St. Mary's School, Melrose
Standards and Quality Report, 2025 - 2026

The School

School aims and values

At St. Mary's School, the 6 C's underpin our work and daily activities.

Connectivity:	Community, family, belonging, past, present and future, global place in society
Curriculum:	Suitability, stimulation, variety, stretch and linkage
Caring:	Selflessness, empathy, selfhood, environment, concern
Creativity:	Expression, freedom, courage, enterprise, imagination
Curiosity:	Knowledge, passion, enquiry, exploration, persistence
Confidence:	Independence, success, growth, resilience, humility

About our School

St. Mary's School serves the town of Melrose and the surrounding rural area. A range of pupils travel from further afield to attend our school, with the pupil body during the academic year 2025-2026 including children from Northumberland, the Lothians, Peeblesshire and throughout the Scottish Borders. The roll at the beginning of the academic year 2025 - 2026 stood at 142 pupils, with a further 18 pupils in our Lower and Upper Kindergarten. A proportion of our children benefit from our active bursary system; parents who think they may qualify for this means-tested assistance are invited to apply to the Bursary Committee.

Mr William Harvey, Headmaster, has been leading the school since September 2010. He is supported by the Bursar, Mrs Fiona Tait, the School Management Team and the Academic Management Team, comprising the staff members below in academic year 2025-2026.

School Management Team
Deputy Head, Mrs Fiona Bell
Assistant Head, Mr Ian Purvis
Director of Communications, Miss Kirsty McRae
Director of Studies, Dr. Keith Morgan

Academic Management Team
Director of Studies, Dr. Keith Morgan
Head of English, Ms Desiree Worth
Head of Modern Languages, Mrs Helen Bruce

Mrs Fiona Tait, Bursar, works closely with the Headmaster and the Board of Governors in running the financial matters of the school. Ms Julie Birdsall, School Secretary, manages day-to-day administration in the school office, and takes care of the many needs of pupils, staff, parents and visitors. She, alongside Miss McRae, oversee the school MIS system, Engage.

St. Mary's Kindergarten is led by Mrs Louise Berni. In August 2025, 9 children moved from Kindergarten into Reception. Kindergarten is an integral part of St. Mary's School with those pupils also attending classes for Music and Drama in the main school as well as visiting the ICT room, Library and Art Studio. In April 2026 our Kindergarten welcomed the Care Inspectorate to carry out an unannounced inspection of our facility. This was a very positive experience with excellent feedback from parents and the Care Inspectorate.

The Learning Support Department is led by Mrs Catherine Redmond who coordinates a team of Learning Support staff providing in-class and individual support as well as consulting with parents and external professionals to ensure that the needs of all of our pupils are met. During this academic year we

engage the services of Occupational Therapist. Mrs Rhona McAlpine. She has offered sessions for parents and staff, and she has engaged with a number of pupils on a one-to-one basis.

The Board of Governors meet every term and there are four sub committees: Finance, Education, Governance and Bursary, who also meet each term.

Flexi and weekly boarding packages are available for pupils in Forms 3-8. Miss Sarah Pugh took over as Housemistress in the Girls' House during academic year 2025-2026, ably supported by Assistant Housemistress Miss Rosie Orr and Mrs Pam Gordon, Matron. Mr Stefan Rooney continued as Head of Boys' Boarding, with Russell Foster continuing to excel in his role as Assistant Housemaster. Mr James Barbour continued in his role as GAP student, and we were delighted to welcome Issy Innes in January 2026 . Mr Matthew Brydon, Estates Manager, continued to take care of the picturesque grounds and various sports pitches whilst overseeing day-to-day maintenance within the campus. Mr Brydon also continued to monitor traffic flow and parking in the morning.

The Friends of St. Mary's are an active parent-led group who fundraise, support and organise several events throughout the school year. Former parent, Mrs Joanna Imray, continued to serve as Chair of the Friends of St. Mary's during session 2025-2026 leading a pro-active and willing group of parents in supporting the school. As well as organising social events for parents, match tea servers, and a variety of events for the children, the Friends have also contributed significantly to resources for the school and fundraising for chosen charities. The FP Club continue to be an active group supporting the school and have indicated an interest in supporting an outdoor play area facility. Their annual FP dinner was once again held in the Buccleuch Hotel and was well attended by Form Pupils from many eras.

