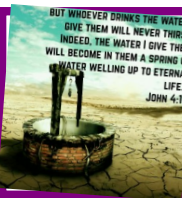




Statement to live by
 I know what humility means.



Ash Wednesday... We began our Lenten journey by celebrating Ash Wednesday together in school. During the afternoon, Fr. Marc visited each classroom to speak to the children about the meaning of Lent, the symbolism behind Ash Wednesday, and how this season encourages us to reflect, pray, and show kindness. He also distributed ashes to every child, offering a thoughtful moment for pupils to consider how they can grow and make positive choices during Lent. It was a calm and reflective start to this important season in our school community.



Third Sunday of Lent... As this is the third week of Lent, we are reminded that this season is a time to pause and grow. Lent invites us to reflect on our choices, show kindness, and make room for God in our daily lives. Even small acts of patience, forgiveness, and care can bring light to others. May this week lead us closer to Easter with renewed hope and a more open heart.

Living Water!



Reading Café... A big thank you to all our Year 1 families who joined us for the Reading Café! It was lovely to see so many of you in school, spending time with your children and enjoying stories together. The children were so excited to share their favourite books and show how much their reading is growing.

Your support at home makes a real difference and helps build their confidence every day. Please keep enjoying books together—reading opens up new ideas, new worlds, and lots of wonderful learning!



Year 4 Curriculum Celebration Assembly... We would like to thank our Year 4 families for joining us at the Curriculum Celebration Assembly which took place before half term. It was a fantastic chance to share the children's



hard work, progress, and achievements across all areas of learning so far this year. We are very proud of everything Year 4 has accomplished so far this academic year—well done, everyone!

Well done!

Attendance at school...

Class...	Attendance figure...	Class...	Attendance figure...
Reception	98%	Year 3	98%
Year 1	94%	Year 4	98%
Year 2	95%	Year 5	95%
	Year 6	98%	

Well done Reception, Years 3, 4 and 6!

Year 2 Missio Coffee Morning... A huge thank you to everyone who joined Year 2's coffee morning in support of their chosen charity, Missio. It was wonderful to see so many families, friends, and members of our school community coming together to enjoy a chat, share a treat, and support a fantastic cause. Thanks to your generosity, Year 2 raised an amazing £112! The children were incredibly proud of their efforts and loved being part of an event that helps others around the world. Your kindness truly makes a difference—well done, Year 2, and thank you to all who contributed!



Our faith in action!

Year 5 Class Mass... A big thank you to our wonderful Year 5 children for leading their class Mass today. They read beautifully, sang with confidence, and took great care during the offertory procession. We are very proud of the reverence and responsibility they showed throughout the celebration. We would also like to thank the Year 5 families and friends who were able to join us. Your presence and support help make these moments even more special for the children.



Celebrating faith!

Year 3 Curriculum Enrichment... Year 3 had a fantastic morning at opencast just before half term! The children began with a tour of the building before splitting into two groups. One group used coding to programme a robot, while the other used JavaScript to create work in Roblox. Their teamwork has been wonderful—and they are having so much fun!



Home-School Links

Address: Durham Rd, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8NF
Email: smi@smi.bwcet.com
Telephone: 0191 584 05 42
Website: <https://stmichaelsoughton.bwcet.com/>
Facebook: [stmichaelsoughton](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsoughton) **Instagram:** [st_michaelcatholicschool](https://www.instagram.com/st_michaelcatholicschool)



Safety Works... This week, Year 6 visited Safety Works in Newcastle, where they took part in a range of workshops about staying safe in the community. The children learned about road safety, explored different types of transport, and discussed the important roles of key community workers such as police officers, firefighters, and paramedics.

This learning experience is especially valuable as our pupils prepare for the transition to secondary school, where they will begin to use pupil transport more independently. It was an informative and engaging visit that will help equip them with confidence and practical safety skills. **Great work Year 6!**



SEND Café... A big thank you to all the families who were able to join us for our SEND Café this week. It was wonderful to see so many of you there and to watch the positive conversations taking place between parents, school staff, and the external agencies in attendance.

We are also extremely grateful to the external providers who supported the event. Their expertise, advice, and practical guidance were greatly valued by our families and helped make the afternoon both informative and reassuring.

We look forward to hosting more SEND Cafés in the near future and continuing to strengthen the support we offer our children and families.

Stronger together!



Year 6 transition...

Thank you to Anne Marie, the Chaplain from St. Robert of Newminster, for visiting school this week to work with our Year 6 pupils. She led a thoughtful and engaging session to help them prepare for their upcoming transition to secondary school. The children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to reflect, ask questions, and begin thinking about the exciting journey ahead. We are very grateful for her time, guidance, and support.

Getting ready!

