



# Newsletter: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Dear Families,

Supporting each other in our wonderful school family, we have made it to the end of an incredibly busy term. There have been so many highlights!

Gaining an **outstanding** judgement in our Catholic School Inspection is certainly worth another mention as it shows the fantastic community we have here and all we do both within and outside of school.



Confirmation that we are now able to extend our provision in Early Years is also very exciting. We start our adventure with a small cohort of pupils in January. I am not sure who is more excited, our new pupils, their parents or school!



This term, we have had:

- *Brilliant lessons across all year groups, showcasing creativity and hard work;*
- *A residential visit;*
- *Inspiring visiting speakers who shared their expertise and motivated our pupils;*
- *Thoughtful assemblies and Celebration of the Word, deepening our faith and values;*
- *Beautiful Masses bringing our school community together in worship;*
- *Sporting events where teamwork and perseverance shone through;*
- *Our fantastic Community Fun Afternoon filled with laughter and togetherness;*
- *Charity fundraising activities supporting local and global causes;*
- *Pupil achievements celebrated in awards assemblies and certificates;*
- *Christmas preparations with festive crafts, parties, carol singing and Nativity plays.*

This could only be achieved through the efforts of the fantastic team of staff and governors at St Patrick's, who are nothing short of amazing; well-behaved and enthusiastic children, ready to embrace new experiences; the support of our families, who are ready to work with us and a wonderful parish.

A big thank you, from us all for all the gifts you have sent into school. Your kindness is very much appreciated.

**We are looking forward to seeing you Tuesday 6th January.**

We wish you all a joyful Christmas and New Year.

From All at St Patrick's

# General News

## St Patrick's Nursery

We are delighted that we have already received some applications for our new Nursery provision opening January 12th 2026.

This is the next stage of an exciting journey for us as a school as we widen our offer to more families and younger pupils.

We are starting small as we feel this will allow us to provide the best possible start.

We have already been in contact with our 'Nursery' families and our newest pupils will be invited for a visit very soon.

Please complete the link below if you would like to apply for your child's place in our Nursery provision.

<https://forms.office.com/e/ayzpUTshMc>

## Reception Applications for September 2026

If you are a family with a child due to start the Reception year in September 2026, we encourage you to look around our wonderful school when making this decision.

We are very happy to introduce you to our fantastic staff and pupils and show you how our school is organised.

Please contact the school office to make an appointment. If you have friends or family in this position, please pass on our details.

Please apply for your child's Reception place on the link below. **Applications close on Thursday 15 January 2026.**

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-primary-school-place>

## New Pupils

This term, we have had a number of children join us across a number of year groups. It is great to know that more children are now able to benefit from the St Patrick's experience. All have settled beautifully.

## Parish newsletter

Please click [here](#) to view this week's parish newsletter for St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's parishes. Here you will find news about upcoming parish events and news.

# General News

## Christmas Party



## General News

### Thank you!

We would like to say a huge thank you to the amazing community groups and organisations who have showed such kindness to our families with their donations of food and toys. This, of course, shows the true spirit of Christmas and we are extremely grateful that you think of us and for the many ways you give your time and energy to support St Patrick's.

Thank you to:

The SVP linked with St Patrick's and St Joseph's.

Pontop Partnership Love Christmas Appeal

The Salvation Army

Kathryn Rooney's Toy Appeal.

We hope that is everyone!

A festive graphic with the word "Merry" in a green, cursive font and "Christmas" in a red, cursive font. The word "Merry" is decorated with holly leaves and red berries on either side. The word "Christmas" is written in a larger, red, cursive font below "Merry".

Merry  
Christmas

# General News

## FOSP Christmas Raffle

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the *Friends of St Patrick's* parent and carer group for their incredible support and dedication throughout this term. Your hard work behind the scenes— helping to organise events, fundraising and creating opportunities for our children—makes a real difference to our school community.

Thanks to your efforts, you have raised **£409**. Your commitment truly embodies the spirit of partnership and care that makes St Patrick's so special.

Watch this space as there will be more planned for the rest of the academic year.

