



### IMPORTANT REMINDERS/TASKS THIS WEEK:

- **IMPORTANT:** Please read the below attendance update from the Headteacher.
  - Parent Consultations for all classes are available to book on Arbor. Please see the table below for a reminder of the dates for each class.
  - **REMINDER:** Year 6 will be attending swimming each Thursday until the end of this half term. Pupils should wear PE kit each Wednesday and Thursday but not on a Friday.  
Year 4 pupils should continue to wear their PE kit each Thursday but not bring their swimming kit. Swimming will resume each Thursday for Year 4 after February half term.
  - Please see note below regarding themed school meals on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February.
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### **ATTENDANCE UPDATE FROM HEADTEACHER:**

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for everything you continue to do to support your child's attendance at school. As I have communicated very regularly, strong attendance underpins pupils' attainment and well-being, and I cannot speak highly enough of the commitment shown by St Mary's parents and carers.

The Department for Education now sets every school an individual annual attendance target. Given our particular context, ours is a challenging figure—yet I am delighted to report that we are currently on track to meet our whole-school target of 97.4%, with persistent absence also low at 3.2%. This is a very positive picture and a testament to the shared efforts of families and staff.

Recently, however, we have noticed an increase in pupils attending non-urgent medical appointments during the school day. Please be assured that we fully understand the difficulties that can arise when trying to secure even routine appointments, and it is not my intention to cause frustration by raising this. However, national guidance encourages education, health and social care professionals to work together to prioritise children's school attendance, and it is important that we play our part in this.

The Department for Education's guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)* states that medical appointments should be arranged outside the main school day wherever possible, in order to minimise lost learning time. This is described as a shared responsibility between parents/carers, schools and medical professionals.

In line with this guidance, we ask that non-urgent medical appointments for your child are arranged outside school hours whenever possible. Health trusts, GP surgeries and dental practices should be aware of this expectation, and please do let us know if you experience any difficulty when requesting an appointment outside the school day.

We fully recognise, of course, that some appointments must take place during school hours, and these should always be prioritised—your child's physical health comes first. When this is the case, we simply ask for advance notice and any supporting documentation so that we can maintain an accurate attendance record and ensure teachers are informed.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this, or your family's individual circumstances, please do not hesitate to contact me at school. We are always here to help.

Thank you, as ever, for your understanding and continued support.

Yours in Faithful Optimism,

J Wheatley  
Headteacher

### **PARENT CONSULTATIONS:**

Please sign up for a face-to-face Parent Consultation with your child/ren's class teacher. If you would prefer a telephone appointment, please make a note of this on Arbor when booking. Please see below for a reminder of dates for each class:

DATE	CLASS
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Y6
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March	Y3
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> March	Reception
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> March	Y4
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> March	Y2
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> March	Y5
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> March	Y1

### **EXPLORE THE CURRICULUM:**

Our Explore the Curriculum sessions will give parents/carers the opportunity to hear some important information from school staff and to share in the learning going on in the classroom with your child. Dates for Spring Explore the Curriculum sessions will be as follows:

DATE	CLASS
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 9.15am	Y1 and Y2
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> March 9.15am	Y3
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> March 9.15am	Y6
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March 9.15am	Y5
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March 9.15am	Reception
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March 9.15am	Y4

### **SPORTS UPDATES:**

#### **Bee Netball Finals**

Our Year 5 and 6 Bee Netball team delivered a fantastic performance at the Gateshead Schools' Finals, earning an impressive silver medal. The players showed remarkable skill, superb teamwork, and outstanding fair play throughout the competition. Their determination shone in every match, and we are incredibly proud of the way they represented our school.

This brilliant achievement means the team has now qualified for the Regional Finals, to be held later this year. We wish them the very best as they continue their netball journey—well done, everyone!

### **THEMED MEALS - TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> AND THURSDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY:**

On Shrove Tuesday (17.2.26), the kitchen will serve pancakes with a selection of toppings for dessert.

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February, the kitchen will serve a themed meal to celebrate Chinese New Year. The options on this day will be:

- Chinese chicken or veggie curry with chips
- Sweet and sour chicken or quorn pieces with rice
- Mini spring rolls
- Prawn crackers

Jacket potatoes will also be available.

If your child has an agreed medical/alternative diet in place, this will be catered for accordingly within the set menu.