



St. Mary's High School

Newry

Year 8

Transition Guide



Contents



2	Principal's Welcome
3	Year Tutor's Welcome
4	Vice Principal's & Head Girls' Welcome
5	The School Day
6	Year 8 Stories
7	Guide to The Year 8 Curriculum
8	Where You Learn
9	School Uniform
10	Travelling to School & Contacting St. Mary's
11	Connecting From Home
12	Year 8 Calendar
13	Guide to Homework
14	Assessments
15	Extra-Curricular Activities

Principal's Welcome



Dear Year 8 Students

I am delighted to warmly welcome all our new Year 8 students to St. Mary's High School and trust that this Year 8 Transition Guide will give you important information about your new school.

As a new Year 8 student, you will have many opportunities to meet new friends and enjoy your learning in a range of subjects. Our students are encouraged and challenged to explore their talents and abilities and you will enjoy a range of academic and pastoral successes as you work to achieve your full potential. We are very proud of our school and you will receive all the support and help you need to ensure that your move from primary school to St. Mary's is straight forward.

I feel privileged to be Principal of such a vibrant school, one where students live up to our school motto, Optimum Semper Facere – 'Always To Do One's Best' as they learn in a happy and positive environment.

Our dedicated and caring staff will support and encourage you to realise your potential and ambitions. As you journey through your years in St. Mary's you will grow into a confident young person, who is equipped with the necessary skills and qualities.

I look forward to welcoming all of you to St. Mary's at the end of August.

Best wishes

Miss D. Crawley

Principal

Year Tutor's Welcome



Dear Year 8 Students

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to St. Mary's High School.

This is a time of great change for you. You have arrived at a very exciting time in your life, as you begin the move from primary school to post-primary school.

As your Year Tutor, I appreciate that this may be a daunting time trying to find your way in a new school, but don't worry, after a few days it will feel as if you were here for years!

When you arrive at our school in late August, you will be placed into your new form class and will meet your Form Teacher, who will be there to help and guide you during your time here in St. Mary's. If you have any worries or problems, your Form Teacher is the person to turn to for assistance.

In Year 8, you will meet your Form Teacher every day at Registration, and I will speak to you at our weekly Assembly, every Monday morning.

Like any school, St. Mary's has a set of rules and guidelines which are there to help us all and I know you will pay close attention to them. Both your Form Teacher and Subject Teachers will help you become familiar with the running of the school.

Finally, I hope you enjoy your time in St. Mary's. You will meet some old friends, make many new ones and have many opportunities to develop all your talents and skills! The very best of luck for your induction and indeed for the year ahead.

Best Wishes

Mrs A. Hughes
Year Tutor

Vice Principal



Dear Year 8 Students

May I take this opportunity to welcome you all to St. Mary's. Moving to secondary school is an exciting time, however it is understandable that some students may feel anxious about moving to 'big school'. Any worries that you may have, will quickly disappear when you become familiar with your new school, our staff and other students in your form class.

In St. Mary's, you will be supported by all our staff. Your Year Tutor, Mrs A. Hughes and your Form Teacher, will help you settle in and achieve your very best. You will have many exciting opportunities in St. Mary's, studying new subjects, making new friends, having new teachers, becoming a member of our different Student Voice Groups and taking part in the many extra-curricular and sporting activities offered. I am very confident that you will enjoy each day at school and will be proud to be a St. Mary's student.

Best Wishes

Mr M. Fitzpatrick

Vice Principal

Hannah Duffy - Head Girl



My name is Hannah and I am St Mary's Head Girl for 2026/27. On behalf of all the students and staff, I would like to give a very warm welcome to all our new Year 8 students joining St. Mary's this September.

Starting secondary school was a huge milestone for me, I felt a mixture of excitement and nerves but I quickly grew to love St Mary's due to the welcome I received and support I

We all remember our first day, wondering where our classrooms were, what our teachers would be like, and whether we would make new friends. Those feelings don't last long. Before you know it, you'll be finding your way around the school confidently and feeling like a St. Mary's girl in no time!

One of the best things about St. Mary's is the sense of community. Whether you are arriving with friends from primary school or joining on your own, you will soon meet people who will become lifelong friends. I personally moved from my primary school on my own, and I think it was the best thing I could've done for myself, and I wouldn't change it! Your teachers, form teachers, and Year Tutor (Mrs A Hughes) will provide you with support, guidance, and encouragement throughout your time here in St. Mary's. As well as staff, older students are always willing to help and support you whenever you need it, as they know what it feels like to be a new student in such a big school!

