



St Mark's C of E Junior School

Growing together, becoming all we are created to be

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 14th March 2025

www.stmarksjunior.com

All enquires: admin@st-marks.gloucs.sch.uk

Our Value in focus this term is: JUSTICE

Headteacher's Message:

Thank you to all those who were able to make the **Spring Term Parents' Evening** this week. We hope it was a positive and helpful experience. We are extremely proud of every single child in our school and the way in which they are grasping the opportunities to grow into more of who they are, every day. What an inspiration! *If there is anything further you wish to talk through with your child's class teacher or with a member of the Senior Leadership Team in follow-up to meetings this week, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school office.*

This week, the school welcomed an external consultant, appointed by the Local Authority, to review the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. The day was rigorous and thorough; an important tool for our ongoing self-evaluation. Below are some quotes from the report, to give a flavour of the observations of current provision, together with the school's 'Next Steps' as we continue to strive for the best education for all of our pupils.

Inclusion is at the heart of St Mark's Junior School. Knowing children as individuals, identifying barriers and celebrating strengths drives their practice.

Leaders have developed a clear graduated response which supports all learners, including those with vulnerabilities, particularly SEND.

The school has a clear process around intervention which is driven by the link with classroom practice. The principles of these interventions are clearly outlined by the school and could be seen in observed sessions.

Learning in interventions clearly links to class learning. This can be pre-teaching, vocabulary extension or over learning and reinforcement.

Leaders have developed a culture of high aspiration and no excuses. An example of this would be the embedding of a curriculum which ensures there is scaffolding and support to remove individual barriers and ensure equality for all.

There is clearly a collective approach to supporting SEND, with SLT and middle leaders ensuring this is a golden thread in subject leadership and school development.

In the observed sessions, children were enthusiastically engaging in learning. Pupil voice during the visit reflected that they valued these sessions and felt it added to their learning in class.

Next steps:

- *For staff across the whole school to be trained in the Phonics programme in order to support the ongoing embedding of practice*
- *Continue to set high expectations and enable staff in terms of Inclusion and St Mark's expectations around this. This should also be considered in terms of any changes of staff across the year or for September.*
- *Consider mechanisms for continuing to build the partnership between the infants and the juniors, ensuring both a seamless transition from Y2 to Y3 and also to build on each other's strengths and share best practice.*

We very much appreciate your continued support and we work together to further embed and improve provision, enabling all children at St Mark's to grow and flourish.

Have a super weekend,

Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team

Photography Competition

Today we announced the winners and runners up of our in house Photography Competition. The photos were printed and displayed in the staff room and judged anonymously by the whole team. Votes were counted and verified by our Art Subject lead, Mrs Edmondson. It was so hard to select just one favourite photo in each group as they were all so unique. The competition was so close, with votes fairly evenly spread amongst all the photographs. Eventually there was a winner and runner up for both the Lower and Upper school.

And the winners are ... 🥁 🥁 🥁

Lower School Winners

1st Place Chris (Class 3) - *Spring's Coming*
Runner up Bea (Class 4) - *Skirt*

Upper School Winners

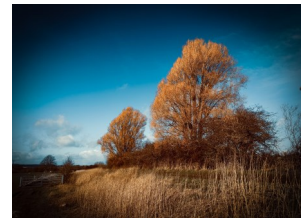
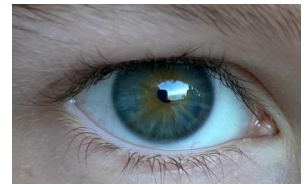
1st Place Penny (Class 7) - *My Eye Reflection*
Runner up Maisy (Class 7) - *Sunshine Dancing on the Leaves*

Well done to our winners and to everyone who entered the competition. We have so enjoyed looking at all your photographs and we will upload them onto our website for everyone to enjoy. They will also be on display in our entrance hall.



We now wait to hear the results from the Camera Club Competition.

Wishing you all the very best of luck!



Teaching & Learning Owls

Gold - Thea

Silver - Josh & Ava

Bronze - Lilly, Margot, Landon, Hasvi, Florence & Sophia

Congratulations to our owl badge winners!



Mock Trials

On Wednesday, a team of twelve children from Year 6 attended the mock trial competition at the Municiple Offices in Cheltenham. Our team had been assigned the role of providing a defence for a fictional scenario, with each child playing a role to support this. These roles included: the defendant (who had been accused of illegally graffitng a wall), the defendant's parents, defence solicitors, witnesses, a courtroom usher, a courtroom artist, a courtroom reporter and magistrates.



The children competed against a team from Woodmancote and were brilliant in asking probing questions of witnesses as well as answering questions from the other team, especially when under cross-examination. There was even a dramatic display from the children who were playing the defendant's parents when she was found "guilty."

Despite this verdict, our final position within the entire competition (not just against the team that we faced in court) is still yet to be decided as we score points based upon our performance against all schools in the competition.

