



St Mark's C of E Junior School

Growing together, becoming all we are created to be

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 20th December 2024

www.stmarksjunior.com

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

Our Value in focus this term is: TRUST

Headteacher's Message:

This week, we have been able to mark some special Christmas moments whilst also very much grieving the loss of our dear Miss Matthews.

On behalf of the whole staff team, my deepest thanks to you all for your love and support shown this week in so many ways. It has been extremely moving to see the whole community coming together to hold each other up.



We shared in some precious time on Thursday and Friday as we planted daffodils at the front of the school in memory of Miss Matthews; I quote one of the children; "We're doing this so that every year the daffodils will remind us of Miss Matthews' sunny happiness!"

Thank you to all those parents who were able to come and help; such a beautiful picture of what community is all about. *Particular thanks to Caroline Woodisse who donated many of the bulbs for us to plant.*



We loved singing and dancing our hearts out at our Christmas Celebration Service yesterday afternoon. What a joy!

The children retold the Christmas story (with much audience participation!) and songs from The Nativity film; 'Sparkle and Shine' was an absolute highlight! We were also treated to a lovely musical interlude thanks to the (70 strong!) choir, orchestra and recorder players. *Special thanks to Mrs Bennett for her work in preparing the musicians for this event.*

As I reflect on the term that has been, I am reminded more than ever of how pertinent our School Vision is: 'Growing together..' As we journey on, we continue to grow together as a community, sharing in both the moments of heartache and joy, supporting each other at each step, rooted in hope and love. This is St Mark's.

May you have an extra special time together this Christmas. See you on Monday 6th January.

With my warmest of wishes to you all, Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team

Winston's Wish

As we head into the holidays, I would really encourage you to take a look at the Winston's Wish website for guidance around how to talk with and support your children through this time of grief. [Winston's Wish - giving hope to grieving children](#)

9/10 children don't know how they feel, and children grieve very differently from adults. But for children and adults grief is physical and emotional.

Children tend to "puddle jump" in and out of grief. They often 'jump out' as quickly as they 'jump in'. Talking together, allowing them to feel their feelings (not brushing it off) whilst also reassuring them with hope, drawing / writing their thoughts down, going for a walk are all really helpful ways of processing emotions. Some children get stuck in their grief and can't jump out as quickly - you may need to take extra action to help them.

In the meantime, it's important that they have access to a quiet space. They may just want to play or be peaceful, and not necessary talk.

It's important to normalise grief, let children talk about it freely as they need to.

Attached is some additional information that was sent out last week, just in case it's helpful.

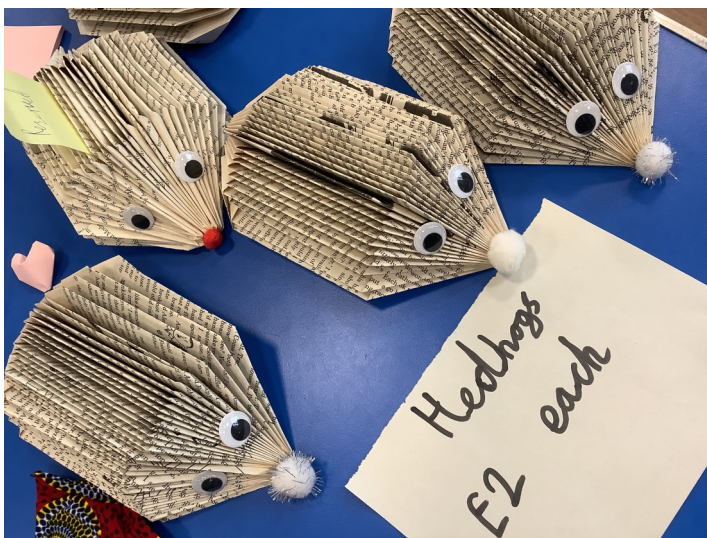
Christmas Fair and Year 6 Business Link

A huge well done to the Year 6 children and PTA for a superb Christmas Fair and Business link. It was really fantastic to see how much work the children had put in creating their stalls. All the products they made, games designed, and creations sold were absolutely brilliant.

Thank you to everyone who came to the Fair, without the support of our parents and school community it would not have been possible to put on.



We can confirm that Year 6 raised an incredible £1100!! Congratulations to the children and the whole team!



Christmas Lunch

We had a lovely Christmas lunch yesterday. The children and staff all looked very festive in their Christmas jumpers and we even had Christmas Crackers which brought much excitement and joy.

It was such a pleasure for staff to be able to sit with the children and enjoy eating together, as well as joining in with the festivities.

Thank you to Caterlink and all the staff for mucking in and helping out.



Rocksteady



On Tuesday we were treated to a Rocksteady concert. Currently we have 3 bands comprising of Singers, Drummers, Guitarists, Bass and Keyboard players.

The band **Astroford** kicked off the concert with their performance of *Merry Christmas Everyone*, **The Jingle Bell Rockers** were next to perform *Merry Christmas Everybody*, in which the audience thoroughly enjoyed joining in with the chorus. The last song was by the band **Fire Red** who performed *Reach for the Stars*.

It was lovely to see how the children have grown in confidence since their last performance and how committed and focused they were.



