



St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. October Information 2026

Welcome to October's Information update.

A very warm welcome to our October Information Sway.

The school year is now well underway, and I am delighted with the positive start our children have made. Across the school, the children are settling successfully into new routines, building relationships and developing their skills and understanding in a wide range of learning experiences. As we move into the second month of the academic year, we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Thank you to all those parents and carers who attended our Meet the Teacher sessions during September. The partnership between home and school is so important, and the support, encouragement and interest you show in your child's learning makes a tremendous difference. For anyone unable to attend, the information shared during these sessions is available on our school website.

October promises to be another busy and exciting month at St. Mary's on the Hill P.S., with a variety of events, activities and opportunities for our children and families to enjoy. Throughout this Sway, you will find more information about what's coming up and how you can get involved.

We hope this format continues to provide an easy and accessible way to keep up to date with school life. As always, we welcome your feedback. If there is information you would like to see included in future editions, please contact us at info@stmarys.newtownabbey.ni.sch.uk.

Thank you for your continued support of our school community. Together, we can ensure our children continue to grow, learn and flourish.

Kind regards

Mr. Matthew O'Brien

Principal

Attendance - Let's aim Higher in 2026

*At St. Mary's on the Hill P.S., we believe that **every school day counts**. Last year, our overall attendance rate was **92%**, which is lower than in the previous year, this year, we're aiming to ensure this increases.*

Attendance Matters – Let's Aim Higher Together!

Regular attendance is vital for your child's learning, social development, and overall wellbeing. When children are in school consistently, they build stronger relationships, develop better routines, and make steady progress in their education.

Our Goal for This Year

*We are encouraging all families to help us **increase our attendance rate** and ensure that every child has the best opportunity to succeed. Even small improvements can make a big difference!*

A Reminder About Holidays

*We understand the importance of family time, but we must strongly remind all parents and guardians that **holidays should not be booked during term time**. Absences for holidays during the school year can disrupt learning and make it harder for children to catch up with their peers.*

If you are unsure about term dates or need support with planning, please contact the school office—we're happy to help.

 Working Together

We appreciate the support you give your children in getting to school on time and ready to learn. If your child is experiencing any difficulties that may affect their attendance, please reach out to us. We are here to support every family and ensure every child feels safe, happy, and motivated to come to school each day.

 **Contact us anytime at:** info@stmarys.newtownabbey.ni.sch.uk

Cuppa and Connect- Numeracy



At St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School, we are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to support every child's learning journey. As part of this commitment, we

are delighted to invite the parents and carers of our **P4-P7 pupils** to our next **Cuppa & Connect** session.

This session will focus on **Numeracy** and will provide practical advice, ideas and strategies to help support your child's mathematical learning at home. Our staff will share information about the approaches used in school, suggest simple activities that can be completed at home, and answer any questions you may have.

 **Monday 12th October**

 **Cuppa & Connect: Numeracy**

 **For Parents and Carers of P4-P7 Pupils**

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about how we teach numeracy, gain confidence in supporting your child, and connect with other members of our school community over a cup of tea or coffee.

We look forward to welcoming you and working together to help our children develop strong numeracy skills and a positive attitude towards mathematics.

We hope you can join us!  **+** 

Pumpkin Patch (PTA Event)



Pumpkin Patch Returns to St. Mary's on the Hill!

*Our magnificent **PTA** are delighted to be organising our **Pumpkin Patch** once again this year!*

*Join us on **Saturday 17th October from 12:00pm to 2:30pm** for an afternoon of autumn fun, festivities and community spirit. This is always a fantastic event for families and a wonderful opportunity to spend time together while supporting our school.*

We can't wait to see all of our pupils, parents, carers, families and friends there for what promises to be another great day!

   **Save the date and come along to join the fun!**   

Free School Meals



*I would like to draw your attention to the **Education Authority (EA) Free School Meals Scheme**. With the continuing rise in household and food costs, we want to ensure that all eligible families are accessing the support available to them through this provision.*

*Your child may be eligible for **free school meals** if they are in full-time education and you are in receipt of one of the following:*

- *Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA);*
 - *The Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;*
 - *Universal Credit, with net household earnings not exceeding £15,900 per year.*
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You may also be eligible if:

- *You are an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT); or*
 - *Your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and requires a special diet.*
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In addition to providing your child with access to nutritious, freshly prepared meals, successful applications for Free School Meals also attract additional funding for the school. This funding helps us provide additional support, resources and opportunities that benefit all of our pupils.

