



Friday 24th October 2025

HEADLINES

St Mary's Catholic School



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Monday 27th - Friday 31st October
Half term

Monday 3rd November
School re-opens

Thursday 6th November
Sixth Form Open Evening

Monday 10th November
Odd Socks Day

Tuesday 11th November
Remembrance Day

Friday 14th November
Year 8 Retreat



GO 4 Schools

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

Dear St Mary's Community,

What a wonderful start to the half-term we have experienced!

Last night's Presentation Evening was truly a moment of pure joy and celebration. We came together to acknowledge the exceptional achievements of our students across the 2024-2025 academic year, particularly highlighting the remarkable success in our Summer Examinations. I am immensely proud to share that we celebrated 115 Prize Winners, ranging from Year 8 through to our current Year 13. These achievements are a testament to the hard work, dedication, and potential of our students. It was a delightful evening that allowed us to recognise and honour their outstanding accomplishments. You will see a range of photos from the evening on our webpages, Instagram and Facebook in the next few days.

Today, our Year 7 students are on their retreat, and we hope they are experiencing a prayerful and meaningful time. This opportunity allows them to bond, forge new friendships, and reflect on their successful transition to secondary school.

I would also like to acknowledge our Year 11 and Year 13 students who have just completed their Autumn Progress examinations. We wish them every success and blessing, and hope that their diligent efforts are rewarded.

An important notice for parents: On Monday, 3rd November 2025, we will have a late start to the school day. This is to facilitate essential staff training following a significant IT infrastructure upgrade during the half-term break. As part of our commitment to providing a high-quality learning environment, we are upgrading our school's IT systems. This comprehensive update includes installing new servers, PCs, and migrating to Windows 11. Our two IT suites will be enhanced to ensure that both staff and students benefit from faster, more secure, and more efficient technological resources.

To effectively manage this transition and ensure all staff are fully trained on the updated systems, the school day will begin at 11:00am on Monday, 3rd November. Students should arrive in time for registration in their form groups, which will run from 11:00am to 11:25am. Lessons will then commence with Period 3, and the remainder of the day will follow our normal timetable.

Wishing you and your families a very blessed and restful half term break.

God bless,

Miss Deirdre McHugh
Head Teacher

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

Deputy Head Boy visits Parliament

Deputy Head Boy, Sam McG, visited the Houses of Parliament on Monday evening and shares with us how the visit came about:

“What started as a normal trip to the shops turned into an unforgettable experience. While out one afternoon, I recognised my local MP, Lewis Cocking, and since I study A Level Politics, I decided to go over and introduce myself. We had a quick chat about my studies, my interest in politics, and current affairs.

Afterwards, I followed up with an email to thank him for his time, which led to an invitation to visit his local office. When I went, he showed me around and we sat down for a conversation that covered politics at every level: local, national and international. It was fascinating to hear directly from someone who works in the middle of it all.

A few weeks later, Lewis Cocking MP invited me to Parliament. The tour was led by David, a former St Mary's student who now works as his parliamentary assistant. It was really inspiring to meet someone who had once been in the same position as me and is now working in Westminster.

We explored parts of the Palace of Westminster that you never normally see on TV, from hidden corridors to the historic chambers. One of the highlights was stepping out onto a viewing platform overlooking the River Thames. The evening ended in the House of Commons viewing gallery, where we watched MPs debate the proposed introduction of digital ID legislation.

Overall, it was an amazing experience that gave me a much deeper understanding of how Parliament works and showed me that politics is something you can get involved in if you take the initiative.



