



Learn to Love, Love to Learn

St. Mary's on the Hill January Information 2026

Principal's Welcome 2026



>Welcome to January's Information Sway! 

I would like to begin by wishing everyone a very Happy New Year!

I hope 2026 has started off with joy, laughter, and maybe even a few leftover Christmas treats. Here's to a happy, healthy, and prosperous year ahead for all our St. Mary's on the Hill families!

As we step into the new year, our children will have lots of exciting opportunities to get involved in. Whether it's learning, creating, exploring, or trying something completely new, we know they'll bring their usual energy and enthusiasm. A new year always gives us that wonderful feeling of fresh starts and new possibilities, and we're looking forward to continuing our strong partnership with you as we support every child on their journey.

Winter Wellness Reminder

The colder months can bring along some unwelcome visitors—coughs, colds, flus, and even COVID. If your child isn't feeling their best, please keep them at home so they can rest and recover—and to help keep our school community healthy.

If you ever need us, have a question, or just want to get in touch, you can reach us at:

 info@stmarys.newtownabbey.ni.sch.uk

Wishing you all a fantastic start to the term!

Warm regards,

Mr. Matthew O'Brien

Principal

Open Enrolment Timetable - September 2026



P1 Admissions Portal

On Wednesday 7th January 2026, the Primary One application procedure opens with the online portal available until Wednesday 21st January 2026 at 12 noon

This is the date/time by which parents can submit an application and documents in support of their application (treated as punctual).

An application received after 12 noon on 21st January 2026 and up to 4:00pm 26th January 2026 will be treated as late.

Applicants will be guided, after the Online Portal closes, on how to complete a late application.

Please use the following link to access the Education Authority website.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/>

Promoting Internet Safety



✿ Keeping Our Kids Safe Online – Let's Do It Together! ✿

As we head back after Christmas, lots of children are excited to use new phones, tablets and gadgets. That usually means an increase in pupils trying out apps like **WhatsApp** and other social media platforms.

✿ **A gentle reminder:** These apps have **AGE RESTRICTIONS**, and **primary school pupils should not be using them**.

We know how tricky this area can be, so thank you for working with us to keep everyone safe. ☺ **Top Tips to Keep Your Child Safe Online**

(Small steps that make a big difference!)

⌚ 1. Weekly Check-Ins

Make an agreement with your child that you can look at their phone together each week. Turn it into a routine—maybe with a hot chocolate!

🎮 2. Know Their Apps

Have a look at what apps they use and check if they're age-appropriate. Kids love to show off their favourites!

⌚ 3. Keep an Eye on Activity

Regularly monitor calls, messages, photos and the websites they visit. It's not snooping—it's safety.

🌙 4. No Phones in Bedrooms

Primary pupils don't need a phone beside their bed. Night-time is for rest, not group chats!

💬 5. Talk, Talk, Talk!

Open conversations help children understand the dangers of social media. Ask them what they see online, what they enjoy, and what worries them.

What We're Doing in School

We'll continue to explore online safety through:

- *ICT lessons*
- *PDMU*
- *Assemblies*
- *Religion Programme*
- *and other learning opportunities throughout the year.*

Many of the issues we see start with apps and online interactions outside school. With your support, guidance and engagement, together we can help our pupils navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Pupils of the Month December 2025



Congratulations to all our wonderful Pupils of the Month for December. They have worked so hard and we are very proud of them all.

Class	Name	Name
P1GB	Harry Lewis Fionn Whiteside	Emily McAleenan
P1MMA	Dara Turley	Conlead McMahon
P2PMcI	Sophia McLean	Eimeid Lawell
P2MM	Clodagh McDade	Theo Kelly
P3KR	Brooke McKenna Amos	Katie Mc Farland
P3	Erin Downey	Cillian Mooney
P4MMC M	Shéa McCabe	Ellen McKevey
P4AOB	Grace Cassidy	Jack Dowie
P5MD	Eimear Donaghy	Luca Barnes
P5EC	Grace Moran	Logan Kelly
P6SMCC	Christian McAtamney	Rosa McMullan Katie Stewart
P6SR	Jacob Sharp Ava Beattie	Luighseach McDade
P7JP	CJ Baxter	Anna Thompson
P7JOK	Jores Lumontod	Ella Hale
SPiM DMcE	Evie Crothers	
EMcN	Bonnie Harbinson	

Principal's Award Term 1



⚠️ St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. – Term 1 Principal's Awards! ⚠️

Celebrating Kindness, Hard Work & All-Round Superstars!

