



Friday 10th October 2025

HEADLINES

St Mary's Catholic School



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Monday 20th - Thursday 24th October
GCSE progress exams

Thursday 23rd October
Presentation Evening

Friday 24th October
Year 7 Retreat

Friday 24th October
Cultural Day

Monday 27th - Friday 31st October
Half term



GO 4 Schools

Click [here](#) to access your child's academic achievement and progress data.

Dear St Mary's Community,

This week has been filled with remarkable moments of spiritual and sporting excellence in particular that I am delighted to share with you.

We were privileged to welcome Fr Emmanuel and Brother Paul, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, who visited our school and shared profound insights into their spiritual journey. Their commitment to discipleship and the teachings of Saint Francis was truly inspiring. The friars spoke passionately about their vocation, emphasising that prayer must be the very heart of their way of life. Our students were deeply engaged, asking thoughtful and meaningful questions about the friars' daily experiences and work. A particularly memorable moment was witnessing Brother Paul connecting with our students during break time, enjoying a basketball game which demonstrated the beautiful human connection that transcends formal religious discourse.

I am immensely proud to celebrate an outstanding achievement by our Under 14 girls netball team. They have been crowned Hertfordshire County Netball School Plate winners for 2025-2026. Last Saturday 4th October we travelled to Welwyn Garden City to compete against the school leagues in Hertfordshire. Despite challenging autumnal weather conditions - chilly and windy - our girls displayed exceptional skill and determination. The dedication of Miss Serdet and Ms. Creus ensured the team remained focused and performed brilliantly. Our victorious team comprises these remarkable Y8 and Y9 students: Mai M, Libby P, Zoe O, Emily B, Ava H, Aoife M, Isla M, Sarah G, Grace O'L, and Isobel S. They were an absolute credit to St Mary's, embodying our school's spirit of excellence and teamwork.

Looking ahead, we have our Y11 and Y13 students busy studying hard and preparing for their Autumn Term Progress examinations. We keep our students in our prayers, that their hard work and efforts secure them making good progress towards achieving their targets grades. I am also very excited to invite all parents and guests to our annual Presentation Evening awards night on Thursday 23rd October. This will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our students' achievements in the next few weeks.

Wishing you all a restful and relaxing weekend,

God Bless,

Miss Deirdre McHugh
Head Teacher

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

University Summer School

During the summer break, St Mary's students and sisters, Martha and Patricia E, attended prestigious Summer Schools at universities at different ends of the country. They have written about their experiences:

My time at Exeter University was definitely one of the best experiences I've had in my 15 years of life. I am so grateful I got chosen for the opportunity...I was one of 800 applicants. When I first arrived I knew it was my chance to fully embrace the uni experience so I made a promise that I was not going to limit myself from the things I could do, so I ended up really putting myself out there. I'm glad I did, because being myself helped me to make new forever friends and explore new places.

I met so many new good people and made so many great friends that I really enjoyed spending time and living with. I got to explore and stay on Streatham campus, one of the three locations of Exeter University. We did various ice breakers, team building activities, and workshops about our futures after Year 11 and Sixth Form. All combined, it really helped me understand what pathways I want to go down over the course of the next few years...it is most likely to end up with me at Exeter University at the end of Sixth Form which I am very, very happy with!!

Martha

Taking part in the Sutton Trust Summer School at Durham was one of the most eye-opening and rewarding experiences I have had so far. The programme brought together students from across the country, each with their own academic passions, ranging from archaeology to physics.

This diversity created a vibrant atmosphere where I was constantly meeting new people, hearing about their interests, and gaining insight into subjects that I might not otherwise have come across. For me, however, the highlight was being able to step into the shoes of a university student at one of the UK's top institutions, immersing myself in lectures, workshops, and social activities that reflected what life at university is really like.

From the outset, the academic side of the summer school challenged and inspired me. I chose to focus on two areas that align closely with my future aspirations: geography and biochemistry. The first part of the week was devoted to biochemistry, where I was introduced to the fascinating field of pharmacokinetics. Learning how drugs move through the body was both engaging and highly relevant to my ambition of pursuing a career in pharmacy. The lectures were delivered in a true university style, encouraging us to think critically about the processes involved.

Later in the week, I turned my focus to geography, a subject I have always enjoyed. The sessions explored the global significance of bananas and how their production and trade have caused major social and environmental problems. This was followed by a practical investigation into glaciers, where we used state-of-the-art resources to measure how far glaciers have retreated over time. By the end of the week, I felt not only more knowledgeable, but also more motivated to keep exploring these subjects at a higher level.

Of course, the summer school was not only about the academic experience. The social side was equally valuable, helping us all to relax, bond, and make lasting friendships. Singing, laughing, and dancing with people I had only met a few days before created a real sense of community and reminded me that university is as much about the people you meet as it is about the degree you study.

Looking back, I would recommend the Sutton Trust programme to any Year 12 student. Not only does it provide the chance to experience university life first-hand, but it also offers a guaranteed alternative offer if you later apply to the university, which is an incredible opportunity. More than that, though, it gave me the confidence to picture myself thriving in a top university environment. I left Durham inspired, better informed, and excited for the future.



Patricia

Netball Champions!

Congratulations to our Under 14 girls netball team on winning the Hertfordshire County Netball school Plate winners for 2025-2026. The girls played exceptionally well in the tournament, the competition was fierce and the windy chilly autumnal weather were a challenge but the dedication and commitment from Miss Serdet and Ms. Creus ensured the girls were focused and played very well.



