

In the Loop

SAINTANNESPS.COM

JANUARY 2026



Catholic Schools Week 2026

Catholic Schools: Normal Lives, Called to Holiness

18–24 January 2026



MONDAY

Called to Holiness through Prayer

TUESDAY

Called to Holiness through Love and Friendship

WEDNESDAY

Called to Holiness in Family Life (Grandparents' Day)

THURSDAY

Called to Holiness through Courage and Service

FRIDAY

Called to Holiness through Joy and Mission

We are delighted to share that our school will be celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2026, joining pupils and families across Northern Ireland in recognising the important role Catholic education plays in shaping compassionate, faith-filled communities.

This year's theme, **"Normal Lives: Called to Holiness,"** reminds us that holiness isn't found only in big moments, but in the ordinary choices we make each day — how we speak to one another, how we help, how we show patience, and how we live out our values at home, in school, and in our wider community.

'Each of us is called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do.'

Gaudete et Exsultate, 14

Throughout the week, pupils will take part in simple, meaningful daily activities designed to help them explore this theme and recognise the goodness and potential for holiness in their own everyday lives.



' MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW '



Mid-term Break: Monday 9th
- Friday 13th February

School Meals Update

The EA recently set out several saving measures in response to a significant funding shortfall of approximately £300 million. As part of these measures, school meals will increase this month for the first time since 2017.

Nursery Dinners will now cost £3.00.

P1-P7 dinners will now cost £3.10

Pupils entitled to Free School Meals will not be affected by this rise.

Parent Teacher Association

The next PTA meeting will take place in the Birch Building on Tuesday 3rd February at 6.30pm.

Afterschool Clubs

Afterschool clubs recommence on Monday 12th January and will run until Friday 27th March.

Afterschool clubs are an essential support to our school community. We greatly appreciate the financial support raised from these.



ST. ANNE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT

Nursery Open Days

Tuesday 9th December 2025: 2.30pm - 3.30pm

Wednesday 7th January 2026: 2.30pm - 3.30pm

Primary 1 Open Days

Wednesday 10th December 2025: 1pm - 2pm

Thursday 8th January 2026: 1pm - 2pm

A proud tradition of serving children from our parish and beyond.



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SEAG Transfer Test Results

For those pupils who sat the SEAG transfer test in November 2025, results will be issued on Saturday 24th January 2026. Parents and carers will be able to access their child's outcome through the secure 'Statements of Outcomes' section on the SEAG website.

Transitioning to Post Primary

We are pleased to share that a number of post-primary schools have been invited to our Post-Primary Fair on Friday 9th January. This event will give our P7 pupils the chance to meet teachers and chat with some Year 8 pupils from these schools, helping them gain a clearer sense of what each school is like as they prepare for the next stage of their educational journey.

Exploring New Horizons

We would encourage you and your P7 child to visit a number of post-primary open events. These are valuable opportunities to experience their potential future 'big school' and to get a real sense of each school's culture, ethos, subjects and facilities.

We also recommend that Primary 6 pupils also attend open events where possible. Early visits can help them begin thinking about their preferences, provide motivation and useful information for the year ahead, and allow them to revisit their shortlisted schools again in Primary 7 with greater confidence and clarity.

Swimming Programme

Swimming lessons will begin on Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th January for all P7 pupils and two P6 classes. All sessions will take place in Olympia Leisure Centre.

Please note that there will be no swimming on Monday 16th or Tuesday 17th March.

If you or your child have any concerns regarding these arrangements, please contact your child's teacher, who will be happy to help.

Mass

Families of the following classes are welcome to attend 10am Mass on the following Wednesdays.

14th Jan – 7CW/ 6JP

21st Jan – 7CM/ 4CG

28th Jan – 7KD/ 4LH

New Year: New Achievements

To celebrate the children's great work and to encourage positive behaviour in St. Anne's, we present a range of monthly awards. This month's certificates will be awarded for:

- Moving around the school quietly and responsibly
- Being well organised and prepared for work
- Obeying classroom rules
- Fabulous Friendship Award

We wish all the children well in their efforts. It would be greatly appreciated if you could discuss these focus areas with your child and encourage them to do their best. Certificates will be presented at the special prize-giving assemblies, giving us the opportunity to come together as a school community and share in the achievements and efforts of others.