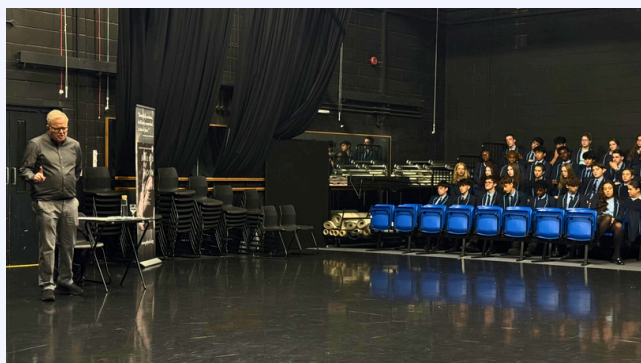
Author visit

Recently we were delighted to welcome Paul Lynch to St Mary's. Mr Lynch's latest book 'A Mind Prone to Evil' delves into the mind of Hermann Göring, Hitler's brutal Second-in-Command, as he is about to stand trial at Nuremberg for his crimes. Two Year 11 students tell us about the event:

“we learned about Hermann Göring who was a really close companion of Adolf Hitler. I learnt a lot about the trials through the talk and the dramatized production of the novel (performed by Mr Bamlett). For example, I learnt that Hermann Göring was an avid art collector and clung onto wealth, context that most people wouldn't have known until reading the novel. I particularly enjoyed the drama production of the novel as it made the words of history come out of the page and onto the stage, giving a visual of what actually happened during the trials, giving a different perspective on the trials.



Abbie L



“Dr Lynch has written a book about the life of Hermann Göring and gave us fascinating insights into the Nuremberg Trials. Mr Bamlett brought history to life by skillfully acting out scenes from the trials. His performance was incredibly realistic and made the events easy to understand...I gained a much deeper understanding of the trials and of Germany during the Nazi period, especially how art was used during that time. This experience will definitely help us with our History GCSE studies. We also explored the disturbing mindset of Hermann Göring, which was both chilling and engaging.

Maisie P

Reading Champion!

We are delighted and incredibly proud that Mr Smith, school librarian, is winner in the School Reading Champion category of The HarperCollins Reading for Pleasure awards.

Judges commented: “We are extremely impressed with your work around using football to engage reluctant readers in secondary school. Your approach is creative and your enthusiasm shines through. Establishing a hub is inspired, and we admire your determination to offer a range of formats; reaching out to the Premier League for programmes is both bold and imaginative. We are impressed by your thinking and by your recognition that you are ‘marketing’ reading to students”.



Radio Maria



The Year 12 Radio Maria Team at St Mary’s is happy to announce that their first programme ‘Growing in Grace’ will be broadcast on Radio Maria England at 5pm on Friday 31st October, with a repeat broadcast on Sunday 2nd November at 8pm.

Radio Maria is a Catholic radio station sharing faith, hope and love through prayer, teaching and music. Broadcasting 24/7, it’s A Christian Voice by Your Side—connecting listeners across the country and around the world

Tune in on the free Radio Maria Play App, ask your smart speaker to ‘Play Radio Maria England’), or listen online at www.RadioMariaEngland.uk.

Radio Maria England can also be found on DAB+ Digital Radio in selected regions (including London and Cambridge) as well as wherever you normally get your podcasts.

St. Agnes Lyne ‘A’ House Assembly

Last week, students from Years 7–12 gathered for our much-anticipated St. Anne Lyne ‘A’ House Assembly, a celebration of House spirit, values, and achievements. The assembly was a wonderful opportunity for students to reflect on the legacy of our House Saint, St. Anne Lyne, whose courage, faith, and compassion continue to inspire us today.

During the assembly, students explored how these virtues can be lived out in our daily school life – through kindness, integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. We celebrated the importance of House Point Virtue Success, recognising students who have gone above and beyond in both academics and extra-curricular activities.

The Sixth Form Senior House Captains led the assembly and shared details of exciting upcoming Inter-House Events. In true ‘A’ House spirit, the focus was on the House Motto – “Participation” – reminding us all that the real success of our House lies in every student giving their best and joining in with enthusiasm.

The assembly concluded on a high note with a lively House Quiz, where students from all year levels showcased their knowledge, teamwork, and competitive spirit.

Congratulations to all who took part!