Over the next few years, you will have countless opportunities to learn new skills, discover new interests, and create memories that will stay with you after you leave school. Most importantly, enjoy every moment. Work hard, be kind to one another, and don't be afraid to ask for help along the way.' We are so excited to see all that you will achieve and cannot wait to welcome you in September. We wish you every success and happiness during your time at St. Mary's.



There are **9 periods** in a school day.
 School starts at 8.55 a.m. and finishes at 3.00 p.m.

School begins at **8.55 a.m.** every morning and all students are expected to be in school by this time. The day continues as follows:

8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.	Assembly/Registration - Period 1
9:15 a.m.-10:00 a.m.	Period 2
10:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.	Period 3
10:45 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Period 4
11:30 a.m.-12:05 p.m.	Period 5
12:05 p.m.-12:45 p.m.	Lunch - Period 6
12:45 p.m.-1:30 p.m.	Period 7
1:30 p.m.-2:15 p.m.	Period 8
2:15 p.m.-3:00 p.m.	Period 9

St. Mary's operates a Biometric System for the school canteen. Students will be given information in August on how to use the system.

As part of our Year 8 induction, Year 11 Guides will escort you and the rest of your form class to and from each lesson. These Year 11 Guides will assist you for the first week, until you settle in and learn your way around your new school.

During the first two weeks, Year 8 students will be allowed to go five minutes early for lunch. This will give you a chance to become familiar with the canteen / lunch hall and our Biometric System.

What To Do If You Are Absent From School

When you return to school, you must bring a note from home explaining why you were absent. You will give this note to your Form Teacher. For convenience, blank absence notes are available at the back of your Homework Diary – Explanations for Absences.

Contact Details

It is essential that we have an up-to-date **mobile number/home telephone number** for every student. This is necessary so that parents/carers can be contacted during the day or in the case of an emergency.



This is Nelly
She went to
St. Malachy's Primary School
in Newry.

Hello, my name is Nelly and I know what it is like to start a new school, but I also know it will all be fine, the teachers and staff make sure of that. My favourite activity in St. Mary's is the Traditional Group, I also really enjoy Home Economics because I love to cook; brownies are my speciality. I have made lots of new friends in school and plan to make many more. See you in September and good luck.



This is Vanesa
She went to St. Ronan's
Primary School, Newry.

Right before my first day in St. Mary's I was nervous but I also felt very excited for a new place, a new challenge. I have been so happy with my choice of school; the teachers are really helpful and kind. I wouldn't change a thing about coming to my school, I have made some great new friends and have enjoyed learning new subjects and I know you will feel just like this too.



This is Annie
She went to St. Clare's
Primary School, Newry.

Hello, my name is Annie. When I first joined St. Mary's I was scared and very nervous, but once I was in a couple of days, I felt like I'd always belonged. My favourite subjects are PE and Music. All the teachers in St. Mary's are so nice and if you want to talk to someone, they will listen. St. Mary's has loads of activities and clubs for you to get involved in. You should always give some a go, it's worth it to help you make friends and feel part of the school. You will love St. Mary's and will make so many new friends and precious memories.



Guide to Year 8 Curriculum

In St. Mary's all students follow the N. Ireland Curriculum.

There are three aspects to the curriculum:

1. Areas of Learning (Subjects)
2. Cross-Curricular Skills
3. Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Areas of Learning

All students study a range of subjects. Some are a continuation from the primary school curriculum, while others are new:

- Art & Design
- Citizenship
- Drama
- Employability
- English
- French
- Geography
- History
- Home Economics
- ICT
- Irish
- Mathematics
- Music
- Personal Development
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science
- Technology and Design

Cross - Curricular Skills

Each subject develops important cross-curricular skills. These skills help students to become an independent, lifelong learner. They include:

- Communication - Development of language skills in all areas of the curriculum and in everyday situations.
- Using Mathematics - Ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of Mathematics throughout the curriculum and in everyday life.
- Using IT- Ability to handle and communicate information, solve problems and ask questions through the effective use of IT in different contexts.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

These skills are developed across all subject areas and are essential for everyday life, education and work. They include:

- Managing Information - Examples include recording and presenting information.
- Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making - Examples include making connections, generating possible solutions.
- Being Creative - Examples include experimenting with ideas.
- Self-Management - Examples include being aware of personal strengths and interests.
- Working with Others - Examples include group and peer work.



