

St Mary's

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5 - JANUARY 2026



Year 9 Les Menuires Ski Trip

In January, 50 Year 9 students set off in the early hours for an unforgettable ski adventure in Les Menuires. Despite the sleepy start and a coach journey delayed by heavy snow, the first glimpse of the resort in Les 3 Vallées made it all worthwhile. After collecting equipment and an early night, students were ready to hit the slopes.

The week quickly became a brilliant mix of progress, perseverance and fun. Most students began on the nursery slopes, mastering the essential snowplough before moving on to green and then blue runs, with growing confidence and increasingly impressive parallel turns. Our more experienced skiers made the most of the mountain, tackling red runs, deep powder and even a few black runs. Even the inevitable tumbles couldn't dent the determination on show, and instructors repeatedly praised students' resilience and attitude.

Evenings brought plenty of laughter, from Taskmaster challenges and a hotly contested quiz night to the high-speed thrills of 'La Mine'. A scavenger hunt around the village, finishing with hot chocolate, provided a memorable final evening. The trip ended on a high with ESF badge tests, where students showcased their slalom skills and the progress they had made across the week. Congratulations also go to Mia Sherwood, Ella Harwood and Florence Brown for winning the tidy room competition with immaculate rooms and creative towel art. The 2026 ski trip was a huge success, and Year 9 were, as always, a credit to St Mary's. Well done!

Headteacher's Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are well. We have had a fantastic start to the term, with many enrichment opportunities taking place, including our yearly Ski trip to France.

We have also hosted the Diocesan Inter-Faith Holocaust Memorial Evening and rehearsals are in full swing for our school musical, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Well done to our students for their continued excellent effort in lessons and more widely.

Best wishes,
Miss Patterson, Headteacher.

I Am Because We Are

A group of 28 Year 10 students have taken part in a project called 'I Am Because We Are' in school. This project involves students from a range of schools across Newcastle.

As part of this project, we welcomed Holocaust survivor Dr Martin Stern MBE and Bosnian genocide survivor Smajo Beso to the school. The Year 10 students took part in a powerful and thought-provoking workshop, where they had the opportunity to listen to first-hand experiences and reflect on the importance of remembrance, empathy, and responsibility.

Students also attended a learning conference at the Civic Centre focused on how young people can bring about change and raise awareness around genocide and injustice.

It was a fantastic opportunity and they will be sharing their ideas with the rest of the school in due course. A huge well done to the students involved for taking part so maturely and respectfully in this very meaningful opportunity.



History Lecture

We were delighted to welcome Dr Farr from Newcastle University into school to work with our Year 13 students this term.

During the visit, students took part in a mini-lecture on modern British History, offering a university-style experience that challenged them to think critically, engage with key historical debates, and deepen their understanding beyond the A-Level course. It was a fantastic opportunity for students to hear from an expert in the field, and we are grateful to Professor Dr Farr for giving his time and sharing his expertise.



Aspire to Oxbridge

We were pleased to welcome St Anne's College, University of Oxford into school to deliver an inspiring session for our Year 9 students. The workshop gave students a clear insight into what studying at university is really like, helping them to understand the differences between school and higher education, and what day-to-day academic life can involve. Students also explored the key skills needed to succeed at university. The session encouraged them to think ambitiously about their future options and consider why they might choose to apply to highly competitive universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.



Subject Enrichment

Year 12 students have begun a series of bespoke, subject-specific enrichment sessions designed to help them explore their next steps beyond Sixth Form.

Each session focuses on what related university courses and pathways students might consider, as well as offering mini workshops that give a flavour of what studying that subject at degree level can look like. So far, students have taken part in sessions connected to Fine Art, Philosophy, and Film Studies, with more subjects to follow over the coming weeks.



Theology Lecture

Professor Robert Song from Durham University gave a talk to all Year 13 Core RE students and Year 12 Theology students about the Ethics of AI and its impact both now and in the future.

Professor Song discussed issues around the uniqueness of human beings and how this fits in with a future where AI will impact on so many areas of society. Students were given the opportunity to think about, and reflect upon, all of the benefits of AI, as well as the potential problems it may pose.

Students asked many thoughtful and insightful questions, showing their interest in, and knowledge of, AI and where it may take humankind in the future. It was a pleasure to welcome Professor Robert to our school and to gain insight into his vast stores of knowledge on the Ethics of AI. Students were enthused about the topic discussed, as well as considering Durham University as a future option for their next phase of education. We will be sure to invite Professor Robert back again to speak to our Sixth Form students.



