



St. Joseph's
Catholic Infant
& Junior Schools
Birtley



All are welcome in this place

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Monday 23rd March 2026

Dear Parents & Carers,



Our Journey Through Lent

During Lent we focus on fasting, prayer and alms-giving. As a school we have chosen to support Cafod and the Good Shepherd Appeal during Lent. All profits from our Friday tuck shops will be donated to the Good Shepherd Appeal and we will update you on how much we raise, by the end of term.

On Friday, the children took part in Cafod's Big Lent Walk. Supporting Cafod is an important part of our mission for charitable giving during Lent. We support this cause each Lent and stand in solidarity with our global neighbours.

A huge thank you to all the children and parents for returning their completed sponsorship forms and for their fantastic support with fundraising. We are delighted to share that the total amount raised so far is **£1,117.50**. — an amazing achievement! The children who raised the most for Cafod (Years 5/6, Years 3/4, Years 1/2, Reception) will be awarded tomorrow, once the proceeds have been finalised. **If you do have any unreturned sponsorship at home, please return this to school tomorrow.**

As we move towards Holy Week, we would like to remind you of the many opportunities to join us in prayer. On Thursday 26th March, our Year 6 pupils will be leading our junior school pupils in the Stations of the Cross, in Church. On Tuesday 31st March, our Year 1 and 2 pupils will lead the infant school pupils in a Palm Sunday Liturgy, including blessing of palms by Fr Martin. On Thursday 2nd April, Years 4 and 5 will lead a Maundy Thursday Celebration of the Word. All of these events are at 9:30am in St Joseph's Church and we warmly invite you to join us.

Mass for the Holy Land – Saturday 25th April, at 11.00am, St Joseph's Church, Birtley

All are warmly invited to attend Mass for the Holy Land on Saturday 25th April at 11.00am at St Joseph's Church, Birtley, celebrated with members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Northumbrian Section.

The Order supports the Christian presence in the Holy Land, assisting local Christian communities through pastoral, educational and charitable work. At a time of great challenge and uncertainty for many in the region, this mission remains especially important. This Mass offers an opportunity for the parish to pray together for peace and to stand in solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land.

Members of the Order will be present and will take part in the Mass, including a formal liturgical procession. This will also be an opportunity to find out more about the work of the Order and its mission.

Parishioners, families and friends are very welcome, and all are encouraged to come along and join in prayer.

Important Reminder – Nut-Free School

We would like to remind all parent/carers that we are a **nut-free school**.

We do have children in school with severe nut allergies, and even small traces of nuts can cause serious allergic reactions. To help keep everyone safe, please ensure that **no food containing / may contain nuts** is included in packed lunches. This includes items with hazelnut spread and the like.

We kindly ask that you check packaging carefully before sending food into school. Thank you for your understanding and continued support in helping us maintain a safe environment for all students.

Easter Eggstravaganza

Thank you for your kind chocolate donations last week, on non-uniform day. The Easter Egg Raffle will take place on Wednesday 1st April.

Children can bring coins into school this week, to purchase raffle tickets from either school office - £1 per strip of 5 tickets. Your generosity helps us to raise funds for our children - thank you in advance for your support.



School Meals

Just a gentle reminder, that as of 1st April, our school meal price will rise to £3.10 per day.

If you believe that your child/ren could be eligible for free school meals, whether they be at the infant and/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.

DfE Funded Breakfast Club:

Please be reminded, that the DfE funded 30-minute free breakfast club at the junior school, will commence from **Monday 20th April**.

- For the full breakfast club session, starting at 7:45am, there will be a small charge of £1.50
- 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 at the junior school and continues from 8:05 – 8:35 at the infant school.



On Arbor, there are two options to choose from within the 'Early Adopter Breakfast Club', so please take care to select the correct time slot and you will need to top up your wraparound care account, before being able to book.

A polite reminder that the doors for Breakfast Club at both schools open at 7:45am. Children will not be permitted to enter the school before this time as we must ensure safe staffing numbers.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Dates for the Diary

(Please note that these dates are subject to change)

- Tuesday 24th March – Year 2 & Year 4 Dance Festival
Tuesday 24th March – Mothers' Day Reception Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
Wednesday 25th March – Year 3 Visit to Little White Farm
Thursday 26th March – Stations of the Cross 9:30am Key Stage 2 only (in church)
Tuesday 31st March – Year 1 and Year 2 Palm Sunday Liturgy in Church - 9:30am
Wednesday 1st April – Year 4 and Year 5 Maundy Thursday Celebration of the Word Service in Church – 9:30am
Thursday 02nd April – Last Day of Term
Monday 20th April – Children return to school
Tuesday 21st April- Year 4 Whitburn Wherry and Seaburn
Thursday 23rd April- Mr Taylor to visit SJJB
Friday 24th April - Mr Taylor to visit SJJB
Monday 27th April – Good Shepherd Mass – 10:00am
Tuesday 28th April- Year 3 Celebration of the Word –9:00am
Wednesday 29th April – Mini Vinnies to attend Good Shepherd Mass –10:00am
Monday 04th May – May Bank Holiday
Monday 11th May – KS2 SATS Week
Wednesday 20th May - Happy Europe Day Celebration Lunch – SJIB/SJJB
Friday 22nd May – Year 4 & Year 6 - Fun Run at Saltwell park – 8:45am
Friday 22nd May – Last Day of Term
Monday 01st June – Children return to school
Tuesday 02nd June – Thursday 04th June – Year 6 Bikeability – Consent forms will follow
Tuesday 02nd June – Year 6 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
Tuesday 09th June – Year 2 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
Tuesday 16th June – Year 5 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
Tuesday 16th June- Year 6 Transition Day at Cardinal Hume Catholic School
Tuesday 16th June – SJIB to attend Washington Wetland Centre
Friday 19th June – Father's Day Shop
Monday 22nd June – Sports Day – SJIB/SJJB – *date to be confirmed*
Tuesday 23rd June – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
Friday 26th June – Summer Fayre – *date to be confirmed*
Monday 29th June – Inset Day
Tuesday 30th June – Year 2 transition day to Year 3

Tuesday 30th June & Wednesday 01st July – Year 6 to attend Cardinal Hume Catholic School
Wednesday 1st July – SJIB Big Sing for Mini Singers at The Glasshouse
Thursday 02nd July – Celebration of Sport – *date to be confirmed*
Tuesday 07th July – Year 4 Celebration of the Word- 9:00am
Wednesday 8th – Friday 10th July – Year 5 & Year 6 PGL Ford Castle Residential
Thursday 9th July – Year 3 & Year 4 Big Sing at The Glasshouse
Thursday 14th July – Reception Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
Wednesday 15th July – Year 6 Leavers' assembly
Friday 17th July – Leavers' Mass in Church – 10:00am
Friday 17th July – Last Day of Term

Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school: *Mrs K Swaddle*

Deputy Leads: *Mrs R Nutton, Mrs E McConnell, Mrs A Snaith & Mrs J Smith*

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