Where You Learn

In Year 8 you will learn in a different classroom for each subject. These are some of the classrooms Year 8 students use.



This is the Fitness Suite



This is one of the Science Labs



This is the Art Room



This is one of the Home Economics Rooms



This is the Technology Room



This is the Music Room



This is one of the IT Suites

St. Mary's School Uniform

School Uniform Years 8 to 10



- Pink and white check blouse
- Maroon box pleated skirt
- Maroon clip on tie
- Maroon jumper with school crest
- Maroon tights
- Flat black soft-soled shoes
- Maroon blazer with school crest
- Summer blouse and socks (May, June, Sept. – optional)
- Black coat with school crest only (optional) - available to purchase for £35 from the link - <https://link.mfc-sports.com/RP6235>

St. Mary's PE Uniform

PE Uniform can be bought from O'Neills in Newry

- Laced Trainers and Socks – supportive trainers with grip soles
- Black leggings with school crest or plain black leggings
- Half Zip or School Sweatshirt with school crest
- School PE Jersey
- Optional: - school shorts for Gaelic Games/Athletics and school skort for netball



Travelling to School



Bus Routes to Newry Bus Depot

Area	Bus Times
Banbridge Bus Station	07:40 / 08:16
Jonesborough Brennans Corner	08:35
Meigh Cross Roads	08:08 / 08:15
Camlough Post Office	08:22
Cloughoge	08:12
Hilltown, Main St Supermarket	08:13
Mayobridge Roundabout	08:20
Loughbrickland Mace Shop	07:46 / 08:22
Belleeks Post Office	08:10
Rathfriland Bus Depot	07:40
Bessbrook Charlemont Square	08:15
Warrenpoint Square	07:55 / 08:15

There are connecting buses from Newry Bus Depot to St. Mary's Chapel at 08:35, 08:45 and 8:50
Going home from school Number 45 bus will drop students off at Stone Bridge – walk to Bus Depot.
- Contact: Bus Inspector (Newry Bus Centre) – 028 30263532

Contacting St. Mary's

Parents/Carers are welcome to contact the main office if they wish to speak to their daughter's Form Teacher. Your daughter's Form Teacher will then return your call at their earliest convenience.

As a parent/carer you should not feel you are being overanxious by ringing the school and we encourage parents/carers to discuss with the school any issues or concerns they may have.

Parents/carers should also encourage their daughter to speak to their Form Teacher/Year Tutor or any member of staff she feels comfortable talking to, about any concerns she may be having.

Points of Contact

1. Form Teacher
2. Mrs A. Hughes: Year Tutor
3. Mrs F. McCloy: Learning Support Coordinator (LSC)
4. Mr M. Fitzpatrick: Vice Principal, Head of Pastoral Care, Designated Teacher for Child Protection

School Phone Number - 028 3026 2851

School Email – info@stmarys.newry.ni.sch.uk

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones should not be used in school from 8:55am to 3:00pm. Mobile phones are not permitted to be used in classrooms or on the corridors/stairways. Mobile phones and earphones/headsets must be **'On silent and out of sight'**. Mobile phones must be kept in the inner pocket of the school blazer. **Any phone seen or heard will be retained.** *The only exception to this is when a student has been given special permission to keep their phone with them for specific health-related reasons as detailed in their IEP or Health Plan.*

Connecting From Home

How to connect to the School App



Our main method of communication with parents/carers is through our School App. We are reducing the amount of paper we use, therefore most information and school reports are posted on the School App.

New Year 8 students and their parents/carers can download the School App using the following links:

Google Play Store

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.edtap.s_newry_st_marys&hl=en

App Store

<https://itunes.apple.com/ie/app/st-marys-high-school/id1113505428?mt=8>

Please set your profile by selecting the Year 8 student or parent group for the school year.

The app enables the school to increase communication with students/parents/carers. You will receive regular updates and notifications from school.

