



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL



This year, the season of Advent has fallen wholly in the month of December. It's a time of busyness at home and at school with plenty to enjoy; nativity plays and carol services, lights and decorations, plans to visit friends and family... It can sometimes be easy, amongst all the fun and excitement, to forget what Advent is about - a time to pause, reflect, and get ready to welcome Jesus into our hearts. This week we have celebrated the Third week of Advent, lighting

the third candle on our wreath, representing 'joy'. We are joyful as the waiting is nearly over and the birth of Jesus is very near. In our whole school Monday worship, the children reflected on John the Baptist - an important Advent witness who helps others to believe that Jesus is the long-awaited Christ. The children thought about how they will be ready to believe, and worship Jesus this Christmas like the shepherds and the kings. In his Gospel, John describes John the Baptist as a witness to the light, sent by God so that through him everyone will believe. We can trust John and other witnesses from the Bible because they saw Jesus and knew Him. You might want to ask your child(ren) to talk about what they know and believe about Jesus and who they trust to help them learn about their faith. Perhaps ask your child(ren) to recall some names and titles of Jesus that tell us more about Him e.g. *Son of God*, *Saviour of the World* or *Prince of Peace*. Accompanying this bulletin is the first edition of our Catholic Life and Mission newsletter. I hope that you find it a useful summary of key information relating to the Catholic life of the school for this term.

WEDNESDAY WORD The latest version of the Wednesday Word can be accessed [here](#). Please enjoy spending some time sharing the Word of God with your children.

NATIVITY CONCERTS 2023



Our nativity concerts were a highlight of the term! Y1 and Y2 entertained us with the story of 'Prickly Hay' this week – an exciting nativity musical with a fun hoedown flavour. It was narrated by Sam, a hardworking stable boy, and features himself, his faithful friend Shrew and some very special visitors... the Holy Family, kings and shepherds. All the children sang with gusto, acted with enthusiasm and thoroughly enjoyed themselves! Thank you to our audiences, who clapped and cheered brilliantly. The staff have worked incredibly hard to make these occasions so enjoyable for everyone and I am extremely grateful to them for their excellent work and

commitment.

CHRISTMAS DINNER DAY

We enjoyed a wonderful Christmas dinner thanks to Mrs Woodward and Mrs Deane, who cooked around 200 delicious meals. We had carols, festive placemats, efficient service and the food was excellent quality and locally produced. Thank you to all the staff who served and supported the event.

TRAVELLING CRIBS

If you have one of the Travelling Crib sets, please take care of it during the holidays and return it on the first day back in January. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC CONCERT THANKS

Some of the children who have received individual/group music performed for the school and their parents/families yesterday. The children were amazing and demonstrated courage, perseverance and resilience performing to such a large audience. It is remarkable the progress the children have made; some of them in one term of playing an instrument or in some cases, two instruments. A huge thank you to Miss Davies, Mrs Falstead and Mr Collins for their expertise and encouragement. There will be further opportunities for children who didn't play this time round to play later in the school year.



CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

ST MARY'S PARISH	HOLY SPIRIT PARISH
Sunday Christmas Eve NM 5:30pm Carol Service followed by Family Mass at 6.00pm MB 8:00pm Vigil Mass of Christmas Monday Christmas Day NM 9:30am Christmas Day Mass MB 11:30am Christmas Day Mass	Sunday Christmas Eve 8.00 pm Sung Vigil Mass of Christmas Monday Christmas Day 9:00am Children's Christmas Day Mass We continue to keep Fr Bill in our prayers as he recovers from heart surgery.

REACHING OUT

Year 6 have been writing to some of our local care homes, shops and residents this week. Some of the pupils have walked to deliver the letters and Christmas cards. This is a brilliant opportunity for our children to connect with members of the local community and to spread a little Christmas joy.

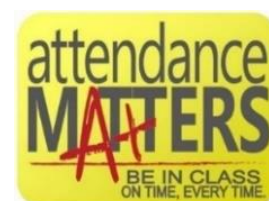
TERM DATES 2024 – 2025



The term dates (holiday list) for 2024 - 2025 are published on our school website – [please follow this link](#). Please remember that holidays requested during term time cannot be authorised and, if subsequently taken, may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by Stockport Local Authority to each parent. Further details of Fixed Penalty Notices can be found on the [Stockport Council website](#).

DECEMBER ATTENDANCE UPDATE

At St Mary's we believe that, if learners are to get the greatest benefit from their education in school, it is important that they have good attendance and arrive punctually. The attendance over the month of December is below. Our school target is 97%. Congratulations everyone on your amazing efforts this month, especially with winter illnesses taking hold. As a school we have achieved a very good 96.1% attendance overall since September. Nationally, attendance currently stands at 92.0%, so again, well done St Mary's for our strong attendance and thank you parents/carers for supporting strong attendance habits.