Our catering and domestic staff are a vital part of the school and are well-known, trusted and liked by the children, parents and staff. Our Chef, Mr Robert Sinclair, is in charge of the catering team, assisted by Miss Sarah Logan. The rest of the team comprised of Miss Wendy Scott, Mrs Kerry McGurk and Miss Aimee Ferguson. Miss Codie Stewart joined us in the Michaelmas Term on a fixed Term contract. We said a fond farewell to Mrs Helen McSorley in October 2025. A stalwart of our cleaning team for many years, and much-loved by pupils, staff and parents. In her place we were pleased to welcome Miss Lauren Foster to work alongside Mrs Andrea Tyerman, Mrs Sharron Noble and Mrs Rita Redpath.

There is a collegiate atmosphere amongst the whole staff, and we have a positive working relationship with our parent body. Our open-door policy has always been a feature welcomed by parents whereby easy communication is maintained in person as well as by email. Parents' evenings were, in the main, in-person however we continued to be happy to facilitate these by Teams where required. Our online booking system through the Engage App has proven to be an efficient way of selecting and confirming meeting times.

While there are defined stages and areas within the school, with their own identity and features - Kindergarten, Pre-Prep, Middle School, Upper School and the Boarding House - these form part of a greater family that is obvious on arriving at the school. Pupils mix well across year groups, enhanced by our Squad system where pupils from Reception to Form 8 are grouped together to participate in annual events such as Squad Day, Squad Sports, Squad Singing, Squad Charity Day and the Abbey Park Relays. They can also accumulate points for their Squad for good work, effort, resilience, sporting and creative endeavours,

to name a few. This year our Squad Charity Day saw pupils, staff and parents clocking up 100K in May in support of The Great North Air Ambulance and The Harris Trust.

Parent engagement with our School Portal and App has strengthened this year with all families registered to use this effective means of communication. Pupil reports and general notices are sent out via the portal and app with staff and parents finding this to be a quick and easy means of communication when on the move at sporting events, for example. Our Instagram page continued to have excellent engagement with current families, prospective families, former pupils and the wider community. We always aim to have a balance between regular posts and over-posting, while ensuring the highest levels of online safety for pupils.

The Eco Committee, Library Group, Boarding Committee and RRSA Committee are all examples of forums where the pupil voice really makes a difference to life at St. Mary's. In addition, staff are active in seeking the opinions of pupils in their subject areas and in acting upon feedback. Our 'You Said, We Did' wall continued to provide an excellent visual display of the pupil voice and collaboration between the school community.

This year we celebrated what was probably the school's most successful ever year on the sports pitches. Our flagship 1st XV rugby team ended their season having won the Loretto 7s tournament, winning all but one school fixture, as well as a near faultless performance at Rosslyn Park. Similarly, the U11 boys rugby team won the Ardvreck 7s tournament and had an unbeaten season in school fixtures. The senior girls were arguably even more successful. The 1st VII netball & hockey teams won both of the Scottish regional IAPS qualifying tournaments and represented Scotland at the National Finals at Rugby School and Wellington College respectively. Both the hockey VII and the netball VII were also unbeaten in school fixtures. The school's 1st XI cricket team continued the unbeaten theme by winning all of their school fixtures, which wrapped up an incredible nine months of competitive sport at St. Mary's.

Such success is not by chance. Our 'involve all' ethos at St. Mary's helps to fuel enthusiasm and raise standards across all sports and all ages. Our dedicated and expert coaches from U9s all the way through to U13s nurture the talents all pupils, from our beginners to those gaining national recognition.

Squad Singing was held in October, and we were once again delighted to have a full congregation at our annual Carol Service in Melrose Parish Church in December. Three school shows were produced this year with F5 and 6 performing 'Matilda Jr' at Christmas, Form 3 and 4 starring in 'Treachery at Traitor's Quay' in February and Form 7 and 8 demonstrating their fantastic array of performing skills in 'Oklahoma Jr' in March. Pre-Prep were able to hold a Christmas concert for their parents while Reception and Upper Kindergarten tread the boards in our annual Nativity play. All three Pre-Prep year groups staged an end of year show in early July. We were delighted to have one of our pupils represent the school in the National Youth Brass Band of Scotland's Training Band.

Five of our Form 7 artists were delighted to discover that their posters promoting train travel along the Waverley Line had been selected for reproduction at stations along the route. As part of a national competition run in collaboration with ScotRail and the Great Tapestry of Scotland, it's a wonderful opportunity for our young artists to see their creative work travel beyond the studio and be enjoyed by passengers along the line.