<b>Prize</b>	<b>Colour</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Overnight stay</b>	Blue	1-5	Arthur Y1
<b>Trenchers</b>	Green	426-430	George Y5
<b>Moti Jheel</b>	Pink	31-35	George Y5
<b>Hall Hill Farm family ticket</b>	Orange	346-350	Leland Y6
<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	Green	446-450	Lucas Y6
<b>Beamish Museum</b>	Pink	91-95	Toby Y2
<b>Mini Shoot</b>	Blue	86-90	Toby Y2
<b>Wreath</b>	Orange	56-60	Patrick Y3
<b>Gel Polish</b>	Green	21-25	Harry Y3
<b>Finishing Touches</b>	Blue	376-380	Joe Y6
<b>Cake Voucher</b>	Green	456-460	Phoebe Y5
<b>Barbie Doll &amp; Tub</b>	Blue	121-125	Henry Y2
<b>Barbie Doll &amp; Tub</b>	Green	81-85	Oscar Y2
<b>Tesco Awaken</b>	Pink	81-85	Oscar Y2
<b>Tesco Tubs</b>	Yellow	116-120	Daisy Rec

# Online safety

We will give regular updates throughout the year regarding the need for vigilance with online safety. Please alert us to any concerns you may have.

Please see the following guidance and advice from National Online Safety.

## What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

# AI TOYS

This festive season, the newest toys on the shelves do not just blink or make noise; they listen. Many now come with artificial intelligence (AI), allowing them to talk, learn, and even respond to a child's emotions. These toys can be educational and engaging, but they also collect, store, and process information. This guide explains what that means for families and why it matters.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

#### TOYS THAT LISTEN AND LEARN

When a toy uses AI, it collects data such as voice recordings, interactions, and background sounds. This information is sent to remote servers, where it is analysed to improve responses. Your child's voice becomes training data, which may be stored indefinitely or shared with third parties.

#### WEAK SECURITY PROTECTIONS

Some AI toys have poor password protection or open network connections. Others may have microphones or cameras that stay on, even when the toy appears to be off. This can lead to recordings being made without your knowledge, including conversations unrelated to play.

#### ARTIFICIAL VOICES, REAL INFLUENCE

For very young children, an AI companion may become one of the first voices they interact with regularly. How that voice shows humour, empathy, or authority can shape how a child learns to communicate. If the model is artificial, then part of what is learned is artificial as well.

#### PRESSURE TO KEEP ENGAGING

Some toys reward repeated use or track engagement, encouraging children to interact more. When children compare how their toys perform, it creates pressure to play more often. This increases the amount of data collected and can make learning feel like competition.

#### MARKETING THROUGH PLAY

Toys that learn a child's preferences may feed that data into future advertising. A toy that knows a child's favourite colour or hobby could help a company design more targeted marketing to that child and their family.

#### PLAYTIME AS DATA TRAINING

The information collected from children helps train AI systems. Their voice, emotional responses, and behaviour shape how machines 'understand' people. Play becomes part of a much larger system that influences how future technologies behave.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

#### START WITH A CONVERSATION

Talk to young people. Explain that some toys learn from what they say and do. Help them understand that even friendly technology should have boundaries, and to ask questions about it. Curiosity is healthy, blind trust is not.

#### SET LIMITS ON USE

Turn off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth when the toy is not in use. Check for updates regularly, as they can change privacy or safety settings. Treat connected toys like any smart device; they should be monitored, updated, and switched off when not in use.

#### MODEL DIGITAL AWARENESS

Children learn from adults. If they see you checking privacy settings, reading terms, and talking openly about online safety, they are more likely to do the same. Show them how to question technology in a healthy way.

#### RESEARCH BEFORE YOU BUY

Look for toys that work offline or store data locally. Check for a free or demo version so you can test how it behaves. Read privacy policies to understand what data is collected, where it goes, and whether it's shared with others.

#### REVIEW PRIVACY SETTINGS

Find out where the data is stored and who has access to it. Some companies sell or share data with advertisers. If the toy connects through an app, check what it requests access to and limit those permissions whenever possible.

#### BALANCE AI WITH REAL PLAY

AI toys can be fun and creative, but they are not a replacement for real human interaction. Encourage time away from technology with activities that foster emotional and social development. Use AI toys to support learning, not define it.

### Meet Our Expert

Clara Hawking is Executive Director of Kompass Education. She advises governments, school trusts, and global organisations on AI governance and safeguarding, helping schools and families understand how technology shapes learning, wellbeing, and the digital future of children.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

# December Wellbeing Activities

I am loved.

## Christmas Wellbeing Advent Calendar

I am thankful.