Key Stage 5 STEM Club

Our KS5 STEM Club students recently took part in an excellent specialist session delivered by Newcastle University, combining a lecture and interactive workshop on evolution through DNA.

Students particularly enjoyed the hands-on activities, which brought science to life and encouraged thoughtful discussion.

A real highlight was exploring how skulls have evolved, using evidence and observation to link structure to function and adaptation. It was a fascinating and engaging session, and we are grateful to Newcastle University for providing such an inspiring experience for our students.



Dungeons and Dragons

The Dungeons and Dragons Club meets every Friday after school, made up of a small group of dedicated D&D enthusiasts.

The students have lots of fun playing the world-famous board game, in which players create their own characters and embark on adventures, solving problems, engaging in battles, searching for treasure and gathering knowledge. It is a great way to end the school week.



Boccia

Several students have start playing the ancient game of Boccia (pronounced Bot-cha). With its roots in ancient Greece, Boccia is a sport that is similar to carpet bowls and the French game pétanque, with players throwing balls as close as possible to a jack.

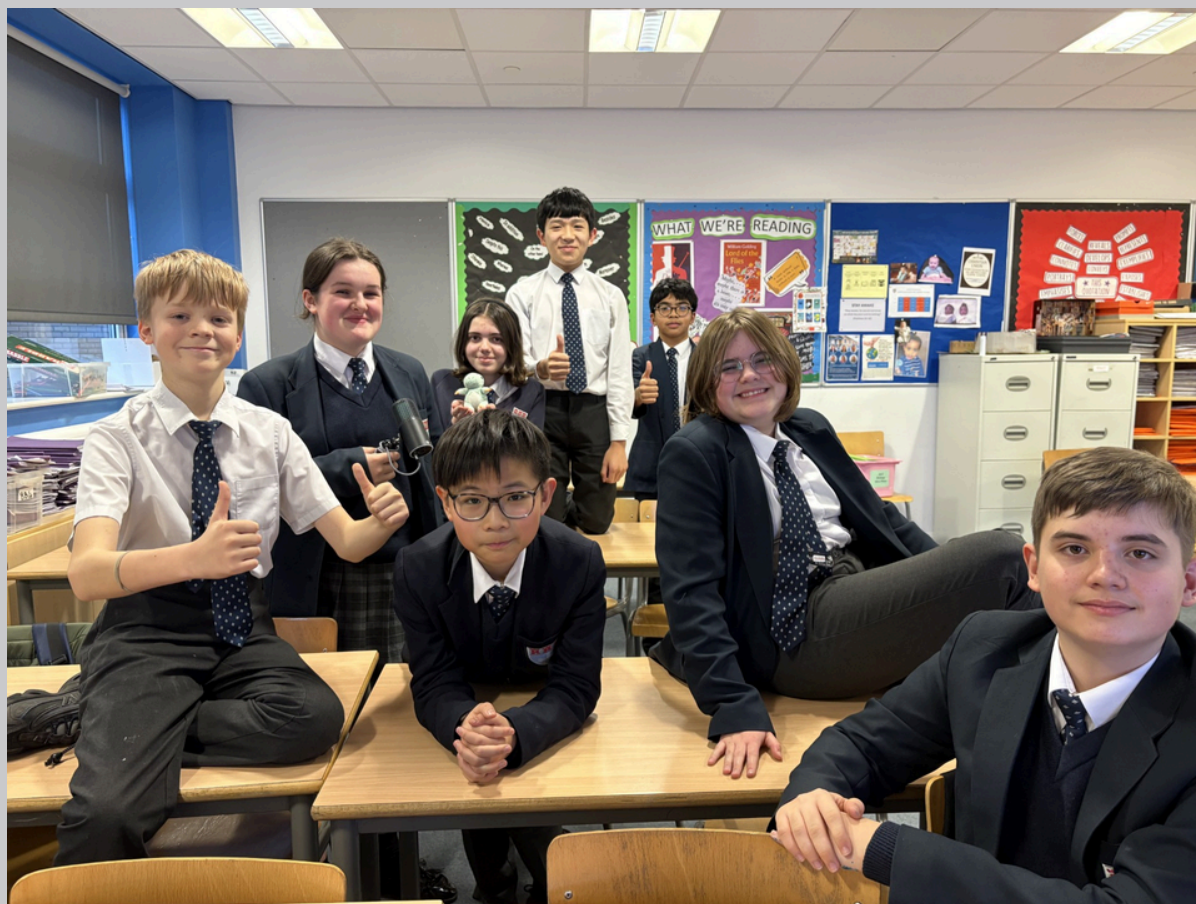
The students in the club have really enjoyed developing their skills. They have also taken part in inter-school competitions.