*Before Christmas, we had the joy of presenting the **Term 1 Principal's Awards**—one of our favourite moments in the school year! These special awards recognise pupils who have truly shone throughout the entire first term, not just in their work, but in their attitude, behaviour and the kindness they show to others every day.*

⭐ What Makes a Principal's Award Winner?

Our incredible award recipients stood out because they consistently demonstrated:

⚠️ **Hard Work** – giving their best in lessons, persevering through challenges, and taking pride in everything they do.

 **Very Good Behaviour** – setting a positive example to others, making sensible choices, and contributing to a happy school environment.

 **Kindness & Compassion** – being caring, thoughtful and supportive towards classmates and staff. These pupils make our school a brighter place!

 **A Wonderful Attitude** – bringing enthusiasm, positivity, and a willingness to take part in all aspects of school life.

 **A Love for School** – showing excellent commitment to learning, being prepared every day, and embracing new opportunities.

 **A Huge Well Done!**

We are **extremely proud** of each and every pupil who received a Principal's Award. They are a credit to their families and to our school community. Their hard work and kindness do not go unnoticed, and we love celebrating pupils who make St. Mary's on the Hill such a welcoming, supportive and joyful place to learn.

Let's keep the positivity going into Term 2—who knows who will shine next?

Principal's Award December 2025

Please fill in the table below.

Class	Name of child	Reason for Award
Mr McEvoy's Class	Mia Watters and Ruaidhri O'Toole	For being amazing at the Christmas Show.
Miss McNamee's Class	Michael Molloy	Michael is a kind and gentle young boy who fully applies himself to all aspects of school life. He has a nurturing nature and always ensures that everyone is included in games. Michael enjoys working at his independent workstation, where he takes pride in completing tasks that make him feel capable and confident.
P1GB	Naoise Lawell	Naoise has settled so beautifully into St Mary's on the Hill and truly embodies what it means to be a pupil here. She shows love and kindness every day, she cares for her friends, and is always ready to lend a helping hand. Naoise is a fantastic listener and has a real enthusiasm for learning. I am so proud of her! Well done on receiving this term's Principal's Award! Very much deserved.
P1MMA	Eireann Murphy	Eireann has settled brilliantly into life at St Mary's on the Hill. She is a kind and caring friend to others. In class Eireann is always willing to help out and shows an amazing attitude to school and learning new things. Well done Eireann!

P2MM	Miesha Dunlop	Miesha is full of joy and kindness. She works so hard every day on every task given to her. She brings friendship and warmth to our class and her smile cheers us all.
P2PMI	Emmet Foy	Emmet is hardworking. He has lovely manners. He plays well and is respectful to others . Emmet shows resilience often,
P3KR	Jenny Lim	Jenny has settled into life in school so well. She always shows kindness to her friends and teacher.
P3EL	Aoife Davidson	Aoife Davidson consistently gives 100% effort in everything she does and works hard every day to demonstrate our school values. Aoife is also an incredibly kind and caring friend who always looks out for others. She is a wonderful role model to everyone around her. Well done Aoife!
P4AOB	Aodhan Graham	Aodhan works hard and always tries his best every single day. He is kind and friendly to all. In his AR he has accepted the challenge of reading and completing quizzes amazingly showing an example to all the others in his class of how hard work helps you to reach your potential.
P4MMC	Bobby Magill	Bobby is so kind and considerate to others. He works very hard and always tries his best. Bobby sets a lovely example for others in our school.
P5MD	Cara McLean	Cara consistently lives our school values. She shows kindness, helpfulness, and is an outstanding role model every day. Her high expectations of herself inspire others and make our school a better place!

