

# St Mary's Newsletter

## Summer 2015



The cover photos are taken from a selection of articles inside this newsletter



St Mary's Catholic School



As another school year draws to a close, I am delighted to be able to introduce the Summer 2015 Newsletter. Students of all ages have continued to throw themselves into the life of the school over the last term and they have made an outstanding contribution in so many different areas. I hope you enjoy reading about some of their exploits.

As we go to press, a busy few days of end-of-year activities are underway. We have had two excellent celebration events in school for all Year 7 and Year 8 students. It was a pleasure to present certificates to students for academic progress and attainment, as well as for their contribution to sport, music and the wider life of the school. It was nice to be able to thank all students for their superb contribution to St Mary's over the past twelve months.

A similar evening event takes place in the last week of term for Year 9 students and their families. We are also looking forward to celebration events for older students in the autumn term.

We had an excellent summer concert with outstanding performances from singers and musicians, as well as from the school choir, orchestra and various bands. Everyone is looking forward to Sports Day, International Day, Activities Day and the end-of-year Mass, which are all taking place throughout the last week of term.

Students have travelled far and wide this term, including very successful overseas trips to Spain and France, as well as visits closer to home, such as year group retreats and the Diocesan Youth Festival at the Youth Village, Geography field-trips to the Ingram

Valley, a lobby of Parliament as part of CAFOD's climate change initiative, and a Leading Edge Science visit to London. I hope you enjoy reading about all of these exciting activities.

Finally, my thanks go to our fantastic staff who provided our examination students with superb support over the course of the last term during the exam season. Our students worked really hard and deserve great success in the summer when results are published. Well done to each one of them for their efforts. Thanks also go to all parents, governors and friends of St Mary's for your continued support of the school. It is really appreciated.

I hope everyone has a wonderful summer break.

**John Foster**  
**Headteacher**  
**July 2015**



Images from the recent *Summer Showcase of Talent*

# Hungry For Real Change

'Hungry For Change' was the theme of the 2015 Just.Is conference which was recently held for Year 5 pupils from our feeder primary schools. The event was organised by the Just.Is group which meets regularly to plan events like this to raise awareness of important issues that affect people around the world.

Year 10 student, Hannah Rai, one of the key presenters at the conference, explained the choice of theme: "We know that the young people from the feeder primaries are like us and want to do whatever they can to make the world a better place. In order for this to happen, we need things to change."

The day began with a trail around school, a quiz and some thought-provoking presentations and pieces of drama from the Just.Is students. This was followed by two young people from the Youth Ministry Team who shared stories of how they were bringing about change through their work with CAFOD and the YMT this year.

After two workshops, which allowed everyone to explore the theme in more depth, a successful conference ended with a liturgy and a resolution by everyone to do something practical to make a difference.

**Mrs Shields**

# Good Shepherd Mass For Fundraising Efforts



Crosses created for Lent by the St Mary's Art Club

At the end of April, the Good Shepherd Mass was held. This was a great celebration of all the fundraising that had taken place locally for St Cuthbert's Care by both primary and secondary schools.

Four students from Year 7 – Jessica Stephenson, Isobel Guthrie, John Carr and Jake Davison – represented St Mary's on this occasion. Two of them delivered the second reading, taken from the First Letter of St Peter, describing Jesus as the shepherd and

us as his sheep. During the offertory, the other two Year 7s carried crosses that had been made by the St Mary's Art Club. These crosses were part of the St Cuthbert's Care display at the diocesan offices in St Cuthbert's House.

The Good Shepherd Mass was a memorable event that united both primary and secondary schools in their work of putting faith into action.

**Mrs Blackburn**

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## Exhibition At The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum has an acclaimed reputation for staging top-class exhibitions that have featured works by Vivienne Westwood, Stephen Jones, Damien Hirst, Tim Walker and Gavin Turk. Its most recent show, *Birds of Paradise*, gave A-Level Design students a rare chance to see the work of such

acclaimed designers as Prada, Gucci and Alexander McQueen. A trip to the exhibition was specifically planned to help the students develop ideas for their AS and A2 exam projects. As is evident in the work that has since been produced, the visit to the Bowes Museum was invaluable.

**Mrs Douglass**

# Geographers On Tour

The Geography Department has had an incredibly busy year visiting various places around the North of England. Fieldwork is vital for our students as they gain first-hand experience of how to conduct experiments and also investigate local issues. We always try to stay as close to Newcastle as possible as this increases affordability, encourages students to investigate their own environment, and allows the maximum number of students to participate.

The year started with a fantastic residential visit to the Lake District for all the A-Level students. They survived almost a full week in the cold and wet surrounded by rugged scenery and without any mobile phone signal. The week was fantastic for team-bonding and also for getting the students to understand the geography of the area. They were lucky enough to explore glaciated landscapes close to Easedale Tarn, river environments along the River Mickleden, and settlements in Hawkshead and Ambleside.

The AS students visited York to study its flood defences and investigated changing settlement types in Northumberland and Newcastle. A fantastic tour of Newcastle's Grainger Town, which explored its historical development and current renaissance, was led by Mrs Jill Young, mother of Emma (Year 11), Rachael (Year 9) and Daniel (Year 7). As always, this was incredibly informative and we are indebted to Jill for her knowledge, humour, expertise and time.

Year 9 students have also been active in the local area, studying the infamous South Gosforth double-roundabout. They investigated traffic volumes and the safety features of this notorious accident blackspot before making proposals for improving the system. Following this, the department received a fan-



A-Level students in the Lake District



Year 10 geographers in the Northumberland National Park

tastic e-mail from a parent of one student who commented that this project was "a brilliant example of proper, real-world, practically-applicable education."

Finally, half of all the GCSE students in Year 10 recently conducted an investigation of stretches of the River Breamish in the Northumberland National Park.

