



St. Columba's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Miss. R. Quinn



Iona Star – 7th March 2025

St Columba's Families,

Welcome back after half term; we hope that you had a good week. We've been straight back into a busy week at St Columba's!

We've been thinking about our future careers for National Careers Week and this has been a big talking point around school!



On Wednesday, three school representatives attended Mass at St Aidan's with Fr David and then helped to distribute ashes to the rest of the school community as part of our liturgy.

On Thursday, we celebrated 'World Book Day' – thank you for helping us celebrate in your outfits, pyjamas and own clothes! In school, we completed lots of lovely activities to support reading in classrooms. We also had 'Run and Read' where, everytime the bell rang, the adults of our school ran to different classrooms to share books with the children – it was great fun!



This week, our new 'Book Club' started for avid readers in Y5 and Y6 – they all received a special welcome pack with a copy of the book and a special hot chocolate to cosy up with as they read their first few chapters.

A huge 'well done' to our kitchen staff who received a five star hygiene rating in their inspection this week – it's great to hear about the high quality dinners that our children receive!

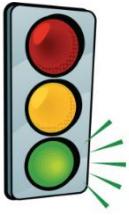


Below, you will find key information and dates for the coming term. Also attached to the Iona Star is a guide for staff and parents, this week the focus is on 'Using Technology to Boost Reading Skills'.

If you have any questions about anything in the newsletter, or if there is anything that we can help with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Take care and have a lovely weekend, Miss Quinn

Attendance and Punctuality

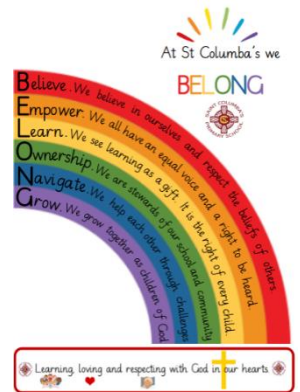


Our whole school attendance from Reception to Year 6 for this week has been **93.3 %**. We are in the **amber zone** and we are not quite meeting our targets set by the Department for Education (96%).

We are, however, delighted to announce that Year 3 are the winners of our attendance trophy with an attendance of 99.3% this week. Congratulations!

BELONG Champions

This week, we have introduced rainbow lanyards into each class. Each day, one pupil is chosen to be the BELONG champion, they wear the lanyard with the values on and are spotting up to 3 children in their class who deserve house points for living out our values!



Breakfast Club Drop Off



An email was sent to parents through the week, asking that children are walked to Breakfast Club during morning drop off. We do ask, please, that **all** parents do not allow children to walk independently from the car park. This is for safety, as school is being opened up, the perimeter being checked and made safe for the school day. At these times, there are limited staff on site and we need to ensure the safeguarding of children and safe transfer from parents' care to ours.

Please note that this does include Year 5 and Year 6 children, even if they have permission to leave school premises independently. Thank you for your support.

School Car Park



A reminder to take care when accessing our staff car park for breakfast and afterschool club. There have been a few near misses with staff cars recently, and, at times, parents have blocked several spaces which has prevented staff from being able to park their own cars. Many thanks.

Ten Ten Parent Newsletter



You can access the latest parental newsletter from Ten Ten which shares the key messages, prayers and opportunities for worship at home by clicking this link <https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/prayers-for-home/parent-newsletter/>

Wellbeing Hub



Through our partnerships with Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, we are pleased to be able to offer all parents, staff and children aged 10+ access to a wealth of information through The Wellbeing Hub.

Positive mental health is fundamental to young people's ability to thrive and make the most of the opportunities available to them while at school. By collaborating with The Wellbeing Hub, we aim to equip all our staff and parents with the knowledge, understanding, and strategies to support our pupils effectively.

To register, please use this link or QR code.

<https://club.teentips.co.uk/register/parents/?ca=1b5372e0e7384-337b68bf150a0f7c597>

PODCAST

The Wellbeing Hub
— from Teen Tips —

This week's content
Week commencing 10th March
PODCAST: Strategies for tackling tricky issues: compulsive gaming, obsessive phone use and anxiety with Anita Cleare, Director of Positive Parenting Project and Alicia Drummond, Therapist and Founder of The Wellbeing Hub

Listen now: club.teentips.co.uk

Diary Dates for Parents – Spring 2024

(new dates added in yellow)

Thursday 13th March – Year 5 and Year 6 will be attending Whitley Bay Playhouse to see St Thomas More's production of 'High School Musical'

Thursday 13th March – Our team will be competing in the local 'Lego League' competition for the chance to reach the national rounds

Thursday 13th March – Reception class are being visited by dental students to complete a 'Brush Up!' session about oral hygiene.

new **Thursday 13th March** – Year 2 class trip to The Rising Sun country park.

WB Monday 17th March – Assessment week. Year 2 – Year 6 will take part in internal assessments during this week within their classrooms.

Thursday 20th March – National Child Height and Weight Measurement Programme for Reception and Year 6

Friday 21st March – Year 3 are visiting the Laing Art gallery

new **Friday 21st March** – Year 4 are visiting Bede's World

new **Friday 21st March** – Red Nose Day. Noses will be available to purchase for £2.00. Children can wear something red on the day. We will be holding a cake sale during the day with all proceeds going to Red Nose Day. We are asking for donations of cakes for the children to sell – these can be homemade or shop bought. Any children with allergies will be supported.

