



St. Joseph's
Catholic Infant
& Junior Schools
Birtley



All are welcome in this place

info@sjib.bwcet.com
info@sjib.bwcet.com

Friday 25th September 2026

Dear Parents & Carers,

Pupil Attendance:

Strong attendance builds brighter futures

Every day in school counts!

Good attendance is a habit for life

Why strong attendance matters in primary school

Better learning and progress

Children learn more when they are in school. They receive clear teaching, build on what they know and develop key skills.

Stronger friendships

School helps children feel part of a community, build confidence and develop social skills that last a lifetime.

Improved wellbeing

Being in school gives children structure, routine and a sense of belonging — all of which support mental health and happiness.

Greater opportunities in the future

Good attendance helps children achieve higher attainment, which opens doors to more options in secondary school, work and beyond.

Builds lifelong habits

Regular attendance helps children develop responsibility, resilience and the confidence to take on new challenges.

Department for Education

The DfE position

The Department for Education (DfE) is clear: regular attendance at school is essential for children to achieve their full potential.

The DfE expects all schools, parents and carers to work together to make sure children attend school regularly, and to put in place support where it's needed.

The DfE says:

- Attendance is a **key indicator** of a child's **success**, both in school and in later life.
- Schools should work with families **early** to address any attendance concerns.
- Persistent absence** (missing 10% or more of school) can lead to poorer outcomes, including lower attainment and reduced wellbeing.
- The DfE supports a **consistent, evidence-based** approach, including clear expectations, **early intervention and targeted support** for families.

The DfE's message is simple:

regular attendance, with the right support, helps every child thrive.

Let's work together so every child is in school, **every day.**

Better attendance. Brighter futures.

Each Gateshead school has been assigned an Attendance Welfare Officer and we are obligated to refer cases where there are issues around persistent absenteeism. Where required, the Attendance Welfare Officer will work alongside our families to support and guide them when there are barriers to strong attendance. We look forward to working with our officer and helping to ensure that we build lifelong habits that develop success.

Attendance Data:	01/09/2025 to 18/09/2025	01/09/2026 to 18/09/2026	Trend
Infants	97.1%	96.2%	↓
Juniors	97.9%	97.2%	↓

Early Years Induction:

Each year, we offer a series of workshops for you to work alongside your child to find out about how we teach our pupils the earliest skills in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. Each workshop is carefully planned and there is an opportunity to work with your child and find out about useful teaching strategies that we use in school, which can also be replicated at home.

Reception Phonics Workshop

Come and join us!

Monday 28th September
 9am
 St. Joseph's

Parents can watch 'live' phonics lessons alongside their child and learn about our **Rocket Phonics Scheme**.

Rocket Phonics

Find out more about:

- ★ How we teach phonics in Reception
- ★ The Rocket Phonics Scheme and resources
- ★ How you can support your child at home

Together we can build confident readers!

Reception Parent & Carer Workshops

Work alongside your child, learn together, make a difference!

Monday 28th September

Phonics Workshop

9am

Monday 16th November

Reception Number Fluency Workshop

9am

Friday 20th November

Nourish Food School

Morning

Monday 25th January

Reading Workshop

9am

Thursday 18th March

Creative Arts Workshop

2:15pm

Friday 18th June

Creative Health Workshop

2:15pm

We look forward to welcoming you!

Support • Learn • Grow • Together

Reminder for Nourish Food School:

We once again welcome the Nourish Food School to St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools for a joint pupil/parent/carer cookery workshop, as we seek to develop pupils' cooking abilities in design technology. On each class's planned day, parents will select one slot out of three possible times, to come into school to work with their child. Parents (or another family member!) can then work with their child to create an exciting meal, which can be eaten at the end of the session or taken home.

We hope that this is a lovely way to develop relationships and to have some quality time in school with your child - outside of the home environment.

Parents/carers will be able to select from three sessions per day for the workshop that they attend, apart from our Reception pupils, where there will be a choice of two sessions, only. You will need to sign-up via the MS Form link in the box.