Despite the usual inclement weather, the students were in high spirits and have produced some fantastic work using the data that they collected. One student, Emily Ridyard, said: "It was fun and educational, and I had a really good time."

**Mr Gamesby**

# British Biathlon Finals

YEAR  
7

Year 7 student, Toby Caisley, qualified for the British Biathlon Finals that were held in London earlier this year. This was a truly fantastic achievement as over 5,500 students originally entered the competition. St Mary's is very proud of Toby's success and would like to congratulate him on his superb performance. Here is Toby's own report of the competition.



Toby at the Olympic Park in London

I arrived at the London Aquatics Centre early one rainy day in March. I had to wait a long time until the warm-up for my 100 metre swim. The warm-up lasted ten minutes and, after this, I nervously waited on my block for the race to begin. There was silence; you could hear a pin drop. The gun went off and the poolside crowd erupted with cheers. I finished eighth in my heat but still recorded my best time ever.

Once I had finished the swim, I ran to the changing-rooms to get ready for the 1,600 metre run. Outside it was freezing and rainy. I warmed up properly so I was prepared and succeeded in finishing fourth in my heat. I completed the race well below seven minutes and a good minute faster than my qualifying time.

Overall, I finished sixth in Britain and third in the North of England. I was proud of myself and would recommend biathlon to anyone who likes running and swimming.

**Toby Caisley (Year 7)**

YEAR  
9

# News Report

The Year 9s have had another fantastic year with a variety of achievements, experiences and successes which will soon be officially recognised at an end-of-year awards evening.

This year's highlights include our Advent and Lenten fundraising events, the Youth Ministry Team retreat, and the excellent tutor-group assemblies that were all planned and delivered to a very high standard. Each form has also been responsible for planning a Mass at different points during the year and they have shown themselves to be committed, enthusiastic young people who will happily give up their time

for others.

The following students have each achieved 100% records of attendance during the academic year: Owen Connell, Ali Hamza, Arek Menke, Elliot Shepherdson and Daniel Sorenson.

All Year 9 students have now decided which subjects to study for the next two years. They are now very much looking forward to beginning their GCSEs after a well-earned summer break.

Congratulations on a successful year, Year 9!

**Mr Tait**

## James Impresses In Dramatic Performance

James Metcalf of Year 9 recently performed in the Waterville Musical Society's production of *The King and I*. James joined a highly talented cast and, playing the role of Prince Chulalongkorn, helped to transport audiences to nineteenth-century Siam.

The show was a huge success and

James' contribution to the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic received rave reviews. James reported: "I found the show to be a fun experience and I feel that I learnt so much."

We are all very proud of all that James has achieved.

**Mr Tait**

YEAR  
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## 'Bin It Roadshow' Visits St Mary's

In June, as part of their pastoral programme, Year 7 students attended the 'Bin It Roadshow'. This session provided many facts about chewing-gum and conveyed the serious message of just how damaging it can be if it is not disposed of properly.

Both students and staff participated throughout the event and clearly enjoyed themselves. They shared

their own experiences – good and bad – of chewing-gum and discussed how we can protect our environment. The main conclusion reached was that it is cool to place or even slam-dunk things into a bin.

We very much hope that the 'Bin It Roadshow' returns to St Mary's soon.

**Mrs Blackburn**

# One Climate, One World

YEAR  
10



different parts of the UK to know more about their views on this matter.

With the help of CAFOD, we were also able to meet three local MPs, Nick Brown (Newcastle East), Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle North) and Chi Onwurah (Newcastle Central), at the House of Commons. This was a great opportunity for us to share our concerns about climate change with them in person.

During the separate meetings, we highlighted certain key local issues which included urbanisation, pollution and public transport. Moreover, we requested further action for more usage of renewable energy sources through the provision of grants to install more solar panels. After listening to us patiently, all the MPs shared their personal plans to help prevent climate change and assured us of their support for this cause.

Finally, at the end of the day, we met Ed Miliband, the former leader of the Labour Party, for a photo-opportunity.

From this trip, we have all learnt the importance of our individual contribution to helping the environment. Even the smallest change can help prevent a global crisis.

**Sowmya Menon (Year 10)**

Mr O'Connell, Mrs Shields and the students listen to Nick Brown MP

Climate change is a huge issue which dramatically affects our world by destroying the environment, diminishing wildlife and making people suffer. It is an issue that touches us all directly and that will impact on future generations. It is a problem that could eventually wipe out all life on earth. This is why CAFOD is taking action.

In June, the charity invited students from across the UK to voice their views on climate change to MPs. Eight Year 10 students from

St Mary's – George Atkinson, Owen Bell, Suzie Clayton, Joe Johnston, Sowmya Menon, Joshua Poole, Mahdi Shivli and Sujata Shrestha – were among the many thousands of young people who followed this call by travelling to London to take part in this significant campaign.

On arriving in the capital, we were kindly welcomed by members of CAFOD who made us understand more about the organisation and its work. Additionally, CAFOD organised many activities which allowed us to talk to other young people from

The Year 10s meet Ed Miliband MP



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Professional artist, Rasa Zilinskaite, recently delivered portraiture workshops to students in Years 10 and 11. These helped the GCSE candidates to use acrylics in an expressive style in preparation for their examinations.

## La Petite Crêperie

YEAR  
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Two groups of Year 8 students and keen members of the school's Language Club recently had an exciting opportunity to take part in a French language and cultural session that was led by two representatives from the Newcastle-based company, La Petite Crêperie. Students found out how crêpes are made and then learnt how to place an order in

French. Once students had mastered the language, they were then able to sample the crêpe of their choice. "Une crêpe au caramel" was the most popular order closely followed by "Une crêpe au Nutella."

