



# Newsletter: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Dear Families,

## **Mental Health Week at St Patrick's – "This Is My Place"**

This week, our whole school community has come together to celebrate Mental Health Week, focusing on what it truly means to feel a sense of belonging. Through discussions, activities and reflection, pupils explored how each of us plays an important part in building a school where everyone can confidently say, "This is My Place."

Children have thoughtfully shared ideas about kindness, inclusion, friendship and the small everyday actions that help others feel valued and noticed. It has been wonderful to see pupils supporting one another and recognising the importance of looking after both our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around us.

Our staff team have also been busy this week, taking part in valuable training as part of our involvement in the STAR programme (Support Targeted for Anxiety and Resilience). This training strengthens our expertise in supporting pupils' emotional health and ensuring that every child can develop confidence, resilience and a strong sense of self-worth.

At St Patrick's, we continually challenge ourselves to grow, learn and deepen the support we offer to our pupils and families. We are incredibly proud of the commitment shown by our staff, the openness of our children and the fantastic partnership we have with our families.

Together, we are building a community where everyone feels safe, supported and truly at home.

Have a lovely weekend,  
Mrs Burgess

## General News



### A Wonderful Valentine's Celebration at St Patrick's

What a truly fantastic Valentine's event we enjoyed this afternoon here at St Patrick's! It was a joy to welcome so many grandparents and parishioners into school to share in an afternoon filled with fun, games and plenty of smiles. Our hall was alive with laughter, conversation and the simple pleasure of spending quality time together.

Events like today remind us how special it is to pause, connect and make memories with the people who play such an important part in our children's lives. Watching pupils enjoy time with family, friends and neighbours was a real highlight for everyone.

We also know that not every grandparent was able to join us today—and that is absolutely fine. Family circumstances vary and we appreciate every family just as they are.

We also hold in our hearts those grandparents who are no longer with us. They remain an important part of our lives and our children's stories.

This afternoon was a beautiful reminder of the strength of our community: supportive, caring and always willing to come together. Thank you to everyone who attended, helped, or supported in any way. Your presence makes a real difference.

A special shout out of thanks to Mrs Asumadu-Aboagye and the Mission Team for their organisational skills and for Friends of St Patrick's for helping with refreshments.

Our school is truly blessed to have such love surrounding it.

# General News



# General News

## St Joseph's and St Patrick's 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.

## No After School Club on Tuesday 17th February

Due to whole-staff training, our after-school club will not run on Tuesday 17th February. We're sorry for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.

## Family Valentine's Quiz Night ❤️

The Friends of St Patrick's have organised a Family Valentine's Quiz Night, which will take place in school on **Thursday 19th February from 3.30–5.00pm.**

This fun, family-friendly event is **completely free** to attend and refreshments will be provided at no charge. All parents, carers and members of the wider family are warmly invited to come along for an afternoon of laughter and friendly competition. There will also be a chance to win a **Krazy Kingdom voucher** 🎉

If you are planning to attend, **please complete the following Microsoft Form by Monday 16th February:**

<https://forms.office.com/e/YZM3diwQuL>

We hope you can join us for a lovely Valentine's celebration with our school community. ❤️

**Family Valentine's quiz night**

Bring the family for an afternoon of fun, laughter and friendly competition.

Location : St Patrick's School Dipton

Date : 19/02/26

Time : 15:30 - 17:00

**Free Event**

**Krazy Kingdom voucher to be won**

Organised by Friends of St Patrick's

# 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 GROUP CHATS

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

#### TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes complicate that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

#### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or images. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only visible once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

#### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have to control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

#### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

#### PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might justify inappropriate behaviours – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

#### VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or in the group chat.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

### SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if a stranger is added. Tell children that if they've added to a group they didn't agree to beforehand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

### SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded. Instead of responding to the person who's upset them, validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure they understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen with. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.

# February Wellbeing Activities

I am loved.

I am thankful.

## Acts of Kindness February Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

1

Draw a picture and give it to someone special.

2

Help tidy your classroom or home.

3

Write down something you are grateful for.

4

Tell a joke to make someone laugh.

5

Help prepare a meal with your family.

6

During a family meal, ask everyone to share the best part of their day.

7

Give someone a compliment to help them feel better about themselves.

8

Share a favourite memory with a friend or family member.

9

Introduce yourself to someone you haven't met before at school.

10

Write a thank-you note to someone who helped you.

11

Play a boardgame or do a puzzle with your family.

12

Set yourself a goal to achieve today.

13

Encourage someone that you see is struggling.

14

Write a note to someone to show them that you care.

15

Wish the first person that you see an amazing day.

16

Offer to help someone.

17

Share your toys with a friend or sibling.

18

Find a positive quote and share it with someone.

