



**St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

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## St Mary's Catholic Primary School Newsletter

Dear God,

We thank You for Pope Francis,  
for his kindness, wisdom, and loving heart.

Please watch over him,  
bringing strength to his body,

peace to his mind,  
and comfort to his soul.

Guide the doctors and nurses caring for him,  
and fill his days with hope and healing.

Help us remember to keep him in our prayers,  
as he works to spread Your love and kindness across the world.

We ask this in Jesus' name,  
Amen.



### Thank you

Thank you to all parents who took the time to read the recent ParentMail regarding online safety and the concerning issues we've had to address in school. I'm both pleased and relieved to hear that many of

you are responding by enforcing greater restrictions on your child's phone use.

I cannot stress enough what a positive difference this will make - not only to the children's experiences in school but also to their overall wellbeing, safety, and mental health. Your support in setting these boundaries is truly appreciated.

I know how challenging it can be, especially as phones have become such a big part of children's lives, just as they have for many of us, with the constant pull of scrolling, searching, and messaging. But your efforts are making a real impact.

Please keep it up. Together, we can create a safer, healthier space for our children, both online and off.

### School Trips

While we are incredibly excited to provide our children with these enriching experiences outside the classroom, we are currently facing a significant shortfall in contributions, totalling nearly £600.



We fully understand that times are challenging for many families, and we are always committed to keeping the costs of these trips as low as possible. However, it is important to stress that without sufficient contributions, we simply cannot continue to bridge the financial gap. As a school, we do not have the resources to consistently cover these shortfalls, and unfortunately, if this situation persists, we will be left with no option but to cancel future trips.

School trips are more than just a day out - they bring learning to life, spark curiosity, and create lasting memories for our children. We genuinely want every pupil to benefit from these valuable experiences.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding. Together, we can continue to offer our children the broad, exciting curriculum they deserve.



## Biggest Football Session Ever

We are excited to announce that on Friday 7th March 2025 we will be taking part in **The Biggest Ever Football Session!** This event will be an exciting opportunity for all students to

participate in football activities. The children will be taking part in a range of activities, including warm up games, football activities and mini matches.

We believe that sports are not just about competition, but about building inclusivity, encouraging teamwork, and fostering a sense of belonging. Football, like all sports, provides a unique opportunity to teach valuable life skills such as communication, resilience and respect, while also helping to build self-confidence and friendships.

On the day, children can come to school wearing their own sports kit, the kit of their favourite football team is also fine, and please ensure that they wear trainers as we want all children to participate.

## Year 6 SATs meetings for parents

There will be two informative meetings in our Year 6 classroom for parents about the forthcoming SATs. One at 3.30pm and the next at 5pm. Please try to attend one if you can.

## **The Jubilee of the World of Education**

**The Jubilee of the World of Education is a special event in the Catholic Church's Holy Year 2025, celebrating the power of education to change**

lives. It will take place in Rome from October 31 to November 2, 2025, bringing together teachers, students, and everyone involved in education. The event will include talks, discussions, and cultural and spiritual activities, highlighting how education helps people grow and shapes future generations.

The week before, from October 27 to November 2, 2025, will focus on schools, universities, and church-related studies. This time, called a "constellation of hope," aims to inspire and guide young people in their learning journey.

The Jubilee of the World of Education is part of the Holy Year 2025, which Pope Francis started on December 24, 2024. The Holy Year is a time for peace, forgiveness, and spiritual renewal, giving people a chance to reflect on their faith.

## The impact of smartphones



There is a growing concern on how excessive use of smartphones can affect our children.

In addition to the effects of seeing inappropriate content online, the risk of cyberbullying and grooming, it is important that we also highlight the effects of smartphone use on our children's mental health.

If your child is using a smartphone then please try to ensure they maintain a healthy screentime limit.

According to King's College London, "two new studies of smartphone habits in teenagers have identified links between problematic smartphone use and depression, anxiety and insomnia." You can read more about these studies here:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/teens-with-problematic-smartphone-use-are-twice-as-likely-to-have-anxiety-and-many-are-eager-to-cut-down>

Compass have published an article as well on what effects mobile phones have on children here:

<https://www.compass-uk.org/services/compass-changing-lives/what-effects-do-mobile-phones-have-on-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/>

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)



### What is AI?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity continues to increase, and examples include:

- **Virtual assistants** like Alexa and Siri.
- **Chatbots** such as ChatGPT and My AI from Snapchat

### Potential Risks of AI?

- **Chat apps** - A simple search of "AI Chat" within the App store highlights the number of apps already available and just scrolling through, you can see that they are not suitable for children with many rated as 17+.
- **Image manipulation** - there are AI tools that can be used to digitally remove clothes from photos, which clearly raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes** - there are also AI tools that create realistic, fake videos which can be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

Child Rescue Coalition discuss the dangers in more detail here:

<https://childrescuecoalition.org/educations/the-dark-side-of-ai-risks-to-children/>

### How can I protect my child?

As always, to keep your child safe online, it is important to:

- Develop your child's digital literacy by highlighting the risks of AI and showing them how important it is to verify what they see online.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

### Further information

For further information, the NSPCC and Internet Matters provide useful guides on their websites:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2025/artificial-intelligence-safety-tips-for-parents>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/>

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# TikTok

**You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok.** TikTok is a social media platform for sharing and watching short video clips. Some of the videos may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child. If your child is using TikTok then make sure appropriate security/privacy settings are applied.



