



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL HEADLINES

FRIDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2026



Dear St Mary's Community,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you in week four of this half term, reflecting on the wonderful events that have already taken place and looking ahead to all that awaits us. Our annual Open Evening was a truly special occasion that filled me with immense pride as Head Teacher. The evening provided a vibrant showcase of our school community, with visits across Science, Maths, Design and Technology, Religious Education, Art and all our subject areas. Our students' work and learning were presented with such engagement and interactivity that our visitors were able to experience firsthand the quality of education we provide. I must extend particular thanks to our student guides and Sixth Form students who supported the evening, along with our departmental helpers. Their exemplary conduct, warmth and evident pride in our community were a tremendous testament to St Mary's.

Last Thursday, we were honoured to welcome Bishop Paul McAleenan to celebrate our Year 7 Dedication welcome Mass of enrolment. It was a wonderful evening for our families and Year 7 students as they formally begin their educational journey with us. The Mass was deeply prayerful, and the liturgy was beautifully enhanced by our highly talented musical groups, expertly led by Ms Matthews, Ms Wojcik and Mrs Russell. A particular highlight was the commissioning of ten of our Sixth Form students as Eucharistic Ministers during the Mass. This was a tremendous example of service and student leadership, and we are immensely proud of them.

In this edition, you will find the responses we received from our annual parent survey last July, along with the actions we have taken forward as a result. Your feedback is invaluable to us, and we remain committed to ensuring our home school liaison continues to keep you fully informed and updated as partners in education. We respect and are always responding to your feedback to ensure we are doing all we can to support your child in their educational journey.

I would also like to thank all our families for their wonderful support of Education Sunday. The photographs and contributions from the range of different parishes represented in our community are truly wonderful, and I have included a selection for you to see in this edition.

Finally, I encourage you to click on the link to our Autumn Term Trust newsletter, which highlights the achievements of all the schools in our Trust and the collaborative work we undertake together. I am particularly proud of our Trust Speak Out Challenge winners and our summer term exam success. Do take a moment to see our Head Pupil team, who adorn the front cover!

Wishing you a restful and relaxing weekend.

God Bless,

Deirdre McHugh

Dates for the Diary

Friday 2nd October
Sixth Form Retreat

Monday 5th October
Cross Trust Feast Day Mass
and Celebrations

Thursday 8th October
Flu Vaccinations

GO 4 Schools

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



The Autumn edition of the Trust newsletter, Messenger is now available on our website at www.stfrancistrust.net/trust-news or via our publication page on [Issuu](#).

A Catholic Community dedicated to achieving excellence for all

The Chaplaincy Team – Living our Faith

*“In simplicity of our hearts joyfully giving all to God”
Sisters of St. Mary of Namur*

Prayer intention requests

We are a community that prays for one another. Please click [here](#) or scan the QR code to submit a prayer request.



Our Parish News

Stay connected with news from our parish, click [here](#) or scan the QR code to find latest mass times and newsletters.



Living Liturgically Together

As we continue through Ordinary Time, we can think about how our families can live liturgically through these next few weeks and grow in our faith together. On **29th September** we celebrate the Feast of St Michael the Archangel. On this day, you could all say a family prayer, asking St Michael to protect, guide and give you strength for the days ahead.

On **1st October** we celebrate the Feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux. Perhaps do a small act of kindness as a family, following her example of showing love in simple ways.

On **2nd October** we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. You could say a prayer together, thanking God for His protection and guidance.

On **9th October** we celebrate St John Henry Newman. Perhaps read about his life together and pray for guidance in our own faith journeys. These feasts give us opportunities to grow closer to God as a family.

Let us continue to live out our faith together at home and grow our love for God more every day.

Written by Lisa (8J)

Key Catholic Dates

In School

- Friday 2nd October – Sixth Form Retreat
- September-October – Welcome Liturgies in the School Chapel
- Friday 23rd October – Year 7 retreat

In the Parish

Saturday 26th September - AppleFest. St Elizabeth's Centre is running AppleFest again this year. Click [here](#) for further information.