Session 1: 9:00am – 10:15am
Session 2: 10:30am – 11:45am
Session 3: 1:15pm – 2:30pm (Years 1 to 5)

	Date	MS Form Link for sign-up	Curriculum linkage
Reception	Friday 20 th November	Reception - Nourish Food School - Friday 20th November – Fill in form	Making bread – The Little Red Hen
Year 1	Thursday 22 nd October	Year 1 - Nourish Food School - Thursday 22nd October – Fill in form	Harvest: Creativity with Rations – links to WW2
Year 2	Monday 5 th October	Year 2 - Nourish Food School - Monday 5th October – Fill in form	Great Inventors and UK Geography - Group 1 Soups; Group 2 and 3 Links to Louis Pasteur - Pasteurisation
Year 3	Friday 16 th October	Year 3 - Nourish Food School - Friday 16th October – Fill in form	Middle-Eastern Foods – links to Ancient Sumer
Year 4	Monday 19 th October	Year 4 - Nourish Food School - Monday 19th October – Fill in form	European Cuisine – Rhine and Romans
Year 5	Monday 16 th November	Year 5 - Nourish Food School - Monday 16th November – Fill in form	Anglo-Saxon theme
Year 6	Wednesday 18 th November	Parents / Carers do not attend as year 6 children will cook independently	Quintessentially British

School Uniform & Jewellery:

Details of our school uniform can be found in the parent section of our school website and if you wish to buy branded items, you will find them online at Tots to Teams: [Buy St. Joseph's Catholic Infant & Junior Schools \(Birtley\) Uniform for from Tots To Teams](#)

Please be reminded that for health and safety reasons, children are not permitted to wear bracelets, necklaces or earrings in school and they will be asked to remove them at the start of the day if they do so. Thank you for your co-operation.

Flu Vaccinations:

Flu vaccinations are scheduled to take place in school, on 13th November. If you haven't already done so, please ensure you complete this online form at your earliest convenience to consent or decline the vaccination for your child/ren: <https://www.northumbriaimmunisations.co.uk/Forms/Flu>. Please remember to use the correct code for each school: **Junior School – NBI48844** **Infant School - NBI48809**

After School & Lunchtime Activity Clubs:

Day	Junior School Lunch Clubs	Autumn Term	
		Infant School	Junior School
Monday	Rosary Club – Mrs Birkett	Years 1 & 2 - Chatter Books – Gateshead Library Service	Lego Construction Club – Mrs Birkett
	Football Club – Mr Smith	Football Club – Birtley Town – Mr Smith	
Tuesday	Korean Club - Ms Song	Art and Design Club – Mrs Stobbard and Miss Sweeney	Art and Design Club – Mrs Atkinson Football Club – Birtley Town – Mr Smith
	Football Club – Mr Smith		
Wednesday	School Council Meetings – alternate weeks – Mrs Snaith	Lego Construction Club – Miss Sweeney	Dance and Drama Club – Fuse Dance
	Debate Club – Mrs Smith		
Thursday	Mini Vinnies Meeting – Mrs Fishwick	Mini Tennis Club - Mrs Stobbard	Years 3 and 4 Chatter Books – Gateshead Library Service
	Football Club – Mr Smith		
Friday	Natwest Thrive Finance Club – Mr Myers	Dance and Drama Club – Fuse Dance	Podcasting Club – Mrs Pattison

At St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, we are committed to providing a rich and forward-thinking educational experience that prepares our pupils for future learning and life beyond the classroom. In anticipation of the DfE's 2028 Primary Curriculum, we have proactively reviewed emerging curriculum priorities and identified key themes, including **oracy, creativity, wellbeing, digital literacy, cultural capital, civic responsibility, and the secure acquisition of foundational knowledge.**

Our extra-curricular offer has been carefully designed and developed to align with these anticipated directions. Each club has been thoughtfully planned to complement and enhance classroom learning, ensuring that pupils have meaningful opportunities to apply knowledge, develop new skills, and grow as confident, well-rounded individuals.

Please remember to book after-school activity clubs via Arbor.

New Free School Meal Scheme:

Although we have already sent a few communications about free school meal eligibility, perhaps some families have assumed that this will not apply to them, based on historical checks. However, under the new guidance, almost **all families who are in receipt of even a small amount of Universal Credit**, are now eligible and we do not want you to miss out. If you are in receipt of this benefit, or think you may be eligible for any other reason, please complete this short MS form and we will run the check on your behalf:

[Free School Meals Eligibility Checking by School – Fill in form](#)

It really is worth giving it a try, if you're in any way unsure, as some families have been pleasantly surprised by the outcome this week. Please note that **parents/carers of infant school children and those who usually bring a packed lunch should still apply**, as from time to time, other benefits from the local authority may be available for those families.

School Meal & Wraparound Care Payments:

Please may we politely request that school meal and wraparound care accounts are topped up at regular intervals in Arbor, whether that be weekly or monthly, in line with your pay dates, to ensure that you remain in credit at all times. We simply cannot allow debit balances and unfortunately, we are still having to chase outstanding debts on a weekly basis. If this continues, regrettably we may need to withdraw the applicable service until the balance is settled.

