

Headteacher's Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome to the April edition of the St Mary's Newsletter. As always, this newsletter celebrates the wonderful God-given gifts and talents of our fantastic students.

We are also so grateful to our fantastic staff team for providing so many superb experiences for our students, both within school and more widely.

Our Year 13 students began study leave for their summer examinations last week, with Year 11 beginning study leave at May half-term. We wish all of our Year 11 and 13 students much success with their exams and we look forward to celebrating with them on Results Day in the summer break.

Many thanks for your continued support. We appreciate it.

Best wishes,
Miss Patterson, Headteacher.





Year 10 Battlefields Trip

Last term, some of our Year 10 GCSE students took part in a memorable visit to the First World War battlefields of France and Belgium. Between 1914 and 1918, the First World War claimed the lives of an estimated 15-22 million people worldwide, and this trip gave students the opportunity to understand that impact in a reflective way.

In the Somme region of France, students visited key sites including Vimy Ridge, Beaumont Hamel and the Thiepval Memorial. While on the Somme, pupils learned that the first day of battle on 1st July 1916 resulted in nearly 60,000 British casualties, making it the deadliest day in British military history. Exploring preserved trenches at Beaumont Hamel helped students visualise trench warfare and understand the difficulties soldiers faced, from enemy fire to poor conditions. At Thiepval, students reflected on the scale of loss as they learned, from our expert tour guide Tony, that more than 72,000 British and South African soldiers who died in the Somme battles have no known grave and their names are carved into the memorial.

The trip continued on the second day in Belgium, where students visited the Passchendaele Memorial Museum to explore the Battles of Ypres. They discovered how mud, shellfire and gas made fighting in Flanders particularly brutal during 1917. The visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world, was particularly moving. In the afternoon we had a much enjoyed visit to a chocolate shop in Ypres, after going through the preserve trenches of Sanctuary Wood in our wellies - the underground tunnel was a particular highlight!

To conclude our visit, we attended the nightly Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate, which has taken place every evening since 1928 to commemorate the missing of the Ypres Salient. It was a very poignant and fitting end to our trip. Throughout the trip, students behaved impeccably, showing maturity, curiosity and respect. The experience deepened their historical understanding while encouraging empathy, reflection and a lasting appreciation of the human cost of conflict.

Warhammer Club

Every Friday, the Warhammer Club meets in the Art Department. Students spend much time meticulously painting figures, creating unique colour schemes and customizing their imaginary armies. It is a really relaxing way to spend lunchtime, immersing yourself in the creative process and taking time out from busy nature of the school day. It is also a great way to socialise and meet new friends.



Computing Clubs

The Python Computing Club meets on Monday lunchtimes and is open to students in Years 7, 8 and 9. On Tuesday lunchtimes, the Girls Coding Club meets. Both clubs are very popular and well attended by those students with a special interest in programming, which is the process that is used to communicate with computers, turning commands into actions like software, apps and websites.

Recently, Year 10 and Year 11 GCSE Computer Science students Otto Nemeth and Alina Rudzenis participated in the Perse Coding Challenge, which is a national competition open to all schools. Over two round rounds, teams compete against each other and are tested on their ability to solve programming and algorithmic problems. Both Alina and Otto received a Distinction for their efforts in the opening round. A huge well done!



Results Day Information

Year 13 students attended a Results Day and Clearing information session delivered by Northumbria University, helping them understand what to expect over the summer.

Students were given clear guidance on the steps to take on Results Day, including what to do if they need to use Clearing, and where to access support.plan and a better understanding of the opportunities available.



Year 9 Deliver Confident French Presentations

Our Year 9 French students recently impressed us all with a fantastic speaking project. After creating their own television shows in French, students delivered presentations introducing their original characters to the class. The creativity on display was excellent, with a wide range of ideas, genres and personalities brought to life.

Even more impressive was the confidence shown in their spoken French. Students spoke clearly and enthusiastically, demonstrating strong preparation and a growing command of the language. Their performances showed not only imagination, but also real bravery and progress in using French independently. Bravo, Year 9 – très impressionnant!



