



**St. Joseph's  
Catholic Infant  
& Junior Schools**  
Birtley



*All are welcome in this place*



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**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Dear Parents/Carers,**

**Christmas Party Day**



Our Christmas party day is **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December with a visit from SANTA at the infants and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December at the junior school.**

Infant school children are welcome to come to school in their party-gear; year 2 PE will take place on Friday instead.

Junior school children who have PE on a Thursday, should come to school in their PE kit and bring their party clothes in a bag, to change into after lunch. Other classes can come in their party clothes.

We will be hosting party games and will provide small party snacks (*all dietary requirements and allergies will be catered for*).

**Reception Admissions:**

The deadline for Reception admissions is January 15<sup>th</sup> 2026. Please remember that you need to apply to Gateshead

Council via their portal. [Primary school admissions September 2026 - Gateshead Council](#)

Please note that we are happy to host a tour if you would like to see what our schools have on offer.

**By this deadline date, Year 2 parents/carers must also make an application for their child, to move to the junior school.**

**Retirement:**

It is with a heavy heart that we announce Mrs Fuery's retirement. She is due to retire on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December. She has worked with our schools since 2014 and has taught so many of our community. We wish her every blessing for a happy and healthy retirement and look forward to her popping back into school for a catch-up with us! We are now recruiting for a Level 3 Teaching Assistant. Please visit BWCET vacancies for further information. [Level 3 Teaching Assistant - Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust - North East Jobs](#)

[https://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/job/Level\\_3\\_Teaching\\_Assistant/289651](https://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/job/Level_3_Teaching_Assistant/289651)

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### After-School Wraparound Care Club:

**Please note that there will be no after-school activity clubs during the last week of term**, but wraparound care is still available to book. January activity clubs will be made available on Arbor early next week.

On Arbor, there are 3 session timeslots available, so please be sure to select the correct one, per day:

- Full session to include a light meal from 15:15 or 15:30 until 17:45 - **£8.00**
  - One hour session from the end of the school day, from 15:15 or 15:30 until 16:15 or 16:30 - **£3.00**
  - Session to follow an activity club, from 16:15 or 16:30 until 17:45 - **£5.00**
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### Centenary of St. Joseph's Catholic Infant School:

We will be celebrating the centenary of St. Joseph's Catholic Infant School, on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 10am.



Rt. Rev. Abbot Geoffrey Scott OSB, Abbot of Lindisfarne has kindly agreed to celebrate Mass for us as Fr. Martin Wheaton is away. Abbot Geoffrey, the former Abbot of Douai Abbey, attended St Joseph's Infant School as a child so is happy to be returning for this occasion.

**We are currently arranging an afternoon tea event with the Nourish Food School for the afternoon of Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January for our pupils in the infant school. We will send details to you as soon as they are finalised.**

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### Faith in Action Award:

As part of their **Faith in Action Award**, our Year 6 children have been reflecting on ways they can make a positive difference in the world, in light of the Cafod visitor to school. The Cafod assembly has sparked a wonderful idea among the children: instead of (or in addition to) sending Christmas cards this year, they would like to invite families to consider making a small donation of perhaps **£1.00** towards this cause. Your generosity, no matter how small, can help transform lives and support those most in need.



**If you would like to take part, please either send a cash donation into school with your child, or make payment via the School Shop in Arbor, this December.**

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement of our Year 6 pupils as they live out their 'faith in action'.

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### A Little Reminder About Daily Reading

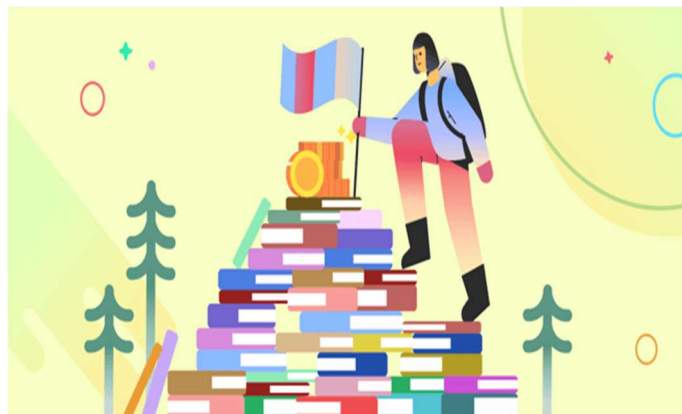
We'd like to give a gentle nudge about our school policy of **daily home reading**—it really does make a huge difference! Research shows that when parents get involved in their child's learning, it can lead to learning gains of **up to three extra months over the course of a year**. That's the power you hold! Just a few minutes each day sharing a book, asking questions and enjoying stories together can open doors for your child's progress and confidence.

Here's a handy tip: **repeated reading of the same passage** can have a big impact on reading fluency, so if your child wants to read the same page or story again, let them—it's building speed, accuracy and confidence every time!

Let's make reading a top priority—it's one of the simplest and most rewarding ways to support your child's success.

### **Our Termly Reading Competition – Keep Those Pages Turning!**

Don't forget about our exciting **whole-school reading challenge!** Every time your child finishes a book, they add a sticker to our whole-school display. At the end of the term, the **winning house** goes into a special draw and one lucky winner gets to choose **a book from Amazon**. Encourage your child to keep reading regularly—not just for the competition, but to build **reading fluency, stamina and confidence**. The more they read, the more they grow as readers... and the closer they get to that prize!



