



Friday 23rd January 2026

HEADLINES

St Mary's Catholic School



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Wednesday 28th January

Year 9 Options Evening, 6.30pm - 8.30pm

Monday 2nd February - Friday 12th February

Year 11 & 13 Mock examinations

Thursday 5th February

Year 9 Parents' Evening, 4.30pm - 7.30pm

Dear St Mary's Community,

I am excited to share some remarkable moments from our school that highlight the incredible potential and spirit of our students.

On Monday, 19th January, we were privileged to welcome Nilesch Doha MBE to St Mary's. His visit was particularly significant for our Year 11 students, who are at a crucial point in their GCSE studies. Nilesch's personal testimony and "Icanyoucantoo" programme on creating future leaders deeply resonated with our students. The engagement and inspiration were palpable, and I am hopeful that the insights shared will motivate our young people in their academic journey.

This evening marks our second Radio Maria broadcast, a testament to the creativity and leadership of our Year 12 students. This student-led initiative is a wonderful platform that beautifully blends fun, faith, discussion, and interaction. Our young presenters have demonstrated remarkable technical skills and initiative in planning and producing tonight's programme. I encourage our community to tune in on Friday, 23rd January from 5pm-6pm, with a repeat broadcast on Sunday, 25th January at 8pm. You can access the programme via DAB+ radio, the Radio Maria England app, or by visiting <https://radiomariaengland.uk/>.

We are now entering an important period for our Year 9 students as they begin the Options process for selecting their GCSE subjects for September 2026. Next Wednesday, we will host the Options Evening for Year 9 students and parents, followed by the Year 9 Parents Consultation Evening the subsequent week. These events are crucial in providing guidance and support as students make important decisions about their academic pathways.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to nurturing leadership, creativity, and informed academic choices.

I wish you all a blessed and restful weekend.

God Bless,

Miss Deirdre McHugh
Head Teacher



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

LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

Growing in Grace

Greetings from the Radio Maria Youth Team at St Mary's Catholic School, Growing in Grace. At the start of this new calendar year, we reflect on our hopes and aspirations for the new year and the challenges of new beginnings. The programme will air on **Friday 23rd January at 5pm**, with a repeat on **Sunday 25th January at 8pm**. You can access the programme on DAB+ radio and on the Radio Maria England app, or simply by typing <https://radiomariaengland.uk/> into your browser.

This month, we are joined by one of our new Governors at St Mary's Catholic School, Mrs Anel Zuniga-Daly. In her interview, Anel shares insights into coping with change and new beginnings in an honest, graceful and thought-provoking way.

I encourage you to support our students by listening to our Growing in Grace programme. Please send any feedback, comments or suggestions to info@stmarys.net marked 'RMEY Growing in Grace' in the subject line.

Wishing you success and perseverance in your New Year's resolutions.

Kind regards

Daniel D'Cruz, Senior Leader: Catholic Life and PSHEE



icanyoucantoo

I was honoured that Year 11 had the opportunity to listen to Nilesh Dosa OBE as he visited to speak with us about his icanyoucantoo enterprise and the journey that shaped it. From the outset, his presence was both assured and engaging, immediately capturing our attention and setting a reflective tone. He spoke with true conviction about the power of mindset, illustrating that success is not dictated by circumstance but forged through self belief, perseverance and an unwavering willingness to grow. There was a sense of wonder woven through his narrative, a quiet awareness of the depth and complexity of individual experiences, that made his message feel both personal and universally relevant.

What made Nilesh's presentation especially effective for me was the authenticity with which he addressed adversity. He did not shy away from discussing failure, instead, he reframed it as an indispensable catalyst for growth and self-discovery. Through icanyoucantoo, he has transformed personal challenges into a platform that empowers others to recognise their own potential. His words resonated strongly with us as students, standing on the threshold of important life decisions, as he emphasised that discomfort and uncertainty are often the very conditions in which confidence and capability are cultivated.

Overall, the talk was both enlightening and extremely inspiring, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended. Nilesh encouraged us to interrogate our own limitations and to replace self-doubt with purpose and determination.