Road Safety Quiz

A collaborative team of four P7 Eco & School Councillors will participate in the Road Safety Quiz on 29th January in Belfast City Hall.





Sacramental Preparation

Enrolment services for the Sacramental Preparation Programme will take place on the following dates:

Confession: 15th January

11.00am: P3 Classes of Mrs Donnelly and Mrs Walsh

1.00pm: P3 Classes of Mrs Stott/Mr Harkin and Mrs McGuinness

Confirmation: 22nd January

11.00am: P7 Classes of Miss A O'Neill and Mr Donnelly

2.00pm: P7 Classes of Mrs Watson and Ms Mullan

Holy Communion: 29th January

11.00am: P4 Classes of Ms Fitzpatrick/Houten and Miss Gillespie

2.00pm: P4 Classes of Mrs Brown/Mr Harkin and Mr Higgins

Parents are warmly invited to attend these enrolment services as we continue to strengthen the important partnership between home, school, and parish.

Further details regarding these celebrations will be shared shortly.

Eco-Update

Hedgerow Heroes: Take Two!

Pupils from P5CE will soon be taking part in their Hedgerow Heroes Workshop 2, building on the fantastic learning from their first session. In Workshop 1, the children explored the importance of planting native hedgerows, discovering how these living boundaries create vital wildlife corridors that support birds, insects, and small mammals. They also surveyed our school grounds to identify the most suitable locations for new planting.

In this second workshop, pupils will put their learning into action as they plant hedgerow saplings on the school site. This hands-on experience will help them understand how small environmental actions can make a big difference to local biodiversity.

This project is proudly supported by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, and we are delighted that our pupils can play an active role in caring for and improving their environment.

School Council

We are delighted to announce that the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tracy Kelly, will visit St. Anne's on 20th January at 10am to present our newly elected School Councillors with their official badges.

During the visit, the Lord Mayor will speak to the children about leadership, responsibility, and the importance of contributing positively to their school and wider community. Our councillors will then receive their badges in a short ceremony attended by pupils and their parents/carers.

We look forward to welcoming Councillor Kelly and celebrating this proud moment with our young leaders.

Dream Space

Our Dream Space Ambassadors will continue their training on 27th January as part of our preparations for Safer Internet Day. This session will focus specifically on developing their understanding of how to use technology safely, responsibly, and confidently.





Nursery News

Join the Big Garden Birdwatch

Our nursery will take part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch from 23–25 January 2026!

You too can join in—spend one hour at home counting garden birds and help protect wildlife. Submit your results online and be part of the fun. Learn more at rspb.org.uk/big-garden-birdwatch.

Storytime

On Tuesday 6th January, Miss Barbara will return for her monthly story sessions with the nursery boys and girls. Her story sack will be packed with exciting stories and rhymes for the pupils to enjoy.

Make a Sound

Each Wednesday in January our nursery will be filled with music, laughter and lots of movement!

Children will take part in interactive music and movement sessions that are designed to be fun, energetic and full of creativity.

They will use colourful props like scarves, ribbons and instruments to make the experience even more exciting. It's all about exploring sounds and rhythm, dance and enjoying the music!

Shared Education Programme Update

We are delighted to let you know that our Aspire Shared Education Programme is continuing with our partner school Barbour Nursery School, Lisburn, and we have some exciting activities planned:

Wednesday 14th January *Mrs Hamill's class* will visit Barbour Nursery School and enjoy a joint session with Kids Coach Jason, focusing on movement, physical activity, and fun games. *Mrs Schmidt's class* will host Barbour at St Anne's for a joint movement and dance class with Make a Sound.

Friday 23rd January both classes will travel together to W5 for an amazing day exploring the *Storybook World* called "Over the Hills and Far Away" and the Lost Planet multisensory activity zone.

We would love some volunteers to join us – parents and extended family members (such as grandparents) are very welcome! Your help will allow these trips to take place and make these experiences even more special for the children. If you're available, please let us know. Thank you for your continued support.

Boys' Gaelic Indoor Tournament

Our boys' Gaelic team will take part in their group games for the indoor tournament on Wednesday 21st January in the Colin Dome. Final details regarding the fixtures and match times will be shared as soon as they are confirmed.