P5EC	Olivia Simpson	Olivia consistently demonstrates our school values. She is kind, helpful, and an excellent role model every day. Her commitment to high standards inspires those around her and helps make our school an even better place!
P6SR	Anna Oliver	Anna is a wonderful member of our class who always shows our school values in everything she does. She is kind and respectful, works brilliantly with her friends, and always gives her best effort. Anna loves helping others and is a valued member of our class.
P6SMC	Enda Mc Cann	Enda consistently demonstrates the core values of our school. He is kind, caring, and thoughtful. He always thinks about others and goes the extra mile to ensure everyone is included even when no one is watching. He is an excellent role model for our school in every way. I am so proud to have Enda in my class.
P7JOK	Cliodhna Neill	Cliodhna embraces all aspects of school life and does so with enthusiasm. Cliodhna is a school counsellor, she is in choir, she represents our school in both camogie and football (Gaelic). Cliodhna applies herself to her work and always tries her best.
P7JK	Krish Adhkari	Krish is an amazing role model within our school. He lives by our school values of growth and respect. He works extremely hard and always tries his absolute best.

Flag January Value: **Growth**



A Fresh Start, New Possibilities, and Growing Together at St. Mary's on the Hill

*As we step into a brand new year, it feels like the perfect time to focus on one of the most important parts of childhood: **Growth**.*

January gives us a clean page and a fresh start—a chance to reflect on how far we've come and look forward to all the ways we can continue to grow, learn, and flourish.

This month, our whole school community will be exploring what Growth looks like in everyday life. And it doesn't just mean getting taller!

At St. Mary's on the Hill, we are looking for growth in three special ways:

 **1. Emotional Growth**

We want our children to understand their feelings, care for themselves, and show kindness to others.

Throughout January, we'll be encouraging pupils to:

- *Recognise their emotions and talk about them*
- *Build resilience when things go wrong*
- *Celebrate positive attitudes and perseverance*

Emotional growth helps children feel confident, safe, and ready to learn—no matter what challenges come their way.

2. Social Growth

School is a wonderful place to build friendships and work as part of a team.

This month, we'll be focusing on:

- *Listening to others*
- *Sharing and taking turns*
- *Helping classmates*
- *Showing respect through words and actions*

Social growth helps children become thoughtful, responsible members of our school family.

3. Physical Growth

We're also celebrating the amazing changes that happen as children grow stronger, healthier, and more capable each day.

We'll be encouraging:

- *Active play outdoors*
- *Healthy habits*
- *Participation in PE and movement activities*
- *Taking pride in trying new physical skills*

Physical growth helps children feel energised, confident, and ready for each new challenge.



Growth happens in small steps—and every step matters.

Whether it's learning something new, showing kindness, trying a challenge, or simply giving their best effort, we are excited to see our pupils shine in so many different ways this month.

*We look forward to celebrating all the wonderful examples of **Growth** across our school community throughout January.*

Here's to a month full of curiosity, courage, kindness, and growing stronger every day!



Catholic Schools Week 2026



*This year, St Mary's on the Hill PS is excited to celebrate **Catholic Schools' Week**, beginning on **Sunday 18th January 2026**. It's always a special time in our school calendar—a week filled with reflection, joy, celebration, and a deeper understanding of who we are as a Catholic school community.*

*This year's theme is: **“Normal Lives, Called to Holiness”***

It's a beautiful reminder that holiness isn't found only in big gestures—it's found in the everyday things we do with love, kindness, patience, and joy. Whether it's being a good friend, trying our best in class, helping at home, or showing kindness to others, we are all called to grow in faith through the simple, ordinary moments of life.

 *A Week to Celebrate Our School*

Catholic Schools' Week is our chance to celebrate everything that makes St Mary's on the Hill PS such a special place:

- *Our values*

- *Our community*
- *Our faith*
- *And, of course, our wonderful children*

We are proud of every child in our school and look forward to seeing their faith shine through in all sorts of small and big ways during this special week.