Medical Leave of Absences Information

A gentle reminder to parents & carers when requesting medical leave authorisation from the school.

Evidence of the appointment should be emailed to the child's head of year (f.surname@stmarys.net) and the Attendance Officer (attendance@stmarys.net).

Please allow a minimum of 48 school hours lead time.

Due to the volume of students at St Mary's we cannot guarantee your child will be able to attend same day appointments unless there is evidence of urgent care needed.

A **minimum** of a **48-hour lead time** also applies to **all** Leave of Absences forms that should be completed and returned to r.juliff@stmarys.net for Miss McHugh's review. The Leave of Absence form can be found [here](#).

The school requests any medical appointments should be scheduled outside the school day and in school holidays where possible.

Thank you.



On **Thursday 27th November**, all Year 11 students will be taking part in our Mock Interview Day. These help students learn how to answer difficult questions, develop interview strategies, improve their communication skills as well as giving the students the tools required to remain calm before an actual interview.

We are seeking volunteers to be our Interviewers between the times of 9am - 2pm.

NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE NEEDED AND WILL BE LUNCH PROVIDED!

We would appreciate any parents / carers to come in on the day and assist in being an interviewer. If you can support us, please email Mrs Knight on j.knight@stmarys.net.



Direct Line:
Email: clare.andrews@herts.police.uk
Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Date: 11th October 2025

Dear Parent,

Over the upcoming Halloween and Bonfire Night period police will be carrying out extra patrols, to provide a reassuring presence, keep people safe and deter anti-social behaviour.

Halloween is always a busy time for police and sometimes what others consider harmless fun can be a serious nuisance or danger to others.

To ensure everyone enjoys the celebrations we're urging parents and guardians to please make sure they talk to their children about being considerate to neighbours and others in the community.

Sadly, we've seen in previous years that some people see this time of year as an excuse to commit anti-social or criminal behavior, and this will not be tolerated.

If you and/or your children are planning to go trick or treating, please consider the following advice to help everyone stay safe and prevent distress being caused to others:

- Never go trick or treating alone and always take an adult with you
Don't knock on the doors of strangers.
- Only visit houses where there are signs that trick or treaters are welcome, such as Halloween decorations and pumpkins outside.
- Keep your Halloween 'tricks' safe - damage to property or hurting someone is a crime. Threatening and abusive behavior can amount to an offence too.
- Remember road safety rules, particularly after dark.
- Wear something bright so that drivers can see you.

If you witness any suspicious or criminal activity taking place, please call 999 straight away.

Kind regards

PCSO Clare Andrews

Your local Neighbourhood Policing Team

Hertfordshire Constabulary Headquarters
Stanborough Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6XF
herts.police.uk

TRAIN TO TEACH BSITT INFORMATION MORNING AT WINDHILL21

◆ WEDNESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2025

◆ 9.30AM - 11.00AM

◆ WINDHILL21



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

MEET THE TEAM

INFORMAL PRESENTATION

OPPORTUNITY TO ASK
QUESTIONS


BISHOP'S STORTFORD
INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING



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

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

Windhill, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 2NQ Tel: 01279 654901 Email: info@stmarys.net

Helping children and young people with MANAGING DEVICE STRESS AND ANXIETY

The internet and advances in the capability of digital devices have afforded us arguably the fastest period of technological and social evolution in living memory: creating opportunities for us to interact with people anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. It's also, however, blurred safety boundaries and added new stresses for young people, who are often less aware of the hidden hazards. With almost half of 10–15-year-olds experiencing bullying online and algorithms pushing content in front of our children every day, it's important to know how to address some of these challenges.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LIVING ONLINE

The internet is awash with sophisticated algorithms that learn from our online behaviour and try to predict our wants and needs. That's very helpful in some respects, but it can make the online world difficult for children and young people to negotiate. Content can be brought to them at any time – it may not always be appropriate, and children may not have the ability or the support to deal with it.

