St. Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form College

'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world ablaze'

Newsletter: 9 January 2026

Faith

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 3:13-17) Jesus chooses to be baptised by John, even though He is without sin. This simple act shows His humility and His willingness to stand alongside the people He came to serve. It reminds us that true leadership begins with example, not status.

When the Spirit descends like a dove and God declares Jesus as His beloved Son, we see that identity and worth come before any achievements. Jesus is affirmed simply for who He is.

For our school community, this passage encourages us to value each person, to lead with humility, and to create an environment where every child feels supported, respected, and known.

Excellence

Headteacher's Message

Happy New Year! I hope you and your families enjoyed a restful and joyful Christmas break. As we begin this new term at St. Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form, we look forward to working together to ensure every child flourishes academically, spiritually, and personally.

Attendance Matters
Excellent attendance is absolutely vital for success. Every day in school counts—when pupils miss lessons, they miss essential learning that cannot always be fully recovered. Strong attendance builds good habits, supports progress, and helps pupils feel connected to their peers and our school community. Please continue to support us by ensuring your child attends every day, on time.

Upcoming Mock Examinations
For Year 11 and Year 13, mock exams will take place during the fortnight beginning Monday 9 February. These assessments are an important opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their knowledge, identify areas for improvement, and prepare for the summer exams with confidence.

Our Core Values
At St. Bede's, we are guided by our values of faith, excellence, determination, citizenship, responsibility, and respect. These principles underpin everything we do and help our pupils grow into compassionate, resilient, and ambitious young people.

As St. Catherine of Siena reminds us, we encourage every pupil to use their God-given gifts and talents to set the world ablaze. This term, let us work together to nurture those gifts so that each child can shine brightly in all they do.

Thank you for your continued support. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

With every blessing, Mrs Cessford

Feast of the Epiphany

This week, our students led a thoughtful Celebration of the Word focused on the Epiphany. Through readings and prayers, they guided our community in remembering the journey of the Wise Men and the call to recognise Christ's light in our own lives.

A particularly meaningful moment came when the students reflected on what their own journeys might be, how they hope to grow, what gifts they can offer, and how they can follow God's guidance in the year ahead. Their insights were sincere and inspiring, reminding us that each young person is on a unique path shaped by faith, curiosity, and hope.

We are grateful for their leadership and the sense of reverence they brought to the celebration, helping our whole school community begin the term with purpose and reflection.

Stay Connected with the Arbor App!

We're delighted that 94% of our parents are already using the Arbor App to stay informed and engaged with school life. Thank you for helping us make communication smoother and more efficient!

If you haven't downloaded the app yet, we strongly encourage you to do so. The Arbor App allows you to:

- Receive important updates instantly
- View your child's attendance, reports, and timetable

Download the Arbor App today and join the majority of parents who are already benefiting from quick, convenient communication.

For help getting started, visit https://support.arbor-education.com or contact the school office.



Maths Department marks World Braille Day

Every year, 4th January provides the opportunity to recognise, learn about and celebrate the contribution of Louis Braille, who created a system to allow blind and visually impaired people to read and write. Building on this, Abraham Nemeth created the Nemeth code which used a similar system to create numbers and symbols so that blind and visually impaired mathematicians could count and calculate.

In lessons, Year 7 pupils have decoded Braille and Nemeth Codes as well as translated from English into Nemeth Code. Pupils were exceptional; they engaged in mature and sensitive conversation regarding protected characteristics and British Values, displaying our core value of respect throughout. The translation was challenging but allowed pupils to empathise with the challenges that blind and visually impaired pupils face on a daily basis.

Maths Wall of Legends

We are delighted to unveil the first Maths Legends of 2026! They have displayed our core values and demonstrated pride in their work - we hope their families are as proud of them as we are.

- Miss Houghton: **Sarah Elliott 8C2**
- Mr Taylor: **Ellie O'Connor 11H1**

PE News

Lucy Pennick 9C1 won rising star at Castle Eden Cricket Club Presentation Evening. Well Done Lucy, Keep up the good work!

Congratulations also to **Reuben Barkwick 9O3** who has been invited to attend an extended trial with Sunderland Association Football Club. This is a fantastic opportunity for Reuben - we are incredibly proud and wish you the best of luck.





Netball Club

Year 7 & Year 8 Netball Club is starting this Wednesday after school, 3.15-4.15pm.

Building a Love of Reading Through Our Reading Canon

At St. Bede's, we believe that reading is the foundation for success and personal growth. That's why, as part of our Reading Canon, students in Years 7–10 read a carefully selected novel during each 13-week cycle. For 30 minutes, four days a week, your child will immerse themselves in stories that inspire, challenge, and broaden their horizons.
Why do we do this?