**Miss Gardiner**

*Below: A Year 8 student places her order*



## Language Students' University Experience

Earlier this year, AS and A-Level English Language students attended an event at Newcastle University. During the day, students took part in a series of lectures on topics relevant to their studies. They also received an introduction to academic life and experienced learning within a higher educational context.

The majority of sessions concentrated on the knowledge and skills needed for exams which all the students found really useful. Lectures delivered by examiners gave students invaluable first-hand advice on how to maximise their potential and really boosted their confidence. The topics covered ranged from child language acquisition, language change in the Seventeenth Century, attitudes to language, and language and technology.

Students also had the chance to attend lectures on an exciting range of areas in linguistics that included accents and dialects and forensic linguistics. Students were even told about new data concerning North East accents and were given the opportunity to contribute to ongoing research by offering their opinions on a range of recordings.

Finally, the Year 13s listened to crime writer and forensic linguist, Danuta Reah, who delivered a fascinating talk on the authorship of the infamous Jack the Ripper letters. Although unrelated to the A-Level course, the students enjoyed discovering how linguistics can be applied in an occupational context.

**Mrs McRae**

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# The Annual Readathon

For the six weeks leading up to the Easter holidays, all the students of Years 7, 8 and 9 were invited to join in our annual Readathon event. This challenges students to read six books in six weeks and to collect sponsorship money for doing so. The funds raised go to four very worthy children's charities: CLIC Sargent, Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity, ReadWell and Together for Short Lives. St Mary's also benefits from receiving free books worth up to 20 per cent of the total

amount of money that we raise.

Readathon is an established national charity that is supported by many authors – including Julia Donaldson, Michael Morpurgo and Sir Andrew Motion – and schools around the country.

During the event, students were allowed time at the start of the day and during some lessons to read their own choice of books. Because the emphasis of Readathon is on reading for pleasure, and on promoting a love

of reading, the children were allowed to choose anything at all to read. They were also encouraged to read whenever they could.

In the weeks following the Easter holidays, students collected their sponsorship money which came to a total of £279.85. I would like to thank all the students who participated, as well as the families, friends and communities who supported them.

**Mrs Harbisher**

## Football Report

YEAR  
8

The Year 8 students have had another excellent year in the Newcastle City Football League. They finished third after some great performances and, had it not been for injuries to key players, they would have finished even higher.

Daniel Kirkbride ended the season as top scorer for the second year in a row with a total of seven goals across all competitions. He was followed closely by Gabriel Turowski (five goals) and Mitchel Simpson (three goals). Aidan Williams captained the team again this year and, leading by example both on and off the pitch, never missed a game despite his commitments to Sunderland Academy.

The match of the season was our first-round County Cup encounter with Cramlington Learning Village at the beginning of the year. Despite being played at an excellent standard by both teams, and with chances for goals at either end, the game finished 0–0 after extra time.

A nail-biting penalty shoot-out followed which St Mary's lost 4–3.

A special mention must be made of three players who, although they did not play many games in Year 7, attended every training session this year and eventually forced their way into the squad. Louis Maw proved to be a very versatile defender; Lucas Grillot came in late on and scored in his final game; and Gabriel Turowski was an ever-present player this season.

Choosing a player of the season was difficult, but the award was finally given to Daniel Meyer for his composed performances in defence. However, all the players have been a credit to the school and I look forward to managing them again next year.

**Mr Maughan**



## Diocesan Chrism Mass

At the beginning of April, Catholics from across the diocese, together with their priests and Bishop Seamus, gathered to celebrate Mass at St Mary's Cathedral.

During this event, our diocesan priests together renewed their commitment to priestly service, and received the prayers and support of the people who attended. The sacred oils used for the sacraments for the coming year were also blessed.

The choir from St Mary's was invited to help lead the singing and the students, who sang 'Bread of Life' during communion, seized this fabulous opportunity to contribute to a large diocesan celebration in a magnificent setting.

**Miss Jackson**

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## Super Sixes Golf Xtreme

At the end of June, six boys from Year 9 – Sam Ashcroft, Max

Ferriday, Ewan James, Sam McConnell, Joseph Stonor and Joby Tennant – braved some unseasonal weather to compete in the Super Sixes Golf Xtreme event at Benfield School.

Playing in a pairs stableford competition, the Year 9s performed superbly well and finished in second place with 56 points. By finishing in the silver position – the gold medal was won by Kenton – the boys earned the right to represent Newcastle at the Level 3 Sainsbury's School Games at Wearside Golf Club later in the summer.

**Mr Bone**



# Anne Frank Exhibition Returns To St Mary's For A Third Time

St Mary's hosted the Anne Frank Exhibition for two weeks in June. This is the third time that the exhibition has been here and each time the whole experience has been a great success. The exhibition tells the story of Anne Frank through a series of forty panels.



Twenty-two keen Year 9 students trained as Anne Frank Ambassadors. They were all proactive in their work and showed other students around the exhibition with passion and knowledge. The members of the Anne Frank Trust who led the

training praised our students highly for their commitment and ability to take on information so quickly.

The Anne Frank Ambassadors worked in teams that showed other year groups around the exhibition. They worked together very effectively and supported each other in their work. It was a pleasure to watch the students grow in confidence through this experience.

During the second week of the exhibition, different classes and year groups took part in a workshop which explored prejudice, racism and discrimination. The workshop allowed students to consider why these things happen and how they could be active in preventing such things from occurring.

Some of the Ambassadors were also able to take part in a special two-day event. This involved a series of

sessions and discussions with students from other schools. The highlight of the event was an afternoon with Eva Schloss, Anne Frank's step-sister, who gave a real insight into life in Auschwitz. The students had the opportunity to ask her questions about her experiences and she urged them to challenge prejudice and discrimination in society today.