Applications can be completed online through the EA website, where you will also find helpful guidance and answers to frequently asked questions:

 [Apply for Free School Meals and Uniform Grant](#)

*Alternatively, you can contact the Free School Meals and Uniform Grant Help Desk on **028 9047 0233** for advice and support.*

If you think you may be eligible, I would encourage you to apply. Should you require any assistance with the application process, please do not hesitate to contact the school office and a member of staff will be happy to help.

Thank you for your continued support

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Flu Immunisation Programme



*The Flu Vaccination programme will take place in school on **Monday 16th November**.
Please ensure your child's form is with your child's class teacher by Thursday 8th October.
Forms will not be accepted on the day of the vaccination as the nurses will only have enough
vaccines for those who have requested it.*

Pupils of the Month September



Pupils of the Month – September

*A huge congratulations to all of our **September Pupils of the Month**. These children have made an outstanding start to the school year and have truly demonstrated what it means to
“Learn to Love, Love to Learn.”*

Through their hard work, kindness, positive attitude and commitment to learning, they have set a wonderful example for others to follow. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and the way they contribute so positively to life at St. Mary's on the Hill.

Well done to each of our award winners. You are fantastic role models and a credit to your families, your teachers and our entire school community. 🌟👏🍓



*Congratulations to our newly appointed **Digital Leaders** for this school year.*

The Digital Leaders have an important role to play in supporting the development of ICT across St. Mary's on the Hill. Throughout the year, they will help promote the use of technology in learning, support pupils and staff with digital initiatives, and encourage the safe, responsible and creative use of technology throughout our school.

We are excited to see the enthusiasm, ideas and leadership they will bring to this role. We know they will be excellent ambassadors for digital learning and will help ensure that technology continues to enhance teaching and learning across our school community.

Well done to all of our Digital Leaders. We are proud of you and look forward to seeing the positive contribution you will make throughout the year! 📖 ✨ 🤝

Our New House Leaders



This week, we held our House Leader elections, and we are delighted to announce our new House Leaders for the year ahead.

Our House Leaders play an important role in promoting the values of St. Mary's on the Hill and encouraging pupils to work together as one caring school community. Through their leadership, they will help to foster respect, kindness, resilience, growth, curiosity, creativity, fun and integrity across our school.

We know that our newly elected House Leaders will lead by example, support their fellow pupils and represent their houses with pride throughout the year.

A huge congratulations to all of our successful candidates and well done to every child who put themselves forward for election. We are proud of your courage, enthusiasm and commitment to making a positive difference in our school.

 **Our House Leaders for 2026-27 are:**

-  **St. Carlo Acutis – Fiadh**
 -  **St. Grace – Caleb**
 -  **St. Francis of Assisi – Cathal**
 -  **St. Martha – Sonny**
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Congratulations to Fiadh, Caleb, Cathal and Sonny. We wish you every success in your leadership roles and look forward to seeing the positive impact you make throughout the year. We know you will be wonderful ambassadors for your Houses and excellent role models for our school community. 🌟👏

Following Our School Value: Respect



*At St. Mary's on the Hill, we believe that learning extends far beyond the classroom. As part of our commitment to nurturing happy, respectful and caring young people, our whole-school value for October is **Respect**.*

Throughout the month, the children will explore what respect looks like in their daily lives. We will encourage them to show respect for themselves, for others, for learning, for property and for the world around them. Through class discussions, assemblies and everyday interactions, we will reinforce the importance of kindness, good manners, listening to others and appreciating that everyone is unique and deserving of respect.

We know that children gain the greatest understanding when the messages they hear at school are also reinforced at home. We would be grateful if families could take opportunities to discuss and model respectful behaviour, helping children to recognise how respect strengthens relationships and builds a positive community.

*By working together, we can help our children live out our school motto, "**Learn to Love, Love to Learn**," and continue to grow as caring, confident and respectful members of society. We*

look forward to celebrating the many ways our pupils demonstrate respect throughout October.