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### **Christmas Mass Times:**

Christmas Vigil - 24th December 7pm at St. Joseph's  
Christmas Day Mass - 25th December 10.00am at St. Joseph's  
Boxing Day - 26th December No Mass at St. Joseph's

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### **School Meals:**

**Our school meals have remained a consistent price for a number of years; however, as of 1<sup>st</sup> April, they will rise to the new price of £3.10 a meal.**

If any family believes that they could be eligible for free school meals, whether their children be at the infant or junior school, we ask that you please, do make an application. The local authority currently provides grocery vouchers to all eligible families at main school holiday periods (**even those families, where infant children receive Universal Infant Free School Meals**). In addition, our schools also benefit from additional funds to improve our resources for the children, which is invaluable to us. [Click the link to apply - Apply for free school meals - Gateshead Council](#)

### **Your child will qualify for free school meals if you meet all the following criteria:**

- you or your partner receive Child Benefit (for the child you are applying for)
- the child is in full-time education, under 19 years of age
- the child attends a local authority school or sixth form (but not a sixth-form college). If your child attends nursery, attendance must be full time and your child must attend before and after lunch in a nursery

### **In addition, you and your partner must receive one of the following benefits:**

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA - IB)
- Guarantee Pension Credit
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA Income Related)
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (see section 'Families with no recourse to public funds' for information)
- **Universal Credit - with a net earned family income of less than £7,400**

Receipt of one of the above benefits will be checked with the relevant government departments (HMRC, DWP and Home Office) - this may be done via the Eligibility Checking Service. By signing the declaration on the application form, you are giving your consent for us to check your eligibility through this service.



DECEMBER

# NEWSLETTER

SIDE BY SIDE ARTS

1<sup>st</sup> of December can mean one thing...we can finally say MERRY CHRISTMAS to all our wonderful students.

We have so much going on over December it's been difficult to squeeze everything onto one page.

Our studio will close its doors on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> December and reopen from 5<sup>th</sup> January

To celebrate Christmas in Style, why not join us for a night to remember with Gloria Love. Scan the QR on the poster to get tickets.



Meet-A-Piper: An Evening with Andy Davison

Come and hear the rich sounds and stories of Northumbrian Small pipes at Ednie Wilson - Traditional Music and Dance next Meet-A-Piper session — a warm invitation to anyone curious about the incredible range of pipers we have here in the North East.



Monday 8th December

The Gateshead Community Choir is changing its name in the New Year and will move from Sundays to Wednesday evenings from 7pm. The Side By Side Arts Choir has a new Come and Sing event welcoming new members on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January.

All our choirs will be back up and running after the Christmas break.



## Black Friday Deals

Deal 1 – New Students

Get £20 off your January lessons when you sign up with us by 20<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Deal 2 - Current Students

Refer a friend and get £20 off lessons if your friend signs up with us by 20<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Quote "Black Friday" to redeem this offer

Email [Info@SideBySideArts.org](mailto:Info@SideBySideArts.org) For more information

[www.sidebysidearts.org](http://www.sidebysidearts.org)

\*Terms and Conditions apply



## Come and Sing Event

14<sup>th</sup> January  
Anyone Can Sing  
No Audition to Join

Side By Side Arts Choir  
Wednesdays 7pm\*

£40 per Term



Side By Side Arts  
Dunemuir Grove  
Bensham  
Gateshead  
NE8 4QL

Email [Info@SideBySideArts.org](mailto:Info@SideBySideArts.org) For more information

[www.sidebysidearts.org](http://www.sidebysidearts.org)



## Grade 1 Music Theory Course

Wednesdays 5pm-6pm

Working Towards Grade 1 Theory exam

14<sup>th</sup> January  
10 week course £50

Side By Side Arts  
Dunemuir Grove  
Bensham  
Gateshead  
NE8 4QL

Email [Info@SideBySideArts.org](mailto:Info@SideBySideArts.org) For more information



07377884203



[www.sidebysidearts.org](http://www.sidebysidearts.org)

## **Dates for the Diary**

***(Please note that these dates are subject to change)***

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December – Year 6 Visit to Safety Works – 1:00pm  
Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December – KS2 Carol Service in Church – 2:00pm  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December – Year 1 and Year 2 will sing at Lindisfarne Care home – 11:00am  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December – Year 6 Carol singing at Covent House – 10:00am  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December – SJIB Christmas Party with a visit off Santa  
Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December – SJJB Christmas Party  
Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December – Last Day of Term  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January – INSET day  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January – Children return to school  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January – Centenary of SJIB Mass in Church – 10:00am  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January – Reception Class Multi-Sport Festival at Gateshead International Stadium  
Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January – Year 2 Indoor Cricket Festival at Gateshead International Stadium  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February – Spring School Disco - 4:00-5:15pm SJIB & 5:15-6:30pm SJJB  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January – Year 4 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January – Year 6 Visit to Centre for Life – 9:00am  
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January – Reception Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February – Year 3 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February – Year 6 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February – Year 2 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February – Break up for Spring Half Term Holiday  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March – Children return to school  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March – Parents' Evening  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March – Year 5 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March – Year 4 Visit to Vindolanda – 9:30am  
Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March – Parents' Evening  
Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March – SJIB & SJJB School Photos  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March – Year 4 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March – SJIB Visit to Beamish – 9:30am  
Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March – Year 1 and Year 2 Palm Sunday Liturgy in Church - 9:30am  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April – Year 4 and Year 5 Maundy Thursday Celebration of the Word Service – 9:30am  
Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April – Last Day of Term

**Visit:** [St Joseph's Birtley Bulletins \(stjosephsbirtley.co.uk\)](http://stjosephsbirtley.co.uk) for more information