**St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

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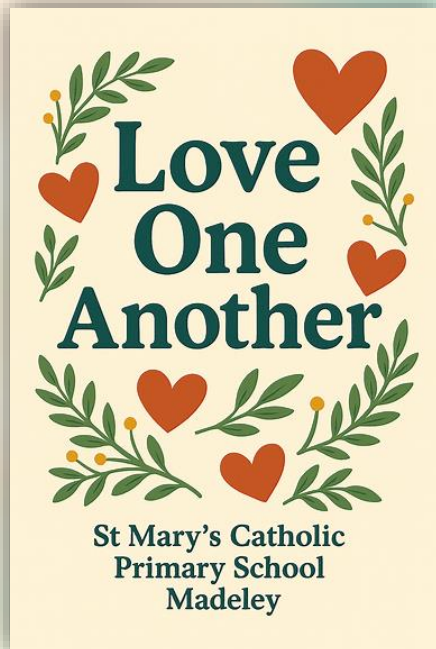
Headteacher: Samantha Griffiths

Assistant Headteacher: Helen Lambie

School Business Manager: Nicola Pryce

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Newsletter

16th January 2026



Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope you are all keeping well as we settle into a busy and joy-filled new term at St Mary's. As always, we are grateful for the partnership we share with you in nurturing, guiding, and inspiring our children in the light of Christ. Below are this week's important updates, news, and celebrations from around the school.

Looking Ahead to Easter

As we begin our journey through the spring term, we are reminded of the hope and renewal that the Easter season brings. Across the school, the children will be reflecting on themes close to our Catholic mission...kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and new beginnings.

Through assemblies, creative activities, prayer, and discussion, pupils will explore stories of compassion and courage from Scripture and from the lives of the saints. We hope these moments of reflection help our children grow not only in knowledge, but also in faith, empathy, and love for others.

Academy Consultation Update

Thank you to all families who engaged with our recent consultation regarding the possibility of St Mary's becoming an academy. We are pleased to share that no questions or concerns were raised during the consultation period.

A New Year Prayer for Our Families

Loving God, As we begin this New Year together, we place our school community into Your caring hands.

Bless our families with Your peace, our homes with Your presence, and our children with joy, curiosity, and a love of learning.

Guide our steps in the light of Christ. Help us to be patient with one another, kind in our words, and generous in our actions.

May this year be a time of growing in faith, of discovering new gifts, and of becoming the people You call us to be.

Watch over all who are starting the year with worries or challenges. Surround them with Your comfort and strength.

Fill our school with friendship, laughter, and hope, and keep us united in Your love.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We appreciate your continued trust and support. As always, we remain committed to ensuring that every decision we make reflects our Catholic values and serves the best interests of our children and community.

School Dinner Price Update

Please note that from February, school dinners will increase to £3.05 per meal.

Thank you for your understanding as we continue to provide nutritious, freshly prepared meals for all pupils.

Staffing Update

Mr Hotchkiss will continue teaching Year Three, as Mr Morgan remains too unwell to return to work.

We hold Mr Morgan in our prayers and send our warmest wishes for his full and speedy recovery. We

are also deeply grateful to Mr Hotchkiss for his continued dedication, care, and commitment to the children.

Birthday Celebrations

January is always a busy month for birthdays for both children and staff, and this week was no exception. It was wonderful to gather in the hall yesterday afternoon to celebrate the special day of so many pupils and staff.

Moments like these remind us of the joy of community and the importance of celebrating the unique gifts God has given each child.

Music Learning: Ukulele!

Children in Years Three and Four are currently learning the ukulele, and the sound of enthusiastic practice fills our corridors each day. It is a delight to see pupils growing in confidence, creativity, and appreciation for the arts.

Sports News

Football Friendly We are delighted to announce a friendly football match with a local school taking place next week. Further details will be shared directly with the participating pupils.

Cricket Coaching Throughout the term, the English Cricket Board will be working with our pupils, providing weekly cricket coaching. We are thrilled to offer this opportunity for children to develop teamwork, resilience, and new sporting skills.

Important Reminder: Changes to Homework

After reviewing educational research, gathering feedback from families, and reflecting on how children learn best, we have decided to stop setting formal written homework across the school.

Our aim is to ensure that home learning is meaningful, manageable, and joyful. We recognise that every family has different routines and pressures, and we hope this change supports a calmer, more balanced home life—something we value deeply as a Catholic community.

Children will still be expected to complete the following each week:

- Phonics practice
- Reading at least five times per week
- Learning weekly spellings
- Practising number bonds
- Practising multiplication tables

The Importance of Reading at Home Reading remains one of the most powerful ways to support your child's learning and nurture their imagination. Just a few minutes each day can strengthen vocabulary, build confidence, and open their hearts and minds to new ideas.

Thank you for the time, love, and encouragement you give your children at home. It truly makes a difference.

Curriculum Information

To help you stay informed, we will continue to outline key learning and topics for each term in our curriculum newsletter. This will give families a clear understanding of what is being taught and how you may support learning at home if you wish.

While there is no requirement to complete extra homework, children are welcome to:

- Create their own project
- Carry out additional research
- Visit a place of interest (museum, library, local landmark, etc.) related to their learning

These optional activities allow pupils to follow their interests and deepen their understanding in ways that suit your family.

Key Dates at St Mary's Catholic Church

Link to the Parish of the Good Shepherd website:

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

11 th January		THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD		Psalter Week I
Sat	10 th	5:00pm	Jos Voppen	<i>St Mary's</i>
Sun	11 th	9:00am	Shelagh Scott	<i>St. Paul's</i>
		11:00am	Kwan Yin	<i>St Mary's</i>
		3-4pm	<i>Holy Hour for Peace</i>	<i>St Mary's</i>
Mon	12 th	Ferial		<i>St. Mary's</i>
		9.30am	Word & Communion	
Tues	13 th	Ferial		
		7.00pm	Oliver Family	<i>St. Mary's</i>
Wed	14 th	Ferial		
		12.00pm	Word & Communion	<i>St. Paul's</i>
Thurs	15 th	Ferial		
		9.30am	Margaret Coyle	<i>St. Mary's</i>
Fri	16 th	Ferial		
		9.30am	Anne Cole	<i>St. Mary's</i>
		3.00pm	Divine Mercy Devotion.	
18 th Jan		SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME		Psalter Week II
Sat	17 th	5:00pm	Brian Hyde	<i>St Mary's</i>
Sun	18 th	9:00am	Mary & Michael Meredith	<i>St Paul's</i>
		11.00am	Mary Connor	<i>St Mary's</i>
		12.30	Baptism: David Ward	