



NEWSLETTER

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast
Monday 16th December 2024

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WELCOME!

Dear St. Mary's Family,

As the Christmas break approaches, it is a joy to reflect on the many wonderful moments we've shared this term. The air around school has been filled with the sound of carols as the children have been working so hard to perfect their lines and songs for the nativities.

Last week, our Key Stage 1 children delighted us with their beautiful retelling of the Christmas Story, and this week we look forward to being equally inspired by our youngest children in Meldon and our Key Stage 2 students. We are especially blessed that our **Key Stage 2 concert will take place in the stunning setting of Buckfast Abbey**. Aren't we so lucky to have access to such a magnificent and sacred space to celebrate the season together?

I also wanted to share a special invitation to the **Christmas Eve Mass**, which Father Francis will be celebrating at 6 pm at Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Petroc in Ashburton. This family Mass is a wonderful opportunity for all children from St. Mary's to join together on this most holy night. Children will have the chance to read and join in with carols, making it a truly memorable and meaningful celebration.

Our **Breakfast and After School Club**—the Early Bird and Superstars Clubs—has been a fantastic success so far, welcoming 22 children over the past two weeks. We're thrilled to offer this support to our families and look forward to seeing the clubs grow. For bookings, please log in to ParentPay.

Another exciting development this term has been our library, now set up in its new location. The next step is to make it a warm, inviting space with soft furnishings and displays, ensuring it becomes a much-loved hub for all our children.

This term has truly been a busy and productive one. We have welcomed **16 new children** across nearly all year groups, and it has been wonderful to see them settle in so well. To all our families, both new and long-standing, thank you for your continued support in making St. Mary's such a special place.

As we prepare to pause and reflect over the holidays, I want to thank our incredible staff, children, and families for their hard work, kindness, and dedication this term. On behalf of everyone at St. Mary's, I wish you a very **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year** filled with peace, joy, and blessings.

With warmest wishes,
Mrs. Sophie Kerswell

Interim Headteacher

Prayer Focus

"May the joy of the Gospel be always in our hearts, especially this Christmas." Pope Francis

<https://www.paperturn-view.com/wednesday-word/leader?pid=MTA101634&v=155.3>


For parents / carers new to St Mary's this term, each week we invite families to look at a publication called 'The Wednesday Word' which can be accessed from this link.

Each week it considers the Gospel reading for Sunday and picks out a key word for that week, based on the message of the Gospel. This week, the word that has been chosen is '**Visitors**'.

Wednesday 18th December **Good News for Families TOGETHER TIME** 🤗🤗🤗

1 Enjoy reading the Gospel

Mary had been told by an angel that she was to give birth to a son named Jesus. When she heard that her cousin, Elizabeth, was also going to have a baby, she went as quickly as she could to visit Elizabeth. Mary went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a loud cry and said to Mary, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For as soon as your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed are you for believing the promise made to you by the Lord."



From the Gospel of Sunday 22nd December 2024 - Luke 1: 39-44 (the 4th Sunday of Advent, Year C)

Which words stood out for you in this Gospel, and why? What does the picture make you think about? Enjoy exploring this Wednesday's word, which is **VISITORS**.



Dear Lord Jesus, please help us to see all **visitors** to our home this Christmas as special people who are loved by you. Amen.



Christmas Masses in Buckfast Abbey Parish.

This year we are once again offering a Christmas Mass in the early evening of Christmas Eve which we hope will be an attractive option for families with children. Mass will begin at 6 p.m. in the church of Our Lady of Lourdes & St. Petroc in East Street, Ashburton, TQ13 7AT. Children will be most welcome to sing or read for us; if they arrive at 5.30 p.m., they will be able to have a little practice. It will be a great help if you tell us you're coming; email parish@buckfast.org.uk

The other Christmas Masses in the Parish are:

December 24 th	
Midnight	Buckfast Abbey
December 25 th	
9 a.m.	South Brent TQ10 9AQ
9 a.m.	Buckfast Abbey
10 a.m.	Buckfastleigh TQ11 0AJ
11 a.m.	Buckfast Abbey

St. Mary's Team

At St Mary's we have a large team of adults working throughout the school and each week we will explain who is who, and their roles at St. Mary's.

This week, we introduce our **WONDERFUL Admin, Caretaker, Mealtime Assistants, Speech and Language Support and School Counsellor.**



Mrs Laura Vallance
Senior Administrative Officer



Mrs Ania Walker
Administrative Assistant



Mrs Donna Bright
Mealtime Assistant and BASC Lead



Mrs Linda Collins
Mealtime Assistant



Mr Logan Berry
Caretaker

Mrs Sarah Knight

School Counsellor



Mrs Ros Sleath

Speech and Language Support

Additionally, we have a great many volunteers who give up their time to support our children, particularly with their reading. I would like to extend my warmest thank you to the following volunteers who have given up their time this term to support our children to be the best that they can be!

Thank you to:

Christine Carnelley, Sarah, Wendy, John, Rachel, Christine Marshall, Christine Elston, Judith, Sophie and Rebecca. Enjoy a well-earned rest this Christmas!

School News!

Catholic Life and Mission.

The Catholic Life of St. Mary's - December Reflections

As we journey through the holy season of Advent, the Catholic Life of our school has been filled with faith, service, and joy, reflecting the values we hold dear at St. Mary's.

Our Mini Vinnies have been shining examples of compassion in action. With the guidance of Rachel Ellacott and Wendy Straw, they baked delicious cakes and hosted a delightful tea for parishioners from our three Churches. The Mini Vinnies warmly served tea, cakes, and conversation, creating a wonderful atmosphere of community and fellowship.

Whole school efforts also contributed to a good cause, raising over £100 for Children in Need through their "Brighten our Day" theme, where children donned cheerful, colourful clothing to spread joy.

Our school choir has been sharing the true meaning of Christmas far and wide. They beautifully opened the Buckfastleigh Christmas Market with a selection of carols that captivated the audience. Following this, our older choir members visited the residents of Redmount Residential Home, bringing festive cheer through song and conversation. This enriching experience fostered connections across generations, leaving a lasting impact on both the children and the residents.

We began Advent with Crib Blessings in all our Parish Churches, a spiritual and uplifting way to prepare our hearts for Christmas. Our KS2 children led these services with heartfelt readings and music, which they had prepared with care and dedication. These moments of reflection were greatly appreciated by everyone who joined us.

Our younger children in KS1 brought the Nativity story to life with their natural charm and enthusiasm. Their singing, acting, and storytelling captivated us all, reminding us of the wonder of Christ's birth. Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate our Meldon Christmas Celebration (for our 3-5-year-olds) in the school hall, Monday 16th 2pm and Tuesday 17th December 9:30am. This is followed by our Key Stage 2 Christmas Celebration at Buckfast Abbey on Wednesday 18th December 2pm.

Finally, we are excited to close the term with our last Family Café of the year on Friday, 20th December, which coincides with Christmas Jumper Day in support of Save the Children. Families are welcome to join us for tea, coffee, and fellowship, and any contributions of cakes or biscuits would be greatly appreciated. Children will be joining in with their own Christmas activities in class and are invited to wear their festive jumpers and bring a £1 donation.

As we reflect on these wonderful events, we thank our entire school community for coming together in faith and joy this Advent. May the spirit of Christmas continue to brighten our lives and guide us into the New Year.

Mrs Sophie Kerswell - RE and Catholic Life Lead.

Reminders and information:

Please can you ensure that your child or children in your care **WALK** down and up our hill and **stick to the path**. We have had lots of nasty falls over the years, and running contributes to this. Thank you.

Wrap around Childcare.

Exciting News: Breakfast and After School Club Open!

We are delighted to announce that our Breakfast and After School Club—**Early Birds and Superstars**—is officially open!

Our offerings:

- **Breakfast Club:** 7:30 am – 8:30 am

- Pre-booked price: £4 (book by 3:30 pm the previous day)
- Ad hoc bookings (on the day): £5

- **After School Club:** 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Pre-booked prices: £6 (3:30 pm – 5:00 pm) and £4 (5:00 pm – 6:00 pm)

- Ad hoc bookings (on the day): £7 (3:30 pm – 5:00 pm) and £5 (5:00 pm – 6:00 pm)



How to book:

All bookings must be made through **ParentPay**. If your child is new to the club, please ensure you complete the preliminary registration forms before their first session.

We look forward to welcoming your children to Early Birds and Superstars!

Collection Arrangements for Key Stage Two

We kindly request that all families and friends collecting children in **Key Stage Two (ages 7-11)** wait either outside in the **playground** or in the **enclosed porch area** until 3:30 pm, which is when the KS2 school day finishes.

This arrangement helps to:

- Reduce the significant number of people gathering in the foyer and narrow corridors, which poses a fire and congestion hazard.
- Minimise distractions for teachers and children still in class.
- Maintain a quieter environment for our admin team, who are busy taking calls and supporting the KS1 collection process.

If you are collecting a **KS1 child at 3:15 pm** and then waiting for your KS2 child to finish at 3:30 pm, we kindly ask that you wait in the playground or porch area.

Alternatively, you may choose to collect both your KS1 and KS2 children at **3:30 pm**, which would save waiting time and streamline the process—just a brief wait for your KS2 child.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation and support in ensuring a safe, calm, and organised collection for all. 😊

Hair and Jewellery:

We are still seeing many children with hair down and wearing jewellery. Please could all children, with hair touching their shoulders or longer, have their hair tied back. Please could jewellery be left at home. A pair/one single stud may be worn in the ears and then will need covering up for PE.

Primary School Applications NOW OPEN

for September 2025!



If your child has a birth date between 1st

September 2020 and 31st August 2021, then you will need to apply for a place for their primary school place by Wednesday January 15th 2025.

Here is the link to do this;

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/apply-for-a-school-place/apply-for-a-primary-school-place/>

If you wish to discuss options for primary schooling, including places in our nursery or in year applications, then please email Mrs Ania Walker at admin@st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk to arrange a more in depth chat or visit.

Message from our Pop Star Parent Mac Robinson!

Here are the details of the Christmas single in aid of the Fishermen's Mission that I have just released together with my songwriting partner Nick Axford.

'Andrew's Song (The Night that Christ Was Born)' imagines that the disciple Andrew might have been a young boy on his father's fishing boat when he saw the Star of Bethlehem, and only realised its significance years later.

The video is available on YouTube, and the song is on all of the usual streaming sites - Spotify, Apple iTunes, YouTube Music etc.

If you can have a listen, and enjoy it, and consider whether there is a way of sharing it? Give our boat 'a little shove into the water'?! It would really help our work with the Mission this Christmas. The lyrics are at the bottom of this email.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF05I8I5IhA>

All proceeds go to the Fisherman's Mission this Christmas.

[Make a donation to the Fishermen's Mission](#)

Best wishes- Mac Robinson (Father of Jonathan)

Christmas Events this week- Dates for your diary.

- **Venford** Abbey Christmas Angel Morning- Thursday 19th December 9:15 am. Children only event- £3.
- **Fernworthy** Year 4-Abbey Wise Men Morning- Friday 20th December 9:15am. Children only event - £3.
- **KS2 Christmas Concert** -Buckfast Abbey Main Church. Roadford, Fernworthy and Burrator: Wednesday 18th December 2pm
- **Meldon Christmas Nativity:** Monday 16th December 2p.m., Tuesday 17th December 9:30 a.m- St Mary's School Hall (2 performances of the same nativity).
- **Christmas Jumper Day** – (Festive outfits) – for our children. £1 donation to Save the Children.
- **Christmas Jumper Day Café for families and friends-** Friday 20th December 8:45-10:00am



Safeguarding

Within schools, staff work in accordance with the government document called "Keeping Children Safe in Education". This document is updated each year and staff take part in refresher training to ensure they are aware of the most current legislation.

If a staff member has concerns about a child, they must report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). At St Mary's, the DSL is Mrs Kerswell and the Deputy Designated Leads who are responsible in Mrs Kerswell's absence are Mrs Jessica Hutchinson and Mrs Kayleigh Teeder.



The contact details for all the above personnel are displayed prominently throughout the school. Buckfastleigh Food Bank offer help to local families who may need extra support at this time. Their website is: <https://buckfastleigh.foodbank.org.uk> As well as offering food parcels, the Food Bank can also signpost people for help and support with their finances.

Congratulations!

Each Friday, our school comes together to celebrate the achievements of our children over the past week. "Building Learning Power" (BLP) Certificates are awarded to children who have demonstrated excellent learning behaviours and "Witness of the Week" (WOW) certificates for demonstrating Gospel values in daily life. We also celebrate achievements outside school that our children want to share in assembly.

Well done to the following children who were awarded certificates in today's and last week's Achievement Assembly.

	BLP	WOW
Meldon	Blake, Evie	Erin, Arlo
Venford	Freddie, Reeva	Frankie, Riley
Avon	Wilfred, Mason	Edward, Anya
Roadford	Aisha, Adeline	Aubrey, Rebecca
Fernworthy	Thomas, Ayrton	Toby, Frazer
Burrator	Libby, Maria	Inigo, Charlie B



Times Tables Stars: Aisha, Oscar, Harry, Nevaeh and Jack.

Achievements Outside of School: Oscar – Netball Trophy and Aisha – Swimming!



Our choir, sharing complete joy and excitement on meeting 'The Grinch!'.
Buckfastleigh Christmas Fayre 2024.