- To build confidence and fluency in reading
- To develop a lifelong love of books
- To encourage meaningful discussion about important themes, including key issues such as the protected characteristics

These novels have been chosen not only for their literary quality but also for their ability to spark conversations about diversity, equality, and the world around us. We encourage you to ask your child about what they're reading and share in their journey - reading together at home can make a big difference!



Year 7: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

When four siblings stumble into Narnia through a wardrobe, they uncover a world gripped by the White Witch's icy rule. Guided by Aslan, they learn courage, loyalty, and sacrifice. This classic story reminds us of the power of hope and family in overcoming darkness.



Year 8: I Have No Secrets

Jemma, a 14-year-old with severe cerebral palsy, cannot speak or move - but she knows everyone's secrets. When a shocking confession puts her in danger, her silent world becomes a race against time. A gripping thriller that explores trust, vulnerability, and the strength of an unspoken voice.



Year 9: The Hunger Games

In a dystopian world, Katniss Everdeen volunteers to take her sister's place in a brutal televised fight to the death. Facing impossible odds, she becomes a symbol of defiance against tyranny. A gripping story of survival, sacrifice, and the courage to challenge injustice.



Year 10: Up

Ben Fogle shares his inspiring journey of resilience and adventure, from conquering extreme challenges to finding purpose in the wild. This uplifting memoir explores courage, perseverance, and the importance of stepping beyond comfort zones - a reminder that life's greatest rewards often come from daring to rise above fear.

St. Bedes's Accelerated Reader

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a fantastic way to spark your child's love of reading! It allows pupils to choose books that match their reading level and interests, then take fun quizzes to show what they've understood. This helps teachers celebrate progress and set exciting goals, while giving parents a clear picture of how their child is growing as a reader. The best part? You can support at home by encouraging regular reading and chatting about the stories they enjoy—every book brings them closer to becoming confident, lifelong readers!

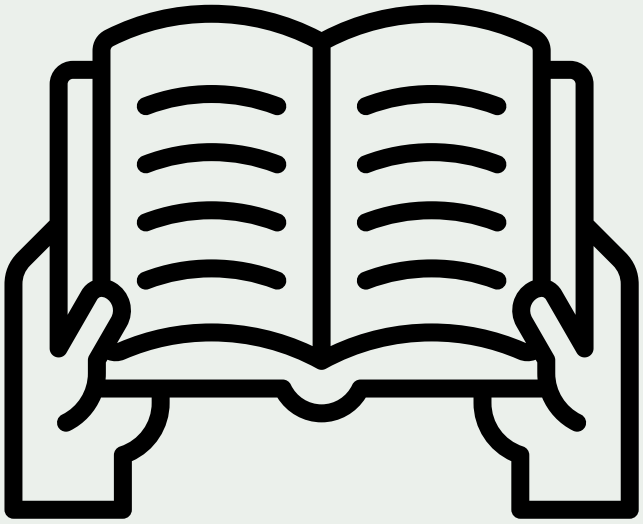
Each book in the Accelerated Reader system has an associated word count which is only achieved if students pass quizzes. Over Cycle One, the following classes came out as the top readers:

- Year 7: 7S - 296,828 words read
- Year 8: 8X1 - 764,488 words read
- Year 9: 9Y1 - 1,028,775 words read

Students are individually able to aim to become word millionaires. The below students have already started to hit some impress milestones!

50,000:

- **Macie Dixon 7S**
- **Elise Doran 7S**
- **Zack Young 7S**
- **Ruby Robinson 8X1**
- **Olivia Scott Myers 8X1**
- **Michael Amusat 8Y1**
- **Darrell Harris 8Y1**
- **Marcus Short 8Y1**
- **Abraham Laogun 8Y3**
- **Archie Wylde 9Y2**



100,000

- **Above Okojie 7T**
- **Tommy Warland 8X1**
- **Charlie Savage 9Y1**

150,000

- **Ruth Chuks 9Y2**

250,00

- **Oliver Crawford 8X1**

To find out more about our literacy strategies, please click here.

Key Dates

- **Monday 12 January:** Week A Timetable
- **Wednesday 14 January:** UCAS Deadline
- **Thursday 22 January:** Y10 Parent's Evening
- **Monday 9 February:** Y11 & Y13 Mock Exams Week 1
- **Monday 16 February:** Y11 & Y13 Mock Exams Week 2
- **Friday 20 February:** Break up for half term at 3.15pm

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Designated safeguarding leads:



Mr Logan
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Cessford
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Robinson
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Ord
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Home and School Links

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Our Parish: Our Lady of the Rosary in Peterlee and Horden
Our Diocese: Hexham & Newcastle