A Huge Thank You for Your Incredible Generosity!



We would like to extend a heartfelt **thank you** to all our families for your amazing generosity during our first term. Your kindness and support have helped us make a real difference to our chosen charity. Thanks to your contributions, St Mary's on the Hill PS has proudly donated:

*This fantastic total was raised in lieu of staff Christmas presents and through our wonderfully festive **Christmas Jumper Day**!*

What an incredible achievement—every pound will go towards supporting communities in need, and it's all thanks to you.

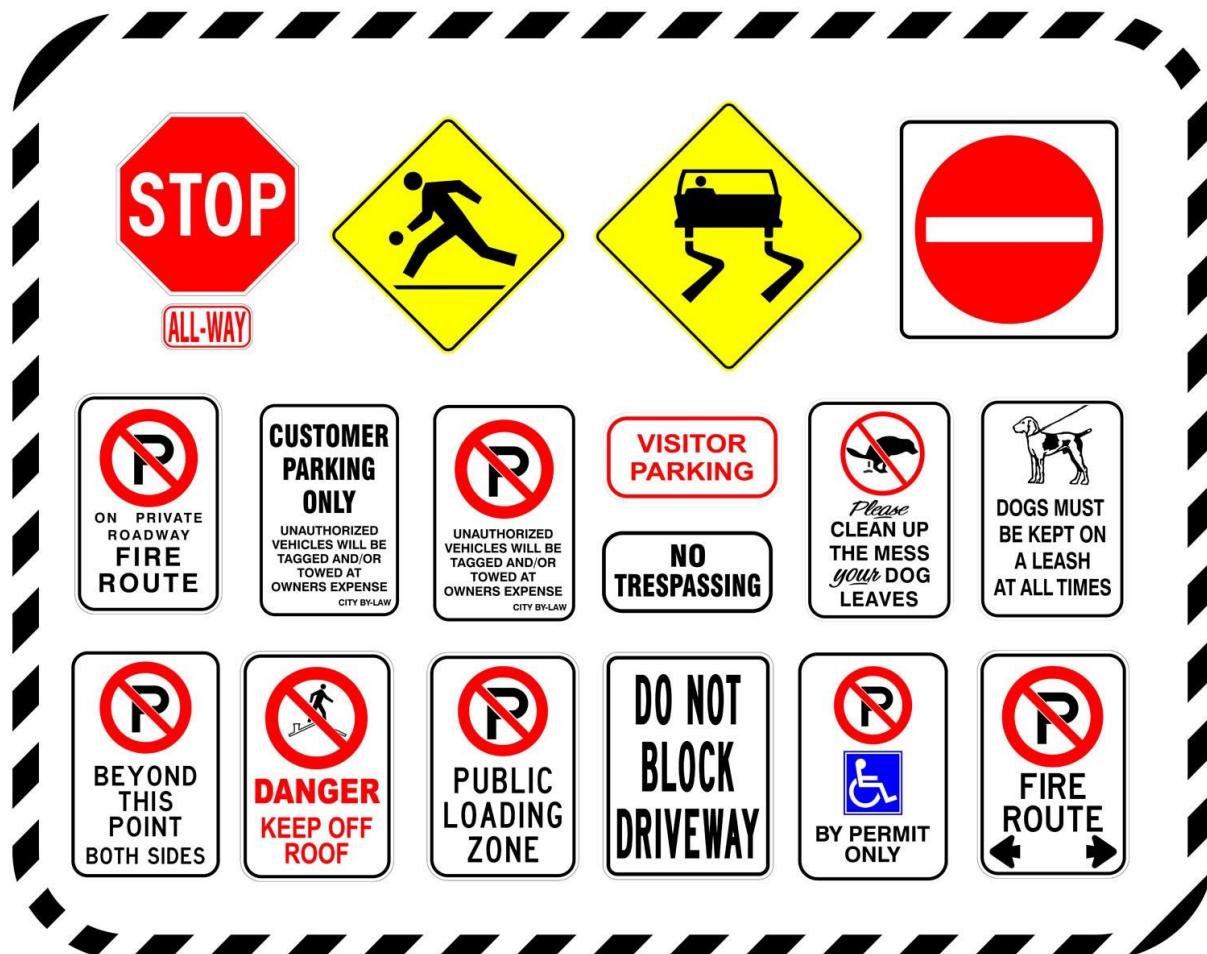
After School Activities



*Alongside our ever-popular **Kidz Academy** and **PlaySport** sessions, we're delighted to introduce **Gaelic Football** and **Hurling** clubs this term! These fantastic clubs are open to our **P5, P6, and P7** pupils and are a brilliant way for children to:*

- *Build confidence*
- *Develop teamwork*
- *Stay active*
- *Learn new sporting skills*
- *And, most importantly... have FUN!*

Road Safety Quiz 2026



We wish our P7 Road Safety Quiz team the best of luck on their first round outing on the 14th January.

❄️ Winter Weather Notice



School Closure Procedures

*As we move deeper into the winter months, there is always a possibility that severe weather conditions may lead to a **school closure**. Please be assured that the decision to close the school is **never taken lightly**.*

*At St. Mary's on the Hill PS, we will always do everything in our power to keep the school open. However, the **health and safety** of our pupils, parents, and staff must come first. Should the weather create unsafe conditions, a full **risk assessment** will be carried out.*

If a decision is made to close the school:

How You Will Be Informed

- *A **text message** will be sent to all parents between **7.30am and 8.30am**.*
- *It is **essential** that the school office has your **most up-to-date contact number** so you do not miss this important message.*
- *Closure information will also be posted on the **school website** for easy access.*

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we navigate the winter season together. Keeping our school community safe is always our top priority.

Facebook



Please visit, like and share our Facebook page. It continues to be used to promote the school in the wider community. We will celebrate and mark events throughout the school year. We have over 900 followers for our page and we would really love to reach the milestone of 1000, if you have not already done so please give our page a like or a follow.