## Account set up

It is important that when setting up an account, your child enters their real date of birth as accounts are tailored by age e.g., Direct Messaging is disabled for accounts aged 13-15. In addition, advertisements are tailored by age. By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child must approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available, such as switching off comments and restricted mode here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/privacy-and-safety-settings-for-users-under-age-18>

## Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode. You can find out more here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/account-and-user-safety/family-pairing>

## Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. Some of the songs available to lip sync to may contain inappropriate lyrics or adult themes. We often see viral challenges on social media, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing.

## Stranger contact

Talk to your child about who is following them online and ensure that they understand that people may not be who they say they are when online. It is important that children understand not to share personal information.

## Refresh your feed

You can refresh your "For You" feed to update the content recommended: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/refresh-your-for-you-feed>

## Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them, including how to report comments, direct messages and another user.

## Further information

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok>
- <https://safeguarding.thekeysupport.com/factsheets-and-briefings/child-safety-tiktok-parent-factsheet/>

## Talk PANTS with the NSPCC

Talk PANTS was developed to help you have conversations with your child to help them understand that their body belongs to them.

You can find out more here as well as a further link to helpful questions:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>

## LEGO Arcade

Are you looking for games for your child to play online? LEGO have a selection of fun games including Lego Ninjago and Lego Friends:

<https://kids.lego.com/en-gb/arcade>

## Stars Messenger App

The Stars Messenger App is rated as 4+ on the App store. It is a free messaging and video app designed for children to use. Users need their friend's username as well as their unique private Friend Code to add each other. There is also an optional Parent View available for a monthly charge.

South West Grid for Learning provide a full guide to staying safe on this app as well as safety considerations:

<https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/a-guide-to-staying-safe-with-the-stars-messaging-app/>

### Dates for your Diary

26.02.25	Faiths around the world's day	Children across school will be celebrating the different faiths around the world.
03.03.25	Year 6 SATs parents meetings	There will be two meetings for parents, one straight after school and one at 5pm. These meetings are to enable parents to better understand the SATs and how to support their child. Year 6 parents only.
03.03.25	Year 5 Space Centre Trip	Departing at 8am, please ensure children arrive at 7:50am.
05.03.25	Ash Wednesday Service in school	Father Michael will be leading an Ash Wednesday service at our school at 9:15 am.
06.03.25	World Book Day	children are invited to come to school dressed as one of their favourite characters from a book of their choice.
07.03.25	Year 2 curriculum assembly	Children in year 2 will be sharing the work they've been doing in their class. All parents of year two children are invited. This will begin at approximately 8:55 AM in the hall.
19.03.25	Photographer in school	the school photographer will be taking photos of individual children, teams, and siblings. More information will be provided closer to the date
28.03.25	Year 3 curriculum assembly	Children in year 3 will be sharing the work they've been doing in their class. All parents of year two children are invited. This will begin at approximately 8:55 AM in the hall.
01.04.25	Year 6 trip-Shropshire discovery centre	
03.04.25	Year 2 Trip to Cosford	
09.04.25	Easter Egg Hunt	

10.04.24	Children break-up	
11.04.25	PD day	
28.04.25	Return to school	
05.05.25	Bank Holiday Monday	
06.05.25	Reception Trip to Home Farm	
09.05.25	Year 4 curriculum assembly	Children in year 4 will be sharing the work they've been doing in their class. All parents of year two children are invited. This will begin at approximately 8:55 AM in the hall.
12.05.25	Year 6 SATS week	These tests assess children's knowledge and understanding in core subjects: English (reading and grammar, punctuation, and spelling) and mathematics. The results help teachers understand how well children have progressed and are used to inform the transition to secondary school.
23.05.25	Leavers mass in Shrewsbury Break up	Our 6 children will be travelling to Shrewsbury to celebrate mass together with other year 6 children from Catholic schools across Shropshire
03.06.25	KS1 Sports day	Families of children are invited to come and spectate our Sports Days. These will begin at approximately 9:00 AM.
05.06.25	KS2 Sports day	
20.06.25	Year 1 curriculum assembly	Children in year 1 will be sharing the work they've been doing in their class. All parents of year two children are invited. This will begin at approximately 8:55 AM in the hall.
23.06.25	Parents Evening	More information to follow.
24.06.25	Parents Evening	
04.07.25	Reception curriculum assembly	Children in Reception will be sharing the work they've been doing in their class. All parents of year two children are invited. This

		will begin at approximately 8:55 AM in the hall.
18.07.25	Year 6 Leavers Assembly	Parents of children in year 6 will be invited to our leavers assembly to celebrate the children's years spent here at Saint Mary's Catholic primary school. The assembly begins at approximately 9:00 AM and should last just over an hour.
	Children break-up for summer	
21.07.25	PD day	