World Book Day 2026! Last week, we enjoyed a fantastic celebration of World Book Day 2026—although it felt more like a full week of festivities with all the wonderful activities taking place! We were delighted to welcome a visiting author, and every class took part in the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust reading event, *Between the Pages*.

Children and staff also loved dressing up as their favourite book characters, and our competitions—including the Extreme Reading Challenge and The Masked Reader—brought lots of fun and creativity to the week.

It was a brilliant celebration of reading, filled with imagination, excitement, and plenty of learning!

Thank you for your support in making this such a memorable occasion!



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SNAP STREAK

97

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

With over 900 million active monthly users and billions of 'Snaps' sent each month, Snapchat is a popular messaging app among children and young people. It allows users to share fun, spontaneous pictures and videos with friends and family while using playful filters. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures, videos and messages are only viewable for a short period of time.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Snapchat's use of artificial intelligence (AI) includes features like the 'My AI' chatbot and AI-powered filters, offering interactive experiences that can be fun but also pose risks. These tools may share unfiltered or inaccurate responses, promote unrealistic beauty standards, and collect personal data. Advanced filters and deepfake-style lenses can distort reality, potentially leading to manipulation, impersonation, or inappropriate content.

SCREEN ADDICTION

Snapchat boosts user engagement and daily use with features like streaks (daily Snapchat exchanges between you and a friend). When a streak's been going for a few days, users will see a 🔥 emoji. The number alongside it shows the number of days, but if users miss a day and break the streak, the only way to restore it is to pay. This encourages daily use habits, and frequent notifications can keep users returning to the app even more often.

SEXTORTION

Because Snapchat's disappearing messages feature may foster a sense of safety, users may become targets of sextortion. For example, a predator may pressure someone into sending nude images, then somehow capture those images to threaten and intimidate the victim. This might involve claiming they will share the images with friends or family unless money is paid.

SNAPCHAT+

Snapchat+ is the platform's premium subscription service, offering early access to new and exclusive features. In June 2025, Snapchat introduced a new tier called Lens+, giving subscribers access to hundreds of lenses and AR experiences for playing, creating, and sharing Snaps. These paid features may encourage young users to spend money to access exclusive content, increasing the risk of overspending or feeling pressured to make in-app purchases.

ACCESSIBILITY

Snapchat is now accessible from a web browser, meaning children can use it on a laptop or tablet without downloading the app. This can make activity harder to monitor, reduce the effectiveness of parental controls, and increase the risk of unsupervised communication or exposure to inappropriate content.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat isn't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's disappearing messages feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ACCESS THE SNAPCHAT FAMILY SAFETY HUB

Created with guidance from Common Sense Media, Snapchat has developed a Family Safety Hub that explains how the app works and how to use its in-app protections for teens. It's recommended that you review this guidance before allowing a child to download Snapchat. Remember, the app is only intended for children aged 13 and over.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you nurture an open dialogue. Talk about scams and blackmail before letting children sign up. If they're lured into a scam, encourage them to tell you immediately. Talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting, emphasising its inherent risks. Furthermore, explain how popular 'challenges' on the platform can have harmful consequences.

BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger connects with a child on Snapchat and makes them feel uncomfortable by pressuring them to send or receive unwanted or inappropriate images, the child can tap the three dots on that person's profile to report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user, with a tailored reporting section under the 'Nudity and Sexual Content' category. In this category, there's the option to report somebody for threatening to leak sexually explicit images, or 'nudes'.

USE PRIVACY SETTINGS TOGETHER

Sit down with the children in your care and explore Snapchat's privacy settings as a shared activity. You can help them adjust who can contact them, view their stories, or see their location on Snap Map. It's a good opportunity to explain why some settings are safer than others, reinforcing their understanding of online boundaries. Encourage them to regularly review these settings, especially after app updates or changes in their friendship groups.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



Use of Social Media outside of school... A gentle reminder that most popular social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, Messenger etc.) are for pupils 13 years and over and therefore our children should not be using them. However, if your child does access Social Media, we ask for your utmost vigilance. Just like their interactions in person, online interactions require supervision and support. What is right will vary from family to family but some strategies that are known to be successful include...

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded
- Enacting parental controls on phones and consoles
- Reviewing the messages they send on platforms and apps – making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing.



Stay alert and vigilant!

Traditional Decorate an Easter Egg Competition...

Children are invited to decorate an egg (*hard boiled please*) and bring it to school on **Tuesday 31st March**. These will be displayed in our Library/Hall and judged by our School Councillors. There will be a prize for 1st, 2nd and 3rd from each class and eggs will be sent home on Thursday 2nd April.



Good luck!

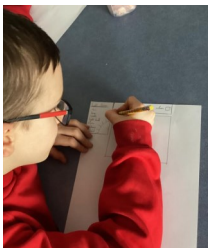
St Cuthbert's Care – Good Shepherd Appeal..