Hockey

On Wednesday a team from St Mark's competed in Move More's Quick Sticks Hockey competition. This was the children's first time playing competitive Hockey, but you would not have known! They showed great understanding of the game, and played really well together as a team.

The team played 5 matches won 3 and lost 2, scoring some really good goals and showing some lovely skills.

Very impressive, well done team!

A huge thank you to Mrs Bonser who has been coaching the children and to Mrs Campbell for overseeing the event.



Red Nose Day— Next Friday

This Red Nose Day is celebrating and impressive 40 years. We will be joining in the fun and fundraising by inviting the children to wear their own clothes with the addition of crazy hair styles (optional). The crazier the better!

We have set up a donations page on Parent Pay, with a suggested donation of £1, but you are welcome to donate what you can up to £20.00. When you go into the event on Parent Pay you will see two options '**Pay Full Amount (£20.00)**' and '**Choose Payment Amount**'. If you select '**Choose Payment Amount**' you can donate anything between £1 and £20.00.

Thank you so much for your continued support for our charity work here at St Mark's!



Football

Yesterday St Mark's secured 2 wins against St Gregory's.

It was the next round of the league finals for the A team. St Mark's showed amazing resilience and earned a well deserved 4-3 victory. St Gregory's had several very good players, and the match was very physical, with lots of amazing football on display.

It was a comfortable win for St Mark's B team this time, winning an impressive 5-0. An enjoyable match, played with great spirit and comradery.

Congratulations to all the players.



Cross Country

Last Friday it was the girls' turn to take part in the Cheltenham Primary Schools' Cross Country League racing at Ashley Manor.

The girls ran so well, despite the tough course and muddy terrain. The children put in 100% effort and showed excellent sportsmanship throughout.



Well done to Thea, Molly, Penny, Evie and Stella.

You were fantastic!

Netball

On Monday our Netball team had 2 home games against Leckhampton Primary School. The children did a fantastic job battling the elements as well as the opposition.



They played with determination and precision and although we didn't win this time, it was fantastic that every member of the Netball club got the opportunity to play.

On Thursday our B team played Christ Church Primary School away. Despite a defeat there were lots of positives to take away from the match considering most of the team are in Year 5 and playing against a Year 6 team. The game was a fantastic opportunity for the children to get some match practice and develop skills they can take forward on into next year.

YMCA Sleep Rough Challenge

Last Friday Niall and Oscar took part in the YMCA Sleep rough challenge, where they slept in a box at the grounds of YMCA for one night to raise funds in order to help the homeless across Gloucestershire.

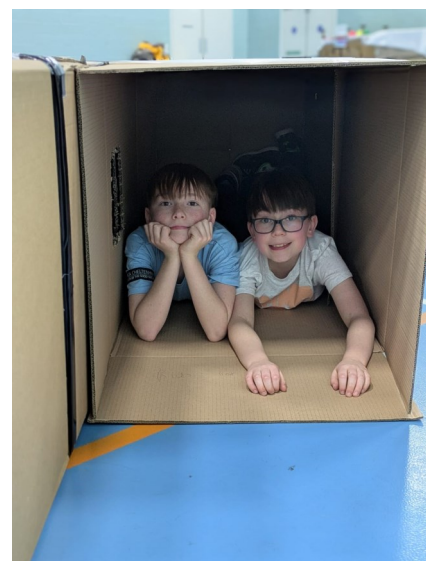
Last year, Niall was the only child that took part, which encouraged more children to come and this year 6 children took part, with their parents.

Since its beginnings in 2010, YMCA Sleep Easy has seen over 7,000 people sleep rough in order to raise over £1.5 million for local YMCA services that assist young people in rebuilding their lives.

Niall and Oscar slept in one box, with their Dad in another, strapped together, with a hatch they made in the middle for midnight snacks! They did so well, managing the whole night, and **together they raised £220!**

Oscar was awarded 'best newcomer' award, and also 'most blood spilled' (due to a friendly basketball game) and their dad received the 'I loved it so much I brought my whole family' award. The boys had a great time and will no doubt do it again next year!

Well done from everyone at St Mark's, such a fantastic achievement and a brilliant cause!



Learning Highlight of the Week

Class 1: Class 1 enjoyed PSHE this week. They thought about things that they are thankful for and made a paper chain in groups. On each loop they wrote down something they are thankful for. This will be put up in class.

Class 2: In DT and Geography the children have been learning about where our food comes from and plotting it on a map in readiness for making a seasonal tart.

Class 3: In English, the children have been creating a newspaper report on Boudicca.

Class 4: The children enjoyed making seed bombs in Outdoor Learning this week. The seed bombs were made using seeds and clay which prevents birds from eating the seeds.

Class 5: Class 5 enjoyed painting pictures of *Durdle Door* with watercolours, using the Pointillism technique.

Class 6: The children enjoyed writing formal letters to either our MP Max Wilkinson or to Mrs Fitch, with suggestions on how to improve our local area/school environment.

Class 7: In Geography, the children took on a treasure hunt orienteering challenge in order to decipher a code.