Wednesday 26th March – SEND parent review meetings with Mrs Harman. These appointments will be available to book via SchoolCloud two weeks before the date.

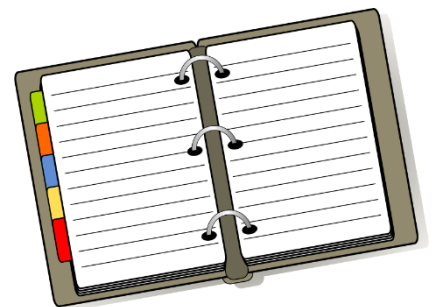
Monday 31st March and Wednesday 2nd April – Parents evening appointments will be available from 3.30pm – 6.00pm. These appointments will be available to book via SchoolCloud two weeks before the date.

Thursday 3rd April – Children in Year 4 will attend Mass at St Columba's and then make their Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday 9th April – Whole school Mass at 2.15pm in the hall. Family members are welcome, please book a space with the school office

Thursday 10th April – school closes to pupils for the Easter holidays

Friday 11th April – Staff training day





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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators USING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST READING SKILLS

The way we engage with text has changed dramatically over the years. Whether reading captions on social media, instructions in a video game or an e-book on a digital device, technology plays a major role in modern literacy. While traditional books remain invaluable, digital tools can enhance reading skills by making text more accessible, interactive and engaging.

1 CHOOSING THE RIGHT TYPE OF TEXT

Before integrating technology, consider the types of text that a child engages with. If they need help on occasion, digital reading pens can assist by scanning and reciting words or sentences. These tools are especially useful for students with reading difficulties, and can even be used in exams if they're part of their routine learning process. Proper training and practice are required, but they can be a great help when tackling printed text.

2 READING ON SCREEN

Many devices now allow users to customise text for better readability. Adjusting font type, size and background colour can significantly enhance comprehension. For many readers, white text on a black background is the easiest to see, whereas other styles – such as dyslexia-friendly fonts – are designed to help those who are struggling. Teaching children how to personalise text settings on their devices empowers them to read more comfortably and with greater confidence.

3 ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

Most modern devices include built-in tools designed to support readers. These features can be found in Settings under Accessibility and may include text-to-speech, speech-to-text and screen magnification functions. Enabling these tools can make digital reading more user friendly, especially for children with learning difficulties or visual impairments, who might have an easier time with spoken language than the written word, or who might simply require a closer look at the text.

4 INTERACTIVE READING PROGRAMMES

Many digital reading devices, such as Kindle and other e-readers, offer features like word highlighting, adjustable text speed and built-in dictionaries. These tools help learners to break down complex words and phrases while maintaining an appropriate reading pace. Some programmes even allow users to track their progress, making reading a more structured and motivating experience.

5 VIDEO GAMES AND READING SKILLS

Many video games require players to read instructions, character dialogues and mission objectives, making them an unexpected but effective literacy tool. Games that involve storytelling, puzzles or problem-solving often include large amounts of text – encouraging children to read these texts aloud or discuss them can improve their comprehension and vocabulary in a fun, engaging way.

6 SUBTITLES AND CLOSED CAPTIONS

Watching videos with subtitles or closed captions is an effective way to enhance reading skills. As children watch their favourite shows or online videos, they can follow along with the text, gaining a better understanding of how written words sound when spoken aloud. This is particularly beneficial for reluctant readers, as it exposes them to words in a familiar, engaging context. Repeatedly watching content with subtitles reinforces word recognition and comprehension.

7 USING AUDIOBOOKS

Audiobooks are an excellent way to develop listening and reading skills simultaneously. Children can follow along with the text while listening to a narrator, reinforcing word recognition and fluency. For struggling readers, listening to an audiobook before attempting to read the text independently can boost their confidence and comprehension.

9 TEXT-TO-VOICE TECHNOLOGY

Text-to-voice software reads digital text aloud, making it easier for learners to follow along. Most smartphones, tablets and computers come with this function built in. When enabled, users can highlight a passage or sentence and press Play to hear it read aloud. This tool is particularly helpful for auditory learners and those who struggle with decoding written words.

8 VOICE-TO-TEXT FOR WRITING AND READING

Voice-to-text tools allow users to dictate words, which are then transcribed into text. This feature helps children see the connection between spoken and written language. By using text-to-voice to have their dictated words read back to them, learners can identify mistakes and improve their reading and writing skills simultaneously.

10 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENTAL CONTROLS

While social media provides opportunities for reading, most platforms have age restrictions of 13–16 years old, making parental guidance essential. Many social media videos include captions and comments that can encourage reading. However, it's important to use the platform's parental controls (such as time limits and content filters) to create a safe and educational online environment for children. Encouraging responsible social media use can ensure a balanced and productive approach to digital literacy.

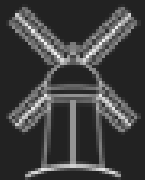
Meet Our Expert

Catrina Lowri is a qualified special needs teacher and experienced SENCO. She recently launched her own site, Neuroteachers, which offers a library of short, 'how-to' and explanation videos for educators. Catrina also writes and delivers online training and events for multi-academy trusts, businesses, schools and training organisations.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College



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Community Golf Instructor
doffylee@gmail.com

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Further instructions and how to pay on booking

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