Reception Class will be raffling off the Easter eggs kindly donated by our Reception families on **Thursday 2nd April**. If your child would like to take part and support this wonderful cause, please refer to the information in the letter that has already been sent home.

Charitable works!



British Science Week 2026... This week, children across the school have been taking part in National British Science Week. Our fantastic staff have planned a wide range of exciting learning opportunities linked to the world of Science. One of our key aims has been to inspire children to think about future careers in Science and to challenge any stereotypes they may have about who can become a scientist. Take a look at some of the brilliant experiences the children have enjoyed..



***New* School Social Media Platforms..** On Monday 2nd February 2026, our school stopped using X as our official school social media platform and moved to Facebook and Instagram. As with X, families can sign up for free Facebook and Instagram accounts if you are not already using these platforms. Please follow us by searching..

Facebook: stmichaelsoughton

Instagram: st_michaelcatholicsschool



Please join us on this journey!

- Important Dates -

	Date	Class	Event
Spring 2	Monday 2 nd March 2026.	Whole School.	Back to School – 8:45am.
	Tuesday 3 rd March 2026.	Year 1.	Reading Café from 9am in the School Hall. All are welcome to join us.
	Thursday 5 th March 2026.	Whole School.	World Book Day. Children are invited to come to school dressed as their favourite book character.
	Friday 6 th March 2026.	Year 2.	Coffee Morning for Year 2's class charity, Missio.
	Friday 6 th March 2026.	Year 5.	Y5 Class Mass 10am in St Michael's Church. All are welcome to join us.
	Monday 9 th – Friday 13 th March 2026.	Whole School.	British Science Week.
	Tuesday 10 th March 2026.	Year 3.	Curriculum Celebration Assembly 9am in the School Hall. All are welcome to join us.
	Wednesday 11 th March 2026.	Year 6.	Educational Visit to Safety Works.
	Friday 13 th March 2026.	Year 1.	Educational visit to Tynemouth Aquarium linked to Science learning.
	Tuesday 17 th March 2026.	Year 3.	Educational Visit to Shipley Art Gallery.
	Thursday 19 th March 2026.	Year 4.	First Holy Communion Preparation.
	Thursday 19 th March 2026.	Whole School.	Comic Relief—Wear something red day (£1 donation via Arbor)
	Friday 20 th March 2026	St Cuthbert House (Red House).	Feast of Saint Cuthbert. Children in St Cuthbert House (Red House) are invited to come to school wearing something Red.
	Friday 20 th March 2026.	Year 1 & 2.	Y1 & Y2 Class Mass 10am in St Michael's Church. All are welcome to join us.
	Wednesday 25 th March 2026.	St Margaret Clitherow House (Yellow House).	Feast of Saint Margaret Clitherow. Children in St Margaret House (Yellow House) are invited to come to school wearing something Yellow.
	Friday 27 th March 2026.	Reception.	Educational visit to Hall Hill Farm. More information to follow.
	Tuesday 31 st March 2026.	Year 2.	Curriculum Celebration Assembly 9am in the School Hall. All are welcome to join us.
	Tuesday 31 st March 2026.	Whole School.	Decorate an Easter Egg Competition (see above)
	Thursday 2 nd April 2026.	Whole School.	Reception Class Easter Egg Tombola.
	Thursday 2 nd April 2026.	Whole School.	School breaks up for Easter Holidays at 3.15pm.
Friday 3 rd April 2026.	Whole School.	Good Friday. Bank Holiday, School closed to pupils on this day.	
Monday 20 th April 2026.	Whole School.	Back to School – 8:45am.	

Assemblies and Collective Worship – Parents Invited

Class	Curriculum Celebration Assemblies		Celebration of the Word	
Reception	Tues 23 rd June 26	9.00am	Thurs 4 th June 26	3.00pm
Year 1	Tues 16 th June 26	9.00am	Thurs 21 st May 26	3.00pm
Year 2	Tues 31 st March 26	9.00am	Thurs 22 nd Jan 26	3.00pm
Year 3	Tues 10 th March 26	9.00am	Thurs 13 th Nov 25	3.00pm
Year 4	Tues 17 th Feb 26	9.00am	Thurs 18 th June 26	3.00pm
Year 5	Tues 10 th Feb 26	9.00am	Thurs 27 th Nov 25	3.00pm
Year 6	Tues 27 th Jan 26	9.00am	Thurs 6 th Nov 25	3.00pm
Year 6 Leavers Assembly	Thursday 16 th July 2026		2.00pm	

Important Information: From time to time, due to unforeseen circumstances, the dates/events mentioned in the Fortnightly may have to be changed /cancelled. If a change/cancellation does occur, you will be notified as early as possible.

Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Proud to be apart of...



Bishop Wilkinson
Catholic Education Trust
Through Christ, in Partnership