

St Mary's Newsletter

Spring Term – Friday 3rd February 2023

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Attendance Weekly - 93.7 %

Attendance Year - 94 %

Let Your Light Shine... as You Grow Matthew 5: 15-16

Friendship

Trust

Truthfulness

Compassion

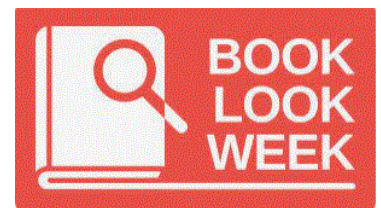
Perseverance

Respect

Dear parents, carers and friends of the school,

Book Look/Share Our Work Session:

On **Friday 24th February**, St Mary's will be holding our Spring Term **before** and **after** school **Book Look/ Share our Work** sessions. The timings for this will be **8.30am to 9am** in the morning and **3.15pm to 4pm** straight after school finishes. These Book Look/ Share our Work sessions are an excellent opportunity for our lovely pupils to proudly show off the work that they have been producing in class—both in their exercise books, their Class Books and also on the displays in their classrooms; these sessions are a excellent opportunity to show the progress they have been making throughout this academic year.



Parents and Carers Spring Term Consultations

This term, St Mary's will be holding our Spring Term Consultations on **Tuesday 28th February** and **Thursday 2nd March**. Following the same arrangements as the Autumn/Winter term Consultations, these will be hosted **in person** and **in the school hall**. Please can you keep an eye out for booking information – which will be sent out by the school office when we return after the February half term break. Children who have **One Plans** will receive separate information from the class teacher and will be contacted by the school office with the suggested time and date provided by the class teacher.

Bag2School Initiative:

A HUGE thank you to all of the families from St Mary's who donated bags of clothes for our Bag2School initiative. Last Friday, members of the School Council helped to load these donations — which had formed a HUGE mound in the reception/office area—into the collection van and the children had a whale of a time helping to carry and deposit them. In fact some of the School



Council members felt that they'd had to carry about a 100 bags and the delivery driver was incredibly impressed with the amount we had collected (for the size of our school!) I am delighted to report that the school will receive funds based on the weight of all of these bags and the money will be used to purchase new library books for

our pupils. Check out the photographs (more are available on the school website).



Next **Tuesday (7 February)** is Safer Internet Day: the annual event to promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital tech among children and young people. This year's title is 'Want to talk about it? Making space for conversations about life online' – giving young voices a platform to shape the kinds of online safety support that they receive.

Simply checking in with children regularly about their experiences – both good and bad – in the digital world is a brilliant way to engage with what they're currently into online, while also acting as a valuable early warning system about potential issues. For more info visit: www.saferinternetday.org



Nut Free School/Healthy Eating



We are asking parents to be very mindful of the food that they send in with their children. Please help us protect those in our community with severe nut allergies by checking all packaging and making sure that food does **NOT contain nuts or traces of nuts**. We would also like to promote healthy eating at school and we ask that Nutella/chocolate spread are not used in sandwiches and snacks.



Next week is national Children's Mental Health Week 2023

Everyday next week, the children will be taking part in activities to develop their connections to one another, the staff and the school community as a whole. They will also be creating their own self-portraits to express how they want to be seen in the world. You will be able to see these at the upcoming book look. **Attached is a Tips for Parents and Carers information sheet.**



On **Friday the 10th February** we are asking pupils to take part in 'dress to express' We will be asking children to wear clothing that expresses their personalities or something that they love. Whether it's a TV character, a super hero, colours to support a charity, or just their favourite outfit, anything goes. So please send your children into school wearing something they love, and £1. We will be looking out for the most creative outfits to photograph!

KS2 Swimming



Swimming for KS2 is part of the National Curriculum which states that for swimming, by the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils should be able to:

- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m.
- Use a range of strokes effectively.
- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

As this is a mandatory requirement by the Department of Education please ensure that your child attends all the allocated swimming dates. If your child is well enough to be in school they must attend the swimming session unless physically unable (ie broken bones) or a doctor's note is provided. Please can you also make sure that the correct swimming kit is bought into school.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the school office to arrange a time to speak to the

Parking on Castle Street

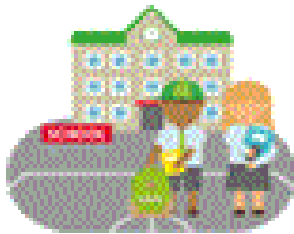


We have had a few residents of Castle Street contact the school about parents parking at drop off and pick up. Please can we politely ask parents to not park across driveways or in residential parking bays in the flats next to the school. Please also be mindful of the parking restrictions along Castle Street.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL NURSE DROP IN SESSIONS

Drop in sessions held once a month around the Uttlesford District, support and advice offered by a School Nurse and the 5-19 Healthy Family Support Practitioner.

Parents can ask advice about behaviour and emotional needs, bed wetting and soiling issues plus other health needs that may be impacting on both home and school life.



Spring Term

7.2.23

Room A Saffron Walden Hospital, Radwinter Road, Saffron Walden CB11 3HY

15.30-17.00hrs

7.3.23

Little Goslings, North Street, Great Dunmow, CM6 1AZ

15.30 _ 17.00hrs

Today some of the St Mary's School staff went to the Touchpoint **COMMUNITY FOOD SHARE** event at the Baptist Church which runs weekly on a Friday from 10am – 11am.