We very much look forward to hearing how the students progress.



Podcast Club

Students in the Podcast Club have fun producing their own audio programmes on a range of topics, including music, fashion and culture. They work hard planning roles, writing their own scripts and recording each section. Teachers and other students are also often interviewed and asked for their views of specific topics. Podcast Club is very enjoyable, fun way to discuss the topical issues, learn new things and develop skills.



History A Level Master Class

In January, seven Sixth Form students from our A-Level History class joined other students from BBCET schools at a 'History A Level Master Class for achieving A/A* grades' at St Cuthbert's High School.

This day was hosted by David Ferriby, an expert in AQA History A Level, to give students further insights into achieving the A and A* grades in the final examination. The session was very interesting and enjoyed by all students who attended, as well as being highly informative about exam technique. The information is also now being disseminated to all students in their history lessons, to support all of our students with their achievement in the summer exams.



Student Mentoring

Our Sixth Form mentoring programme with Key Stage 3 students has now begun, and it has been fantastic to see it running so positively. Sixth Form students are working with younger students to provide encouragement, organisation tips and academic support to help them thrive in school.

They have made an excellent start; demonstrating patience, maturity and real commitment to helping others. We are proud of how well our mentors have represented the Sixth Form and the positive impact they are already having.



Sixth Form Enrichment Programme

Our Sixth Form Enrichment Programme continues to play a central role in helping students explore their future pathways and build the knowledge and skills needed for life beyond school. Recently, we held an Enrichment Morning where every Year 12 student attended a workshop designed to support their aspirations and broaden their understanding of the opportunities available after Sixth Form.

We were delighted to welcome a range of external partners who delivered engaging, informative sessions. The University of Sunderland led a workshop exploring possible future careers and how students can begin to research and plan their next steps. Representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions spoke to students about roles within the Civil Service, highlighting the variety of routes in, progression opportunities, and the importance of public service. We were also joined by ESH, who led an excellent session on careers in the construction industry, giving students a clear insight into the sector and the wide range of roles involved.



Newcastle Schools Cross Country Championships

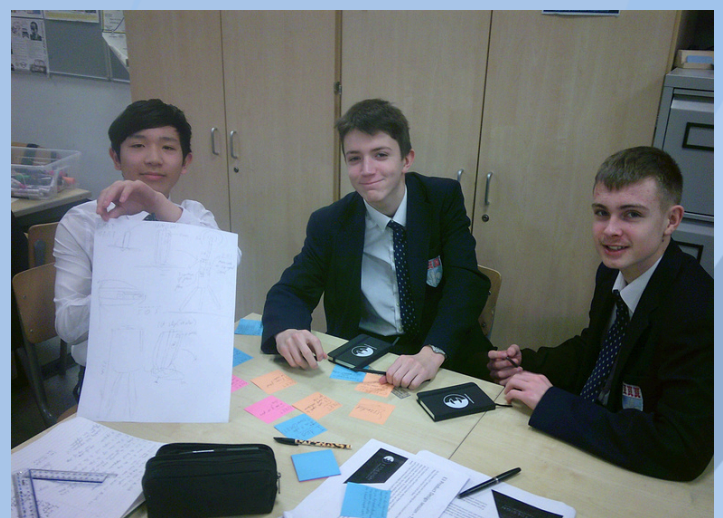
Following their success last term, our Cross Country Athletes again performed exceptionally well at a recent Cross Country event at Temple Park in South Tyneside. Students Isobel McCann, Jack McManus, Tom McCann, Joseph Brown, Arnav Buchepalli and Nyrel Equisse all performed exceptionally well, giving 100% effort on a wet, cold and windy January day.

The students achieved some excellent results and four of the students, Isobel, Jack, Tom and Arnav, qualified for the inter counties Cross Country event where they will represent Northumberland at Sedbergh School in Cumbria in February. We wish these students the very best of luck in the next stage of the competition!