19

At the end of the day, write or draw one great thing that happened.

20

Teach someone something you are good at.

21

Be kind to yourself and do something special for you.

22

Help a teacher without being asked.

23

Be a friend to someone in need at school.

24

Do something nice for someone who is special to you.

25

Do a chore to help someone in your family.

26

Donate food to a local food bank or books and toys to a local charity.

27

Do something that you love to do.

28

Ask your teacher how their day is going.

29

Recycle

## Mindfulness

### Mindful Breathing Balloons

Taking a moment to be calm and relaxed during a busy day can help us to feel settled and happy.

Taking slow and gentle breaths, in and out, can help us to feel better if we are worried, frightened or sad.

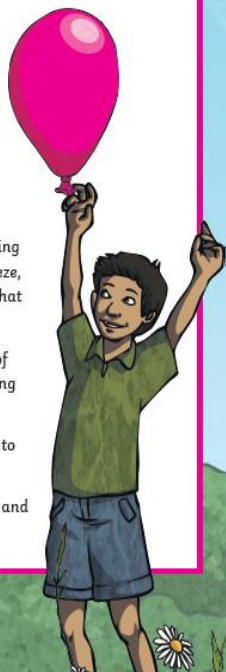
Imagine you are blowing up a balloon - take a gentle, deep breath in and slowly breathe out to fill up your imaginary balloon. Pretend to tie a knot in the end and attach a string.

As you hold on to the balloon, imagine seeing it flying high in the sky. As it gently blows in the warm breeze, just watch it. As you watch it, think of something that makes you happy.

Blow up some more imaginary balloons and think of some more things that make you happy. Enjoy feeling calm and relaxed.

Thinking of things that make us happy can help us to have a positive day.

It is a good way of looking after our mental health and wellbeing too!



## Strawberry Scones

### Ingredients

225g self-raising flour (plus extra for work surface)

50g cold butter, cubed (plus extra for greasing and serving)

25g caster sugar

50g sultanas (optional)

pinch of salt

120ml milk, plus extra for brushing

strawberry jam for serving

strawberries to garnish

### Equipment

mixing bowl

knife

round cutter

wooden spoon

baking tray

rolling pin

ruler

pastry brush

cooling rack



### Method

1. Preheat your oven to 200°C-200°C fan/gas mark 7.
2. Grease a baking tray with butter.
3. Put the flour and salt into a mixing bowl and add the cubed butter.
4. Gently, rub the mixture together with your fingertips until it looks like breadcrumbs.
5. Carefully, stir in the sugar and sultanas (optional).
6. Gradually, add the milk to the mixture and stir well.
7. Coat the work surface with a light dusting of flour. Pour the mixture out onto the floured surface and knead it with your hands until the dough is quite stiff.
8. Roll out the dough until it is roughly 2cm thick. Press the cutter into the dough to cut out individual circles. Repeat with any remaining dough.
9. Gently, spread out the scones on the greased baking tray, allowing a gap between them. Then, brush them with milk.
10. Bake in a hot oven for 12-15 minutes. Leave to cool on the cooling rack.
11. Carefully, cut the cooled scones in half and add a layer of butter and strawberry jam to each half.
12. Wash the strawberries and chop off the green stems. Cut the strawberries into slices and add them to the top as an extra garnish.
13. Enjoy!

## Head Teacher's Awards

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

Reception	Being Ready to Learn	Ashton	For listening carefully in phonics.
Year 1	Being Respectful	Indiana	For always having lovely manners with adults and children in school.
Year 2	Being Ready to Learn	Freddie	For not giving up even when things are tricky.
Year 3	Being Ready to Learn	Harry	For working hard in lessons and producing his best work.
Year 4	Being Ready to Learn	Deifilia	For having an excellent attitude to learning, always trying her best.
Year 5	Being Ready to Learn	Millie	For writing some excellent descriptive sentences about Skellig.
Year 6	Being Ready to Learn	Amber	For an all-'round fantastic attitude to all areas of learning.

## Class Teacher Special Mention Awards

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

Reception	Nico	For coming into school every morning with a big smile.
Year 1	Joseph W	For his hard work in Maths this week when completing addition and subtraction questions within 20.
Year 2	Everley	For being such a kind, helpful and friendly member of our class.
Year 3	Leo	For showing greater participation in Reading Fluency lessons.
Year 4	Charlotte	For always being such a friendly, helpful and hardworking member of our class.
Year 5	Lily-Rose	For working very hard this week in all areas of the curriculum.
Year 6	Erin	For some fantastic ideas for writing about The Highwayman.