We were thrilled to once again welcome extended friends and family to our 'Kith 'n' Kin morning in June which is wonderful whole-school family event. Form 7 ran a French Café for our guests and the Middle School Choir and some soloists provided entertainment at the close of the day. As well as a Summer Concert and Sports Day for Prep pupils, and a separate Sports Day for Kindergarten and Pre-Prep, the school hosted three prizegiving ceremonies, one each for the Pre-Prep, Middle School and Upper School. Mr Dan Harrison, Executive Head at Sedbergh School, was welcomed as guest speaker at our senior prizegiving.

St. Mary's is proud of its place within the local community and constantly strives to work with partners to provide educational opportunities for all and to immerse itself in local life. Many pupils participated in Melrose Festival week, representing the school by singing at the Crowning Ceremony and riding in the junior and senior rideouts. An enthusiastic group of boarders were thrilled to be awarded first place in the Festival Fancy Dress Parade. Much success was celebrated by our young equestrianists, competing locally and further afield, a number of whom have qualified for the British Championships in October 2026. Many children play for their rugby and football clubs in Melrose, Selkirk, Lauder and Jedburgh and the local Fjordhus Reivers hockey club and Galashiels Athletics Clubs are well attended by St. Mary's pupils. The relationships between these clubs and the school are positive and mutually beneficial. Links with local brass bands saw pupils performing with Galashiels Town Band, Selkirk Silver Band and St. Ronan's Band, including participation in Scottish Borders Brass Band workshops, contests and the National Youth Brass Band Championships of Scotland.

Bang Goes the Borders returned to the campus in September 2025 with a full programme of engaging workshops for youngsters from across the Borders. This year we had a wonderful footfall of over 1500 people. Sponsored by Bright Green Nature, Mitchell Glass, Maryanne Johnston Ltd and St. Mary's FP Association, we welcomed presenters from Senior Schools, Universities, Colleges and organisations such as Zoolab and Kinross AeroSpace. We were delighted to have Jack's Takeaway from Melrose providing catering for all presenters, as well as being our official public caterer on the day. Coffee Inc, a local coffee trailer, was also on campus, and DH Design of Kelso were contracted to provide all marketing materials. Sponsorship means that this event remains open to all and free to attend.

Monitoring of Health and Wellbeing continues to be of prime importance, with Form Tutors creating opportunities for sharing feelings and exploring emotions and anxieties. We have the ongoing input of a Governor who works professionally and expertly in the field of counselling and psychology, and the addition of Mrs Rhona McAlpine to our Learning Support provision has allowed for further intensive support for relevant pupils. Mrs Bell and Mrs Pinches carried out an extensive review of the PSHE programme and have devised a thorough addition to the curriculum addressing RSHP (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting). This will be implemented from August 2026.

Weekly assemblies offer an opportunity for the whole school to gather with the Headmaster, with staff and pupil-led assemblies taking place, as well as a range of invited guests speaking to this gathering.

The School continues to keep abreast of guidance and developments from Scottish Borders Council, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools. Staff have attended a wide variety of development opportunities from outside agencies, as well as participating in on-site training and colleague-led initiatives.

Learning provision at St. Mary's

Children are performing well with their classwork, which is evident through the quality assurance procedures in school – monitoring of jotters, classroom observations, formative assessment, pupil feedback, parent-teacher meetings, staff meetings, standardised testing, summative assessment, Common Entrance examinations, ABRSM/Trinity College Music examinations, sports fixtures and participation in national competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge and a variety of Art initiatives. We continue to monitor and adapt our teaching and learning experiences in light of feedback from, and in partnership with, pupils, staff, parents and senior schools. The Academic Management Team, led by the Director of Studies, oversees curricular provision throughout the school. Classes in Form 7 and 8 were split in core academic subjects to best support pupil learning needs. Classes in Form 6 were set for Maths and Science only. In other subject areas and year groups, pupils are mainly taught in mixed ability groups with additional support from our expert learning support team where required.

As well as the core subjects of English, Maths and Science, pupils attend lessons in Spanish, French, History, Geography, Classical Civilisation, RME, Latin, ICT, Art, Design and Technology, PSHE, Music, Drama, PE, Environmental Studies and Environmental Science as they progress through the school. In the final year pupils may be invited to study Ancient Greek as an additional Common Entrance subject. Teaching at St. Mary's is creative, engaging, inspiring and fun. This is monitored and supported by regular review of practice along with our PRD system, INSET training and engagement with the GTCS and the PU process.