Please do congratulate the following Y8 and Y9 Girls: Mai M, Libby P, Zoe O, Emily B, Ava H, Aoife M, Isla M, Sarah G, Grace O'L and Isobel S. The girls were an absolute credit to the school.

Inter-House Volleyball



The atmosphere in the Sports Hall was electric last Friday as our Sixth Form students took to the court for the much-anticipated Inter-House Volleyball Competition. The event brought together energy, teamwork, and house spirit in abundance, showcasing the sporting talent and camaraderie of our senior students.

Each house fielded a strong team, with players demonstrating impressive hand-eye coordination. The matches were fast-paced and fiercely contested. There were lots of long rallies, powerful serves, and clever teamwork that kept the scorelines tight right until the final whistle.

After a series of exciting group matches, 'A' House emerged as overall champions!

Well done to all who participated.

Summer St Mary's Award

Many congratulations to the 60 students who completed the Summer St Mary's award for Years 6 and 7. They have been given a well earned Character Award badge which they can wear with pride. Here are a few extracts from student submissions:

I admitted I forgot to do something.

I continued with dance class even though I felt like quitting.

I practised violin without being asked.

I stood up for my little brother even when my siblings scoffed at me.

I helped around the house without being asked.

I tried to be more kind and understanding with my brother.

I started to read the Bible daily and in my free time.



I prayed for God's help and to do the will of God.

I tried Filipino foods.

Attendance

At St Mary's School, we are committed to ensuring every child receives a high-quality education. A key part of this is regular school attendance, which plays a vital role in your child's academic progress, personal development, and future opportunities.

While we understand that children may occasionally be unable to attend due to illness, frequent absences can lead to them falling behind their peers—both academically and socially.

Why Attendance Matters

Attending school regularly helps children to:

- Achieve stronger academic outcomes
- Build friendships and develop social skills
- Strengthen emotional wellbeing and resilience
- Establish positive habits for future education and employment
- Engage fully in school life and activities

Our Commitment to You

In St Mary's, we are dedicated to working with families to remove barriers to regular attendance wherever possible. We recognise that challenges may arise, and we are here to support you and your child.

Key Expectations

We ask that all families support the following expectations:

- Children attend school every day it is open, unless they are unwell or have a valid statutory reason
- Children arrive on time and ready to learn
- Families follow the school's attendance policy
- Parents/carers notify the school promptly when their child is absent unexpectedly
- Medical appointments are scheduled outside of school hours where possible
- Requests for leave of absence are made in advance and only in exceptional circumstances

How You Can Help

You play a crucial role in supporting your child's attendance. You can help by:

- Encouraging daily, punctual attendance
- Communicating with the school about any concerns or barriers
- Engaging with any support offered to avoid the need for more formal interventions

If you have any concerns or need support, please contact us. Schools are here to work with families to ensure every child can thrive.

For further resources and support, please visit:

[Families First Hertfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)

Parking in The Stewarts

Whilst residents understand how difficult finding a parking place at drop-off and pick-up times can be, they have requested we remind you that it is a restricted parking zone, and that if you must pick up from there please:

- Don't block residents' driveways
- Don't double park
- Don't park on a corner or a bend
- Don't leave your engine running

Thank you so much for your consideration in this matter.



HERTFORDSHIRE

SUMMIT

22 November 2025

An afternoon of games, workshops, socialising, and **ENCOUNTER** with the Lord through prayer and Adoration, walking with soon-to-be Saint Carlo Acutis and, culminating in a Youth Mass.

Church of Our Lady, Queen of Apostles
141 Woodhall Lane
Welwyn Garden City
AL7 3TP



Find out more and register
youth.rcdow.org.uk/events

DIocese of WESTMINSTER
YOUTH MINISTRY



Hertfordshire Music Service



Free Singing Lessons

If your child is interested in having two free trial lessons please sign up in your music lesson or email Miss Matthews on: J.Matthews@stmarys.net

Further information on paid lessons can be found here: [Registration - Hertfordshire Music Service \(speedadmin.dk\)](#)



For more up-to-date information and to find out about more events follow us on Twitter and Facebook - [@hertsmusic](#)

Follow @HertsMusic

Hertfordshire Music Service
hertsmusicservice.org.uk



TRAIN TO TEACH

BSITT INFORMATION EVENING

- ◆ MONDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2025
- ◆ 6PM - 7.30PM
- ◆ LEVENTHORPE SCHOOL
CM21 9BY



JOIN US & FIND OUT HOW WE CAN HELP YOU START YOUR TEACHING JOURNEY!

- MEET THE TEAM
- INFORMAL PRESENTATION
- CHAT WITH FORMER TRAINEES

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD**
INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING



PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST VIA OUR WEBSITE:
www.bsitt.co.uk

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

(certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

18
CENSORED

DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact with strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

TikTok can be addictive, especially for young people: compulsive repeated use can interfere with sleep patterns and be a distraction from other activities. The platform recently introduced default usage time limits of 60 and 100 minutes for new members under 18 (in the UK, children with TikTok average 102 minutes per day on the app), but these restrictions can easily be removed in the settings.

TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account with their child's and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content); set screen time limits; and manage their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.



MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-16s will have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents have the ability to manually set their child's account to private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.



LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can alter the settings to prevent them from making in-app purchases. We'd recommend that you enable this feature, as it's quite easy for a young person – without realising what they're doing – to spend a significant amount of real money buying TikTok coins so they can unlock more features of the app.



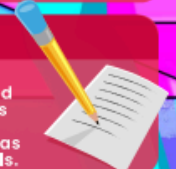
DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Thinking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.



READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.



Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



National
Online
Safety

#WakeUpWednesday