Harvest Festival CAFOD Family Fast Day:

CAFOD *Family Fast Day* Appeal this Harvest

Please donate to our *Family Fast Day* collection in time for Friday 9th October. Each year, we send home a small green envelope for 'Cafod Family Fast Day'. This will be sent out as soon as the envelopes arrive to school. The idea is that pupils 'fast from their snack' on the Family Fast Day and donate the price of their snack/or tuck shop to the Cafod causes. Please note that you can also GiftAid your donation.



Therefore, on Friday 9th October, there will be NO TUCK SHOP.

'Put your faith into action and share the Lord's love by supporting our global neighbours experiencing shortages of food and safe water. Your gift can support children like Tayla in Zimbabwe to stay in school by helping communities and schools provide nourishing meals, improve access to water and grow food in school gardens. '

Harvest Festival Donations for The People's Kitchen:

This year, our Mini-Vinnies have chosen to donate our Harvest Festival donations to The People's Kitchen. During the week from Monday 5th October to Friday 9th October, we ask for donations towards this very worthwhile cause. All donations will be taken to church as part of our display and will then be transferred to The People's Kitchen that afternoon.

THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN est. 1985 NEWCASTLE HOW YOU CAN HELP THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

Our work is only made possible thanks to your kindness and generosity. The People's Kitchen is run entirely by volunteers so every penny donated goes directly to helping our vulnerable Friends who might be homeless, at risk, unemployed, lonely, or living in poverty.



Items we need	Examples
Tinned Veg	Tomatoes Plum & Chopped, Peas, Carrots, Sweetcorn, Potatoes
Tinned Fruit	Peaches, Pineapples, Fruit Cocktail, Pears, Mandarin Oranges
Soup	Tinned or Instant Vegetable, Tomato, Chicken, Broth, Lentil, Potato & Leek
Cooking/ Baking Ingredients	Sugar-Caster & Granulated, Flour – SR & Plain, Jam, Coconut, Cocoa, Dried Fruit, Cooking Oil, Lentils, Broth Mix, Spices
Snacks	Pot Noodles, Pot Pasta, Crisps, Biscuits, Chocolate, Sweets, Cereal Bars
Drinks	UHT Milk, Coffee, Tea, Hot Chocolate, Cartons of Juice, Fruit Squash
Desserts	Rice Pudding, Jelly, Angel Delight, Instant & Tinned Custard, Evaporated Milk, Golden Syrup, Black Treacle
Tinned Meat	Ham, Corned Beef, Chilli, Curry, Minced Beef, Bolognese, Stewing Steak
Cooking Sauces	Indian, Thai, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, Coconut Milk
Condiments	Tomato Ketchup, Brown Sauce, Mayonnaise, Salt, Pepper
Pasta & Rice	Lasagne, Egg Noodles, Rice
Stock and Gravy	Vegetarian, Beef, Chicken, Onion
Toiletries	Soap, Mens Spray Deodorant, Shampoo, Conditioner, Shower Gel, Razors, Toothpaste and Brushes, Sanitary Products
Cleaning/Other	Washing Up Liquid, Washing Powder, Books, DVD's, DVD Players/ Small -Medium Flat Screen TV's
Rough Sleepers	Sleeping Bags, Rucksacks, Handwarmers, Flasks, Unlocked Mobile Phone
Pet Food	Dog & Cat Food – Wet, Dry and Treats
Clothing	Trainers, Waterproof Jackets, Joggers, , Jeans, Sweat Shirts, T Shirts, Socks, Gloves, Scarfs, Hats
We are grateful for your kind donations – We do not accept food if it is opened. Clothing does not need to be new, but we ask for it to be in good condition and clean. We do not need used duvets, suits, dress shirts, or summer clothing.	

Thank you for any help and support you can give us!

All donations are gratefully accepted. We will always try to minimise waste, so will occasionally share surplus food/clothes with other charities. A lot of the people who come to us for clothes are young men and often need small sizes in clothes. We like to ensure we give items that are suitable for size/age and buy clothes when we are short. We have an Amazon wish list where people can purchase items online and post direct to us.

THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN LIMITED The Alison Centre, 56 Bath Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5SQ
T 0191 222 0699 E info@peopleskitchen.co.uk www.peopleskitchen.co.uk

amazon
wishlist



Football:

A huge well done to our Year 5/6 football team who are showing tremendous determination and courage each week as part of the Chester-Le-Street District Athletics Small Schools Football league.

The next round takes place at Birtley East – let's keep fingers crossed for some positive results!

BWCET Celebration Day!