To mark both the work that the students had done and their dedication to the whole event, the students were presented with certificates. We are very proud of what they have achieved.

It seems fitting to end with a quote from Anne Frank herself: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

**Mrs Blackburn and Miss Clark**

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## City Athletics Championships

St Mary's enjoyed another successful visit to the City Athletics Championships which were held at Gateshead Stadium early in June. Eighteen students from Years 7 and 8 represented the school in a range of events from the 100 metre sprint to the shot putt.

Everyone performed fantastically well and there were some excellent individual achievements. Eight students finished in the top four of their respective events and therefore qualified for the County Championships.

The standout performances came from Josh Collinson (Year 7), who finished first in the 200 metre race and second in the 800 metre run, and Ross Ward (Year 8), who won both the 100 metre and 200 metre races for his age-category.

**Mr Maughan**

# Sixth Form Leavers' Prom

To celebrate the end of their time in Sixth Form, Year 13 students enjoyed their Leavers' Prom at the Northern Stage in Newcastle. This was extremely well organised by Teresa Meniru and Eddie Shields, our Head Girl and Boy, and their deputies, Will Chan and Katy Willis. The night was a real success.

It was such a privilege and a pleasure to see our Year 13s at this exciting point in their lives as they prepare to make their own way in the world of work or at university. The night was a culmination of two years' hard work and it provided some light relief after a very intense period of examinations and study.

We are confident that students will do very well this year but we do have a nervous wait until August 13th when the A-Level results are published. In the meantime, I would like to thank all parents and staff who have supported our students during this very important time.

**Mr McKeating**

# Tasting Life On A Farm

Treginnis Farm, on the picturesque Pembrokeshire coast in Wales, proved to be the perfect place for Year 7 students to learn about life on a farm.

As part of the 'Farms For City Children' initiative, which is supported by the author Michael Morpurgo, the students swapped their usual classroom routines to spend a week living and working on the farm, which is located near Britain's smallest city, St David's.

With each day starting at 7.30 a.m. prompt, this was certainly no holiday for the students. On the contrary, the visit gave them a real opportunity to learn how a commercial farm operates, experience rural life and undertake many of the day-to-day activities that this all entails.

Daily tasks included feeding and mucking-out a range of livestock such as goats, sheep, cows, chickens, turkeys, hens, pigs and donkeys. There were also other chores ranging from chopping wood and cleaning-out stables to working in the farm garden and preparing food for meals.

Visiting the farm in late April and early May also ensured that some students had the opportunity to see the birth of a lamb, while all



the students were able to feed the animals.

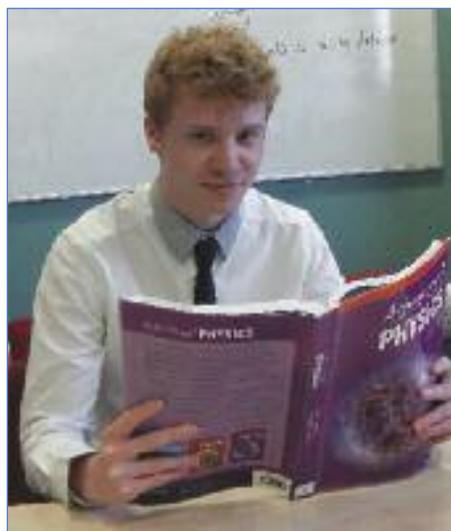
During the stay, the Year 7s also enjoyed a visit to St David's twelfth-century cathedral, walks around the Pembrokeshire coastline, and trips to some of the many beaches and bays that are dotted around the area.

At the end of each day – the last activity always finished at 7.30 p.m. – students retired to the farmhouse for some free-time and to reflect on what they had seen and experienced.

**Mr Swinburne**

# Thomas Heads For Harvard

Thomas Armstrong of Year 12 has a lot to celebrate. After a hugely successful year, Thomas was chosen from a pool of 3,700 applicants as one of only 175 students to be given a place on the US Summer School Programme through the Sutton Trust. This aims to give students a taste of American culture and higher education, and Thomas will spend time at Harvard University and Yale University. The scheme also supports highly able students through the process of applying to leading universities in America.



We are sure that Thomas will have a great time in America and we look forward both to hearing his stories of university-life across the pond and to supporting him in his application to US-based universities in September. Thomas, who was also awarded one of the prestigious Reece Scholarships earlier in the academic year, is currently studying A-Levels in Physics, Chemistry, Maths and Further Maths.

**Mr McKeating**

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# 'Lay It Down' For Lent 2015

Throughout March, the community of St Mary's took part in various activities to observe the season of Lent. Our chosen theme was 'Lay It Down' and each day we spent time thinking about what we need to let go of in our own lives to give to God. Staff and students took part in observing the Stations of the Cross around the Atrium, and Year 9 forms were given the opportunity to take part in a service of reconciliation. All the students attended a Lenten Liturgy to reflect on the theme and the whole school gathered on Maundy Thursday for a service to mark the events of Holy Week.

Lots of fundraising activities were held to raise funds for St Cuthbert's Care and other charitable causes with students arranging themselves into the words of our theme in the Atrium, washing cars and holding a raffle. These events were a great success and the students gave very generously. If this was not enough, we also held a week-long soup kitchen and people gave up their usual lunch for a bowl of soup and some bread with all the proceeds going to CAFOD.

All in all, throughout Lent the community came together in prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and learnt more about what it means to have a faith and to live it out.

**Miss Jackson**



Year 7 students sell tickets for the raffle

# A Summer Showcase Of Musical Talent



Ayo Oluwole-Oni (Year 8) performs Beethoven's 'Ode To Joy' on clarinet

Many students performed as soloists and in ensembles during our recent annual *Summer Showcase of Talent*. The event was a tremendous success and was thoroughly enjoyed by the large audience that attended. Huge thanks are owed to everyone – students and staff – who took part; their support is greatly appreciated.

