



THE ST MARY'S MESSENGER

FRIDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2026

THIS WEEK

What a fantastic first week we have had at school!

It has been an absolute joy to welcome the children back and see the excitement, enthusiasm and smiles that have filled our classrooms and outdoor spaces. The children have settled beautifully into their new classes and routines, and we are incredibly proud of the way they have embraced the start of a new year.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our families for your unbelievable generosity at the end of the summer term. We have been truly touched by the many kind gifts, cards and words of appreciation that staff have received. Your support, encouragement and recognition of the work we do with your children means so much to us. We are privileged to work in partnership with such a caring and supportive community, and we are incredibly grateful for your kindness.

OPAL (outdoor play and learning) playtimes are off to a brilliant start

- Children must bring a named water bottle to school every day.
- Please ensure that all clothing is clearly named.
- No toys, fidget toys or personal items should be brought into school unless specifically requested by a member of staff.
- Donations of dressing-up clothes, toys, pots, pans, buckets, suitcases and other suitable loose parts for OPAL are always gratefully received.

Thank you once again for helping us make such a positive start to the year. We look forward to an exciting term ahead, filled with learning, friendship, play and success.

"Do everything in love."

1 Corinthians 16:14

Have a wonderful weekend.

Diane Wright

STAR OF THE WEEK

This academic year, we have decided to no longer have our weekly Star of the Week award, as it does not fit comfortably with our school ethos, going against latest psychological studies and advice.

This may be frustrating for some, however, we urge you think back to when you were a child. We can all remember the children that always seemed to be given rewards at school and the children who did not. You may have fallen into one of those categories or sat somewhere in the middle. Please remember how it felt when you were overlooked, when your effort and hard work went unnoticed. Did it lead to encouragement, or resentment and jealousy.

Every week, through star of the week, we have recognised that children are overlooked, leading to feeling unmotivated to learn and try new things.

We hope that you will support us in this decision and have included an information poster to explain more as part of this newsletter.

KEY DATES

14th September - After school clubs start

15th September - 9am Year 1 Maths lesson demo and forum for parents

17th September - Flu Vaccinations

22nd September - 9am Year 2 Maths lesson demo and forum for parents

1st October - 2.30pm Phonics demo and meeting for parents

20th October - 2.45pm Lions class worship

23rd October - 2.45pm Leopards class worship

23rd October - Break for half term

3rd November - Return to school

WHY WE HAVE STOPPED STAR OF THE WEEK

a quick guide for parents

What is Star of the Week?

Star of the week has become a method of rewarding behaviour across many primary schools, including our own, however, many psychological studies suggest that it can have negative side effects on children's wellbeing and educational motivation.

The problems with Star of the Week

- It reduces intrinsic motivation and integrity - children only work to receive the reward
- It creates peer competition, rather than community
- Some children's achievements are overlooked
- It encourages a "fixed" mindset - This creates children who avoid challenge and become less resilient.
- It is subjective - This leads to children have perceptions of unfairness, favouritism or confusion about expectation.

What we are doing instead

- Specific feedback - Teachers will be looking to praise children with specificity, focusing on effort and improvement - this develops what is called a "growth mindset", encouraging children to take on challenge, develop resilience and recognise personal growth.
- We will focus on our class 100 square - each class has a 100 square where all children have the responsibility to contribute toward a shared goal - this builds community and teamwork.
- We will support children with community based activity through our OPAL approach.



BACK TO SCHOOL REMINDERS



THE SCHOOL DAY

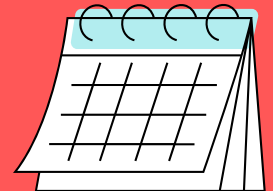


- Our school gates open at 8:45am and close at 8:55am.
- The school day finishes at 3:15pm for EYFS and Key Stage 1 and 3:20pm for Key Stage 2.
- Lunchtime is 12:00pm to 1:00pm.
- You can book additional wrap around care for your child via the arbor app, our breakfast club opens at 8:00am and our After School Provision stays open until 6:00pm.

TERM DATES

These are our term dates for this academic year.

