



St. Joseph's
Catholic Infant
& Junior Schools
Birtley



All are welcome in this place

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Friday 24th April 2026

Dear Parents & Carers,

CAFOD Big Lenten Walk

We were astounded by the generosity and support of our CAFOD Big Lenten Walk, before Easter. Sponsorship money has raised an incredible £1,175.50 for CAFOD. The sponsorship money raised will go to help families and communities overseas access safe drinking water and, according to CAFOD's website, a total of our size can help a remote community establish their own supply of clean, safe water. We are very grateful of your kindness and generosity. We must also express a huge thank you to those who acknowledged and ticked the box for 'Gift Aid' – meaning a significant proportion of the £1,175.50 is likely to be increased by a further 25%.

The Catholic Social Teaching Principles which apply to our fundraising includes caring for the poor, walking in solidarity and supporting the common good.

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

We are incredibly grateful to the group of KS2 pupils who have agreed to form a choir on Saturday and represent our school in Mass for the Holy Land.

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.

The Catholic Social Teaching Principles which apply to the Order are: participation, caring for the poor and human dignity.

Statutory Assessments – Key Dates

Year 6 SATs – Multiple assessments from Monday 11th to Thursday 14th May 2026

Year 4 Multiplication Check Window – Monday 1st to Friday 12th June 2026

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check Window – Monday 8th to Friday 12th June 2026

Upcoming statutory assessments take place on the dates listed above. Strong attendance helps children feel settled, confident and ready to do their best. Keeping routines as normal as possible means assessments can be completed calmly and often, within the classroom environment. For our Year 4 and Year 1 pupils, the tests may take place at any point during the outlined period, so it is vitally important that pupils are present and in school each day. Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Easter Raffle and St. Cuthbert's Care

Nicola Milne, fundraising engagement officer for St. Cuthbert's Care came to school today, to talk to the pupils about the impact of their fundraising for our Diocesan Charity. Nicola kindly explained about The Alan Shearer Centre and how much the charity does for those with additional needs, those in care and those who are in nursing or residential care. Our Mini-Vinnies will attend the St. Cuthbert's Care 'Good Shepherd Mass' next week to present our £215 donation to this wonderful cause. Thank you, all!



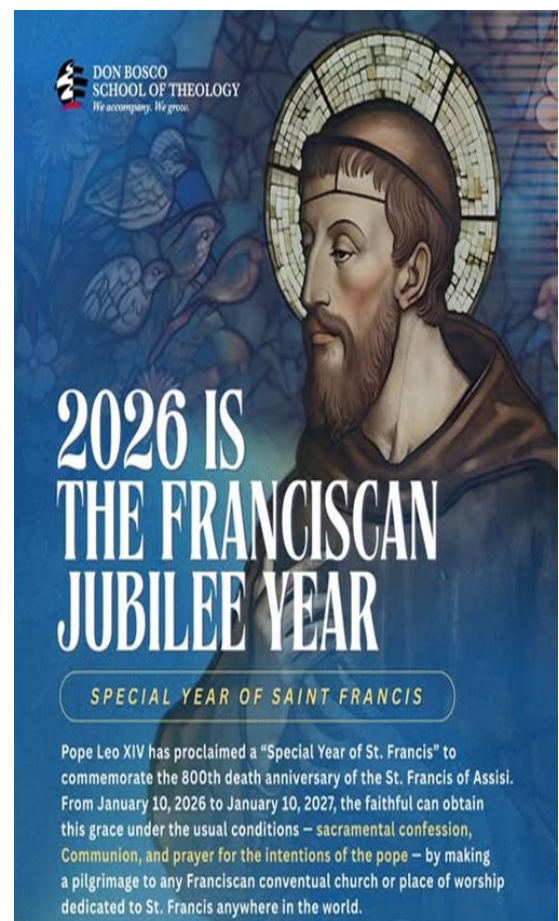
The Catholic Social Teaching Principles which apply to our fundraising includes subsidiarity, supporting the common good and preferential option for the poor.

Year of St. Francis

Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special **Jubilee Year of Saint Francis**, running from **January 10, 2026, to January 10, 2027**. This year marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi (who died on October 3, 1226) and focuses on themes of peace, ecology, and spiritual renewal. *Thought for the week: Why not teach your child to say St. Francis' prayer? You could say the prayer together each evening before bedtime.*

**Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;**

**It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.**



FUN-draising – Summer Fayre

Once again, this summer, we are eager to raise funds to improve our resources and experiences for the children within our schools, by holding our summer fayre on **Friday 26th June**, at St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, from 2:15 - 4:15pm.

Governors have given permission for our pupils to be collected from school, at 2:00pm - junior school and 2:15pm - infant school, on the day. For those children who are unable to be collected at this earlier time, please do not worry, as we will ensure that an adult is able to look after them and support them throughout the last hour of the afternoon.

Fundraising dates for the diary:

- a) Friday 1st May – Non-uniform day in return for a cuddly / soft toy, for the 'teddy tombola'
- b) Friday 5th June – Non-uniform day in return for a bottle of any kind, for the 'bottle tombola'
- c) Friday 12th June – Non-uniform day in return for 'sweetie tombola' donations

Free School Meal Applications

We are now able to offer you the facility to check your eligibility to receive **Free School Meals (FSM)** directly via the school website. We would like to encourage all families to take a moment to check whether they may be eligible. Even if your child currently receives Universal Infant Free School Meals (from Reception to Year 2), it is still important to complete this check. If eligible, our school will receive additional funding through the **Pupil Premium grant**, which directly supports teaching, resources, and wider opportunities for pupils. And even if your child prefers to bring a packed lunch into school each day we would be grateful if you would complete an application – the additional funding will be paid, whether or not your child takes a meal.

Checking eligibility is quick and confidential. Please use the link below:

[Free School Meals – Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust](#)

School Gate Closing Times

We kindly remind all parents and carers that the school gates close promptly at 8:45am for the Infant School and 8:55am for the Junior School.

To support a calm and productive start to the school day, it is important that all children arrive on time. Late arrivals can cause disruption to lessons and result in missed learning time.

Please note that if a child arrives after the gates have closed, they must report to the school office and will be marked as late.

We appreciate your continued support in ensuring punctuality for all pupils.

DfE Funded Breakfast Club

We are delighted that the DfE funded 30-minute free breakfast club at the junior school, commenced on **Monday 20th April**. It has been wonderful to see so many of our children attend. We look forward to welcoming more pupils in the coming weeks.

- 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 28th April- Year 3 Celebration of the Word –9:00am
 Wednesday 29th April – Mini Vinnies to attend Good Shepherd Mass –10:00am
 Friday 01st May – Non-Uniform day in exchange for a cuddly toy – SJIB/SJJB
Monday 04th May – May Bank Holiday
 Tuesday 05th May – Beamish Workshop at SJIB
 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
 Friday 05th June– Non-Uniform day in exchange for a bottle – SJIB/SJJB
 Tuesday 09th June – Year 2 Celebration of the Word – 9:00am
 Friday 12th June – Non-Uniform day in exchange for chocolates – SJIB/SJJB
 Monday 15th June – Year 6 Nexus bus induction– 9:30am
 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
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*
 Monday 06th July – St. Joseph's Musical Show Case at Church – 10:00am
 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