St. Mary's on the Hill November Information 2026

Welcome to November at St. Mary's on the Hill P.S.

*It's hard to believe we have already reached November. This is traditionally a special month of **remembrance and reflection**, when we take time to remember and pray for loved ones who have passed away. Throughout the month, our school community will keep all those who have died in our thoughts and prayers during assemblies and moments of reflection.*

*November is also a month in which we place a particular focus on **kindness, respect and looking out for one another**. As part of **Anti-Bullying Week**, our children will take part in a range of activities that encourage them to celebrate what makes each of us unique, understand the importance of respectful relationships and recognise the difference that even the smallest act of kindness can make.*

*In this month's Sway, you'll find **important dates, school updates, upcoming events and information about life across St. Mary's on the Hill**. We hope it continues to be an easy and useful way to keep up to date with everything happening in school.*

*As always, we greatly appreciate the support of our parents, carers and wider school community. Together, we continue to make St. Mary's on the Hill a place where our children can **Learn to Love, Love to Learn**.*

We wish all our families a peaceful and positive November.

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*

Open Day 2026



Prospective P1 parents/carers we are delighted to invite you, to our Open Day on Friday 11th December.

Come and experience, first hand, life in St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School, including our

- *Centre of pastoral excellence*
- *Child centred learning and provision*
- *Amazing school choir and orchestra*
- *Engaging interactive activities*
- *Enthusiastic and approachable staff*

Mr Matthew O'Brien (Principal) will host an information session at 9:30am in the school's assembly hall

We look forward to meeting you all

Anti-Bullying Week 2026 - Break the Silence



Anti-Bullying Week 2026: Power for Good

*At **St. Mary's on the Hill P.S.**, creating a school where every child feels **safe, valued and respected** is at the heart of what we do.*

*Throughout the year, we take a proactive approach to preventing bullying. Through our **PDMU programme, Circle Time, Religious Education and ICT lessons**, children are supported to develop the skills they need to build positive relationships, manage disagreements and resolve conflict appropriately. These learning opportunities promote **kindness, empathy, respect and understanding** and help our pupils recognise what they can do if they experience or witness behaviour that causes concern.*

*We also value the support of organisations such as the **NSPCC**, whose assemblies and workshops reinforce important messages around staying safe, speaking out and knowing where to turn for help.*

Power for Good

*This year's Anti-Bullying Week focuses on the theme **"Power for Good"**, encouraging children to recognise the positive influence they can have on those around them.*

Throughout the week, pupils will take part in discussions, creative activities and collaborative tasks exploring how they can:

- 🤍 ***Choose kindness*** *in their words and actions*
- 🤝 ***Include and support others***
- 🗣️ ***Speak up*** *when something isn't right*
- 🌟 ***Use their influence positively***
- 🤍 ***Celebrate and respect difference***

The message is simple: ***we all have the power to make a difference.***

Together, as pupils, staff and families, we are committed to ensuring that St. Mary's on the Hill remains a caring and inclusive community where every child feels that they belong.

📎 ***Information for Parents & Carers***

Parents and carers can find further information and resources for Anti-Bullying Week using the link below:

https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying-week-2026/parents-and-carers

---

SEAG Entrance Assessments



Good Luck to Our P7 Pupils

We want to extend our warmest wishes to all our P7 pupils who will be sitting their entrance exams this month. We know how much effort and preparation you have put in, and we are so proud of your hard work and determination. These assessments are an important step, but remember—they do not define who you are. You are already valued and cherished members of our school community.

Please keep our P7 pupils in your thoughts and prayers as they approach these important dates:

- ***SEAG 1*** *– Saturday 14th November*
- ***SEAG 2*** *– Saturday 21st November*

To all our pupils: take a deep breath, believe in yourselves, and do your best. We are behind you every step of the way!

Developing World Group 2026- Christmas Appeal

Christmas Charity Donation – Supporting the Developing World Group

This Christmas, our school community will come together to support the Developing World Group (DWG). The DWG works to provide financial assistance to projects in some of the poorest regions of the developing world. These projects are locally identified and managed to avoid creating dependency, focusing instead on empowering communities through primary education, enterprise development, and self-sufficiency.

Mr. Michael Walker from the parish's DWG will visit our school over the coming weeks to give a presentation to the children about the incredible work the local DWG does to improve lives around the world. This will help our pupils understand the importance of compassion and global responsibility.

We invite families to make ***donations in lieu of gifts for teachers*** *and during our* ***Christmas Jumper Day on Thursday 17th December 2026.*** *By contributing, we show that Christmas is not only about celebration but also about caring for those who face real challenges every*

day. Together, we can make a meaningful difference and remind our children that kindness and generosity are at the heart of this season.

Pupils of the Month October



Pupils of the Month

*A huge **congratulations to all our wonderful Pupils of the Month!***

*Throughout October, our school value was **Respect**, and we were incredibly proud of how our children embraced this value. They showed respect through their words, their actions and the way they treated one another each day.*

*Our Pupils of the Month were wonderful examples of **respect in action**, and thoroughly deserve this special recognition.*

Well done, everyone. We are very proud of you!

Our School Values - Kindness



Our Target for November: Kindness

*This month at St. Mary's on the Hill, our focus is on **Kindness**—one of our core school values. Kindness is something we can show in small ways every single day, whether through a smile, a helping hand, or a thoughtful word. Throughout November, we will encourage pupils to look for opportunities to be kind to others, both in and out of the classroom. By making kindness a priority, we help create a caring and respectful school community where everyone feels valued.*

Here are some simple ways pupils can show kindness every day:

- ***Offer to help a friend** who is finding something difficult.*
- ***Invite someone to join in** a game or activity.*
- ***Say something positive** to brighten someone's day.*
- ***Listen carefully** when someone is speaking.*
- ***Share resources** like pencils or books without being asked.*

Together, these small acts make a big difference!

Our November Value: Kindness

Kindness costs nothing, but it can mean everything.

Throughout November, we are challenging everyone at St. Mary's on the Hill to think about the difference a small act of kindness can make.

A smile.

A kind word.

Inviting someone to join in.

Helping without being asked.

Checking if someone is okay.

*These little moments can have a **BIG impact** on someone else's day.*

Our Kindness Challenge

*This month, we are encouraging our pupils to **look for opportunities to be kind**, not just when an adult asks them to, but because it is the right thing to do.*

Can you...

- ***Help someone** who is finding something difficult?*
- ***Invite someone to join in** who might be feeling left out?*
- ***Give someone a genuine compliment?***
- ***Stop and really listen** when someone needs to talk?*
- ***Do something helpful** without being asked?*

- 🏠 ***Take kindness home*** *and do something thoughtful for your family?*

And remember, kindness isn't only about how we treat other people. It's also about ***how we speak to ourselves****.*

🏠 ***Families, we'd love you to join us!***

Why not ask at home:

"What was your act of kindness today?"

It could make a lovely conversation around the dinner table and help our children see that kindness doesn't stop at the school gates.

At St. Mary's on the Hill, we believe that ***small acts of kindness, repeated every day, can make a big difference.***

Together, let's make November a month where ***kindness is noticed, celebrated and passed on.*** 🤍

Flu Vaccination 2026



Flu Vaccination Reminder

*The **Flu Vaccination Programme** will take place at **St. Mary's on the Hill on Monday 16th November 2026**.*

*Parents and carers are kindly reminded to ensure that **all consent forms have been returned to school**.*

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

School Dinners



School Dinners: Ordering & Payment

*Parents and carers can now **select and pay for school dinners in advance** using **SchoolMoney**, with meals available to order up to the **week beginning Monday 21 December 2026**.*

Please remember:

- *All school dinners should be **ordered through SchoolMoney** using your unique username and password.*
- *Orders must be placed **before midnight on the day before** the meal is required.*
- *We ask **all parents and carers to use the SchoolMoney system** when ordering their child's meals.*
- *A copy of the current **school dinner menu is available on our school website**.*

If you experience any difficulties accessing SchoolMoney or ordering your child's meals, please contact the school office and we will be happy to help.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dates for Diary



Anti Bullying Week 2026- 16th November - 20th November

Mass in the Class /Prayers in the Class - Thursday 12th November @ 2pm - Mass for those who have Died