Term 1 - Thursday 3rd September 2026 - Friday 23rd October 2026
Term 2 - Tuesday 3rd November 2026 - Friday 18th December 2026
Term 3 - Tuesday 5th January 2027 - Friday 12th February 2027
Term 4 - Monday 22nd February 2027 - Thursday 25th March 2027
Term 5 - Monday 12th April 2027 - Friday 28th May 2027
Term 6 - Monday 7th June 2027 - Wednesday 21st July 2027 **Note School will be closed on Friday 2nd July 2027*



PE DAYS

Please check below when your child's class has PE. They need to come in to school in their PE kit on that day.

Butterflies - Tuesday & Thursday
Dolphins - Monday & Wednesday
Bees - Monday & Thursday
Deers - Tuesday & Friday
Lambs - Tuesday & Friday
Eagles - Monday & Wednesday
Leopards - Tuesday & Thursday
Lions - Monday & Friday
Doves - Monday (Swimming) & Thursday



LUNCHES

Children can either have a packed lunch or a school dinner. School dinners need to be booked though school grid - please speak to the office if you need help with this. Packed lunches

We ask that:

- Packed lunches should be brought in a lunch box or plastic container with a secure lid and labelled with the child's name. Please avoid large bags or backpacks as storage of these can be a problem.
- Drinks should also be in plastic containers, preferably with a screw top and also labelled. No glass bottles, fizzy or hot drinks should be bought. Only water should be in drinking bottles for during the day.
- There are no sweets in school - for lunch or otherwise
- Bring only one small bag of crisps for lunches

ABSENCE

You must contact the school office on 01536 485500, by 8:30am every day your child is absent from school.

If your child requires any time off from school (such as a doctors appointment) you must complete a request for absence form, these can be found at the school office.

The school's expectation for attendance is 95%+.



NEED HELP?

We all find parenting tricky from time to time and sometimes require a bit of help to support our children or family. Whether this is due to special educational needs, behaviour, medical needs or anything else that crops up, our Inclusion team are committed to supporting all children and their families. If you need any help, please contact the Inclusion Team (Ms. Starkey, Mr. Collins & Mrs. Dix) via the school office.