How to access Student Email from home

- Go to www.c2kschools.net
- Enter your school username and password
- Once you have gained access to MySchool, *click on Microsoft 365 web apps or view all, communication and Microsoft 365 web apps.*
- Click on apps, click on outlook

How to access Google Classroom from home

- Go to www.c2kschools.net
- Enter your school username and password
- Once you have gained access to MySchool, *click on Google Classroom or view all, Google Workspace and Google Classroom*

How to access School Files from home

- Go to www.c2kschools.net
- Enter your school username and password
- Once you have gained access to MySchool, *click on MyFiles or view all, Files and Apps and MyFiles.*
- Access to School Files

Year 8 Calendar 2026-2027



Year 8 Activity Days	Tuesday 11 th and Wednesday 12 th August 2026 (10 a.m.- 2 p.m.)
Year 8 Induction Morning	Friday 28 th August 2026 (9 a.m. -10:30 a.m., Parent Teacher Meeting 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.)
Term 1 Starts	Tuesday 1 st September 2026
Staff Day	Friday 25 th September 2026
Staff Day	Monday 12 th October 2026
Holidays	Monday 26 th October – Friday 30 th October 2026
Staff Day	Friday 27 th November 2026
Parent Teacher Meeting	Friday 4 th December 2026 (9.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.)
Assessment 1	Week beginning Monday 7 th December 2026
Staff Day	Tuesday 22 nd December 2026
Holidays	Wednesday 23 rd December 2026 – Tuesday 5 th January 2027
Staff Day	Friday 15 th January 2027
Staff Day	Monday 25 th January 2027
Holidays	Monday 8 th February – Friday 12 th February 2027
Staff Day	Monday 1 st March 2027
Assessment 2	Week beginning Monday 1 st March 2027
Holiday	Wednesday 17 th March 2027
Staff Day	Thursday 18 th March 2027
Holidays	Friday 26 th March – Friday 2 nd April 2027
Moderation Day	Friday 16 th April 2027
Bank Holiday	Monday 3 rd May 2027
Staff Day	Tuesday 4 th May 2027
Bank Holiday	Monday 31 st May 2027
Assessment 3	Week beginning Monday 7 th June 2027

If changes have to be made to any of the dates parents/carers will be notified in advance through the School App

Guide to Homework



At the start of the school year, each student is given their own diary. They will be encouraged to be independent learners and use their diary effectively to record all homework, attendance, school notices and keep a record of their Standardised Assessment Results.

Parents/carers should check their daughter's diary regularly and sign it at the end of each week. Form Teachers will also check each student's diary. Students are expected to record their Personalised Target Percentage for each subject in their diary together with the results of each Standardised Assessment.

Students are expected to record all homework in their diaries and complete homework to a high standard. There are a range of types of homework that may be given including: written; reading; learning; research and practical tasks. Homework is an essential element of learning. It consolidates work that has been undertaken in school and extends knowledge and understanding. Homework encourages students to learn independently, developing important self-management skills.

Homework for Year 8 will not be excessive and therefore on occasions when there is not much written homework, students should spend time looking over work done that day, spend time reading a book or reading over class notes or making their own revision notes and aids.

We encourage our students to do their homework on the day it is given and at a regular time each day, maybe after a short break when getting home from school, so that the rest of the evenings are free. Students should do their homework away from distractions, devices and screens and in a quiet place. Parents/ carers should encourage their daughter to organise their school bags themselves each evening, ready for the next day's classes. While parents/carers can offer help and advice with homework and organisation of books, they should not do these tasks for the students.

Assessments



Students undertake a number of assessments throughout the year where progress and attainment are closely monitored.

These assessments include:

- Class tests
- Projects and practical work
- Group activities
- Research tasks and reports
- Debates and presentations
- Standardised Assessments

Standardised Assessments

In each subject, students will have an individual Personalised Target Percentage. This is based on their attainment in baseline assessments completed at the start of Year 8. Students will complete 4 Standardised Assessments in each subject throughout the year, (under exam conditions) and their performance in each is closely benchmarked against their Personalised Target.

The school will send reports home twice a year in December (short report) and June (long report) so that parents/carers can monitor their daughter's progress.

Key Dates – Week beginning

Assessment 1 – 7th December 2026

Assessment 2 – 1st March 2027

Assessment 3 – 7th June 2027

Year 8 Parent Teacher Meeting - Friday 4th December 2026 – (9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)

Extra-Curricular Activities



St. Mary's hosts many after school and extra-curricular activities and groups throughout the year. We feel these are important to help students build friendship groups, build self-confidence and help with their mental health.

After School Dance Class



After School Numeracy Club



Literacy Club



Eco Committee



Gaelic Football



Netball



Green Space Project



After School Cooking



Choir



Fun Days & Events



At St. Mary's we believe it is important to enjoy your school days and so alongside learning we also like to find time to have different types of activities and fun days throughout the year. We also have a range of charity events that our students get involved in.

