 17th March Year 3 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall  
Wednesday 18th - 25th Scholastic Traveling Bookfair in school  
Thursday 26th March School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Tuesday 31st March Reception Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall  
Thursday 2nd April School Mass (Easter) 9.05 a.m. in Church

### Easter Holidays Friday 3rd April until Friday 17th April 2026

## Summer Term

Thursday 23rd April School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Thursday 30th April Year 5 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Thursday 7th May Polling Day - Inset Day  
Friday 8th May Year 4 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall  
Tuesday 19th May Year 1 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall  
Wednesday 20th May Photographer in school taking class photographs  
Thursday 21st May School Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Friday 22nd May Pentecost Parade

### Half Term Monday 25th May to Friday 30th May 2026

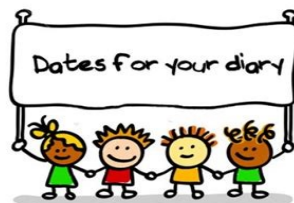
Monday 1st June Inset Day  
Thursday 4th June Year 6 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Thursday 11th June Year 4 Mass 9.05 a.m. in Church  
Friday 12th June Year 3 Celebration of the Word 2.30 p.m. in the school hall  
Tuesday 16th June Year 2 Assembly 9 a.m. in the school hall  
Thursday 2nd July Year 1 Mass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

### Summer holiday Monday 20th July until Friday 28th August 2026

Monday 31st August - Bank Holiday

Tuesday 1st September 2026 - Staff Inset

Wednesday 2nd September 2026 - Staff Inset



**Amended or additional dates will be in bold**

## Side By Side Arts

### K-Pop Demon Hunter Half Term Music Camp

**Date:** 24th February

**Time:** 10:00-3:00

**Location:** Side By Side Arts Studios, Dunsmuir Grove, Bensham, Gateshead, NE8 4QL

**Cost:** £35

**To book:** Email [info@sidebysidearts.org](mailto:info@sidebysidearts.org)

Join us for a Golden day of learning all your favourite songs from K-Pop Demon Hunters. Throughout the day you will have the chance to try different instruments and put together your very own version of Huntrix! The day starts at 10:00 and will finish at 3:00 with a performance to show off all of your skills at 2:45. Please ensure that you bring a packed lunch, and snacks will be provided throughout the day. Suitable for 5-12 year olds.



### Side By Side Arts Children's Choir

**Time:** Wednesdays 4:00-5:00 (during term time)

**Location:** Side By Side Arts Studios, Dunsmuir Grove, Bensham, Gateshead, NE8 4QL

**Cost:** Free to attend

**To book:** No need to book a place, just turn up!

We have bene very kindly funded by Gateshead Council to run a children's choir suitable for 5-11 year olds. This is free to attend and is a great opportunity for children to gain confidence in singing. We learn lots of different songs and play games throughout the session and for those who are feeling a bit more adventurous we often get the mics out for children who would like to sing a solo for everyone else.