**Mr Richardson**



Ellie Reid (Year 10) plays Michael Head's violin piece, 'Irish Idyll'

# Year 12 Visit To Holy Island

SIXTH FORM

At the end of June, Year 12 students studying Philosophy and Ethics and the NOCN vocational course enjoyed a day on Holy Island. They visited Lindisfarne Priory, the central seat of religious power in the North of England over a millennium ago, and gained a sense of why St Cuthbert found this to be such a special and sacred place where anyone could undertake deep spiritual reflection. The Year 12s then went on a guided walk around Lindisfarne Castle, a much later addition to the island and a key fortification for the Tudors.

The students really enjoyed having the space for some contemplation and the time to consider where they

are heading in the future. One member of the group, Nadia Bibi, commented: "It was nice to reflect while I was fasting during Ramadan. It felt like a pilgrimage so I was full of respect for the place." This view was echoed by Bradley Aird who said: "It was nice to find a place of peace to escape from the stresses of school and exams."

The organisers of the visit, Mr O'Connell and Mrs Conway, were absolutely delighted with the way that everyone conducted themselves on the visit. The students were an absolute credit to St Mary's.

**Mr O'Connell**

# Drama Trip To London

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YEAR  
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# Annual Review

In April, a group of A-Level Drama students travelled to London to see a production of *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell at the Barbican Theatre. The performance lived up to all expectations. A large cast brought New York of the 1920s to life and it was particularly interesting for students to see the features of an Expressionist play live on stage. The interesting use of both sound and setting was excellent

and the students have already started to incorporate what they heard and saw into their own work.

Following the performance, the students had time to do a little sightseeing. One of the places visited was the historic Covent Garden where the group enjoyed watching a variety of street-performers.

**Miss Stearman**



Some of the students pictured at Covent Garden

The Year 10s have completed another memorable year and made an excellent start to all their GCSE subjects. Many have even already completed a number of external module examinations and controlled assessments.

As well as making excellent academic progress this year, the students have continued to involve themselves in all areas of school-life. This year we have had a number of students involved in the school's drama productions and concerts, and sports activities. The Year 10s have also been very generous with their time helping to raise money during Advent and Lent, and helping those affected by the earthquake in Nepal.

I have been very impressed with the students this year and hope that they take full advantage of the well-earned summer break so that they are ready for the start of Year 11 in September.

**Mr Henson**

## Brick Planet Exhibition

Students from Years 8 and 10 visited the Brick Planet Exhibition at Woodhorn Museum in May. They enjoyed a day of activities that were designed to improve their teamwork and communication skills.

The exhibition consisted of Lego models of constructions ranging from the Great Wall of China to the Tyne Bridge. The students each chose their favourite exhibit and learnt facts about Warren Elsmore, the artist who built all the models. Afterwards, they worked in teams to create their own designs.

The day ended with a guided tour of the Mining Museum. This was very interactive and the students particularly enjoyed crawling down a tunnel in order to gain some understanding of the working conditions of a miner.

**Miss Egdell**

## Year 12s Impress At The Hoppings

Year 12 students enjoyed supporting Traveller children in their education while the Hoppings Fair was on in Newcastle. Students had the opportunity to be teaching assistants as they supported the youngsters in their learning. This provided invaluable experience to those hoping to apply next year for teaching or childcare courses at university. The feedback from the organisers was very positive and our students made an excellent impression.

**Mr Spurr**



# A Fond Farewell To Year 11

Many of our students will be looking forward to the long summer holiday. However, for Year 11 students this will be not so much a holiday as a very long wait until the GCSE results are released. While some students will be moving on to college or making their first steps into the world of work, we are delighted that many of them have chosen to stay with us to continue their studies in the Sixth Form.

revision and targeted intervention across all departments has given all our students the prospect of maximising their chances of achieving successful outcomes this summer. Many students took advantage of additional revision sessions during holidays, showing a real commitment to their studies.

I would also like to thank all the members of staff who have worked

us as the well-rounded young people that they have become.

The Year 11s have played an active role in the daily life of the school throughout their five years here. They have achieved lots of great things including fundraising many thousands of pounds for charities at home and abroad, competing in various sports at a regional and national level, and taking part in numerous school productions and performances. We are all very proud of their achievements and it has been my privilege to have been their Head of Year.

As always, Year 11 officially ended with the Leavers' Assembly and Prom. The Assembly proved to be a wonderful experience, allowing the students to reflect upon their time at St Mary's. It also gave tutors a chance to share their memories and to congratulate them on everything that they have achieved. The day was rounded-off with the Prom, and all the students looked truly amazing and sophisticated. It was a memorable occasion and it was great to have so many parents share the start of the evening with us.

I would encourage all Year 11 students to spend some time during the summer to reflect on their years at St Mary's and to think about the positive difference that they have made to the school and to the wider community. I am sure that they will continue to be excellent role-models during the next stage of their journey.

**Mr Gray**



Year 11s arrive at the Leavers' Prom

Now that the academic year has come to an end for Year 11, I would like to acknowledge all the hard work that they have put in. They have demonstrated a real commitment to their studies and a determination to succeed. An early, comprehensive programme of

with and supported the Year 11s in any way. In particular, I would like to give special praise to all their form tutors, both past and present. Without the dedication and commitment shown by these staff, our students would not be leaving

## Golden Gymnastics From Maria

Maria Fjodorova, a Year 9 student, recently won gold in the four-piece event – involving the bars, beam, floor and vault – at the South Durham Gymnastics Competition. Maria

finished first out of twenty-three competitors in the multi-discipline contest. She thoroughly enjoyed the occasion and is rightly proud of this fantastic achievement. This is the

well-deserved result of months of preparation which involved following a gruelling training schedule.

