



St Mary's

Catholic Primary School

WE LOVE | WE LEARN | WE LAUGH | WE LIVE

End of year report July 2026



A Year of Growing Together

As we come to the close of another busy and rewarding school year, we reflect with great pride and gratitude on all that has been achieved across our school community. This year has been marked by a wonderful breadth of opportunities for our children, enabling them to grow not only academically, but socially, physically, and spiritually.

In a recent report, it was noted that at St Mary's "the whole child is nurtured and developed, with their God-given talents recognised and celebrated. St Mary's stands as a powerful example of Catholic education at its very best." These words truly reflect all that we strive to achieve each day.

We have been delighted by the wide range of sporting events and activities made possible through the dedication and hard work of our subject leads. These experiences have allowed so many of our pupils to represent the school, discover new talents, and develop confidence, teamwork, and resilience. We are also incredibly grateful to you, our families, for your continued support. We know that attending events and fixtures often requires careful organisation, transport arrangements, and flexibility in an already busy weekly timetable, and your commitment ensures that our children can fully benefit from these valuable opportunities - an essential part of what makes St Mary's such a special place.

The Eco Council successfully secured a £5,000 Royal Horticultural Society grant to increase biodiversity across the school playground. Since work began in May, the project has transformed outdoor spaces through the creation of wildlife habitats, including wildflower areas, a Nature Nook with bug hotels and a mini pond and an edible Garden. Fruit trees and climbing plants have also been introduced, with a living wall and bamboo forest planned for the next phase. The grant has also funded fieldwork and gardening resources, enabling all pupils to engage in hands-on outdoor learning.

This has also been a year of successful events and fundraising initiatives, with fantastic involvement from our wonderful PTA, anonymous donations, parents, grandparents, and the wider community. It speaks volumes about the strength and reach of our school family. After this recent spell of very warm weather, we may even need to consider adding "fundraising for more air conditioning" to next year's priorities!

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and partnership. Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful summer break.

Sarah Clayton

Changes, Welcomes and Farewells

As we reach the end of another wonderful school year, we find ourselves reflecting on the many memories, achievements and special moments we have shared as a school community. This time of year often brings a mixture of farewells and fresh beginnings, and we are delighted to share some staffing news with you.

Mrs Clayton is excited to be returning to her role as Executive Headteacher, bringing her wealth of experience, passion and commitment to supporting the continued success of St Mary's. Alongside her, Mr Gendre will be stepping into the role of Head of School. Together, they are looking forward to working closely with staff, pupils and families as they continue to build upon the many strengths of our school and guide us through the next stage of our journey.

We are also delighted that Mrs Parsons will be taking on the role of SENDCo. Mrs Parsons is passionate about ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive and achieve their full potential and is looking forward to working closely with pupils, families and staff.

This year, we are fortunate not to be saying goodbye to any members of

staff. However, we would like to send our warmest wishes to Miss Mulholland and Miss Julian as they begin an exciting new chapter in their lives. Both will be starting their maternity leave and welcoming new additions to their growing families. We know that you will join us in wishing them every happiness and look forward to hearing their wonderful news.

We are also delighted to welcome two familiar faces into the St Mary's family as newly qualified teachers. Having successfully completed their training with us, Miss Nagy and Miss Horne will be joining our teaching team next year. Miss Nagy will be teaching Year 5, while Miss Horne will be taking on Year 1. We are incredibly proud of all they have achieved and are excited to support them as they begin their teaching journey here with us.

At the same time, we are thrilled to welcome Miss Parslow back from her own maternity leave. Miss Parslow will be working alongside our new teachers and supporting children in Years 1 and 5. We know that staff, children and families alike will be pleased to see her return to our school community.



Every ending is a new beginning. This year has been one of growth, friendship and unforgettable memories.

The Year of Reading

This year has marked the National Year of Reading 2026, a nationwide campaign designed to inspire a love of reading and encourage reading for pleasure as a lifelong habit. At St Mary's, we have embraced this opportunity to further strengthen our reading culture and ensure that reading remains at the heart of our school.

