

Outdoor Playing and Learning

Mrs Blackburn (Key Stage 2 Outdoor Play Leader) and our Playground Leaders have been incredibly busy this year developing our outdoor play opportunities. They have visited another school to gain ideas, devised a plan to 'zone' the Key Stage 2 yards, chosen equipment and games and received training from Mrs Blackburn in leading games outside.

This week got off to a fantastic start on our Junior yard, with our Playground Leaders ensuring all pupils were playing safely with our new equipment. We have a tennis area, ball skills area, throwing and catching/skipping area, quiet area and 'hang out' area. Our next stage in the

project is to develop our Infant play opportunities and Miss Bamborough will be helping to lead this.

We are using some of our PE Premium Funding to support this but would greatly appreciate any donations for our outdoor play, such as tennis balls, soft balls, bean bags, colouring pencils or skipping ropes. If anyone has any bright ideas regarding outdoor play or knows of any grants available, please just get in touch.

PE News



Miss Wiblin, our fantastic PE Subject Leader, is running an exciting new Daily Mile initiative this term—our 'Healthy Hearts Challenge.' Children have to tick off 14 hearts on their charts to earn a reward, just in time for Valentine's Day coming up.

In other news, our boys football team will represent South Tyneside in the Alan Grimes Memorial trophy this term and they will also travel to St Mary's, North Shields in the Bishop's Cup. Best of luck to all involved!

Creative Enquiry Project

We are delighted to inform you that we have secured £3750 from the South Tyneside Local Education Cultural Partnership to create our very own learning and wellbeing garden. We have been assigned a wonderful artist—Amy Grounsell, who will work with a team of children, staff and volunteers to create a place where children can connect scientifically and spiritually with nature, engage in storytelling and spark their imaginations.

The project will be led by Amy and our wonderful Art and Design Technology Subject Leader, Mrs Limer. We will keep you updated about the exciting developments on our Facebook page!

E-Safety Day

Online safety is a key area of our safeguarding education and computing curriculum in school; we teach aspects of e-safety in all year groups throughout the year and Mrs Torley, our dedicated Deputy Headteacher and also our Computing Subject Leader, keeps all staff up to date with the most recent E-Safety advice and teaching.

We also want to help you, as parents, to navigate this very difficult area. **On E-Safety Day (Tuesday 7 February) at 1.30pm we will be holding a Pupil Assembly and Online Safety Session for our Key Stage 2 parents.** Clennell Education

Solutions will be holding an informative session and the children will also be sharing what they have learnt from the day. We would love as many parents as possible to join us for this vitally important session.

We will also be sending out useful online safety information to all parents and sending out our Acceptable Use Policy for parents to talk through with their child and sign.

If you have an online safety concern or a safeguarding concern of any kind, please contact Mrs Alderson (Designated Safeguarding Lead –DSL), Mrs Torley (Deputy DSL) or Miss Wiblin (Assistant DSL),



Liturgical Prayer



Children planning and leading liturgies is one of our RE improvement priorities this year and our proactive RE Leader, Mrs Aitchison, has been providing classes with lovely resources to help with this. We will be

ensuring that all parents have the chance to join their child's class during this very special, prayerful time. All classes will be leading liturgies over the coming months before the Summer holidays aside from

Year 5 who led a beautiful Remembrance Day Liturgy in the Autumn term with support from Liz Boylan, Bishop Chadwick Director of Chaplaincy. We would love parents/carers to join our pupils in their prayer time. We will also be joining the parish for Mass on occasion - all welcome.

Report from the Friends of St Matthew's (FOSM)

'It was a busy end of the year for the Friends of St Matthew's (FOSM) with a flurry of Christmas activities and events. Thanks to everyone who came along, bought Christmas cards and helped out! Our Christmas Grotto in particular was a fantastic event – we had lots of lovely feedback and happy children! With your help we raised:

- £137 from Christmas Card sales
- £500 from the Christmas Grotto, hamper raffle and Christmas craft sale

This latest fundraising activity has helped us get some way to our next target, which is to purchase some much-needed outdoor equipment for the children. To help us achieve this goal, we have some fun and exciting things planned for the Spring term.

Dates are subject to change but look out for:

- Family St Patrick's Night on Saturday 11th March at St Matthew's Church Hall (TBC)
- Easter Hunt!
- Mother's Day Hamper raffle with some extra special goodies
- A King's Coronation Celebration in May (date in May tbc)

Some of you may not know but the Friends of St Matthew's is a Registered Charity which means every year we hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and publish an annual report.

Our AGM will take place on Monday 6 March at 6pm in the school hall. We will

be opening the doors at 5.30pm for anyone who is interested in hearing more about our work or getting involved as a volunteer or trustee of the charity to pop in and find out more. Details and booking form for the AGM are coming soon!



Our beautiful Christmas grotto!

Attendance and Punctuality

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, we have a history of excellent attendance and are very proud of our children and families for their determination to attend school every day, on time. Our attendance to date this year is 95.2% and our aspirational target for the year is 97%.

We have a lovely new weekly attendance trophy for the class with the best attendance each week. A huge well done to the first winners of this award, Year 1, who had 100% attendance last week!

Please could parents help us with this by

ensuring your child gets to school on time each day and by trying to arrange medical appointments before or after school whenever possible. All requests for leave should be carried out by completing the school form available from our school office. Please note that **leave can only be granted for exceptional circumstances.** In line with government policy and advice from the Local Authority, unfortunately headteachers **cannot authorise absence from school during term time for a family holiday.** Please see [Holidays in term time - South Tyneside Council](#) for more information.

Road Safety

Please could we remind all parents to take care when dropping off and picking up children at the start and end of the school day. The roads around school can get very busy and we are concerned for the safety of all the members of our school community.

Please avoid parking on the yellow lines and also ensure you do not block any cars in. We have also had some complaints from local residents and the local Neighbourhood Officer regarding cars being parked in front of their drives or on the grass verges.

When dropping your child off, please also ensure that they do not get out of the car directly on to the road. Cars can come along the road very quickly and may not see the child getting out of the car.

We have been speaking with our pupils regarding road safety and will continue to promote the importance of this in school. Thank you for your support with this.



Magic Breakfast Ending

We have had the support of the Magic Breakfast facility for a number of years now. This has enabled us to provide bagels for all pupils and cereals for breakfast club. Please be aware that we are now no longer eligible for this support and so bagels will not be available in the morning for pupils. Please ensure your child has a breakfast in the morning. Remember, we have a breakfast club available from 7.30am each morning.

Children's Mental Health Week

The 6th to 12th February is Children's Mental Health Week. The theme of this year is 'Let's Connect.' All classes will be holding sessions with Natalie Doyle, our Primary Mental Health Worker and also carrying out activities throughout the week to help them 'connect.'

It would be wonderful if families could also carry out an activity for home from the Place 2 Be website. Please visit <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/families/> to access some lovely resources.