As we left the session, there was a tangible sense of motivation and renewed clarity, as though we had been equipped with a more expansive view of what is possible. His message was eloquent yet empowering: belief in oneself is transformative, and with the right mindset, despite challenges we face, potential can be turned into reality.

I greatly appreciate Nilesh for taking the time to share his experiences and insights, as his words have left a meaningful and permanent impact on our outlook and aspirations.

Alexander M (Y11)



Click on the logo to access the icanyoucantoo website

Pilgrimage to Lourdes Friday 3rd - Saturday 11th April 2026

Over Easter 2026, St Mary's will be providing the opportunity for seven Year 12 students to travel as helpers on a pilgrimage to Lourdes by Jumbulance with Paths Across group.

Paths Across is a collection of local Across groups that fundraise together to provide opportunities for the disabled, sick, terminally ill or those who just need a little love and care (our VIPs) to experience day trips, holidays and pilgrimages to Lourdes or Rome primarily through the charity.

They make travel possible for those who might find it impossible by any other means. We hope to take seven VIPs to Lourdes over this Easter.

We will travel via Jumbulance - a Jumbo Ambulance - which has 7 beds, a hydraulic lift, a kitchen, disabled access toilet plus medical equipment like oxygen as this makes travel possible for those who might require a bed for the entire journey.



Our 9-day pilgrimage will be supported by other parish volunteers including nurses, a priest and previous St Mary's students now studying Nursing or Medicine.

We will stay at the 4-star Hotel Mediterranee which has rooms specifically modified for Across with hospital beds, walk in showers, hoists and all the medical equipment that our VIPs may need. We look after the needs of our VIPs as one of our family in a holiday environment.

We will participate in everything that you would expect from a pilgrimage to Lourdes – the Torchlight Procession, The Blessed Sacrament Procession, Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, the baths, lighting candles and celebrating Mass together daily.

We balance the spiritual side of our trip with social activities; eating and drinking together, excursions up into the beautiful Pyrenees or a beach trip (yet to be decided!) and a visit to the lake for a swim, our trip really will be a holiday with Our Lady.

How much will it cost?

The full cost of a place on an Across pilgrimage is £1600. The school has been raising money for Across during Charity Week over the past few years and this money will help fund places for our students and subsidise the costs for nurses to travel. However, donations to support the pilgrimage would be greatly appreciated. Equally, if you are a business and would like to sponsor our students or a VIP, or sponsor the group hoodies in exchange for an advertisement in our newsletter and social media, it would be wonderful.

If you would like to make an individual donation you can do so by ParentPay using the 'Pilgrimage to Lourdes Easter 2026' item. For more information about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Mrs Magda Brewin on info@stmarys.net.

How else could you support this opportunity?

Are you a parent who is a nurse, doctor or other health care professional? We cannot travel without nurses. It's hard work, but incredibly fulfilling and something completely different. Maybe you would consider travelling with us to make this trip really about our community.

Maybe you have a child or family member with a disability or other health care needs who would like to travel as a VIP? If you would like to discuss this in more detail we would like to speak to you to see if we can make the impossible possible for you. Please contact Mrs Magda Brewin on info@stmarys.net.

Fundraising

Fundraising will continue over the coming months so watch out for events that you could attend or support financially.



**SAVE
The DATE**

Charity Week Community Evening - Friday 20th
March 6:30pm! Details to follow soon!



Stortford Community Panel Event

January is always a good month to re-focus on what really matters in the year ahead. To that end, our local Smartphone Free Childhood Stortford branch is very excited to be hosting a community Panel Event to continue conversations around the issue of smartphones and children.

This Panel Event is confirmed to take place on **Thursday 5th March 2026 from 6.30pm** and the venue will be **The Bishop's Stortford High School, Beaumont Ave, CM23 4SH.**

The main purpose of the Panel Event will be to gather people together to listen to stories of what going smartphone-free might look like and to inspire people as to why they should care! This event is not only for those already singing in the choir, but for the curious, the concerned and even the cynical: we would love to give people some food for thought and show that there is another path – whether you are a parent or an educator – towards a childhood full of hope and free from addictive algorithms and doom scrolling!