On **Thursday 1st October**, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust are once again hosting a day of celebration for all our amazing pupils, which includes a **free school meal for every pupil**. There is no need to pre-order, as we will cater for everyone!

There will be no change to our usual menu for that day:

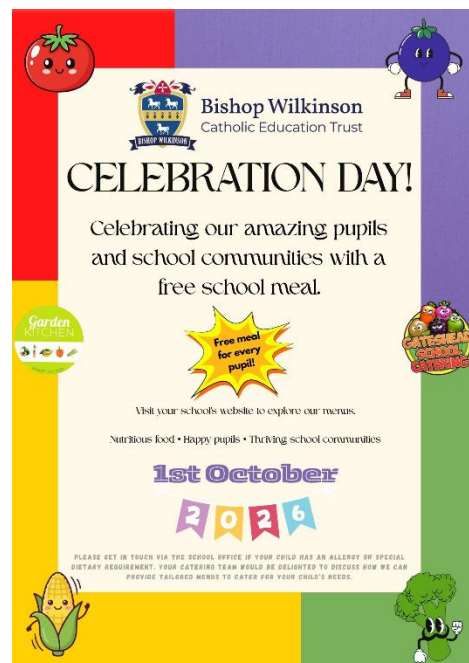
Chicken (or Quorn) fillet & Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower & carrot medley with gravy

Cheese & ham wrap with roast potatoes and salad

Jacket potato with tuna mayo

~ ~ ~

Orange jelly, mandarins & swirl of chocolate mousse



Around Europe in a Day at St Joseph's



On Friday 2nd October, we will be celebrating 'Around Europe in a Day' at St Joseph's.

Each year group will be exploring a different European country through a range of fun and engaging activities; discovering languages, music, art, traditions, landmarks and culture. From Italy and the Netherlands to Greece, Spain, France and Germany, children will have the opportunity to learn about their chosen country through exciting activities and challenges. We will also be enjoying European music throughout the day.

We can't wait for our European adventure!

Nut-Free School:

Following the introduction of new allergy-safety requirements for schools in England through **Benedict's Law**, please be reminded that **we are a nut-free school**. Some children in our school have severe allergies to certain foods and even traces of nuts can cause a serious allergic reaction. We kindly ask that you do not send any items containing nuts into school, either for a healthy break time snack or packed lunches. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Nutella and Reese's products
- Whole peanuts or any other type of nut
- Peanut butter or other nut spreads
- Chocolate bars, snacks, cakes, biscuits or cereal bars containing nuts

We appreciate your support in helping us provide a safe environment for all members of our school community, thank you for your co-operation.



Gateshead Council – Bags of Taste:

Save money and cook better than the takeaway

Join our free, fun cooking courses

Impress your friends, learn to cook great food at home in just two weeks!

Chana Masala

Italian Pasta Sauce

Middle Eastern Pilaf

Meals can be quick, fun and cheap to cook:

- Free ingredients included
- Free, flexible, home-based short courses
- All you need is a kitchen and a phone

To register

Phone / text / WhatsApp
07813 678 660

Email:
gateshead@bagsoftaste.org

Sign up online:
<https://bagsoftaste.org/students>



Funded by the Crisis and Resilience fund

All you need is a kitchen and a phone!

Are you worried about the rising cost of food and how to eat healthily on a tight budget?

Then join one of our free, fun cooking courses. Learn how to make delicious, healthy meals from all over the world whilst saving money.

FREE, ingredients included*

- Cook tasty, exciting meals, cheaply
- Get tips on how to budget and save money when you're shopping
- Learn how to waste less

How does it work?

We deliver three step-by-step recipes and all the ingredients you need, straight to your door.

Your personal mentor will support you by phone or WhatsApp with lots of tips and advice along the way.

What do I need to do?

All we ask is that you cook the three recipes and post photos of your lovely food, then at the end we'll send you a free gift and more great budget-friendly recipe sheets.

How long does it take?

About two weeks but you can work at your own pace.

How do I join?

Sign up online:
<https://bagsoftaste.org/students>

Phone / text / WhatsApp
07813 678 660

Email:
gateshead@bagsoftaste.org

Once we've confirmed your registration we'll contact you to arrange your delivery

*For qualifying participants only

Dates for the Diary (Please note that these dates are subject to change)

Autumn Term:

- Monday 28th September- Reception Phonics Workshop – 9:00am
- Monday 28th September – Year 3 Library Visit
- Tuesday 29th September – Year 5 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
- Friday 2nd October – Around Europe in a Day
- Monday 5th October – Nourish Food School for Year 2
- Tuesday 6th October – Year 1 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
- Tuesday 6th October – Year 5 visit to STEM Fest
- Friday 9th October – School Mass – 10:00am – Harvest Festival
- Monday 12th October – Year 2 Library Visit