Our six key qualities of caring, communication, curriculum, confidence, connectivity and curiosity underpin daily life at St. Mary's. Pupils at St. Mary's enjoy learning and parents and pupils have been positive about their experiences both within the academic and wider life of the school. Concerns raised are taken seriously and open conversation amongst pupils, parents and staff is encouraged and valued.

St. Mary's has an excellent Learning Support Department that ensures specific learning needs are catered for appropriately and sensitively. Children requiring additional support with their learning are identified through regular staff meetings and testing is carried out where appropriate. Those requiring additional/extended activities are very well catered for. Staff are proactive in the staged intervention process within the school and support is provided within the regular classroom setting where possible, and on a one-to-one or small group basis where it is deemed more advantageous to the pupil/s. We

work with parents, pupils and outside agencies to support individual children and incorporate advice and resources into our planning and professional development. The school is accessible to all users and is well equipped to meet the needs of our children and staff.

Co-curricular clubs are integrated into the academic year and in the academic year 2025-2026 included Dog Walking, Playground Games, Gardening Club, Athletics, Cross Country and Orchestra to name a few. In the Summer Term our Outdoor Education Programme offered a wealth of engaging and challenging experiences with residential visits to The Wild Outdoors, Old Melrose, Ford Castle, Dalguise and the College Valley. Throughout the year class teachers and specialists arrange school trips that enhance and support the curriculum offered on campus.

Successes and Achievements

The school prides itself on its academic record and achievements within the disciplines of sport, performing arts and the creative arts. Results in school examinations are measured against expectations from GL Assessment Cognitive Ability Testing (CAT) that takes place for each pupil in September. Our data demonstrates almost all pupils achieve above expected levels at Common Entrance, with benchmarks of 11+ and 13+ work being used in the Upper School. In Common Entrance this year our 18 Form 8 pupils sat a total of 252 papers in English, maths, science, French, history, geography, Latin, classical civilisation and ancient Greek. Some subjects involve multiple papers, but overall, our Form 8 pupils gained 162 subject grades from A* to D. Of these grades, one third were A or A* and one third were grade B. Overall, more than 90% of all the grades obtained were grade C or above this year. Given that we are proud to consider ourselves a non-selective school, this is a strong set of results and demonstrates the value of the solid foundations laid down here at St. Mary's from the earliest years upwards. This year one academic scholarship, 13 sports scholarships and one music scholarship were awarded to our Form 8 pupils.

This year has seen further integration of the Spelling Ninja programme, Big Cat Phonics and Benchmarking, for pupils from Reception to Form 6. Our data from PM benchmarking shows that our children are moving on to their next year group with a firmer grasp of reading, reading very fluently at a younger age and they are beginning to develop a deeper understanding of comprehension too. The Big Cat Collins scheme has enabled us to tailor our teaching and learning to individual needs and has promoted bigger steps of progress in those who previously struggled with reading. The adoption of cursive handwriting has gone smoothly with noticeable neat handwriting happening across the school.

The White Rose Maths scheme has more than met our expectations and has been very well received by staff, pupils and parents. In Pre-prep, Reception now uses the White Rose Reception program, with some of our own additional materials where required. Form 1 and Form 2 use the main White Rose scheme and have found the increased use of "manipulatives" to be of great benefit in developing fundamental mathematical understanding, particularly for the less able, whilst the differentiation built into the scheme also means that the more able are appropriately challenged. Form 3 also successfully adopted the White Rose scheme in 2025-26. In using elements of the scheme in Form 4 it was quickly apparent that full adoption would also be beneficial for learners in

this year group, and so this was also undertaken in 2025-26. Some elements of the White Rose scheme were also utilised in Form 5, in tandem with our existing curriculum.

Our senior pupils sat the UKMT Junior Maths Challenge in May and ee are proud to report that St. Mary's pupils gained 5 Gold, 7 Silver and 8 Bronze medals with three pupils qualifying for the elite follow-on Kangaroo. One of those pupils achieved a silver medal at the elite level.

Digital Technology continues to feature daily in teaching and learning and was significantly enhanced this year by the opening of our 5Hive technology room, supplying STEAM-based resources for the whole school. A wide range of resources including VR headsets, 40 iPads and numerous technology kits have brought the STEAM curriculum to life for pupils and staff alike. Regular Online Safety sessions take place with all pupils, and we collaborate closely with pupils and parents on pertinent issues related to online safety and, more recently, AI. Pupils in Forms 7 and 8 were able to contribute suggestions to a new AI clause within our responsible use of ICT policy.