**Mr Tait**

YEAR  
9

# Cricket Gets Underway

A busy season of cricket got underway early in May when thirty-one Year 7 and Year 8 boys and girls from St Mary's took part in the Sainsbury's School Games Softball Cricket Festival.

The Year 8 boys played excellent cricket throughout the day and were narrowly beaten in the final by St Cuthbert's. The top performers on the day were Matthew Brown (74 runs)

and Ross Ward (five wickets and 30 runs).

The Year 7 boys also performed well and managed to win their final game thanks to a six and a four by Luke Ashcroft from the final two balls. The Year 7/8 girls showed great enthusiasm and a tremendous attitude for a sport that they had previously had little or no experience of playing.

**Mr Hook**



The Year 7 and Year 8 cricketers with Mr Hook and Mr Bone

## A Visit To Spain

YEAR  
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YEAR  
8

A group of Year 7 and Year 8 students recently returned from a wonderful week in Spain. Fifty students and five staff stayed in Tossa de Mar, a lovely town situated along the coast from Barcelona. The shops and restaurants here afforded the students plenty of opportunities to practise their use of Spanish. Its lovely beach also provided a place where everyone could relax and play sports.

Whilst in Spain, students took part in a huge range of linguistic, cultural and fun activities. These included a busy day visiting some of the main attractions in Barcelona such as Parc Guell, the Sagrada Familia Basilica, the Nou Camp Stadium and Las Ramblas, the city's main pedestrianised street.

When asked what their favourite part



Students and staff from St Mary's and Escola Josep Tous pose for a photograph

of the trip was, many students said that it was the visit to our link school – Escola Josep Tous – in the centre of Barcelona. This was the first time that anyone from St Mary's had visited the school and all the students and staff there were incredibly welcoming. They even put on a show for us with songs in Catalan, Spanish and English. This is

a link that we intend to develop and we hope to welcome our new friends to Newcastle soon.

Thank you so much to all the wonderful students and members of staff who went on the trip. They have so many happy and fun memories of their week together.

**Miss Gardiner**

YEAR  
7

YEAR  
8

## Cricket Festival News

In June, St Mary's was represented by twenty-two boys from Years 7 and 8 in the Northumbria Schools Hardball Cricket Festival. The two teams took on St Cuthbert's, with the Year 7s up first to play. St Cuthbert's won the toss, opted to bat and were limited early on by Jack Pilling and Muizz Sheikh. However, St Cuthbert's began to bat well and managed to score 98

runs from their twelve overs. In reply, St Mary's made 44 runs after some good bowling removed Hashim Ali, Jonjo Block and Jake Davison.

The Year 8s representing St Mary's won the toss and decided to bowl first in their game. Ross Ward and Shazhib Saleem bowled brilliantly early on, but St Cuthbert's scored heavily in the middle part of their innings and finished on 102. Matthew Brown and

Shazhib opened the batting for St Mary's, and Matthew started well with some powerful hitting. The next partnership of Tobin Togy and Ross Ward added forty runs before they retired not out. Afterwards, the wickets began to tumble and, with the lower-order batsmen having too much to do, St Mary's eventually lost by nineteen runs.

**Mr Hook**

## The Year 12s Begin UCAS Applications

After the intensity of the AS exams earlier in the term, Year 12s are now beginning the ever-important task of applying to university. This process started with a visit to open days at Newcastle University and Northumbria University.

With opportunities to see the accommodation that is available and to visit social facilities, these events gave students a flavour of what it will be like as an undergraduate. They also allowed the students to go into departments to find out more about the different courses that are available and to ask questions about the application process. Students were encouraged to start looking at different courses and universities before thinking about writing their personal statements.

Information about the UCAS process and student finance will be made available to parents of the current Year 12 students early in the next academic year.

**Mr McKeating**

## Futsal Festival

At the start of this term, sixty students from Years 7–11 competed in the NSFA Futsal Festival at Blue Flames. Each team played a minimum of three matches against other schools. There was some fantastic football on display and the Under-16 Boys 'A' team topped its group to qualify as Northumberland's representative in the upcoming North Region Futsal Festival.

**Mr Bone**

# Young Scientists Leading The Way

YEAR  
9



Erin, Laura and Rose conduct their research

A team of enthusiastic Year 9 scientists has been working on an exciting project with the help of Dr Jankowski since January. The Leading Edge project encourages young people with an interest in science to develop their skills and talents in the subject. This involves working in close collaboration with leading local academics on some cutting-edge scientific research.