Promoting Health Eating



*At **St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School**, we are committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and helping our children develop positive habits that will benefit them both now and in the future.*

We encourage all pupils to make healthy choices when selecting their break-time snack and to think carefully about what they eat and drink throughout the school day. A balanced diet plays an important role in supporting children's concentration, energy levels, wellbeing and overall health, helping them to be ready to learn and achieve their best in school.

Healthy eating is most successful when school and home work together. We are grateful for the support of our parents and carers in encouraging healthy choices and reinforcing positive habits with children.

Through our curriculum, school initiatives and everyday practice, we will continue to promote the importance of a healthy lifestyle and help our pupils understand the benefits of looking after both their physical and mental wellbeing.

Together, we can support our children in developing healthy habits that will last a lifetime.



"Healthy children are happy learners."

Allergy Awareness

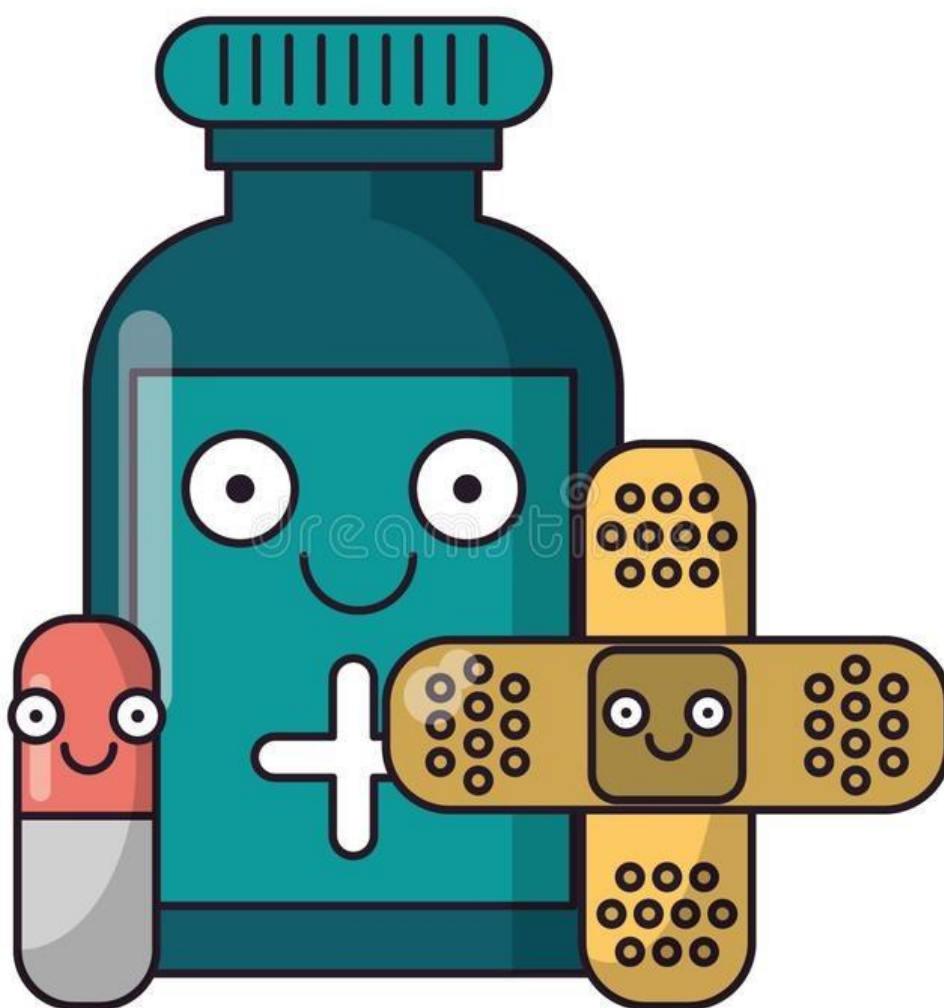


We have a number of children who suffer from allergies, which can result in potentially serious consequences. I would therefore ask that these children are not exposed to danger and that you are mindful of any children in your child's class who may have an allergy. We continue to be a Nut Free School,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

Administraion of Medicine



Please speak to your child's teacher if you require medication administered to your child 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 needs to be prescribed, should have the child's name on it and the dosage clearly labelled. Teachers will not administer medication which is not labelled as such. Please do not send in any medication with your child – it must be handed into the school office by an adult.