Class 8: In PSHE the children have been thinking about the way we communicate with one another. They observed that how we say something is just as important as what we say.

Holiday Free School Meal (FSM) Voucher Scheme

We would like to make you aware of the holiday Free School Meal (FSM) voucher scheme that Gloucestershire County Council is currently offering to families in Gloucestershire.

This Spring (Easter), Gloucestershire County Council will provide families in receipt of Free School Meals, who sign up to this offer, with vouchers to assist with food costs during the school holidays. The vouchers are funded through grant funding they have received, and they are separate to that of term time free school meals.

The scheme is for children in reception to year 11 who receive Pupil Premium (benefits-related) **free school meals** and attend a school in Gloucestershire.

Families who have signed up to the scheme or who are already registered will receive a total of **£15 per child**.

Families who have signed up previously do not need to re-register for Spring (Easter) 2025 holiday vouchers - they will already have been included. Families that have previously signed up will need to contact GCC with any changes to their circumstances (e.g. if the number of children eligible increases or decreases). To ensure they reach all those who are eligible, they are encouraging parents that have not previously signed up, to sign up as soon as they can.

To find out more about the scheme and to apply, please visit [FAQs | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Please note Gloucestershire County Council do check eligibility for the scheme by cross-referencing with the term-time free school meal register, so please make sure you are registered beforehand. You can register by visiting the [apply for free school meals](#).

Applications for holiday FSM vouchers for the Spring (Easter) Holidays 2025 will be open from midday 18th March until midday on 1st April. Voucher emails will be sent from week commencing 7th April. Please check your junk/spam folders during this period as sometimes the vouchers end up there. If you have not received your vouchers by 14th April, please submit a query via the Microsoft Form [HERE](#).

Using vouchers

Vouchers need to be used and will only be awarded once the parent has registered for the scheme and cannot be backdated. Vouchers are valid for 6 months, although should be used in the holiday period in which they are awarded. If vouchers are not claimed and have expired, they cannot be re-issued.

For anyone wishing to update details of an existing application, please submit an update existing details request via the Microsoft Form [HERE](#) so your account can be updated, as details are not automatically updated.

Extra Curricular Clubs - SPRING TERM 2

Monday

Boys Football Y5-6	Lunchtime
Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.30pm
Gardening Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Gym Club Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Chinese Language Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm
Hockey Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Netball Y5- 6	3.10pm - 4.15pm
Rugby Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Recorders Y3-6	Lunchtime

Tuesday

Orchestra Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Tennis Y4-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm

Wednesday

Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.30pm
Cyclestars Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm
French Club Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.15pm

Thursday

Girls Football Y4-6	Lunchtime
Coding Club Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Choir Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Outdoor Learning Y5-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm



Letters Sent Home

- Miss Thornhill Jury Service
Letter- Class 1



School Term Dates

2024-25

Term 3: Mon 6th Jan - Fri 14th Feb 2025

Term 4: Mon 24th Feb – Fri 11th Apr 2025

Term 5: Mon 28th April – Fri 23rd May 2025

Term 6: Tue 3rd June – Fri 18th July 2025

Inset Days: 2nd June, 21st July



Outdoor Learning - Spring Term 2

Class 3: Thursday Afternoon

Class 4: Thursday Morning

Please ensure your child wears suitable outdoor learning clothes to school and brings wellies and a warm waterproof coat every Thursday

Please note: all children must wear long trousers for safety reasons.



2024 - 25



March

Fri 21st - Red Nose Day—Comic Relief
Tue 25th - 2nd Charity Fair after school
Mon 31st - Pioneer Year 6 Residential

April

Tue 1st - Pioneer Year 6 Residential
Wed 2nd - Pioneer Year 6 Residential
Tue 8th - Easter Service 9.45am
Tue 8th - Book Look Year 4
Wed 9th - PTA Bake Sale
Thu 10th - Book Look Year 3, 5 & 6
Thu 10th - PTA Discos
Thu 10th - Year 4 Roman Experience Trip
Fri 11th - End of Term 4
Mon 28th - Start of Summer Term

May

Mon 12th - Rags Collection
Mon 12th - 14th - SATs Week
Tue 20th - School Beat Session
Tue 20th - Swimming Gala
Wed 21st - GWR Trip Year 6
Wed 21st - Spring Fayre
Thu 22nd - Book Look
Fri 23rd - End of Term 5

Advance Notice of a Few Dates

Tue 10th June - Sports Day

PE - Spring Term 2

Children should come to school in their PE kit on PE days.



Class 1: Monday and Thursday

Class 2: Wednesday and Friday

Class 3: Wednesday

Class 4: Friday

Class 5: Tuesday and Thursday for non-swimmers

Class 6: Tuesday and Thursday for non-swimmers

Class 7: Tuesday and Friday for non-swimmers

Class 8: Tuesday and Friday for non-swimmers

Remember: tracksuit tops should be plain navy only. A school sweatshirt is absolutely fine.