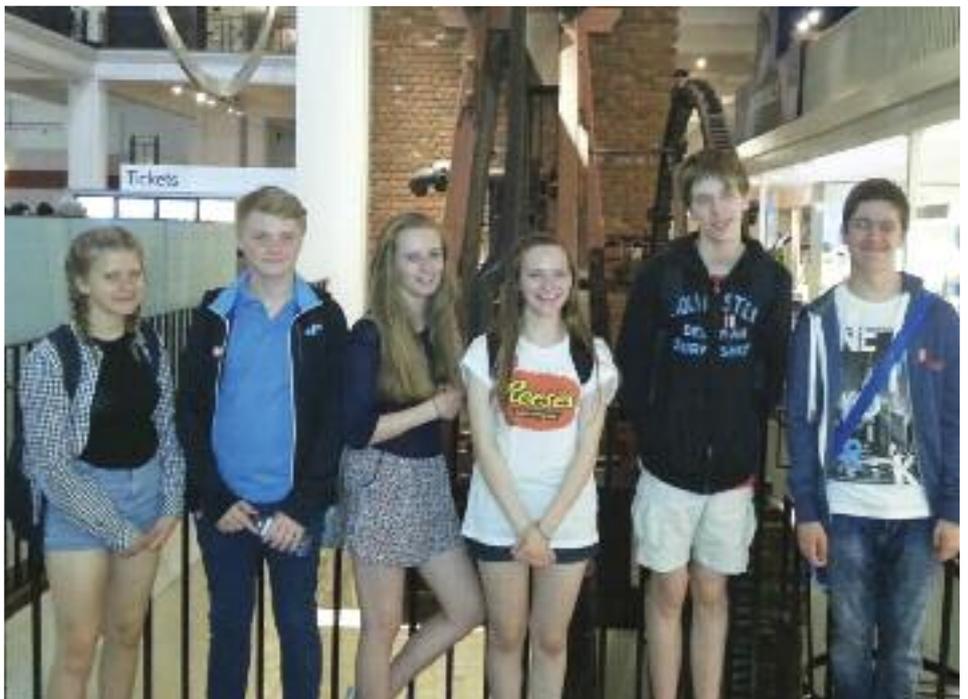
The six students – Mark Broughton,

Laura Dyter, Callum Grimes, James Metcalf, Rose Nicholson and Erin Pennock – have been working with Dr Sarah Judge from the Toxicological Department of Newcastle University's Medical School. The students have researched the viability of a new and exciting invertebrate model using flatworms to investigate the adverse toxicological effects of food additives such as the artificial sweetener, aspartame. During their lab work, the students handled a lot of up-to-date equipment with confidence.

The students' research was of such a high standard that Dr Judge is currently preparing the team's preliminary findings for publication in a leading scientific journal. Responding to this news, Mark Broughton said: "I never thought that this project would lead to me seeing my name in print."

The students were recently taken on a day-trip to London to visit the Science and Natural History Museums and the prestigious Royal Society. This was the culmination of a fantastic year-long journey through toxicology.

**Dr Jankowski**



The young scientists at the Science Museum, London

# What's Been Taking Place In The Library?

The Library has continued to grow this term with the addition of more new books that have helped to bring the total bought this year to over 1,200. Many of these titles have been recommended by those students who have used the 'Suggest A Book' feature that is part of the Library's dedicated website ([our-library.org.uk](http://our-library.org.uk)).

The excitement generated by the brand-new books – the many new graphic novels have been especially popular – has meant that the Library remains a vibrant and busy place. Since September, it has again attracted over 47,000 individual visitors. The Library has also processed the loan of more than 5,500 books, an increase of 1,000 on last year's total. These are very impressive figures which testify not only to the Library's popularity with students but also to the strong reading culture that is an important part of the school. Encouragingly, boys at St Mary's are as active as girls in borrowing books from the Library.

On the chess-scene, this has been another exciting and competitive year with the Library once again offering students the chance to take



Northern Gigafinal qualifiers, Mrugaya Mulay, Rory Bell and Mark Broughton

part in the Delancey UK Schools Chess Challenge. The first, school-based stage of the competition attracted forty competitors – all of them very keen to grab a share of the £20,000 prize fund – and ran from January to March.

After seven rounds of matches, a total of thirteen students – led by Mark Broughton (Year 9) who just beat Aidan Byrne (Year 9) to the title – qualified for the regional finals in

April. By all accounts, those students who were able to compete at the RGS did very well, and Mark and two Year 8 students, Rory Bell and Mrugaya Mulay, scored sufficient points to make it to the Northern Gigafinal. This will be held in Manchester in mid-July. Come September, we hope to report that all three qualified for the last stage of the tournament.

**Dr Richardson**

## Students Work With Bank To Increase Financial Awareness

YEAR  
10

This term, Santander organised three interactive workshops for Year 10 Business students to generate discussion about everyday financial issues and to increase their understanding of finance.

I was really glad to have had the opportunity to take part in the work-

shops which provided an excellent insight into the role of banks and the importance of saving money. We also investigated the legal aspect of banking. This is all crucial knowledge that will ensure that we keep on the right side of the law and avoid drowning in debt.

I now feel that my financial understanding has improved greatly. Santander certainly succeeded in teaching some important lessons that everyone who attended the workshops will use in their future lives.

**Kayleigh Challinor (Year 10)**

# The Sixth Form Diocesan Festival

The Sixth Form Diocesan Festival took place again this term at the Emmaus Village in Consett. The theme of the event was 'God never tires of forgiving us'. This quote came originally from Pope Francis. Forty students from St Mary's attended the event together with students from other schools in the diocese.

The day provided much food for thought. Some of our students helped to introduce the theme in the morning with a piece of drama that showed how God is always there watching us and wanting us to turn to Him and experience His forgiveness. Fr Jim Clarke, a Californian priest, and Steve Murray, a mime artist, helped us to



St Mary's students introduce the theme  
unpack the message of God's forgiveness and mercy and what these two

things actually mean. These areas were explored further by the students who worked effectively in groups with people from other schools.

In the afternoon, the guest speaker was Eva Clarke who shared her story of surviving the Holocaust. There was an opportunity for students to ask Eva questions before Bishop Seamus drew the day to a close with some final reflections and prayers.

It was sad that the day had to end but, with so much information to digest and consider, it is not the end of the theme. We all look forward very much to next year's Sixth Form Diocesan Festival.

**Mrs Blackburn**

## Rugby Competition News

YEAR  
7

YEAR  
8

Rugby-players from Years 7 and 8 competed earlier this year in the Emerging Schools Festival at Bullocksteads.

The Year 7s played three games against George Stephenson, St Joseph's and St Cuthbert's. They played some terrific rugby throughout the day, beating George Stephenson 20-15 and narrowly losing 15-10 against St Joseph's. However, the team saved its best performance for last and beat St Cuthbert's 25-0. The Year 7 player of the day was Damon Baghi for his excellent ball-carrying and two tries.

