



— Friday 14th November 2025 —

HEADLINES

St Mary's Catholic School



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Wednesday
19th
November
RED WEDNESDAY

Friday 21st
November
KS3 Personal
Development
Day

Thursday 27th
November
Year 11 Mock
Interviews

Thursday 27th
November
Year 11
Parents'
Evening

Friday 28th
November
Occasional
Day - SCHOOL
CLOSED



GO 4 Schools

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

Dear St Mary's Community,

I am delighted to share some wonderful moments and important updates from our school this fortnight. Our Sixth Form Open Evening on Thursday 6th November was a vibrant celebration of opportunity. With 30 different subjects available at Key Stage 5, the evening buzzed with excitement as our Year 11 students explored A Level and BTEC qualifications.

The energy was palpable as students discovered the incredible learning pathways ahead of them. A gentle reminder that the application deadline is Monday 8th December 2025 at 8am - all detailed information is available on our school website, under the 'Sixth Form' tab.

On Tuesday 11th November, we came together for our Remembrance Day service. In a moment of profound reflection, 1,200 of us stood in silent prayer, honouring those who have sacrificed so much. This powerful collective act of remembrance epitomises the compassionate spirit of St Mary's. You will see a selection of photographs from this whole school memorial event in this edition. Throughout November, we are holding our November Liturgies in the chapel for each individual form class. These are precious moments where we prayerfully remember and honour our loved ones who have gone before us, connecting our school community through shared reflection and prayer.

Two important upcoming events require your attention:

- Our Pupil Personal Development Day for Key Stage 3 is on Friday 21st November. This day will feature inspiring guest speakers and activities designed to motivate and encourage our students to grow beyond academic learning. It focuses on developing the whole child—their character, wellbeing, social skills, and ability to thrive in life. I hope it is a very rewarding and enjoyable day of activities for our KS3 cohort.
- **RED WEDNESDAY** falls next Wednesday 19th November. We invite students to wear an item of red to support Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)'s annual awareness campaign highlighting the persecution of Christians worldwide. A letter accompanies this request with instructions to encourage us all to bear witness in unity of our faith. It is important we teach our students to stand up for justice and peace especially in our modern world and the global challenges. I thank you in advance for supporting your child in wearing an item of red on Wednesday!

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a blessed weekend.

Kindest regards,
Miss Deirdre McHugh
Head Teacher

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

Remembrance Day

At 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 11, the entire family of St Mary's Catholic School—over 1,200 students and staff—came together in the tennis courts in solemn unity to mark Armistice Day 2025. The service, held in the school grounds, was a moving tribute of prayer, reflection, and remembrance for those who gave their lives in conflict.

The ceremony began with a welcome from Mr D D'Cruz, who spoke about the importance of remembering the sacrifices made by generations past and the responsibility of young people to carry forward the values of peace, courage, and compassion. The History Department led reflections of soldiers' stories with accounts of service and devotion.

Following a poignant reading of a poem by Alexander M in Y11 the assembly observed the traditional two minutes' silence. The stillness was profound as poppies pinned to uniforms and the wreath laid by our Head Pupils at the base of the cross fluttered in the autumn breeze, a symbol of gratitude and respect shared across the school.

The silence was central to *The Last Post* and *Reveille*, adding a powerful sense of dignity to the occasion before Carter F and the choir led the singing of the National Anthem. The service concluded with collective prayers for peace and to remember those gone before us, led by our Head Pupils, inviting everyone to reflect on the enduring hope for a better world.

"Coming together as a whole school to remember is a special moment," said Miss D McHugh "It reminds us that we are part of a wider story—one of service, sacrifice, and gratitude."



Year 7 Retreat

On the last day before half term, Year 7 students had the opportunity to go to St. Theresa's in Stansted for their retreat. They had a day of teambuilding and faith formation, exploring how to trust in God throughout the changes in their lives. They also created time capsules which will be opened when they get to year 11. The Mass was a lovely way to end the half term as a year group capping off what has been an excellent start for them at St Mary's.

Thank you to Fr John Cunningham for celebrating Mass for us, and to all the staff who supported throughout the day.



Cultural Day



On Cultural Day students and staff were encouraged to wear national dress or clothing that represented their culture. Here are a just a few colourful examples from the day.



Year 11 Mock Interview Day



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.

Online Safety Parent Resources

Following a successful Online Safety Parent Workshop, parents can access further useful information and resources from the KidsOnlineWorld website by clicking on the link opposite.

KIDSONLINENEWORLD

Notices

Hertfordshire County Council Consultation on Proposed Admission Arrangements for 2027/28

Hertfordshire County Council is running a consultation on the proposed admissions arrangements for the school year 2027/28 and is seeking responses from parent/carers, schools and community groups.

The proposed changes are:

- To reduce the published admission number (PAN) at three community or voluntary controlled primary schools
- Retain the remainder of the county council's existing admission arrangements for 2027/28, including PANs, Relevant Areas and schemes of coordination.

The consultation period runs until 7 December 2025. Please visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions2027 for more information and to respond online.