Given the fact that the government are finally engaging with this topic and seriously looking into a social media ban for under 16's, this is an exciting time to be thinking about these issues.

We would love to see as many parents and teachers there as possible! There is a capacity of 250 people, **tickets are FREE**, but already going fast, so don't delay to book your space - use either the QR code or the Eventbrite link at the bottom of the page.



Navigating Smartphones & Tech as a Family

A free event from **SFC Stortford** for parents and educators, featuring candid stories and practical tools you can start using straight away.

- > Presentations
- > Panel discussion
- > Alternative phone display

The Bishop's Stortford High School
Thursday 5th March
6.30 - 9pm

Book here:
tinyurl.com/5MARSFC



Eventbrite Page: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/navigating-smartphones-tech-as-a-family-tickets-1978615244459>

Spring Term Update Medical and Emotional Health information

As we begin the Spring Term, we would like to remind parents and carers of the importance of ensuring that the school holds accurate and up-to-date information regarding their child's physical and emotional health needs.

If there have been any changes to your child's health, including medical conditions, emotional or mental health concerns, medication, care or support requirements, or involvement with external health or mental health services, it is essential that you complete and submit an updated Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP) form as soon as possible. This ensures that appropriate arrangements and support can be put in place to meet your child's needs safely and effectively during the school day.

Please be aware that it is the responsibility of parents and carers to inform the school of any changes to their child's physical or emotional health needs, including any external support such as CAMHS, counselling services, therapy or other medical professionals, and to provide updated and accurate information when required. Without this information, the school may be limited in its ability to fully support your child.

IHCP forms and further information about how the school supports students with medical and emotional health needs can be found on our website at:

[St Mary's Catholic School - Medical Needs](#)

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us to maintain a safe, caring and supportive environment for all students. Thank you for your continued support.

Notices

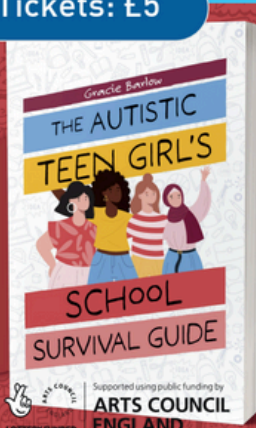
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The Autistic Teen's Survival Guide

An exclusive talk and Q&A with author **Gracie Barlow**


Saturday 7 February, 1.30pm - 3.00pm
Bishop's Stortford Library

Tickets: £5



Super helpful advice on learning, communicating, being yourself and making friends

SCAN FOR TICKETS



100 years Hertfordshire County Council Libraries Service 1925-2025

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Family Lives Online Programme Spring 2026

Less Shouting, More Cooperation (6 weeks)
Tuesday 20th January to 3rd March, 7.00pm to 9.00pm
 Do you feel you are constantly nagging or shouting at your child to get what you need? Learn how you can change the way you communicate with your child, respond better, and feel more in control.

Monday 9th February to 23rd March, 9.45am to 11.45am
 Do you feel you are constantly nagging or shouting at your child to get what you need? Learn how you can change the way you communicate with your child, respond better, and feel more in control.

Less Shouting, More Cooperation (6 weeks)

Dads Together (6 weeks)
Wednesday 4th February to 18th March, 7.00pm to 9.00pm
 Calling all Dads - join our free online group, come along and receive support from other dads and learn how to change the way you communicate with your child, respond better and feel more in control.

Tuesday 3rd February to 17th March, 7.00pm to 9.00pm
 Is your teen feeling anxious or isolated? Are you concerned about their mental health and struggling to get help? You may have an FFA, CIN, or CP in place and need more support. Learn how parents can best emotionally support their teen and feel confident and prepared for whatever challenges might arise.

Getting on with Your Pre-teen or Teenager (6 weeks)

For more information, call **0204 522 8700/8701**, email services@familylives.org.uk or scan the QR code for our online form.

We build better family lives together

www.familylives.org.uk

[@familyliveshertsandbeds](https://www.facebook.com/familyliveshertsandbeds)

Funded by Hertfordshire County Council

Family Lives is registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales No. 3817762. Registered charity No.1077722. Registered address: The Annex York House, Salisbury Square, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5AD

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