1 Do something kind for someone else.	2 Make a batch of Christmas biscuits to share with family and friends.	3 Find some seasonal natural treasure and bring it inside to display.	4 Get a cosy blanket and snuggle up on the sofa with a good book.	5 Create a piece of art using natural materials.	6 Arrange to see a friend for a chat and a giggle.	7 Wake up in time to see the sun rise.
8 Make a Christmas card for a friend thanking them for something.	9 Get creative! Use paint to create a winter scene.	10 Listen to your favourite Christmas song.	11 Go for a winter picnic with hot chocolate and a cake.	12 Complete a seasonal craft project. Use sequins, glitter or colouring pens to get creative.	13 Sit in a quiet area outside and listen to all the natural sounds you can hear.	14 Look outside in the early evening and try to spot some stars.
15 Dance to your favourite Christmas song.	16 Research a charity. Think of a way you could help raise money to support a good cause this Christmas.	17 Create a senses box. Place smells and textures that remind you of Christmas inside it.	18 Plant some spring flowering bulbs like daffodils or tulips.	19 Sitting comfortably, close your eyes and breathe deeply. Think of five things you are grateful for.	20 Create ice art. Collect leaves or petals and put them in a pot of water and then freeze it. Take your ice sculpture out of the pot and display it.	21 Watch your favourite Christmas film with someone special.
22 Invite a friend round to play a game.	23 Wrap up a gift for a family member.	24 Arrange a family meal where everyone suggests a course.	25 Wrap up warm and go for a walk outside.			

### Cocoa Meditation

Why not make up your own cocoa ceremony? Make a hot chocolate, using a special cup, pouring technique and serving tray. Make the hot chocolate as if something very profound is happening. Drink it slowly and with your full attention. Tidy it away with that same sense of quiet joy.



### Light it Up

There is nothing like a little light show. Put on the Christmas lights and spend time just enjoying their twinkle. Watch the colours, the light areas, shadows and how they change. You might spend more time there doing a quiet task or listening to gentle music.



### Chain Gang

Making paper chain decorations is a really calming and productive way to spend your time. Simple strips with tape at the end can be linked together to create a lovely decoration. Decorate the strips before assembling with written messages or hopes.



### Shining Star Pose

Lie on the floor with your legs and arms stretched out comfortably so you are in a star shape. Imagine your heart is the centre of the star and that it beams out peaceful love. Breathe slowly and easily as you relax your shoulders and neck. Rest here for 10 lovely breaths.



## Christmas Pudding Rice Cereal Cakes

### Ingredients

50g rice cereal  
30g raisins  
50g butter  
100g milk chocolate  
2 tbsp crunchy peanut butter  
30g mini marshmallows  
80g white chocolate  
Icing decorations such as holly leaves (these can be bought pre-made)

### Equipment

Chopping board  
Sharp knife  
Hob  
Small bowl  
Medium saucepan  
Large mixing bowl  
Wooden spoon  
Egg cup  
Cling film  
Microwave

### Method

1. Chop the raisins and break your milk chocolate into pieces.
2. Put the butter, milk chocolate pieces, peanut butter and marshmallows into your saucepan and heat gently on a low heat. Stir the mixture until the chocolate and butter have melted and the marshmallows are just going gooey.
3. Pour the sticky butter, milk, peanut butter and marshmallow mixture into your bowl with the raisins and rice cereal and stir well until everything is mixed together and coated.
4. Line your egg cup with cling film and then press about a tablespoon of the mixture into the egg cup.
5. Press the mixture down firmly and then pull the cling film out of the egg cup and remove from your rice cereal ball. Place the ball, flat side down, into one of the cupcake cases.
6. Continue steps 4 and 5 until you have used up all your mixture. You should be able to make between 10 and 12.
7. Place the rice cereal cakes in the fridge and chill until they are firm.
8. Whilst the rice cereal cakes are chilling, put the white chocolate in a small bowl and melt in the microwave. Do this in short bursts to make sure that the chocolate doesn't burn.
9. Once the chocolate is melted and the cereal cakes are firm, spoon a little chocolate over the top of each pudding.
10. Top the white chocolate with your pre-made holly leaf decorations.

## Head Teacher's Awards

The following children have received a head teacher's certificate this week:

Reception	Being Responsible	Nico	For sharing equipment and helping to tidy it up.
Year 1	Being Respectful	Hannah	For using her manners with all staff in school.
Year 2	Being Ready to Learn	Harlow	For working so hard with everything she is asked to do.
Year 3	Being Responsible	Addie	For always bringing all items to school and completing her homework on time.
Year 4	Being Ready to Learn	Safiia	For an excellent first week at St. Patrick's.
Year 5	Being Responsible	Alya	For always being very helpful in class, making sure resources are tidied away carefully.
Year 6	Being Respectful	Lexi	For always showing beautiful manners.