It's all about reducing food waste!

Touchpoint help to distribute produce which supermarkets would otherwise dispose of but is still perfectly good to eat.

They work with local supermarkets to collect food at the end of the day that would otherwise be thrown away. They **then invite the community along to help themselves to whatever they want – for free. They suggest you only take what you need / can use over a few days.** They also offer free refreshments, biscuits and cake. The idea is to reduce the amount of food going into landfill, and it's been a great success so far!

The team from St Mary's School will be going again next week, if you would like to walk with us and see what it is all about please come along to the main school gates at 10am.

Remember to bring a bag!



Tips for Encouraging Open Discussions about DIGITAL LIVES

The online world is an entirely familiar and commonplace part of life for today's children and young people, far more so than for previous generations. There are many positives to children being able to access online materials, so it's important not to demonise the internet, games and apps, and limit the benefit of their positive aspects. At the same time, we do have a responsibility to educate children about the hazards they may encounter online (just as we would about real-world dangers) so it's essential that we don't shy away from talking to them about the complex – and often sensitive – subject of what they do and what they see when they're online.

Here are some suggestions for kicking off conversations with your child about their digital life ...

MAKE YOUR INTEREST CLEAR

Showing enthusiasm when you broach the subject signals to your child that you're keen to learn about the positives of their online world. Most children enjoy educating adults and will happily chat about what they use the internet for, or what games and apps they're into and how these work. Asking to see their favourite games and apps in action could help you spot any aspects that may need your attention – such as chat functions which might require a settings adjustment to limit contact with strangers. Keep listening even if your child pauses for a long time; they could be considering how to phrase something specific, or they may be gauging your reaction.

BE OPEN AND HONEST, APPROPRIATE TO THEIR AGE

At various stages, children and young people become curious about puberty and how their body changes; about relationships; about how babies are made; and about sexual health. If your child knows that they can discuss these sensitive subjects with you, they tend to be less likely to go looking online for answers – which can often provide them with misleading information and, in some cases, lead to them consuming harmful content. Don't worry if you don't immediately know the answers to their questions – just find out for yourself and go back to them once you have the facts.

REMIND YOUR CHILD THEY CAN ALWAYS TALK TO YOU

In my role I work with many children and young people who admit being reluctant to tell a trusted adult about harmful content they've viewed online, in case it leads to having their devices confiscated. Emphasise to your child that you're always there to listen and help; reassure them that if they do view harmful content, then they are not to blame – but talking about it openly will help. Children shouldn't be expected to be resilient against abuse or feel that it's their job to prevent it.

KEEP TALKING!

The most valuable advice we can give is to keep talking with your child about their digital lives. You could try using everyday situations to ask questions about their online experiences.

DISCUSS THAT NOT EVERYTHING WE SEE ONLINE IS REAL

Here, you could give examples from your own digital life of the online world versus reality – for example, those Instagram posts which show the perfect house: spotlessly clean, never messy and immaculately decorated. Explain to your child that there are many other aspects of the online world which are also deliberately presented in an unrealistic way for effect – such as someone's relationship, their body, having perfect skin and so on.

TRY TO REMAIN CALM

As much as possible, try to stay calm even if your child tells you about an online experience that makes you feel angry or fearful. Our immediate emotions frequently influence the way we talk, so it's possible that your initial reaction as a parent or carer could deter a child from speaking openly about what they've seen. Give yourself time to consider the right approach, and perhaps speak with other family members or school staff while you are considering your next steps.

CREATE A 'FAMILY AGREEMENT'

Involving your whole household in coming up with a family agreement about device use can be immensely beneficial. You could discuss when (and for how long) it's OK to use phones, tablets, consoles and so on at home; what parental controls are for and why they're important; and why it's good to talk to each other about things we've seen or experienced online (both good and bad). Explaining your reasoning will help children to understand that, as trusted adults, we want to make sure they are well informed and kept safe. Allowing children to have their say when coming up with your family agreement also makes them far more likely to stick to it in the long term.

Meet Our Expert

Rebecca Jennings of RSH (raising awareness in sex education) has almost 20 years' experience advising all sorts of organisations and training to schools, colleges and other education providers. A published author on the subject, she also advised the Department of Education on the staff-training element of the RSE curriculum.



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Diary Dates



Week Commencing

- Monday 6th February - Children's Mental Health Week
- Wednesday 8th February - Road Safety Training (Reception & Year 5)
- Friday 10th February - Safer Internet Day
- [Mental Health Dress to Impress](#)

Monday 13th February to
Friday 17th February

- Half term holiday

Week Commencing

- Monday 20th February - Pupils return to school (from 8.30am)
- Monday 20th February - One Plan Meetings
- Friday 24th February - Book Looks (8.30am to 9.00am and 3.15pm to 4.00pm)

Week Commencing

- Monday 27th February
- Tuesday 28th February - Parents/Carers Consultations
- Thursday 2nd March - Parents/Carers Consultations
- Thursday 2nd March - World Book Day

Week Commencing

- Monday 6th March - World Book Day Workshop
- [Thursday 30th March - Easter Service in St Mary's Church 10.00am \(all parents/carers welcome\)](#)
- Friday 31st March - Last day of Spring term
- Monday 3rd April to
Monday 17th April - Easter break
- Monday 17th April - Teaching staff INSET Day

** new or amended items added are in blue*