Thank You.

School Dinners



*Parents and carers can now select and pay for their child's school dinners for the first term, up to and including the week beginning **Monday 21 December 2026**.*

*Please log in to **SchoolMoney** using your unique username and password. Dinner choices must be submitted **before midnight on the day before the meal is required**.*

All parents and carers are asked to use the SchoolMoney system to order and pay for school dinners. A copy of the current dinner menu is available on our school website.

If you experience any difficulties accessing SchoolMoney or placing an order, please contact the school office and we will be happy to help.

Dates for Diary



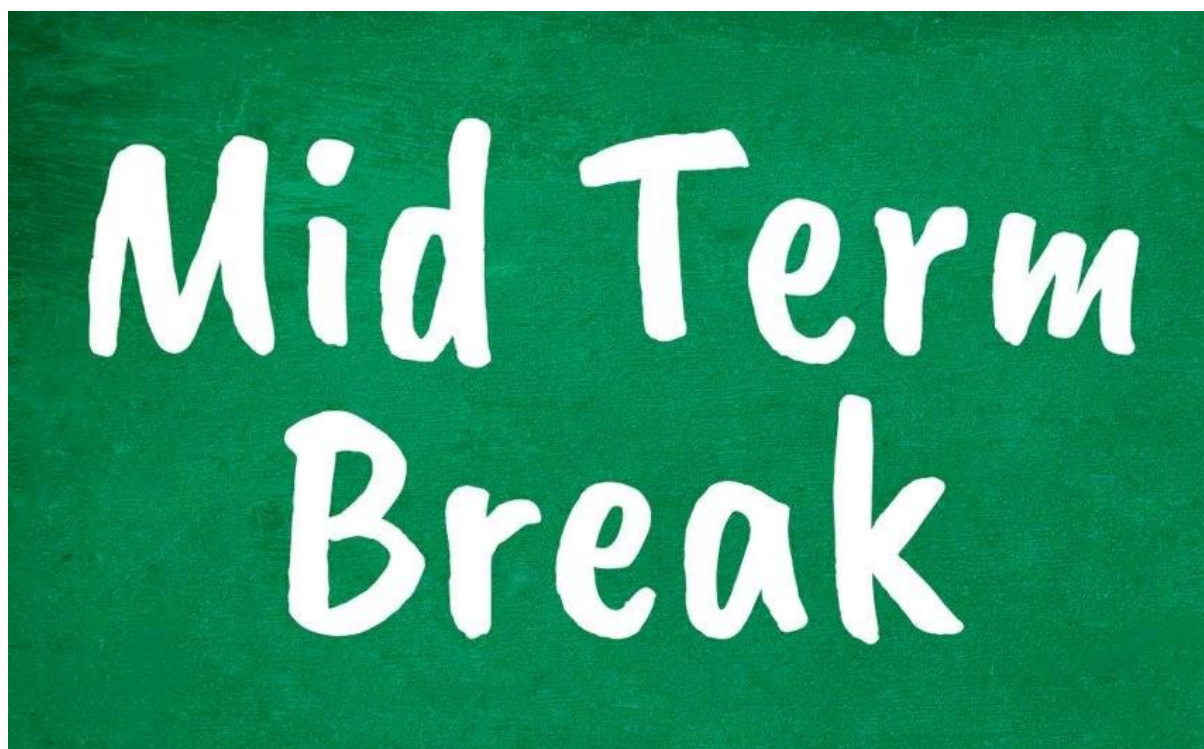
Maths Week Ireland - 10th October - 20th October

Flu Vaccination - Monday 16th November

Cool 4 School Photographer - Thursday 4th November and 5th November

Mass in the Class - Thursday 8th October @ 2pm - New Beginnings

Mid- Term Break



*A reminder that school will close for all pupils on **Friday 23rd October** for the Mid-Term Break.*

 ***P1-P3 pupils will finish at 11:45am***

 ***P4-P7 pupils will finish at 12:00 noon***

*School will reopen for all pupils on **Monday 2nd November**.*

We hope all of our families enjoy a restful and enjoyable break and we look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready for the second half of the term.

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 that 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.*

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 Mrs Mason in the office to ensure we have up to date information should we have a need to contact you.