Basketball

Our P7 classes are in for an exciting opportunity! Each week, pupils will take part in a dedicated basketball session led by Coach Carla. These sessions are designed to help students develop their skills, build confidence, and enjoy the fun of team play. We're looking forward to seeing their progress on the court!



Library Visits for P4 and P6

Our P4 and P6 classes will be visiting Finaghy Library for the first in a series of planned visits. During each session, pupils will enjoy stories and activities facilitated by Miss Barbara, the librarian. Classes will walk to and from the library, and we would greatly appreciate parental volunteers to accompany the groups. Further details will be shared.

Freckle Update: December

Our pupils have been working incredibly hard on Freckle, with a remarkable 32,500 minutes spent practising across all mathematical areas!

Primary 4 stood out as the year group with the highest usage, showing fantastic commitment to learning. We are proud of the growth, accuracy, and effort demonstrated by all children, and these achievements will continue to be celebrated both in classrooms and during assemblies. Thank you for supporting your child's learning journey!

My Child's First Device

5 Steps to Make Phones, Tablets, and Laptops Safer

You might be deciding to give your child their first phone, tablet, or laptop (or third, fourth, fifth – even a new update). This is a big decision! The responsibility and freedom that comes with owning a device is a big step for children – and you! It might even be their first “grown up” responsibility.

As a parent or carer, it's important to remember that even if a child is tech-savvy, they need to be taught how to be tech-safe. We know this can be daunting with various device brands, apps, and settings to choose from. Our online safety experts have created 5 steps to help you make that first device (or brand-new model) safer for the child or young person in your care.

Remember!

This is an exciting time in your child's life! You want to be a part of that in a positive way that encourages them to share with you and trust you. If you take the time to teach them, they will be empowered in their online actions and behaviours for the better.

1 Do your homework

Make sure your home environment is secure and ready for your child to be online. Many major broadband providers offer age restriction settings so check with your provider to ensure these restrictions are put in place.

Many retailers offer free Parental Controls to their customers. You can find Parental Control walkthroughs on most popular provider websites.

Check the device's brand website for simple walkthroughs of where to find privacy settings on your child's specific device.

2 Set up the device with your child

Taking the time to sit down with your child and set up the device together will help you both get to know how the device works, allow you to implement SafeSearch filters on search engines, and set up in-app purchase restrictions. You can use the device settings to set up agreed upon restrictions, like Screen Time and App Limits.

Explain why these settings are important to protect children and young people from online risks and that these restrictions will be lifted when they are old enough. Ensure your personal account is set as the Parent account and make sure your parental control PIN number is secure and random.

3 Discuss and agree on healthy phone and device habits

Once the device has been set up, take the time to agree on some healthy rules and boundaries for how they will use the device. This can include rules like when and where they can use their device, screen time allowance and which apps are allowed to be used.

Be realistic on what will work in your household. If your child has friends with different rules, remind them that what works for one family might not work for another! As the parent or carer, you are responsible for the way your child uses their device and they will need guidance, especially if this is your child's first independent responsibility.

4 Check-in with your child

Check-in with your child about their device use. It doesn't have to be a big sit-down conversation! Informal chats over the dinner table, in the car or while watching television as a family can have the biggest impact. Ask questions like, “Tell me about your favourite app! Why do you like to use it?” or, “How has your device helped you today?”

Online safety is never a one-off conversation – it's a continuing dialogue. Show your child that you're interested in their responses and thoughts to foster an environment of openness and trust between you and the child in your care.

5 Keep Yourself Informed

We live in a digital world that changes daily. The most responsible thing you can do in keeping your child's device safe is to keep yourself informed.

Stay alert to trends and threats that they may be exposed to. With many companies beginning to offer “kid” versions of their platforms, knowing what is safe and what is suspect will help you make the best decision for your child. Luckily, we have some excellent resources to assist you that are reliable and relevant. Visit our website and social media pages.

Online Safety Centre
oursafetycentre.co.uk
How to stay safer on popular platforms

SAFER SCHOOLS NI
saferschoolsni.co.uk

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Dear Parent/Carer,
Perhaps a new digital device was a gift for Christmas? If so, it may be timely to revisit a few of the key messages around the use of the digital technology, using the poster above. For further

Information and advice visit:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