## Class Teacher Special Mention Awards

The following children have received a Class Teacher Special Mention certificate this week:

Reception	Jasper	For his amazing progress in reading and always reading at home at least 3 times every week .
Year 1	Jackson	For working really hard this half term with his phonics.
Year 2	Evie	For always being so kind and helpful.
Year 3	Emiliia	For contributing to class discussions and producing excellent maths work.
Year 4	Deifilia	For producing an excellent piece of artwork in the style of Matisse.
Year 5	Millie	For always listening and contributing in lessons.
Year 6	Eddie	For working really hard at Year Six expectations.



## Summary of upcoming events

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December School Closes for Christmas holidays**

**School re-opens to pupils on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January**

Friday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Family Breakfast 7.40am-8.40am – Parents/carers are encouraged to join children for breakfast. Normal costs apply for pupils. Adult £3 (please bring correct change on the day)
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Fire Safety Assembly with Consett Fire Department
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Y4 Multiplication Check Parents' meeting 3.30pm
Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Open the Book Assembly 2.30pm. All welcome.
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Little Acorns Meeting 9-10.30am. Led by Caroline Daly SEND & Inclusion Advisory Team. Invited carers
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Y1/Y2 Gymnastics Festival at Northern Hope Gymnastics am
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	Y3/Y4 Gymnastics Festival at Northern Hope Gymnastics am
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Y5/Y6 Gymnastics Festival at Northern Hope Gymnastics am
Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Y5 'I'm a Scientist' Teams Session with STEM professionals from the North-East.

**[Please click here to view our Diary of Events for the rest of the Academic year](#)**

# Parent/Carer Information



## **Mental Health & Emotional Support**

for **children, young people & families** in County Durham

This is a **great starting point** to help you **access support**

If **Christmas is a hard time** for you, it's important to **remember that you are not alone.**



**KOOTH | [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)**

Free, safe and anonymous support around mental wellbeing for 11 years +

**CAMHS - Single Point of Access | 03001 239 296 [www.tewv.nhs.uk](http://www.tewv.nhs.uk)**

Community mental health teams for children (0-18 years)

**Emotional Health & Resilience Team | 03000 263 532**

Emotional health, advice and guidance for 5-19 years

**NHS 111 | [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

Get medical help near you or advice on your nearest walk-in centres

**TEWV Crisis line | NHS 111 Option 2 | [www.tewv.nhs.uk](http://www.tewv.nhs.uk)**

24 hour service for young people experiencing a mental health crisis

**Children's Social Care First Contact 03000 267 979**

**[www.durham.gov.uk/FirstContact](http://www.durham.gov.uk/FirstContact)**

Report a concern about a child's welfare

**Childline | 0800 1111 | [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem

**Early Help Triage Line Professionals Only | 03000 267979 (option 4)**

Early Help Triage can support professionals to identify appropriate support options based on family's needs

**Mind | 0300 123 3393 | [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)**

Provides information and signposting around mental health, including where to get help and treatment options

**Samaritans | 116 123 | [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

The Samaritans offer a safe space to talk in your own time and way about what is important to you

# Parent/Carer Information

**Young Minds | 0808 802 5544 | [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**

Helping young people around isolation and gaining support around mental health

**The Mix | 0808 808 4994 | [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)**

Free, confidential support for under 25 via online, social or mobile

**PAPYRUS | 0800 068 4141 | [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)**

Confidential support and advice for young people with thoughts of suicide

**Shout | Text SHOUT to 85258 | [giveusashout.org](http://giveusashout.org)**

Confidential 24/7 crisis text support when you need immediate assistance

**BEAT Youthline | 0808 801 0711 | [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)**

Provides support for children and young people with an eating disorder

Remember your **local school** and **GPs** are **available to help**.

**You** are **not alone**, we can get through this **together**.

**NHS**  
County Durham  
Clinical Commissioning Group

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

County Durham  
**Care Partnership** 



# Parent/Carer Information

STANLEY FAMILY OF CATHOLIC PARISHES

CHRISTMAS  
CONCERT



*Craghead  
Colliery  
Band*

21ST DECEMBER 2025 3PM

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH STANLEY

THIS IS THE PERFECT WAY TO EMBRACE THE MAGIC OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON  
WITH JOYFUL MUSIC, BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS, AND WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE.

MULLED WINE & MINCE PIES

£5 PER TICKET