Employer Experience Sessions

Year 12 students have recently taken part in a series of Employer Experience sessions designed to help them explore future pathways beyond Sixth Form. We welcomed Occupational Therapists and a Primary School teacher, who shared honest insight into their professions, the key skills and qualities needed to succeed, and the different training routes into each career.

Students asked thoughtful questions and gained an understanding of what these roles look like. Alongside this, students were given information about YMT Internships, including how placements can help them test out career ideas, develop employability skills, and strengthen future applications for university or apprenticeships.



St Mary's Students Shine in Regional Reading Champions Quiz

Last half-term, two teams of students from St Mary's competed in the regional qualifier of the National Literacy Trust's Reading Champions Quiz, with the chance to secure a place in the national final in London this May.



Both teams were up against 24 other schools from across the region, and all eight students performed exceptionally well in a challenging and wide-ranging quiz.

Team A achieved an outstanding result, finishing second overall with an impressive 56 out of 75. They were just three points behind the winning team from Burnside College and finished comfortably ahead of many strong schools, including Whitley Bay High, RGS, Dame Allan's, Yarm and Barnard Castle. Each member of Team A will receive £20 in book tokens as a prize for their achievement.

Team B also rose brilliantly to the challenge, tackling some very demanding questions. They finished on 43 points, equal with Hummersknott Academy and Sacred Heart High, and just ahead of RGS B, Dame Allan's A and Yarm B.

Congratulations to all students involved for representing St Mary's so confidently and enthusiastically – a fantastic achievement all round.

Careers Fair

We were delighted to recently host our annual Careers Fair for students in Years 10–13, bringing together over 35 employers, colleges and apprenticeship providers. Throughout the event, students had the opportunity to speak directly with representatives, ask questions, and receive high-quality information, advice and guidance about potential next steps; whether that is university, college, apprenticeships, or employment.

It was fantastic to see students engaging so positively, showing real curiosity and maturity as they explored different pathways and began to reflect on what might suit their interests and strengths. Many students also left with practical advice about applications, entry requirements and how to build experiences over the coming months. We were especially pleased to welcome so many former students back to St Mary's, who generously shared their own journeys and offered insight into life after school. Thank you to everyone who supported the event and helped make it such a valuable experience for our students.



Football achievements

A huge well done to **Alan Mih Achuo** in Year 13 who plays for Newcastle Blue Star Football Club as a junior and Whitley Bay Football Club in the men's team. Whitley Bay reached the cup final and Alan played in this team at St James Park in the Northumberland Senior Cup Final. The team won on penalties and Alan scored his penalty! An amazing achievement.

Furthermore, **Amelia Rowell in Year 7** has been given a new contract at Durham Women's Football Club. Next year, she will play a year above her age in the U14 academy team who play in the Junior Premier League. Another superb achievement.

Autism Acceptance Month

For World Autism Acceptance Month, and the National Autistic Society encourages everyone to take part in a 5K walking challenge to raise awareness of autism. Inspired by this, the SEND department set themselves an ambitious goal of walking 500K over the final week of April. To help reach this target, staff and students came together after school to walk around the school track. It was a wonderful event that gave everyone the chance to reflect on the key themes of Autism Acceptance Month, particularly the importance of acceptance and celebrating both our differences and our strengths.

Students have also had the chance to explore these themes with their form group during tutor time. They listened to the voices of autistic young people and took part in meaningful discussions about inclusion and acceptance. We are proud to have a diverse community where students respect and celebrate one another's differences, and where everyone works together to ensure that all feel valued and included.



Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Students recently visited the Yorkshire Sculpture Park as part of the Arts Award and they were a credit to St Mary's, demonstrating excellent behaviour and manners throughout the day.

All of the students found the trip very inspiring; they particularly enjoyed reviewing and documenting the artwork from a range of artists, including Barbara Hepworth and Damien Hirst. A huge well done to the students involved.



Key dates and events ...

Friday 22nd May-
All students break up for half-term

Monday 1st June-
All students return to school after half-term

Monday 8th June-
Year 8 Parents' Evening (in school)

Monday 29th June-
Year 7 Parents' Evening (in school)