The school will continue to communicate and update parents via email and text. Facebook will not be used to send messages to parents and we would ask that parents do not use Facebook to contact the school.

Click on the link below and please share with anyone you think would be interested or has a connection to our school - <https://www.facebook.com/StMarysOnTheHillPS/>

Free School Meals



The application process for free school meals/uniform has commenced. Parents who are currently eligible to apply for free meals/uniform should now complete their application.

Please note that entitlement to free school meals will attract funding to the school's budget. Whether your child wishes to partake of a meal or not is down to individual choice.

We would like to encourage parents who fall into this category to please make an application as soon as possible. Application forms may be obtained via the Education Authority website – www.eani.org.uk or alternatively by contacting Free School Meals Section on 028 2566 1350. Forms are also available from the school. Should you have any further queries regarding this, please contact the school office.

Car Parking



CHURCH CAR PARK: I would like to gently remind everyone of the difficulties and dangers around drop-off and collection of your child/ren. I am asking that all parents exercise extreme caution. To alleviate the difficulty of congestion we are asking all parents to make a **LEFT TURN** when exiting the car park. **Please use the designated parking spaces or drop off zone.**

WAITING AT THE GATE: Thank you all for your support and cooperation in the mornings whilst leaving your children to school. **We would ask parents not to wait at the gate once**

they have left their child to school. By leaving your child off and moving off-site you are freeing up limited parking spaces. It can be difficult for children to enter through the gate when parents are gathered there. As the gate is in close proximity to the entrance of the car park we want to make every effort to ensure no accidents occur. We would appreciate your cooperation in this matter as the safety of our children is our primary concern. Please pass this information on to anyone who will be responsible for leaving or collecting your child.

Allergy Awareness

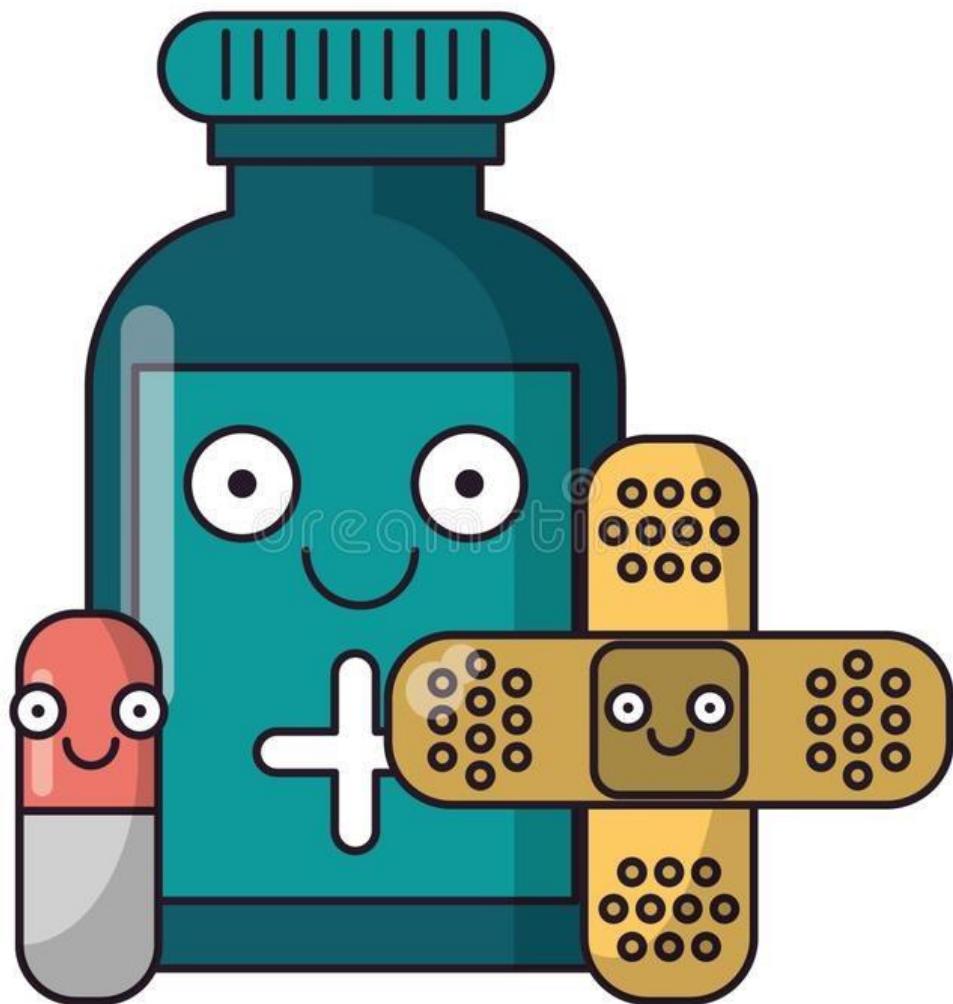


We have a number of children who suffer from allergies, which can result in potentially serious consequences. I would therefore ask that these children are not exposed to danger and that you are mindful of any children in your child's class who may have an allergy. We continue to be a Nut Free School, please do not send in anything which contains nuts.

Parents of children with diagnosed allergies are asked to provide the school with 2 Epipens (with valid dates) and any other necessary medication as soon as possible.

Please continue to support our 'Healthy Eating Policy' and provide your child with a piece of fruit and water or milk for break.

Administration of Medicine



Please visit the school office if your child requires medication to be administered whilst at school. Parents need to sign and complete an 'Administration of Medication' form (available from the school office) before the school will administer the medicine. All medication should have the child's name on it and the dosage clearly labelled. Please do not send any medication with your child – it must be handed into the school office by an adult. Thank You.

Contact Details



There are some contacts in school which do not appear to be working, perhaps due to change of number or email address. If your address, telephone number or email address has changed please inform the school office to ensure we have up to date information should we have a need to contact you.