If you have any queries, please email admissions.consultation@hertfordshire.gov.uk or call 01992 555876 (Kellie Gilbertson-Hoy) or 01992 555840 (Rebecca Pendry).



Let's talk about our kids and their tech

Visit our stand to discover the Parent Pact - join families choosing play, connection, and confidence before smartphones.

When

Sunday 16th
November
10am-4pm

Where

Jackson Square
(top of the escalators)



Bishop's Stortford



EX-FOOTBALLER AND AUTHOR SETH BURKETT VISITS ST MARY'S ON THE 21ST NOVEMBER.

WIN A PERIOD 5 KICKABOUT WITH SETH AND LEARN FROM A PLAYER WHO'S PLAYED AROUND THE WORLD.

TO WIN A SPOT IN THIS SESSION, EITHER:

1. Write a match report based on a recent football match you've seen
2. Make a poster persuading a footballer to play in Brazil

Entries must be labelled clearly with your name and tutor group. Entries must be handed into the Library by the 18th of November!

AUTHOR VISIT SETH BURKETT



**21ST NOVEMBER, TALKING TO YEARS 7-9.
SETH WILL BE SIGNING HIS BOOKS ON THE DAY.
PRE ORDER YOUR SIGNED BOOK ON PARENTPAY NOW!**

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

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

Top Tips for SETTING BOUNDARIES AROUND GAMING

If your child loves video games, then you'll probably be aware that how long they spend gaming – and what they're actually playing – can occasionally become a source of concern or conflict. The UK's trade body for interactive entertainment, Ukie, has recently launched a campaign to promote safer and more responsible gaming among young people – with parents and carers helping by setting sensible and fair boundaries. Our guide has tips on key areas where you could agree some healthy ground rules for your child's gaming activity.

PROMOTE SAFER GAME CHOICES

Deciding which online games are OK – and which should be avoided – is tricky. Some titles allow children to cooperate or compete with strangers, which creates potential risks. Watching your child play online for a while could provide more insight into a particular game, while the parental controls on most consoles allow you to limit who can chat to your child or send them friend requests. Remind your child of the hazards around strangers online when you discuss this boundary with them.

ENCOURAGE REGULAR BREAKS

Help your child understand the need to take regular breaks, playing in shorter bursts rather than marathon sessions. Bear in mind that some games (such as role-playing games) require time investment from the player, while others (online team games, for example) can't be stopped or paused at a moment's notice. A quick break every hour or so is good practice, and you could suggest some things to do in these breaks, such as having a drink of water or getting some fresh air.

AGREE SPENDING LIMITS

There's no doubt that gaming can be expensive, and younger players often don't realise how much paying for digital items and subscriptions can add up to. Many young gamers love to buy new skins or upgrades for their character, so you could settle on a fixed amount that your child is allowed to spend on in-game items each week or month. This sort of boundary will not only help your child to manage their expectations but will also make you more aware of the price of these items.

DISCUSS AGE RATINGS

Children often ignore the age ratings on games – or are unaware they even exist. If you're happy with your child playing a particular game even though it's rated above their age, then establish that as a boundary: emphasise that you've made an exception, and talk about what age ratings mean and why they're important. You could add context to this boundary by browsing games' boxes together while shopping, discussing why some games might have earned certain age ratings.



FACTOR IN FRIENDS

If your child is a keen video gamer, the chances are that they'll have other gamers among their social circle, too. When friends visit, do they instantly dash to their console or computer? You could put boundaries in place before their guests arrive by agreeing on a length of gaming time. Bear in mind, though, that they may try to extend this once they're together. Try coming up with activities or challenges for them during screen breaks – if they join in, they earn a little extra time on their game.

ENJOY GAMING TOGETHER

Setting time aside to play video games together can be an enjoyable bonding exercise. Undeniably, some young gamers may be less enthusiastic about a parent or carer joining in, but it can be a productive way of encouraging them to share their hobby with you. Setting goals or tasks might be useful: if they love Minecraft, choose something to build together; if Fortnite's their favourite, ask to try out some of the fun game modes, like Prop Hunt, which don't require high skill levels.

TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS

Help your child to monitor their emotions as they play. Discuss what is (and isn't) an acceptable level of competitiveness to show while gaming. Are they allowed to trash talk other players, for example? Can they notice when they get angry if they lose? Do they think these emotions are healthy? Some games can provoke anger, but others can bring joy, humour and the thrill of overcoming a challenge. Try to steer your child towards games that tend to produce these more positive feelings.

BE PREPARED FOR TROLLS

A frequent problem when gaming online is other players who are deliberately troublesome. Make sure your child knows how to report and block someone who makes their experience a negative one. Between you, decide if or how they should deal with these online trolls. Talk about where your child's boundaries are in terms of what they think is acceptable: what behaviour by other users is merely frustrating, and what crosses the line to become upsetting or abusive.

Meet Our Expert

Daniel Lipscombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality and Web3. He has also written 15 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.



#WakeUpWednesday

Source: <https://hipal.app/about/privacy.html>