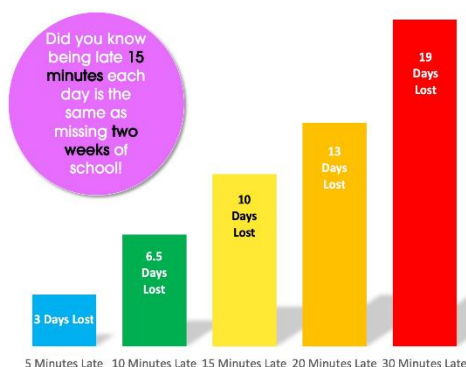


December 2023 Attendance	
Rec	96.26%
Y1	94.77%
Y2	97.98%
Y3	96.20%
Y4	93.99%
Y5	94.66%
Y6	92.99%
Overall	95.21%

PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality Matters!

Lost Minutes = Lost Learning



We often report to parents about the important matter of attendance – but punctuality is just as important. We understand that, on occasions, we can all experience an unexpected delay – and ‘one-offs’ are not a problem. However, some pupils are regularly late. If a pupil arrives at ten past nine every day, almost an hour of learning time is lost across a typical week – over the year this equates to over a week of lost learning - not to mention the unsettling aspect of entering the classroom when all the other children are launched into the day and may have enjoyed up to 15 minutes of social/ networking time before registration.

SWIMMING – SPRING TERM Y5

Swimming lessons will begin for Year 5 from Thursday 11 January until the end of the Lent (Spring) term.

RECEPTION PLACES FOR SEPTEMBER 2024

If you are applying for a school (Reception) place for next September, applications should be made by the **15 January 2024** via the [Stockport Admissions website](#). Please note: *if you child attends St Mary's Nursery, this does not guarantee your child a place in the school.* You will need to complete the application form using the link above by the closing date.



ROBLOX CHECKLIST 2023



Many of our children use Roblox and with Christmas just around the corner I share a useful resource with you, particularly as Roblox is one of the most popular games out there. Roblox have collaborated with the Southwest Grid for Learning (SWGfL) and created a checklist for parents/carers which includes:

- How to report abuse.
- How to block users.
- Setting up a parent control pin.

The resource can be downloaded [here](#).

HOUSE POINTS

Below are the house point totals for December.

Green	624
Red	724
Yellow	686
Blue	720

This means that the totals for this term are as follows and Blue house group are this term's winners. They attended a treat afternoon with Christmas music and games, colouring, biscuits and juice in the hall on Thursday afternoon.

Green	4186
Red	4317
Yellow	4409
Blue	4470

This term, over 16,000 dojos have been awarded!

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

I wish all our children and their families peace and joy this Christmas and many blessings for the New Year. I hope that you all enjoy the holidays – everyone deserves a good rest after such a busy, long and successful term! Thank you for the on-going support we receive from our parents/carers, governors, staff, parishioners, Fr Bill and Fr Emmanuel, the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust and Stockport Local Authority... the many people who work so hard for the benefit of our children and St Mary's school. I look forward to seeing everyone back at school on **Thursday 4 January 2024**.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT AND PRAYER

Light looked down and saw the darkness. 'I will go there', said light.
Peace looked down and saw war. 'I will go there', said peace.
Love looked down and saw hatred. 'I will go there', said love.
So, He, the Lord of Light,
The Prince of Peace,
The King of Love
Came down and crept in beside us.



THE MONTH (OR SO) AHEAD...KEY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Event
	<i>Please note the dates and times detailed below are provisional and may be changed if necessary. (New events added in bold.)</i>
22 December	School closes for the Christmas break.
4 January 2024	School reopens following the Christmas break.
15 January	Closing date for Reception place admissions. Stockport Admissions website
19 January	Wonderdome Planetarium visiting school for all classes (PTA funded).
20 January	Cross Country at Woodbank Park.
22 January	Year 6 Class liturgy 2:30pm in the school hall. All welcome.
31 January	Rookie Rockstars Concert (surnames A-L) 6:00-7:00pm in the hall.
1 February	Rookie Rockstars Concert (surnames M-Z) 6:00-7:00pm in the hall.
5 February	Year 2 Class liturgy 2:30pm in the school hall. All welcome.
6 February	PTA AGM. 7:00pm in the school hall.
9 February	Coffee and Cake with Mrs Bradbury and Mrs Norburn. 1:15
9 February	End of half term celebration assembly. 2:30pm in the hall. All welcome.
9 February	School closes for the February half term break.
19 February	School reopens following the February half term break.
26 February	Trust INSET day. School closed for children.

Wishing you all a holy and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024.
Mr John Nish and Miss Alice Poole.

The next Friday Bulletin will be published on 12 January 2024.