E3 Design Workshop

Year 9 students had the opportunity to meet and work alongside Design Engineers and Product Developers from E3 Design. Students were introduced to a variety of career pathways into the Product Design sector and given a fascinating insight into the work of a Design Development Company. Peter Angus from E3D has over 30 years of experience in the field, working with firms such as the Ministry of Defence, Unilever, P&G and Tommee Tippee. He was able to discuss his most exciting and challenging projects with the group, showing working examples of his products. Hannah Dolman from E3D offered a new perspective on the career as a new graduate from Northumbria University. She was able to bring a fresh approach to design, sharing her innovative ideas with the group.

The students were given a design challenge to produce a design concept for the context of 'Preparing For Emergencies'. In a fast paced task they paired up to produce a concept board and elevator pitch to present to the class. There were some truly outstanding product ideas ranging from wearable security items for women, first response drones, stress relieving products for those with neurodiversity and embedded emergency lighting for hospitals and schools. The students all presented their ideas with clarity and confidence. Marvina, Emily and Wiktorina were crowned the winners of the challenge, walking away with E3D hoodies and hats as their reward!



Samling Institute Academy

On Thursday 22nd January, students from Year 7 to 13 took part in a workshop by Samling Institute Academy for Young Singers. Over the course of the afternoon, pupils discovered more about the world of classical music and performance, learned new techniques to warm-up their voices and maintain vocal health, and methods to improve their sound and projection. We had demonstrations from current Samling Academy students, as well as performances from professional opera singers, soprano Jessica Cale, and tenor Nick Pritchard accompanied by pianist Alfred Fardell.



Two Year 12 students from St Mary's, Evangeline and Daisy, volunteered to do a mini workshop with input from the opera singers, who gave them tips to help improve technique and to make their performances even better. The students who took part were excellent ambassadors for the school, taking part in all activities and asking insightful questions. Well done!

Blood Brothers Workshop

Year 10 and 11 students recently took part in an engaging Blood Brothers workshop delivered by the fantastic theatre company Stage-Ed, and it proved to be an inspiring and memorable experience. The students were led by Mike and Stephen, who themselves played Sammy and Edward on the West End for many years, therefore they were in the best hands to explore their set text in depth. The interactive session brought Willy Russell's powerful play to life, helping students deepen their understanding of the characters, themes, and dramatic techniques studied in class.

Students enthusiastically participated throughout the workshop, showing excellent focus, creativity, and respect. Their thoughtful contributions and mature engagement impressed the workshop leaders, who praised the students for their positive attitude and commitment. The experience not only enriched the students' learning but also highlighted how much of a credit they are to the school. Well done to all involved for making the workshop such a success.





Nissan Plant Tour

Year 12 D&T students recently visited the Nissan Car Plant in Sunderland for a full plant tour. The students donned their PPE and headed on a 3-mile guided tour to see rolls of sheet aluminium and steel be transformed into cars which rolled off the production line and on to the test track.

Students were able to see the 5200-tonne line press forming hundreds of car panels, AGVs transporting materials and components around the plant, welding robots joining panels autonomously, cell manufacturing systems and sub assembly line manufacture.

The tour was fascinating to see and hear as the level of organisation and complexity of the factory was astounding. The Year 12 students will now be able to take this real world experience and use it as tangible examples in their exam responses.

School Games Indoor Athletics Championships

Six students from St Mary's took part in the School Games Indoor Athletics Championships at Temple Park Leisure Centre on 9th January 2026. After winning their previous team event before Christmas, the team went on to represent Newcastle Schools against the top-performing schools across Tyne and Wear.

The students competed in a wide range of indoor athletics events, including standing long jump, vertical jump, speed bounce, chest push, and several shuttle relay races. The atmosphere throughout the afternoon was superb, and the boys showed outstanding effort, determination, and team spirit.

Although St Mary's did not place in the top three overall, the team represented St Mary's and Newcastle brilliantly, demonstrating excellent sportsmanship and pride throughout the competition. Well done to all the students involved: Ryan Price, Runelf Lopez, Jeremiah Kimvula, Tomi Bamidele, Ted Herron, Matthew Williams.



Key dates and events

Friday 13th Feb- Last day before half-term break.

Mon 16th Feb-Fri 20th Feb- Half-term break.

Mon 2nd March, 2.45pm-6.00pm- Year 10 Parents' Evening (in school).