Monday 12th October – Bible Stories with Mr Taylor at SJJB
 Tuesday 13th October – Year 4 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
 Tuesday 13th October – Bible Stories with Mr Taylor at SJJB
 Friday 16th October – Nourish Food School for Year 3
 Monday 19th October – Nourish Food School for Year 4
 Monday 19th October- Year 1 Library Visit
 Monday 20th October – Year 2 Visit to The Discovery Museum
 Tuesday 20th October – Reception Class Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
 Thursday 22nd October – Nourish Food School for Year 1
 Thursday 22nd October – Halloween Themed Lunch

Monday 26th October – Half-term holiday begins

Monday 2nd November – Return to School

Monday 2nd November – Parents' Evening
 Tuesday 3rd November – Year 4 Visit to Newcastle Reform Synagogue
 Tuesday 3rd November – Year 6 Visit to Safety Works
 Wednesday 4th November – Parents' Evening
 Monday 9th November- Reception Library Visit
 Tuesday 10th November – Remembrance Mass - 10:00am – with involvement from Year 3
 Tuesday 10th November – School Disco at The Masonic Hall
 Friday 13th November – Flu Vaccinations
 Monday 16th November - Nourish Food School for Year 5
 Monday 16th November – Reception Number Fluency Workshop for Parents – 9am
 Tuesday 17th November - Year 2 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
 Wednesday 18th November – Nourish Food School for Year 6 (independent cooking)
 Friday 20th November – Nourish Food School for Reception
 Tuesday 24th November - Year 6 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
 Tuesday 24th November – Year 3 Visit to the Hancock Museum
 Thursday 26th November – Bible Stories with Mr Taylor at SJJB
 Thursday 26th November – Year 1 Gibside Visit
 Friday 27th November – Bible Stories with Mr Taylor at SJJB
 Tuesday 1st December – Year 1 Celebration of the Word - 9:00am
 Tuesday 8th December – Year 2 to attend Christmas Journey at Birtley Methodist Church – afternoon session
 Wednesday 9th December – Reception & KS1 Nativity in Church 10:00am & 2:00pm
 Friday 11th December – Reception Visit to Gala Theatre Durham
 Wednesday 16th December – KS2 Carol Service in Church 2:00pm
 Thursday 17th December – Christmas Themed Lunch
 Friday 18th December – Last day before the Christmas Holiday

Spring Term:

Monday 4th January – INSET Day

Tuesday 5th January – Children are welcomed back to school
 Wednesday 6th January – Mass for Epiphany – 10am
 Tuesday 12th January – Reception Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Tuesday 19th January – Year 5 Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Monday 25th January – Early Years Reading Workshop for Parents/Carers and Pupils in Reception - 9am
 Monday 01st February – Year 6 to Visit The Centre for Life
 Tuesday 9th February – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Monday 22nd February – 9am – School Photographs
 Tuesday 2nd March – Year 4 Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Tuesday 9th March – Reception Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Tuesday 16th March – Year 3 Celebration of the Word – 9am
 Thursday 18th March – Reception Creative Arts Workshop for Parent/Carers and pupils in Reception – 2:15pm
 Friday 19th March – Mass for St. Joseph – Year 2 to Lead – 10am
 Wednesday 24th March – Stations of the Cross – Year 6 to Lead – 2pm
 Tuesday 20th April – Year 2 Celebration of the Word – 9am

Summer Term:

Tuesday 27th April – Year 5 Celebration of the Word – 9am

Tuesday 4th May – Year 1 Celebration of the Word – 9am
Monday 10th May – Friday 14th – Year 6 End of Key Stage 2 Assessments (SATs)
Tuesday 18th May – Year 4 Celebration of the Word – 9am
Tuesday 25th May – Reception Celebration of the Word – 9am
Friday 28th May – Mass for Month of Mary – 10am
Monday 7th June – Friday 18th June – Year 4 Multiplication Times Table Testing Week
Tuesday 15th June – Year 3 Celebration of the Word – 9am
Monday 14th June – Friday 18th June – Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and Year 2 Rescreening Check
Friday 18th June – Reception Creative Health Workshop for Parents/Carers and Pupils– 2:15pm
Monday 21st June – Sports Day for both schools (Venue TBC)
Friday 25th June – Infant trip to Kirkley Hall Zoo -
Tuesday 29th June – Year 5 Celebration of the Word for Ss. Peter and Paul – 9am
Monday 5th to Wednesday 7th July – Year 5/6 Residential to PGL Newby Wiske Hall

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