The Year 8s played four games against Gosforth Central, Three Rivers, Ovingham and Ponteland. Gosforth Central proved to be too strong and defeated St Mary's 20-0 in a match that was overshadowed by an injury to Isaac Kain. In the second match against Three Rivers, the boys got off to a good start with an early try from Charlie Kain. However, the opposition fought back



**The Year 7 and Year 8 rugby teams**

and earned a deserved draw in the final minutes.

St Mary's started strongly in game three against Ovingham, and had an early two-try lead thanks again to Charlie Kain and to Asif Khan. St Mary's continued to attack well and added further tries from Ross Ward,

Josh Scott and player of the day, Charlie Kain, to record a comfortable 25-10 win. St Mary's final opponents were Ponteland. Both sides worked hard and, with neither one managing to edge ahead for long, the game finished 5-5.

**Mr Hook**

YEAR  
10

# Primary School Sports Event

Current Year 10 GCSE PE students led a multi-activity sports afternoon for local feeder primary schools – St Catherine's, St Lawrence's and St Vincent's – late last term. All the

students organised each activity brilliantly and were a credit to St Mary's. The feedback given by the primary school staff and children was extremely positive. Particular mention was made of the great

attitude, generous support and infectious enthusiasm that were generally displayed throughout the afternoon.

**Miss Knott**

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# Career Ready Scheme Helps Year 12s Prepare For Work

A group of enterprising students from St Mary's is set to receive a head-start when it comes to the world of work. The Year 12s are busy preparing for internships in businesses in Newcastle as part of the Career Ready programme. Career Ready is a national initiative which gives students practical experience of the corporate world and access to business mentors.

Over the summer, each of the ten students is taking a six-week placement working for a major business in Newcastle. Among those companies involved are Santander, RBS and leading North East law firm, Bond Dickinson. Students will have an unprecedented opportunity to experience full-time work with a major employer, gain experience in a range of roles and work as part of a team alongside experienced employees.

As part of their preparations for the



**Career Ready students attend a mentoring session with their business partners**

placement, each student has been working closely with a business mentor from the Career Ready programme to develop a CV, hone interview techniques and enhance workplace skills. They have also taken part in a group-workshop which was designed to help them understand what to expect in the workplace. This included practical exercises and group discussions covering everything from

working hours to professional standards.

Mrs Shields, Career Ready co-ordinator at St Mary's, said: "This promises to be a fantastic experience for the students and we are very thankful to all the employers involved for offering their support." She added: "It gives each student the chance to find out about life at work, clarify future career options and enhance their CV."

St Mary's has been involved in the Career Ready scheme for several years and will continue to be involved in the next academic year. In preparation for this, the school is looking for local businesses that may be able to offer internship places next summer. Anyone interested in helping is encouraged to contact the school on 0191 2153260 for further information.

**Mr Swinburne**

# The Great Languages Bake-Off

YEAR  
9

In April, three groups of very talented Year 9 cooks travelled to the University of Sunderland to compete in 'The Great Languages Bake-Off'. They had all previously been filmed cooking a variety of French and Spanish dishes that included macaroons, crêpes and paella. The videos also showcased

the students' language skills as they explained the different steps of each recipe in French and Spanish.

At Sunderland, the Year 9s delivered a presentation about the cooking process and talked of why they had entered the competition. Their videos were then screened to a

large audience that included competitors from over twenty other schools.

The students all had a fantastic day and they each received a certificate for their excellent efforts.

**Miss Lamb**

# Jennifer Receives An Achievement Award

Jennifer McFarlane of Year 11 was nominated for a Newcastle Schools Achievement Award earlier this year. The nomination recognised her progress in archery at county and national levels. As was reported in the last newsletter, Jennifer has made superb progress over a very short period of time and has established an impressive record in numerous competitions.

I am delighted to report that the nomination was successful and that Jennifer was selected to receive an award during a celebration evening that was held at St James' Park. Also receiving awards at the same event were Eleanor Lincoln (Year 7), Jack Ward (Year 8) and Magali Nkunku (Year 13).

**Mr Gray**



Eleanor, Jack, Jennifer and Magali with their achievement award certificates

It has been another great year filled with lots of different events that have allowed the Year 8s to develop in many ways. I have been particularly impressed with the students' attendance record, which has consistently been above the target of 95%.

As has been reported in earlier newsletters, many Year 8s have been fully engaged in school-life throughout the year. However, I would specifically like to acknowledge the work done by the Year 8 monitors who help the office staff each day with many different tasks. I have often received positive comments from teaching and support staff on how helpful and efficient they have been.

Tutors and teachers have recently been busy nominating students for various awards. These were issued during a celebration afternoon that was held before the end of term. I trust that all the recipients will be satisfied with the recognition that they have received. Huge thanks must go to two students who performed during this event: Finola Clarke for her superb clarinet interlude and Jack Ward for his sublime Irish dancing.

Finally, because I am leaving St Mary's to start a new teaching job in September, I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for all the support that they have given me during my time at St Mary's. I wish all the students and their families the very best of wishes for the future.

**Mr Freeman-Myers**

# Preparing For Oxbridge

Preparing to apply for a place at Oxford or Cambridge takes some planning and our Year 12s have already started the application process. Several of them will be attending UNIQ, the competitive summer school at Oxford University, studying a mixture of disciplines including History, Engineering and Law. UNIQ will give students an excellent insight into the way of learning at Oxford which is based on a tutorial system.

Some students who are not taking part in UNIQ are also considering applying and several of them attended open days held at Oxford and Cambridge at the start of July. These allowed the students to get a sense of the atmosphere at the prestigious universities and to ask subject and admissions tutors any questions that they had to help them with their applications.

**Mr McKeating**



# St Mary's Catholic School

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