Parent Teacher Consultations - Monday 23rd November - Wednesday 25th November

*Parent Teacher Consultations - Friday 27th November - **Children are not in school***

Open Day - Friday 11th December

Thursday 10th December @ 2pm - Advent Mass

Promoting Healthy Eating in November



Healthy Choices at Breaktime

*At **St. Mary's on the Hill**, we promote **healthy eating** and encourage our children to make healthy choices about what they eat and drink.*

*As part of this, we ask pupils to bring a **healthy snack for their mid-morning break**.*

Healthy snack ideas

Fresh fruit

Vegetables

Bananas

Berries

Cucumber sticks

Crackers or other simple healthy snacks

*Making a healthy choice at breaktime helps children develop **positive, healthy habits** that can last a lifetime.*

Thank you for your continued support in helping your child make a healthy choice for their breaktime snack.

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.*

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.*

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.

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

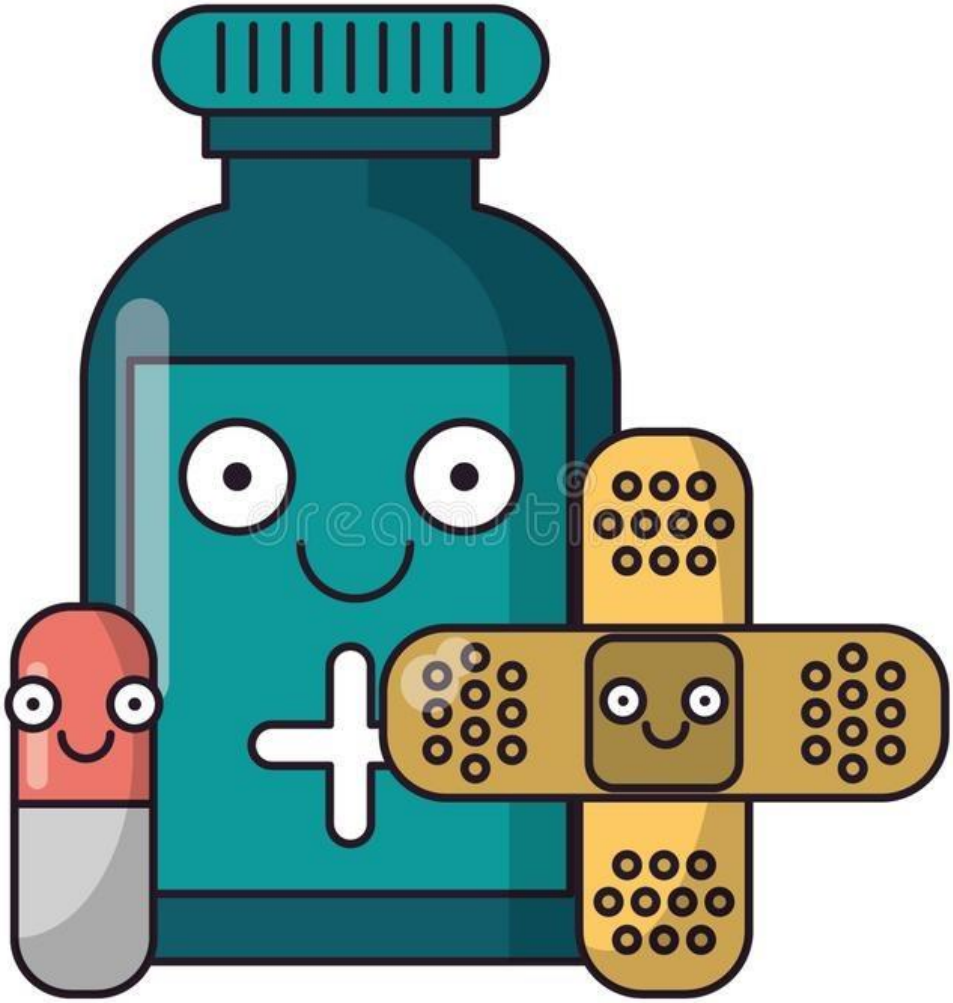


We have a number of children who suffer from allergies, which can result in potentially serious consequences. I would therefore ask that these children are not exposed to danger and that you are mindful of any children in your child's class who may have an allergy. We continue to be a Nut Free School,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