Instrument instruction continues to flourish at St. Mary's, with a cohort of 9 visiting instructors coaching our young people on a wide variety of instruments. Pupils who were ready to sit performance exams with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, achieving 3 distinction, 4 merit and 2 pass grades, while pupils presented for Trinity College exams achieved 4 distinction and 6 pass grades. Our instrumental tuition was provided by 9 superb instructors, and in partnership with Borders School of Music and Merlin Music.

Our athletes were thrilled to compete in athletics at Fettes College in June and deservedly came away with 10 gold, 12 silver and 12 bronze medals as well as the cup for outstanding girl athlete. In cross country the U9 girls and U11 boys teams both placed 1st in the SSISCC event and in the individual event St. Mary's placed first with a new course record in the U13 girls race. Our cross-country team also took part in the annual Rawthey Run at Sedbergh School achieving a 1st place in the U11 girls' individual races and the U13 girls. Our U13 boys team won with our mixed relay team coming 3rd.

Leadership and management

The Head meets with the Bursar on a weekly basis and the School Management Team meet once a week to discuss the day-to-day running of the school, while the Academic Management Team meet each term to review the academic programme. The School Education Committee, Finance Committee, Governance Committee and Bursary Committee report to the Board of Governors who meet once each term. A Risk Management group maintain the risk register, and this is regularly reviewed by the Board of Governors.

The PRD system within school sees a number of line managers being the first port of call for staff members. This year all staff had a meeting with their reviewer, setting out personal priorities for their own and school development. Staff play an active part in the annual consultation process of the Whole School Improvement Plan and are aware of how this informs our progress as a School.

We aim to communicate effectively within school, with our parent body, our local community, outside agencies and senior schools. Staff know each other well and are approachable and supportive towards each other. Regular discussions, staff meetings and email support our necessary daily dialogue.

Sustainability and Inclusivity

Our Global Awareness Calendar continues to draw our attention to national days of recognition and causes that we can recognise and support. Our languages department once again celebrated the European Day of Languages with an assembly and activities related to that for classes.
The Lunar New Year was recognised across the school, and Kindergarten enjoyed a Chinese lunch during this period.

In 2025-26, F7 undertook a Wild Person's Guardian Award through the John Muir Trust. In addition to exploring our grounds and participating in a variety of 'acclimatisation' activities that helped the pupils to look more carefully at the natural world on our doorstep, they also worked alongside Ellie Oakley of the JMT to remove invasive Sitka spruce saplings from a developing native woodland at Glenlude, a local JMT property.

The road verges project, led by Mrs. Bruce, saw F7 meeting with local conservation groups, SBC representatives, BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland to campaign for a change to our local road verges mowing schedule. This would see verges and roundabouts being left to grow, enabling a larger network of wildlife corridors and increased local biodiversity. This project is ongoing and a second meeting is scheduled for the start of October.

F8 worked together to choose an organisation that they wanted to support. After a term of research and presentations, they decided to support the work of the Farmers Community Network and participated in a 'Three Peaks' challenge in the Eildon Hills to raise awareness of the FCN in our school community.

The school looked after the vegetable beds, harvesting rhubarb, peas and courgettes for the kitchen whilst Pre-Prep grew sunflowers to take home. Our indoor farm produced cress and pea shoots for the salad bar. For wildlife, our 'edible' hedge, 4 years on, has produced its first elderberries, rowan berries and rosehips which will benefit wild birds in the run up to winter.

Capacity for continuous improvement

St. Mary's continues to be a successful and thriving co-educational day, flexi boarding and weekly boarding preparatory school. Our procedures for self-evaluation for self-improvement underpin the high quality of education and pastoral support being delivered.

Through the Whole School Improvement Plan and the PRD process staff take responsibility for personal and whole school development priorities. St. Mary's understands its role in supporting teachers in the PRD process, by ensuring the principles of PU are embedded in their professional learning and development.

We value and recognise the need to regularly seek the opinions of our partners in continuing to provide the best quality of education we can here at St. Mary's. Our wide and varied methods of communication mean that we maintain a healthy dialogue with our partners.

National guidelines will continue to inform our priorities in ensuring that the safeguarding, health and wellbeing of all children is at the forefront of all that we do.