Saturday 6th March – Flame 2027. FLAME is an event which takes place every two-three years and is the largest gathering of Catholic Young People in the country. Tickets can be purchased for £30 by speaking to Sophie Sullivan at St. Joseph's or emailing bstortfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk. Year 9+ you won't want to miss it.



EDUCATION SUNDAY



We were delighted to see so many of our students representing St Mary's at Mass for Education Sunday. It was wonderful to see them proudly wearing their school uniform and taking an active part in the life of our parish communities.

Their presence was a lovely reminder of the strong connection between our school, our families and our parish. We are incredibly proud of the way our students represented St Mary's, showing respect, confidence and a real sense of belonging to our Catholic community.

A huge thank you to all the students and families who took the time to join us and celebrate Education Sunday together.



MOBILE PHONE FREE SCHOOL

The Department for Education expects all schools to operate as mobile phone-free environments, with mobile phones and smart devices not being used at any point during the school day.

In line with this expectation, and to strengthen our existing mobile phone policy, we are making our expectations absolutely clear.

Students are not permitted to use mobile phones when on school site. Students are expected to ensure that their mobile phone is switched off and securely stored in their school bag from the moment they arrive on the school site in the morning until they leave at the end of the school day. Phones must not be used, seen or accessed during this time.

Sixth Form: Students may only use their phones within the Sixth Form Study Centre or where they have been given explicit permission by a member of staff. Where permission is granted, the phone must be used only for the agreed purpose and under the teacher's ongoing supervision.

These expectations have been communicated clearly to all students through presentations and assemblies at the start of the academic year. Students are also reminded of the school's mobile phone expectations each morning during registration and a sign in each classroom.

We are committed to maintaining an environment that supports learning, wellbeing and safeguarding, and we recognise that limiting smartphone use plays an important role in achieving this.

Some schools across Hertfordshire have chosen to prohibit smartphones entirely from the school site. While this approach was considered, we believe it would currently disadvantage a significant proportion of our students, particularly because train and bus companies no longer provide physical termly or annual travel passes. Our approach therefore ensures that students can continue to carry their phones for travel and safety purposes, while making it clear that they must not be used during the school day.

We would also like to remind parents and carers that, should you need to contact your child during the school day in an emergency, you must do so via the Front Office on 01279 654 901. This enables us to respond appropriately while ensuring that our safeguarding and pastoral procedures are maintained.

Similarly, if your child needs to contact you during the school day, they will be able to do so through the Student Hub. We ask for your full support in reinforcing these expectations at home. The policy will be applied consistently, and students are expected to comply with these requirements at all times.



NETBALL SUPERSTAR

Congratulations to Mai M (Y10) who was a star player in the London Mavericks U15 Netball squad who were crowned 2026 School Games Champions.

We are so proud of our superstar!



Key Strengths

Strong Relationships and School Ethos

- Parents consistently describe the school as welcoming, caring and supportive.
- Staff are recognised for helping students settle, grow in confidence and achieve success.
- Strong Catholic ethos and sense of community are valued by many families.

Student Happiness, Safety and Personal Development

- The majority of parents report that their child is happy, feels safe and enjoys attending school.
- Parents value the wide range of enrichment activities, clubs, trips and leadership opportunities available to students.
- Strong praise was given for pastoral support, SEND identification and support for individual needs.

Quality of Teaching and Staff Commitment

- Many parents highlighted the dedication of teachers and support staff.
- Parents praised departments including Science and Music, and acknowledged the support provided during examinations and transitions.
- Students are perceived to be making good progress and are well prepared for future education and careers.

Key Themes for Improvement

- Communication with parents.
- Clarity of systems regarding behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Quality and consistency of teaching.
- SEND support and communication.
- Student wellbeing and pastoral care.
- Extra-curricular activities and trips.
- Operational and site issues.



Priority Actions

1. Create a Parent Communication Charter and email response standards.
2. Review bullying, safeguarding and student support procedures.
3. Improve communication around trips, events, fixtures and detentions.
4. Strengthen SEND communication and parent engagement.
5. Develop wellbeing and counselling support pathways for students.
6. Enhance reporting with more qualitative teacher feedback.
7. Review affordability and accessibility of trips and enrichment.