UNIFORM CHECKLIST

SCHOOL UNIFORM

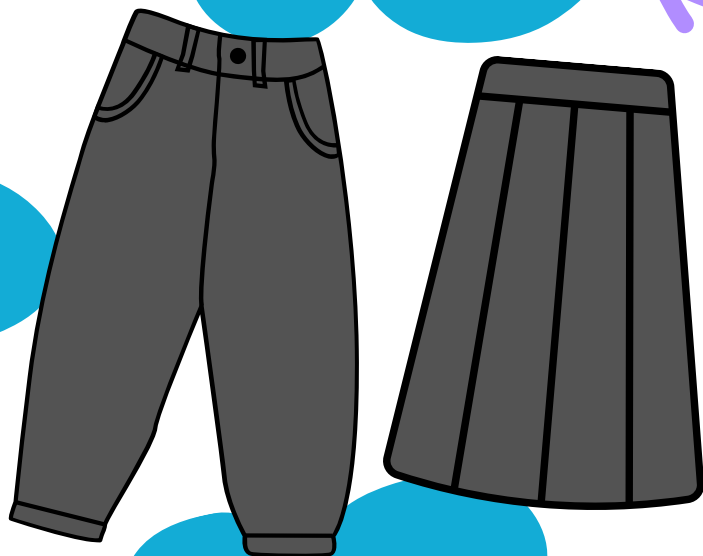
**A ROYAL BLUE
JUMPER OR
CARDIGAN**



**A WHITE SHIRT
OR POLO SHIRT**



**BLACK OR GREY
TROUSERS OR
SKIRT & TIGHTS**



**BLACK SHOES
OR BOOTS**



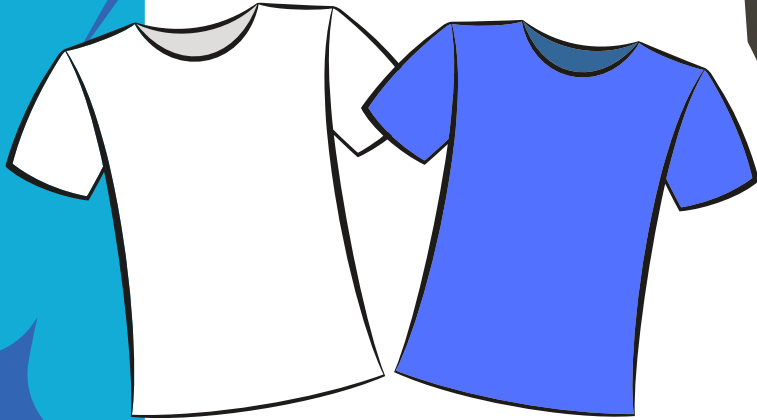
UNIFORM CHECKLIST

PE KIT

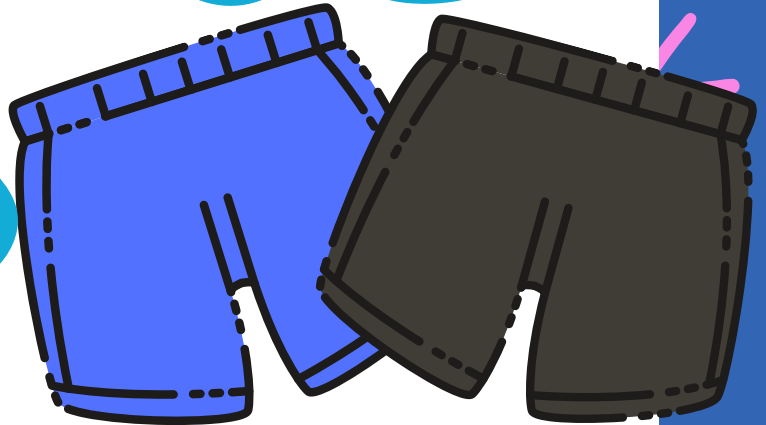
A BLACK OR
BLUE
SWEATSHIRT



A BLUE OR
WHITE TSHIRT



BLACK OR BLUE
SHORTS OR
BOTTOMS



TRAINERS THAT
YOU CAN RUN
AND JUMP IN



OPAL Schools



What is OPAL?

The OPAL Primary Programme will work with your child's school to transform playtimes, so they provide the most active, fun and sociable play opportunity possible for your child. OPAL's motto is 'Every child should have an amazing playtime every day, without exceptions'.

Why is the school focusing on outdoor play?

Outdoor learning is much more than play—it helps children develop important skills while having fun and exploring the world around them.



What are the benefits of outdoor play?



Builds Confidence - Children learn new things, take safe risks and develop independence.



Supports Physical Development - Running, climbing, balancing, and exploring help develop strength, coordination, and fitness.



Promotes Wellbeing - Fresh air and outdoor experiences can improve mood, reduce stress, and support emotional health.



Develops social skills - Working together, sharing ideas, and solving problems outdoors encourages teamwork and communication.



Encourages curiosity and creativity - Nature inspires children to ask questions, investigate, imagine, and discover.



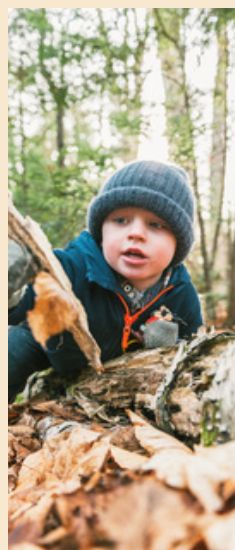
Enhances learning - Outdoor activities support literacy, maths, science, and problem-solving through real-life experiences.



Fosters a love of nature - Children learn to respect and care for the environment while developing a sense of responsibility.

How can parents support?

Encourage outdoor play every day. Visit local parks, woodlands, or green spaces. Talk about what your child notices outdoors. Allow opportunities for safe exploration and risk-taking. Dress children appropriately for the weather so they can enjoy outdoor activities all year round.



For more information visit www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk