



St Benet's Catholic Primary School

'A happy and holy place of learning and the centre of a thriving community'

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Newsletter: Monday 30th September 2024

Statement to Live By:

'We are all Special'

Headteacher News

Dear Parents, Carers and Governors,

On Friday, our school hall was packed with tasty and scrumptious cakes! Many thanks to you all for donating such tasty treats for this event and thanks to everyone who was lucky enough to come along to our jazz café on Friday afternoon. Children from Nursery to Year 6 enjoyed the cakes too and we have raised over **£450** for Macmillan which is incredible! Our Mini Vinnies, only new to the role this week, did a fantastic job leading this event too!

The Autumn term is a busy one and definitely a time in our liturgical year when we put our Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles into practice. Jesus tells us to love God and to love our neighbours, especially our sisters and brothers living in poverty. The CST principle of *Preferential Option for the Poor* means that the needs of the poor

and vulnerable people should be put first. Our Macmillan Coffee and Cake event contributed towards this and on **Friday 4th October**, we shall also be celebrating **CAFOD Family Fast Day**. The theme once again this year is **Brighten Up the Harvest**. Therefore, on Friday, it shall be a non-uniform day where we would like children to come into school in their own bright clothes in exchange for a £1 donation. We have set up a JustGiving Page but shall also accept coins on the day. Once again, thank you for your generosity and for supporting such a good cause. For anyone who would like some additional information about the brilliant work that CAFOD do, please visit their website [CAFOD - Catholic international development charity](https://www.cafod.org/)



During this Harvest time, we shall also be celebrating our first Mass of the school year on **Thursday 24th October at 9:15am** where Fr Martin shall celebrate with our whole school (Nursery to Year 6) in the hall. Everyone is welcome to attend.

I imagine the very sad news about Deacon Peter has affected many of us over the weekend. We do have some appropriate stories available in Caroline's Library if anyone would like to read one with their child at this time. Please contact a member of staff to arrange this. As mentioned in the message on Friday, we shall come together in the coming weeks to celebrate the life of Deacon Peter and to pay tribute to all that he did to enrich our lives here at St Benet's. May he rest in peace, Amen.

Kind regards,

Catherine Young
Head teacher



Harvest prayer 2024: Praise be to you, O God

During this Year of Prayer, may we join together to celebrate God's gifts.

Praise be to you, O God,
source of life and goodness.
You fill the earth with abundance
and love all that you have made.
As we join creation in singing your glory,
teach us to care for our common home.

Praise be to you, O God,
revealed in Jesus, God with us.
We hear the call of the Carpenter,
to carve a path to a better future.
Guide our hands to repair what's broken,
to build a just and peaceful world.

Praise be to you, O God,
who enfolds us with the Spirit,
to call us deeper into the heart of love,
to comfort and disturb.
Give us strength and courage
to work with you to make all things new.
Amen.

Caroline Stanton/CAFOD



SATS Family Learning Session

Calling all Y6 parents... just a reminder that this **Wednesday 2nd October** is the SATS Family Learning Session, lead by Mrs Sexton. Please come along to the hall for **9:15am**.

Healthy Snacks - Playtimes

Children are welcome to come to school with a healthy snack to eat at playtime. In the Early Years and Year 1/2, children are provided with a piece of fruit. If our junior children would like a snack, please provide your child with a piece of fruit, cereal bar or an appropriate alternative. Crisps, chocolate bars and other sweet delights should stay at home as they are not permitted. Children will be offered a piece of fruit as an alternative. Thank you for your co-operation.

Y2 Celebration of the Word

The Y2 Celebration of the Word shall take place in the Y2 classroom at 9am on **Friday 4th October**.



Venues

North Durham Academy, Emmanuelle College.
New- Washington Leisure Centre

Fun football coaching for 5-12
year olds
After school clubs
Kids birthday parties

- FA Licenced Head Coach - Stuart Connolly
- Over 10 years playing experience
- Over 15 years coaching experience
- Played and coached in the UK & USA

Bringing the fun back into football

Find us on Facebook
Contact Stuart 07885752292

DfE Attendance Update – September 2024

As you are all aware, there have been some significant changes to the DfE Attendance Policy from September 2024. Information was circulated before the summer break including this chart from Durham County Council.



Fixed Penalty Notices for irregular attendance at school Important information for parents

1 Overview

Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by a head teacher.

The notices are used to prevent the need for court action, for example, when support has not been engaged with or is not appropriate (for example, leave of absence during term time). **Changes from September 2024 are shown below.**

2 Leave

Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation **would not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

3 Absence

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if there are **5 days / 10 sessions** of absence in a period of **10 school weeks** (where absence has not been authorised).

A notice may be issued where the 5-day level of absence has not been reached, for example, if there are several periods of leave.

4 Amount

Within a 3-year period:

The first penalty notice is **£160** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice is **£160** to be paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued. **Legal action** may result (for example, prosecution).

For further information please see Durham County Council website page on school attendance or email AIT@durham.gov.uk

As a school, we are not permitted to authorise any holidays unless it is for exceptional circumstances. Family weddings do not count as exceptional circumstances, particularly when a holiday is occurring either side of the wedding day. When any holiday requests reach over 5 days (10 sessions) within a 10 week period, they will be referred to the local authority. We have already received many holiday requests for this year so far and if they reach the 5 day/10 session threshold, they either have or are in the process of being sent to the LA where it is likely that the LA will issue a fixed penalty notice. **Holidays will incur a fine if they reach the 5 day/ 10 session threshold within a 10 week period.**

I urge all parents to look at the chart above so you are aware of the procedures for the fixed penalty notices as there are changes from September 2024 which are in effect for a 3-year period (this will include the transition from primary to secondary school too).

- Any absence of 5 days/10 sessions will incur the first penalty notice of £160, **reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. This is per parent, per child.**
- A **second penalty notice** shall occur where the cost will rise to **£160 per parent, per child** if another term time request occurs within the 3-year period.
- As a third penalty notice cannot be issued, **legal action** may result if another holiday occurs within the 3-year period.

In addition, if your child is absent for a period of time due to illness, it could be that the school will request medical evidence from the GP, especially if the illness is for 5 days or more. If evidence cannot be provided and the absence is for 5 days/10 sessions, this will be recorded as unauthorised and referred to the LA for a fixed penalty notice.

The attendance at St Benet's has declined since the covid years and last year, our overall attendance rate was 95.2%. In previous years, it ranged between 96-97%. Our target for this year is 97%, therefore we will be monitoring children's attendance very closely. We ask that parents work with us this year to ensure that your child is in school for every possible day.

Further information can be found in our Attendance Policy on our school website [Trust-Attendance-Policy-Sep-2024.pdf](#) (bwcet.com)