



IMPORTANT DATES/TASKS THIS WEEK:

- Remember – you can access your child’s annual report on the Parent Portal on Arbor which can be found here: <https://stmw-bwcet.uk.arbor.sc/>
- All parents/carers must read the enclosed notices about term-time holidays and preparation for the new school year.
- Please read enclosed an end of year letter from Mr Wheatley
- All pupils return for the start of the new academic year on **Tuesday 3rd September 2024.**
- All after-school clubs will begin Week 2 of the new term.

SPOTLIGHT SAFETY: Summer Safety

Pupils across school have been spending time thinking about staying safe this Summer, and we would like to encourage all our parents/carers to continue conversations around ‘staying safe’ with their child over the summer break. We would like to direct you, in particular, to some recent information shared about water safety, and to some wider general information you can find here:

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/06/27/staying-safe-during-summer/>. Wishing you all a safe summer holiday!

IMPORTANT – TERM TIME HOLIDAYS:

From 19th August 2024, the Department for Education will be strengthening penalties imposed by the Local Authority for the taking of term-time holidays.

As a school, we strongly discourage the taking of term-time holidays which:

- Impact negatively on pupils’ happiness and well-being in school;
- Impact negatively on pupils’ learning and the teachers’ abilities to deliver the required curriculum to all pupils;
- Impact negatively on pupils’ access to extra-curricular opportunities and experiences.

From September, all cases where unauthorised term-time holidays are taken will be referred to Local Authority in line with their protocols.

The changes to be brought in from September 2024:

Issuing of a penalty notice:

There is a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school, days), within a rolling 10 school week.

Increase in penalty notice amount:

Previous fine	If paid within 21 days	New fine	If paid within 21 days
£120 per pupil	£60 per pupil	£160 per pupil	£80 per pupil

* Please note that all parents will be subject to a fine if a child resides in more than one household and where there is more than one child affected, a fine will be issued for each child.

Escalation in cases of repeat offences:

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

Limited number of penalty notices per parent:

A national limit of 2 penalty notices can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period. At the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool, such as prosecution, will be considered.

More information regarding term-time holidays and attendance can be found here:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/24894/Holidays-in-term-time>.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR:

Please ensure that all new uniform purchases (including shoes and PE kit) are in line with school policies and that pupils return to school with appropriate presentation (including hair and jewellery).

All guidance is specified on our school website here: <https://stmaryswhickham.bwcet.com/parents/school-uniform/>.

Please ensure all items of school uniform (including shoes and coats) and any other items coming in to school (bags, water bottles etc) are labelled clearly with your child's name.

PE days for pupils will be communicated before the start of the new term.

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Miss Foster, our School Business Manager, will be contacting parents/carers of pupils with a medical condition by phone over the summer break as we update our records.

OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB:

If you are in need of breakfast or after-school club for your child in September, contact details for Small Saints Out of School Club can be found here: <https://stmaryswhickham.bwcet.com/parents/wrap-around-care/>.

CELEBRATION OF SPORT:

We are delighted to report that our Y5 pupils contributed to the St Thomas More cluster of schools being crowned the inaugural champions of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust Celebration of Sport held at Gateshead International Stadium on Monday. As well as a competitive 'quad kids' event, the pupils also took part in a range of participatory events including sports challenges (rugby, football, golf, dodgeball and tennis), team building activities and a mass dance ensemble. It was wonderful to share in the day with Y5 pupils from 43 primary schools within our Trust, and we look forward to our future participation in this event which – we hope – will become a permanent fixture in our sporting calendar.

A LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER:

Dear Parents/Carers and Pupils,

As we come to the end of this current academic year, I have been reflecting on what an amazing three terms we have shared. When I look back at the individual achievements each of our pupils has enjoyed since September, I am filled with immense pride. You too should be so proud of everything we have built together this year.

Our school vision – as you will well know by now – is, “be who God means you to be, and you will set the world the world on fire.” In other words, if we try – each day – to be the best, most authentic version of ourselves (the version that God is calling us to be) we will enrich the lives of others and play our part in making the world a brighter place for all. I can say with absolute conviction that each of our amazing pupils, over the course of this past year, has played their own individual part in setting our school ‘on fire’. Their individual and collective contributions to school life have been truly remarkable, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them all, once again, and to thank them for brightening my life, and the lives of our school staff, on a daily basis.

We will of course be bidding farewell to our Year 6 leavers at the end of term. I cannot express how proud I am of them all, and everything that they have achieved during their time at St Mary’s. Watching them grow over the past seven years has been an utter joy, and I will miss each of them and the individual contributions they make daily. Each of our Year 6 pupils has been – for me – a living embodiment of our school Mission; they have set our school alight with their kindness, humour, positivity, talent, humility, wide-eyed openness and love. I look forward to hearing of their continued progress in the weeks, months and years to come.

As the year draws to a close, we will also be saying so long to several members of our staff team. Mrs Collon and Miss Peng, from our wonderful support staff, Mrs Walsh, our amazing kitchen manager, and Mrs Harm, our school cleaner. We give thanks for all they have contributed to the life and work of our school and wish them well as they move on to their next adventures.

On behalf of the entire St Mary’s team, thank you for the generosity and kindness shown over the past weeks. Your kind words, cards and gifts are truly humbling and very much appreciated by us all. I wish you the safest, most wonderful of summer holidays. Our pupils all deserve a well-earned break during which they can go and continue to flourish in other ways over the coming six weeks. I look forward to welcoming them back in school for the start of the new term and will hold you all daily in my thoughts and prayers.

Yours in Faithful Optimism,

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher