

“ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me to be a safe, happy, proud, loving person who flourishes in life. ”



Our belonging prayer

God,
You have created us as unique individuals in your image
with our own gifts and talents.
Each of us belongs to our school community
where everyone is included and able to flourish
Help us to recognise your light in others,
so that we might let our own light shine brightly
Amen



Welcome!

It has been a fantastic start to the academic year 2023-24. A very warm welcome to all our new Year 7 and 12 parents and carers and new staff. We are delighted that you are part of the St. Mary's community.

Our term began on the theme of belonging. On their first day in school the new Year 7 pupils took part in a liturgy led by Mrs Benson and Deacon Paul, and during the first week Mrs Brahms led assemblies with the other year groups. All assemblies and form times now begin with the school's new belonging prayer, which was developed by a group of pupils last year, and expresses the importance of belonging to the school community and valuing individuals within it. Mrs Brahms talked about the importance of feeling that we belong and of helping others to feel the same, and gave pupils some ideas for putting that into practice, a theme picked up again in Week 2 with assemblies based on Jesus' instruction to love our neighbour.

Meanwhile, planning and preparations are already getting under way for the Year 7 Welcome Mass on 28th September, and Year 12 pupils are being invited to step up and become CAFOD Young Leaders.

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Ordinary time of the Church

Breakfast club is starting!

Monday 11th September at 7.45am, Reset kitchen

Miss Henson will be running Breakfast club from Monday morning next week. This will run every morning and everyone is welcome. Feel free to come along for breakfast and a chat.

It's a great way to start your day!



Congratulations

We are extremely proud of our Year 10 student Emma who was selected for a 2 day England camp and attended over the summer at Loughborough University. Well done Emma!



Co-Curricular Round Up:

The full co-curricular programme will be advertised at the start of next week. There is an extensive offer across a number of different subjects on different days that should appeal to a wide audience. We will share the full programme on our school website and social media platforms and posters will be visible around school. If there are any queries regarding details of the provision please do not hesitate to contact school. We will be running a Co-curricular Fair for Year 7 students in the coming weeks to allow them to ask staff members any questions they have.

There are some exciting events coming up in the next term including the Year 7 choir that will be performing at the Welcome Mass on September 28th, a Climate Change Group that will be taking part in a conference in October. The football, netball and rugby leagues will also start in the next few weeks.

Confucius Classroom

St Mary's is extremely proud and privileged to promote the learning of Mandarin focussing on enhancing culture capital in our school community. St Mary's is host to the only independent Confucius Classroom in England- enriching the lives of our students and providing students with invaluable experiences on their school journey. Students engage with knowledge and practice of Tai chi, Chinese calligraphy, travel and tourism and film. The culture rich curriculum content is delivered by our enthusiastic, native practitioners building positive diverse culture both in our school and in the wider community.

The introduction of GCSE Chinese language lessons immerses students in learning the world's most widely spoken language whilst acquiring unique qualifications.

St Mary's is a Catholic school focussed on developing the character of all students through inclusivity, and Mandarin encourages the freedom for our pupils to thrive and flourish.

The Confucius classroom not only assists pupils on their transition to high school but also the growth and evolution of pupils on their post -18 journeys.

Are you entitled to Free School Meals

If, as a parent or carer, you are in receipt of certain benefits your child could be entitled to free school meals.

Information regarding eligibility can be found at:

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Benefit-Grants/Free-school-meals.aspx>

If you think you may now be entitled please complete the form below and return it to school and we will process your application:

[Free School Meal Application Form](#)

We would encourage all parents/carers who qualify for FSM to apply even if your child prefers packed lunch as Free School Meals entitlement brings additional funding into school to support academic progress.

Information from Wigan Council Regarding SEND Survey 2023

Wigan Council have asked us to share that the SEND Survey 2023 is now live. They have developed two surveys – one for parents/carers and one for children and young people, to find out about their experiences and views, as well as feedback on how they can continue to improve SEND services within the Wigan Borough.

The surveys will remain open until October 31st.

Here are the links...

To the main engagement platform... [Project: Special Education Needs \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#)

To the parents/carers specific survey... [Project • The Big SEND Survey - parents and carers \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#)

To the CYP specific survey... [Project • The Big SEND Survey - Children and Young People \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#)

New-to-You Uniform Facility at St Mary's

A reminder that we operate a school uniform #NewtoYou facility in school which is available to all of our families. If your child requires some uniform during the term time, their Head of Year will escort them to the uniform shop to see if we can help them out – free of charge!

We are always happy to receive any good quality second hand uniform from families once their children are leaving St Mary's for pastures new, this ensures that our #NewtoYou facility is stocked up throughout the school year to assist new families joining us.

Whilst donations for #NewtoYou uniform are welcome to aid our School Fund, they are not essential.

The leaflet features the NHS logo and the text 'Starting a new school?'. It includes a checklist with items like 'Buy uniform', 'Get school shoes', and 'Check primary school jobs are up to date'. Below the checklist, it lists 'Primary school jobs include: Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio (DTaP1 vaccine)', 'Measles, mumps and rubella (second dose of MMR)'. At the bottom, there are two QR codes for 'MMR for all looked after children' and 'Immunisations for young people', along with the website 'www.nhs.uk/vaccinations'.

Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) Catch Up Immunisation Programme

The NHS Foundation Trust School Nurse Immunisation Team have, over the summer been liaising with parents of young people in Years 8-11 who are outstanding one or both doses of the MMR vaccine. Those identified have been posted MMR Immunisation consent packs to their home address. The School Nursing Team have asked that we remind parents that if they

have received a pack to please return the signed consent forms to school in the envelope provided.

The team routinely visits school over the course of the academic year to deliver Year 10 booster immunisations and Year 8 HPV vaccinations and they plan to administer the outstanding MMR vaccinations alongside these

Year 11 & Year 12 Support Evening

We invite our Year 11 and Year 12 Parents and Carers to our Support Evenings on Thursday 21st September.

The Year 11 session will start at 5.00pm and will be in the Lower School Hall (accessed via the main gate).

The Year 12 session will start at 6.00pm and will be in the Drama Theatre (accessed via the sixth form gate). This will be an opportunity to outline expectations for students, explain the support offered to them and how parents/carers can help their child progress.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Spotlight on...Science

We would like to welcome all of our pupils back to school from their summer holidays. In particular our new Year 7 students who are completing their **Introduction to Science Investigations** unit. We have been completing a range of experiments to help us test out scientific ideas such as *if the size of an object affects the speed it falls*. We have also used our investigations to provide explanations for why penguins huddle together in the wild and the advantages this provides.



In Year 10 our pupils have started their KS4 science journey and now have three Science teachers (Biology, Chemistry and Physics). In Biology we are looking at cells, the basic building blocks of life and how they can be specialised to do a variety of jobs. In Chemistry we are studying atoms, elements, mixtures and compounds and will be doing practical work to see how we can separate mixtures. In Physics we are looking at the structure of an atom and alpha, beta and gamma radiation. Our teacher has also given a demonstration using radioactive sources including all the rules to keep us safe.



We are delighted that so many of last year's Y11 have decided to study Science with us in Year 12. In Biology we are looking at all the sub-cellular structures we didn't even know exist up until this week! In Applied Human we are looking at the biological molecules that make up living organisms and will be completing practical work on how to test for them. In Chemistry we are exploring the structure of electron subshells to the amazement of our new students. In Physics we are exploring the fantastic properties that materials have that allow us to use them for different jobs!

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Reading for Pleasure at St Mary's



There are plenty of benefits for those who enjoy curling up with a book. A report carried out recently for The Reading Agency revealed convincing evidence that reading for pleasure can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing throughout life as well as building academic progress. Here at St Mary's we want all of our young people to be able to flourish in life, and reading is a key to the door of success. We work hard to create a strong reading culture and foster a love of reading in all of our students. Reading is built effectively into every subject, but reading for pleasure also takes place in lots of other ways. Here are just some of the opportunities we offer:

Library Lessons – all Year 7 and 8 students have a timetabled library lesson once a fortnight where they get to develop their library skills and spend time reading for pleasure. We will also ensure that students in older year groups have the opportunity once per half term to choose/ swap their library book during English Lessons.

Author Visits and Special Events – we regularly organise author visits (virtually and in person) so that students get the chance to speak to the creators of some fabulous stories and learn more about the writing process. We also celebrate key events such as World Book Day in style!

Class Readers – All Key Stage 3 students get the opportunity to read for pleasure for the first 10 minutes of every English Lesson.

Form Time Reading – we read for pleasure and build key reading skills in form time once per week too!

Sparx Reader – we have been chosen to be a pilot school for a brand-new online library initiative produced by the company who make Sparx Maths. Students will soon have the opportunity to access thousands of books and track how much reading for pleasure they are completing – certificates and rewards will be regularly given out for those students who increase their reading for pleasure.