PUSHY NOTIFICATIONS

Content is also directed at us through notifications from our apps: letting us know we have a new message or social post to read, for example. While that's useful in some circumstances, it conditions us to keep going back online (and is designed to do so) and can be a near-constant demand on our child's attention. As such alerts become more common, are we experiencing an 'attack of the pings'?

BLURRED BOUNDARIES

There are now so many ways we can communicate online in real time (like instant messaging apps) or with a delay (such as on social media) that it's possible to be constantly in conversation. Young people often prefer quickfire exchanges of text – but using fewer words can cause distressing miscommunications through the lack of non-verbal cues like facial expressions or tone of voice.

DIGITAL DEPENDENCY

As devices allow access to immediate external help in challenging situations, it's a concern that children may not be developing the inner confidence to work things out for themselves. Likewise, group membership is hugely important to young people – both in digital and 'real' life – and being excluded from online conversations can cause damaging feelings of loneliness and isolation.

DISGUISED DISTRESS

Children often haven't yet developed the emotional resources to deal with many of the setbacks of everyday life, so identifying when it's specifically something online that's worried them can be tricky. A certain level of stress is a normal response to a problem: it spurs us into action to keep ourselves safe. If the stress is excessive, though, it can feel overwhelming and potentially lead to anxiety or depression.

ANTI-SOCIAL SOCIALS

Social media can bring people together in hugely positive ways. Sadly, it does also have a darker side, including 'flame war' arguments which can escalate quickly and have harmful consequences. With so many people looking on, 'group shaming' situations are also common – while there are continual opportunities for young people to compare themselves negatively with other social media users.

Advice for Parents & Carers

LEARN THE BASICS

It's impossible to keep up with every online change or every new app. The best option is to make yourself aware of the fundamentals of how the internet operates, so you can help your child to grasp how – and why – content reaches them. Devices and the digital world can be confusing, so learning to understand them better will give you the confidence to talk to your child about them.

TALK IT OUT

If a child mentions a comment that's been directed at them in a text chat or on social media, it may sound minor but can actually have a much bigger effect than we realise. In our evolved brains, any perceived threat can get internalised while our body reacts as if we were in physical danger – raising stress levels. It's always worth encouraging your child to get any concerns out in the open.

PUSH DISTRACTIONS AWAY

Notifications to our phones and tablets can be helpful, but they sometimes make one wonder who's really in charge: the person or the device? Checking our phone as soon as it goes off is an easy habit to fall into – especially for young people. Try switching off non-essential alerts on your devices and encourage your child to do the same: you should both feel less triggered and more in control.

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

This is tricky – and may depend on the child's age – but any sudden change in behaviour is worth looking out for. If your child seems to be checking their phone or tablet more, doesn't want to be parted from them, or appears unusually secretive, anxious or withdrawn, it could be a sign that something is amiss in relation to their device – and, possibly, that they're in need of extra support.

KEEP CHECKING IN

Healthy emotional regulation balances three systems: threat, drive and grounding. Down the various rabbit holes of the internet, however, that balance can easily slip away – so it's important to help your child manage their emotions when they're online. Check in with them regularly when they're on their device, and remember that 'distraction' and 'relaxation' aren't always the same thing.

BE KIND: UNWIND

Be kind to yourselves as parents and carers. Remember that we're all in the same boat, trying to safely guide our children through this complex, fast-moving digital environment. Getting into the habit of having natural, relaxed conversations with your child about their online life (and yours) can level the playing field and make it far easier for them to open up to you about any concerns.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Carole Francis-Smith is an experienced counselling psychologist who specialises in promoting safe and ethical online communications. She consults with and offers bespoke training to businesses and organisations, supporting positive and effective online communications – often by considering some of the more hidden aspects of the various mediums.



National
Online
Safety

#WakeUpWednesday

Source: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/the-big-ask-big-answers/>

<https://www.wans.gov.uk/people/population-and-community/time-and-justice/bulletin/childrens-online-behaviour-trends-and-welfare-year-ended-march-2020>