



St. Joseph's  
Catholic Infant  
& Junior Schools  
Birtley



*All are welcome in this place*

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**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Dear Parents & Carers,**

### **Centenary Celebrations!**

Thank you to all those who spoke so positively about our centenary celebrations – there was much thought, hard work and commitment taken by the staff in the planning of the event and we hope that you enjoyed it as much as we did. We must also publicly thank Abbot Geoffrey Scott (OSB) who celebrated our Mass. The altar-servers, singing, readers, dancers were wonderful and every pupil was a credit to St. Joseph's.

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#### **DfE Funded Breakfast Club:**

**We have some good news! Following another application, the DfE has agreed to fund a 30-minute breakfast club at St. Joseph's Catholic Junior School after the Easter holidays. Please note all arrangements for St. Joseph's Catholic Infant School will remain as they are, presently.**

The DfE funded 30-minute breakfast club at the juniors will commence from **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April**.

- For the 7:45am – 8:00am session, there will be an associated cost of £1.50.
- Please note that, even though breakfast club at St. Joseph's Catholic Junior School will be free, as it is already at the infant school, we need to operate a strict booking policy to ensure we have sufficient pupil to staff ratios.
- The free breakfast club will operate from 8:00 – 8:30am. (Juniors)
- Our soft start to the school day then commences from 8:30am at the Juniors (Infants soft start begins at 8:35am)

On Arbor, there will be two options to choose from within the 'Early Adopter Breakfast Club' so please take care when selecting from the time slots available. Please note that you will need to top up your account before being able to select the payable option.

- 7:45am – 8:30am (£1.50)
  - 8:00am – 8:30am (free)
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#### **School Meal & Wraparound Care Payments:**

**Please note that going forward, Breakfast Club and Wraparound Care must be booked by 7:00pm, the night before.** As you will appreciate, we must carefully manage our staffing ratios and ensure that we have sufficient staff cover for the pupils attending. Thank you for your understanding.

Please ensure that you 'top up' the necessary pots in Arbor in a timely manner, to avoid any negative balances going into each week. **We cannot allow credit for these provisions, moving forward.**

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## Lateness:

Please remember that our school day commences at 8:45am (Infants) and 8:55am (Juniors): it is imperative that pupils are in school by this time **at the latest**. During our soft starts, we focus on core basic skills (Monday, Wednesday and Friday – arithmetic; and Tuesday/Thursday – handwriting and spellings). It is vital that pupils are on time so that they can receive this input from their class teachers.



## Another Centenary!

We have been invited to be part of a very special festival of celebrations to mark 100 years of Gateshead Central Library, which first opened in March 1926.

**To support the occasion, Birtley Library has invited our Reception class pupils to obtain a limited-edition library card designed especially for children.**

Please submit your consent via the 'notices' section in Arbor, so we can share your data with Gateshead Council, meaning your child won't miss out on this super offer.

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## A Special Email:

**This week, we received an email from Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education. 😊**

*'Dear Mrs Swaddle,*

*Congratulations to you and your team on the excellent outcomes the disadvantaged pupils at St Joseph's Catholic Junior School, Birtley achieved at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. Your school's performance places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement.*

*This success reflects the dedication of your staff and the hard work of your pupils. It shows what can be achieved when ambition and commitment come together. Thank you for everything you do to give children the best possible opportunities to succeed.*

*Your school's achievements demonstrate what is possible, and I hope you will continue to share your experience and best practice with others...'*

Here at St. Joseph's, we have a fantastic team of staff who work with complete commitment and dedication - helping your children succeed and fulfil their potential. The email is testament to our pupils, staff and governors for their hard work. We really value parental engagement and these results could not be achieved without your involvement.

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## Staffing Update:

Mrs Weddle has been appointed as our new teaching assistant and will commence in her new role from May (please note that she will continue to support Wrap-Around Care). We are delighted to welcome her to our infant school.

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**Pause:**

Gateshead Local Authority has launched **Pause**, a new free parenting app designed to support parents and carers of children aged 3–11. The app provides personalised advice, practical strategies and tailored ideas to help families support children’s wellbeing, behaviour and development, promoting happy and confident children. Parents can download the app using the QR code on the flyer and enter the access code provided to gain free access to resources, skills and information.

**Pause**  
How to set up the Pause app

Pause can answer your parenting questions with personalised advice to help your 3-11 year olds grow into happy, confident children.

**First** download the app with this QR code

**Second** Enter the code **GA999** for free access

**Third** Get skills, info and tailored ideas to help you support your child

Gateshead Council

Pause app interface: Welcome, Please enter your group code to get started, GA999, Skip

Illustration of a koala and a turtle.



**Times Table Rock Stars:**

Miss Smithies has organised a TTRS competition:

Year 3 vs Year 4

Year 5 vs Year 6

Let’s keep prioritising our times table facts!

*Designated Safeguarding Leads for the school: Mrs K. Swaddle*

*Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads for the school:*

*Mrs R. Nutton, Mrs E. McConnell and Mrs A. Snaith and Mrs J. Smith.*

### **Dates for the Diary**

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

Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> February – Year 1 Library visit – 9:00am  
Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> February – Year 3 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Monday 09<sup>th</sup> February – Year 2 Library visit – 9:30am  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February – Year 6 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February – Year 3 Library visit – 9:30am  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February – Year 2 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February – Spring Disco at Birtley Catholic Club – 4:00-5:15pm SJIB & 5:15-6:30pm SJJB  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February – Break up for Spring Half Term Holiday  
Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> March – Children return to school  
Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> March – School Photos – ***Rescheduled from 9<sup>th</sup> March by the photographer***  
Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> March – Parents' Evening  
Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> March – Year 5 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> March – Year 4 Visit to Vindolanda – 9:00am  
Wednesday 04<sup>th</sup> March – Parents' Evening  
Thursday 05<sup>th</sup> March – World Book Day Celebration Lunch (*details to follow*)  
Friday 06<sup>th</sup> March – World Book Day - Dress up as your favourite book character / non-uniform  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am  
Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March – Year 5 Singing Festival – 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 24<sup>th</sup> March – Mothers' Day Reception Celebration of the Word-9:00am  
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 02<sup>nd</sup> April – Last Day of Term

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