Reading for pleasure at home:

Here are some ideas you can use to encourage more reading for pleasure at home -

- Help your child build a reading routine – even ten minutes a day would be a great start.
- Talk to your child about the things they are reading at school.
- Let your child choose what to read, rather than choosing what you think they should read.
- Encourage your child to read magazines, comics, newspapers and the internet as well as books.
- Talk to your child about books or magazines you haven't enjoyed, as well as things you love.
- Make time to read together if you can. You could read different things and then talk about them.
- Buy books as presents. Don't forget TV tie-ins and books about interests such as computer games or bands.

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Year 7 Mass of Welcome – 28th September 2023



We are excited to invite our Year 7 pupils with their parents and carers to their Mass of Welcome, which will take place at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Leigh, at 7.00pm 28th September 2023.

This is an important event on a Year 7's journey at St. Mary's and an opportunity to join together in prayer as a community. Our Music Department has been working hard to make sure that there will be beautiful music to help our celebrations and the RE department have been preparing the pupils for the Mass. We look forward to seeing parents and carers of Year 7 at this event.

I enjoyed the Welcome Mass because I felt welcome to this school and prepared for my first year of high school.
Year 8 pupil reflecting on last year's Mass



School Standards & Expectations

Thank you for taking the time to read the Pupil Code of Conduct (https://stmaryschs.org.uk/docs/policies/Pupil_Code_of_Conduct.pdf) and signing the home school agreement. If you have not yet done so please could you complete on the link below as soon as possible.

<https://forms.office.com/e/QjLEjvxAGG>

Your co-operation with this is much appreciated and we have been impressed by the conduct and high standards demonstrated as we commence the new year school year. As always consistency is key, and we will continue to challenge and reward our pupils.



- As you may be aware the government is driving a national agenda to improve attendance to school. We have been impressed with the return to school this year. We are very aware about the relationship between good attendance, effective learning, and good academic progress. Research has demonstrated that the higher the attendance of a student, the higher their grades are at the end of Year 11/13.
- Attendance above 97% every year in School equals one grade difference across all GCSE grades and increases the chances of students achieving a grade 4 or higher in English and Maths. We expect all our students to aim for 100% attendance as we know that students with high aspiration and attendance go on to achieve better outcomes and live healthier, wealthier, and more enriched lives.
- Students with less than 95% attendance are less likely to achieve those important GCSE grades. Additionally, setting high expectations is vital preparation for each student's life beyond school and the important skill of reliability which all settings require.

How can you help? We ask for the support of our parents/carers in supporting good attendance by:

- Promote positive and healthy attendance patterns with your child and set good bedtime and morning routines.
- Ensure your child attends every day, on time and equipped and ready to learn.
- Ensure school has at least 3 up to date addresses and contact numbers.
- Contact School on the first day of absence by 08.30am to provide a reason for absence.
- Contact the school each day of absence until your child returns.
- If contact is not made the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school is responsible for deciding if the absence is acceptable or not.
- Provide medical evidence for any absence exceeding 5 days (10 sessions) or more.
- Ensure medical appointments are made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child needs to be in school prior to and after the appointment. We will need medical evidence upon their return.
- Holiday requests during term time will not be authorised due to the significant impact on progress. Parents/carers who take their children out of school for a holiday may be issued with a Penalty Notice.
- Contact school if you are experiencing difficulty getting your child to attend school.
- Work with the school and any other agencies of support to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance.

Request leave of absence in term time for exceptional circumstance by following the School https://stmaryschs.org.uk/docs/Leave_of_Absence_Requests.pdf

<https://stmaryschs.org.uk/Attendance/>
Where absence is unavoidable, the School is very happy to ensure that work is provided so that our students do not fall behind in their progress.

0 DAYS OFF 190 DAYS ATTENDED	100%	★ PERFECTION "EXCELLENT ACHIEVEMENT"
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	98%	IMPRESSIVE
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	96%	NEARLY THERE
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	95%	CAN BE IMPROVED "INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF B GRADES"
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	94%	NEEDS TO IMPROV
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	90%	SERIOUS CONCERNS "CLASSED AS A PERSISTENT ABSENTEE" re Education Welfare Service
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	85%	RISK OF PROSECUTION "can be damaging to a student's social, and mental wellbeing"
SCHOOL DAYS OFF EACH YEAR	80%	