## Summary of upcoming events

Wednesday 18th	Ash Wednesday Mass 9.30am. All welcome
Thursday 19th	Y3/Y4 Virtual Fitness via Teams am
Thursday 19th	Y5/Y6 7a-side Football at Greenland School 4pm
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Family Valentine's Quiz Night 3.30-5pm.

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> School closes for half term break  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March School re-opens to pupils**



Thursday 5th	World Book Day. Details to follow.
Friday 6th	Y3/Y4 Girls' Football Festival at North Durham Academy pm
Friday 6th	Family Breakfast 7.40am-8.40am

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

## Parent/Carer Information



# ADVENTURE HOLIDAY CLUB

Looking for childcare this half term?  
There's endless fun at Whickham Thorns Adventure Club!

A full day of action-packed fun where kids get to try a brilliant mix of activities such as climbing, laser tag, snow tubing, archery, bushcraft, high ropes and assault courses!

Whickham Thorns Activity Centre  
Gateshead, NE11 9NX

**BOOK  
NOW**



# Parent/Carer Information

The North East's Premier Indoor and Outdoor Activity Centre

## Bespoke and Ready-to-go adventures

With a deep rooted history in the heart of Gateshead, our stone built centre situated within 56 acres of woodland offers all-year-round fun, education and adventure.



### Obstacle Course

Balance, climb and crawl your way around a series of outdoor obstacles. Test yourself individually and work together to complete teamwork challenges.



### Crate Stacking

Build your way to the top of the tower before it crashes down! Your team will support you to stack the crates whilst you balance on top.



### Archery

Keep an eye on the target as you pull back the arrow with a steady hand. Our instructors will teach you everything you need to know to improve your aim.



### High Ropes Challenge

Navigate around a series of elevated vertical beams, bridges and climbing obstacles whilst suspended high above the ground and supported by the belay.



### Bouldering

Our grounds are home to the first man made outdoor boulder park in Britain. Hold on tight as you climb free from ropes and harnesses and learn the essential skills for greater heights.



### Laser Tag

Attack and defend to stay in the game and be crowned the ultimate combat winner. We'll set you missions and track your stats with our state-of-the-art equipment.



### Bushcraft

Learn to survive and thrive in the great outdoors as you master fire-lighting, shelter building, fireside cooking and woodland crafts, with our nature-loving activities.



### Orienteering

Work together with your teammates to navigate around our muddy woodland course and find your way to various checkpoints in the quickest time possible.



### Climbing

Develop your climbing technique on our indoor climbing walls. Feel the adrenaline rush as you reach the top and learn how to belay for others.



### Mountain Biking

Explore over 50 acres of woodland on two wheels, following our family-friendly mountain bike trails around the forest.



### Paddleboarding

Learn the basics in how to stand up and balance on your paddle board, then enjoy the views as you propel yourself forward down a beautiful stretch of sheltered water.



### Skiing

Learn to Ski with our qualified and experienced instructors. Our 40m long dry ski slope, which is split in two, can accommodate beginner to intermediate Ski lessons.



### Snowtubing

Feel the wind on your face as you slip, slide and spin down our 40m dry ski slope on giant inflatable snow tubes.



### ValoClimb

Combining motion tracking and projected graphics, our gamified climbing wall will take you to new heights as you cling on and navigate the rocks.



**Whickham  
Thorns**

Need help planning the perfect event? Contact us:

[activities@whickhamthorns.com](mailto:activities@whickhamthorns.com)

[www.whickhamthorns.co.uk](http://www.whickhamthorns.co.uk)

# Parent/Carer Information

R A B Y

## February Half Term Space Adventure Trail

### Family Saver Ticket

Online | £10.00

On Site | £12.00



Explore the great outdoors through woodlands to the waterfall, sparking your little ones' curiosity in all things astronomy and space along the way.

[www.raby.co.uk/high-force](http://www.raby.co.uk/high-force) [highforcehotel@raby.co.uk](mailto:highforcehotel@raby.co.uk) 01833 662336

High Force Hotel & Waterfall, Alston Road, Forest-in-Teesdale, County Durham, DL12 0XH [f](#) [X](#) [@](#)

# Parent/Carer Information

R A B Y

## Half Term Family Explorer Ticket



Step back in time with  
The Servant School at  
Raby Castle



Explore The Plotters'  
Forest Dragon Quest



Spot the majestic  
Deer roaming in the  
picturesque parkland



Seed Sowing  
in the stunning  
Walled Gardens



*Exclusive Offer*

10% off Family Explorer Tickets with the Code FEB10

[www.raby.co.uk/events/family-explorer-tickets](http://www.raby.co.uk/events/family-explorer-tickets) [admin@raby.co.uk](mailto:admin@raby.co.uk) 01833 660202

Raby Castle, Staindrop, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3AH



*Terms and conditions apply.*