As part of this work, we have partnered with St Mary Magdalene's to work towards achieving the Reading Schools Bronze Award. This collaborative project has provided a valuable framework for evaluating our current provision, celebrating strengths and identifying areas for further development.

Throughout the year, we have actively promoted reading for pleasure across the school. Children have been given regular opportunities to engage with high-quality and diverse texts, share book recommendations, discuss their favourite authors and stories and participate in reading activities with their peers through initiatives such as buddy reading. Staff have played a key role in modelling positive reading behaviours, sharing their own reading experiences and creating engaging classroom environments that encourage children to explore and enjoy books.

Significant work has also taken place to review the quality and range of texts available to pupils. We have audited classroom book corners and reading spaces to ensure that children have access to a broad and inclusive selection of literature, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. This work has encouraged us to reflect on how reading environments

can be further enhanced so that they are welcoming, purposeful and inspiring spaces that promote independent reading and curiosity.

Alongside these developments, staff have begun work on strengthening the consistency of our reading curriculum through the creation of year-group reading spines and the consideration of dedicated daily story times. These initiatives will help ensure that all children are exposed to a rich and carefully curated range of texts throughout their time at St Mary's, broadening their vocabulary, deepening their understanding of the world and fostering a genuine enjoyment of reading.

The impact of this work is already evident in the enthusiasm children demonstrate when discussing books, recommending texts to one another and engaging in reading activities. Reading continues to be a visible and celebrated part of school life, supported by both staff and families. We are grateful for the continued support of parents in encouraging reading at home and recognise the important role this plays in developing confident, capable and motivated readers.

As we move into the next academic year, we look forward to completing the validation process for the Reading Schools Bronze Award and continuing our journey towards the Silver Award. By building on the strong foundations established this year, we aim to further embed a culture where every child sees themselves as a reader and experiences the enjoyment, inspiration and opportunities that reading can bring.



Curriculum

Oracy, Diversifying and Decolonising – looking to the future

This year, we have continued to strengthen and refine our curriculum to ensure it equips all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their ambitions.

A key focus this year has been the development of spoken language and communication across the school. Our approach to oracy ensures that pupils are given regular, structured opportunities to talk, listen and build on one another's ideas in every lesson, enabling them to develop confidence and clarity in their thinking. We have placed a strong emphasis on explicitly teaching vocabulary alongside talk, ensuring pupils can articulate their ideas using precise and ambitious language. By embedding consistent routines and high expectations for oracy, we are supporting all children to develop the communication skills essential for success both in school and beyond.

Alongside this, we have made significant strides in diversifying and decolonising our curriculum, particularly within history. This began with staff training to support a

shared understanding of how to critically examine and broaden the perspectives within our curriculum. Throughout the year, subject leaders have worked with teachers to adapt and re-plan units, particularly focusing on our history curriculum. We have also continued to work closely with the Diversity Council to plan whole-school events that celebrate a wide range of cultures and contributions. As a result, our curriculum now better reflects diverse voices and experiences, helping all pupils to see themselves represented while developing a deeper understanding of the world.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for the upcoming changes to the National Curriculum in 2026–2027. We will continue to build on this year's work by refining our curriculum to ensure it remains broad, balanced and responsive to national developments. Our focus will remain on maintaining high standards while further strengthening inclusivity, knowledge progression and the development of key skills such as communication, critical thinking and cultural understanding.

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality remain a key focus for us at St Mary's. For children to achieve their best and reach their full potential, it is essential that they attend school regularly.

Our attendance target is 96%. Currently, our overall attendance is 93.7%, compared with 94.6% at the same point last year. Unfortunately, this means we have now fallen just below the current national average of 94.5%, so improving attendance will continue to be a priority next year.

We are committed to reaching our 96% target, but we need your support. Wherever possible, please arrange medical appointments outside school hours, during weekends or school holidays. If this isn't possible, please try to book appointments at times that minimise the amount of learning your child misses.

We are unable to authorise holidays taken during term time, and these absences can have a significant impact on a child's learning. There is nothing worse than returning to a lesson and feeling completely lost – something many of us can relate to after missing part of an important meeting!

If your family is finding attendance a challenge for any reason, please get in touch. We are here to support you and will always do our best to help.

To help keep attendance at the forefront of everyone's minds, we will continue to share weekly class attendance figures in our newsletters. Attendance will also be discussed at Parents' Evenings and included in your child's end-of-year report, so you can keep track of how your child is doing throughout the year.

Many of your children will have told you about our new attendance rewards. Each class's attendance percentage is displayed on their classroom door, and the class with the highest attendance each week earns an extra five minutes of playtime. It has been wonderful to hear the children beginning to talk positively about attendance. At the end of the year, children who achieved 100% attendance were also recognised with certificates and a special treat to celebrate their commitment.

We have also been working alongside the Newman family of schools to share ideas and tackle attendance challenges together. Here's hoping we can avoid any more chickenpox outbreaks next term!

Change Makers

It was fantastic to take part in a successful Brighton Deanery synodal project, working alongside Catholic schools across the city to share their thoughts, hopes and ideas about the future of the Church. Through classroom discussions and prayerful reflection, the children explored what they are grateful for in the Church, what they would like to see grow, and how they can help build a welcoming and faith-filled community. In July, Year 4 visited Cardinal Newman

Catholic School to celebrate the project's achievements with pupils from the other participating schools. It was a wonderful opportunity to recognise the children's contributions and celebrate how their voices can help shape the future of our Church. The project encouraged our pupils to listen respectfully, reflect deeply on their faith, and recognise that they have an important role to play in the life of the Church and their community.



Final prayer

Loving God,

We thank You for the time that we got to spend with our Year 6 pupils and for all they have shared and achieved during their time with us. We are grateful for their growth, their friendships, the lessons they have learned, and the many memories they will carry into the future.

As they prepare to leave primary school and begin exciting new journeys, guide them with Your wisdom and love. Give them courage when they face new challenges, confidence to use their gifts, and kindness in all they do.

When the path ahead feels uncertain, help them to remember that they are never alone. Just as the Footprints poem reminds us: in life's most difficult moments, You walk beside us—and when we need You most, You carry us.

Fill their hearts with hope, peace, and joy as they embrace new opportunities. May they always know how deeply they are loved by their families, their friends, their school community, and by You.

Bless them in all that lies ahead, on the path to achieve their ambitions wherever they go.

Amen.



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Good Luck Year 6

As the academic year draws to a close, we say a fond farewell to our wonderful Year 6 class as they prepare to begin the exciting next chapter of their journeys at secondary school. They have been a credit to St Mary's throughout their time here and will be greatly missed by staff and pupils alike. We are incredibly proud of everything they have achieved, not just this year, but across all of their years in our school.

It has been a pleasure to see the children rise to the challenges of Year 6, particularly during SATs, where they demonstrated determination, resilience and a strong work ethic. These achievements are a reflection not only of their dedication but also of the continued support from their families.

One of the standout highlights of the year was the residential trip to PGL Windmill Hill. The children embraced every opportunity with enthusiasm and courage, whether climbing to new heights, tackling

team challenges or encouraging one another to step outside their comfort zones. They returned with a real sense of achievement, having shown bravery, teamwork and resilience throughout.

We will also remember this class for their fantastic end-of-year production - Beauty and the Beast. The children committed themselves fully to rehearsals and delivered a truly memorable performance. With confident acting, beautiful singing and energetic dancing, they brought the story to life and entertained their audience with great flair.

As they move on, we have high hopes for each and every one of them. We are confident they will build on all they have learnt at St Mary's and continue to grow into kind, confident and successful individuals. We wish our Year 6 leavers every success for the future and look forward to hearing about all the wonderful things they go on to achieve.