Thank you to all the children who took part in the concert and to Alex from Rocksteady. We look forward to having Rocksteady back with us again in the Summer.

Music Monday

This week Music Monday was back with a bang, as Oscar played the drums for the whole school in Collective Worship. We were treated to Kelly Clarkson's version of *Run Rodolph Run*, a song originally Chuck Berry. We were all blown away with Oscar's drumming skills and the confidence he showed when talking about the different sections of his drum kit. The fact that he had only had the drum kit for a year impressed us even more.

Well done Oscar and we hope you can perform for us again soon!



PTA Thank You

Thank you to everyone for coming along and supporting the year 6 business link Christmas stalls on Tuesday. The children must have had a fantastic time coming up with their business plans and putting them into action.



A big thank you to all the children who also came along to the school Disco on Wednesday and parents for bringing them!

Stone Age Outdoor Learning Days Y3

This week class 1 & 2 have taken part in a stone aged themed Outdoor Learning experience.

The day started by taking a stone age 'taxi', an exercise to help encourage team work. The children then created their own Stone Age shelters, made Mod-rock necklaces and learnt how to make fire.

The focus then turned to gathering and cooking food. The children foraged food that was contained in boxes (hidden around the field). Each box had a date on it and an event in history, which they spent a few moments ordering chronological. Mr Oakey made a fruit stew which the children enjoyed with a mammoth meat snack (a marsh-mellow.)

After lunch, the children went hunting for animals. Back at the Stone Age Settlement the classes documented the hunt using cave painting techniques- homemade paint and sticks and also made stone age jewellery . Finally they learnt the skills of wattle and daub, making small mini fences using mud, willow and hair!

Wow what an action packed day, the children truly embraced the experience. Well done Year 3 and a huge thank you to Mr Oakey!



Learning Highlight of the Week

Class 1: The children really enjoyed their Outdoor Learning Stone Aged day this week.

Class 2: Class 2 had their marble treat reward this week. They chose to have a Christmas Craft afternoon.

Class 3: In Computing, Class 3 created a database in Excel of all their classmates.

Class 4: In the style of Master Chef, Class 4 tasted different Greek food such as, Olives, tzatziki, Feta, hummus, pita bread, yoghurt and honey. They had to rate the items out of 5 and also write comments about each food. For many of the children this was the first time that they had tried some of these foods.

Class 5: The children explored forces. They made a carriage for an Elf to travel across the classroom on a zip line.

Class 6: Class 6 have made portraits using a Freda Carlo inspired background. One side of their portrait was a photo and on the other side they drew the rest of their face using a pencil sketch.

Class 7 & 8: Year 6 saw all their Christmas Fair planning come into fruition this week. On Monday they made items ready for the Christmas Fair on Tuesday. In Computingn they created a spreadsheet to work out their profit.

Community Christmas Cards

Today some of our Year 6 children took a trip to Whittington House to deliver Christmas cards which they have made for the community.

They also delivered some cards along the way.

It is really important as a school community to be able to connect with our neighbours and particularly at this time of year.

We hope that the children have helped to spread some festive cheer.



Teaching & Learning Owls

Bronze - Jaxon, Charlie, Rex and Joshie

Silver - Amelia

Gold - Samuel



Congratulations to all the children!



Look Who's Talking Competition — *The competition that celebrates the BIG voices of our small people!*

We are very excited to announce that in 2025 St. Mark's will be taking part, alongside other Gloucestershire schools, in the Look Who's Talking Oracy Competition. Oracy is the ability to express ourselves clearly and communicate with others effectively through spoken language.

Your child will get the chance to talk to their class for two minutes on any subject of their choice from which a 'star speaker' will be chosen. The star speakers from each class will then take part in whole school heats where one representative from lower ks2 and one from upper ks2 will be chosen to take part in the next round against local schools.

Children can talk about anything that they choose for their two-minute slot. They may bring props/ script/ notes to support them but cannot use any technology.

It would be great if you could support your child in planning and rehearsing their speech. Children will be presenting their speeches to classes during the first week back in January. Please see the attached information sheet with this week's newsletter for more details.



Extra Curricular Clubs - SPRING TERM 1

Monday

Boys Football Y5-6	Lunchtime
Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.30pm
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
Science Y3-4	3.10pm - 4.00pm



St Mark's Cheltenham Food Pantry Christmas Collection

Thank you so much for your generous donations. They took pride of place under our Christmas Tree and have now been collected by the team.



Packed Lunch—Monday 6th January

Shurdington kitchen will be closed on **Monday 6th January** and so please can all children **bring a packed lunch** with them on the first day back after Christmas.



Letter Sent Home

- **Spring Term 1 Clubs**



Sportily Holiday Club

Attached with this week's newsletter is a flyer for the Sportily holiday club in January. It is a fun HAF holiday club open to all and can be booked on through Tewksbury HAF website. See link below and flyer attached.

[Sportily | Tewkesbury District](#) – HAF

[CHRISTMAS Innsworth Sports Holiday Club Session \(School Years 1 - 6\) - Booking by Bookwhen](#)



School Term Dates

2024-25

Term 2: Mon 4th Nov – Fri 20th Dec 2024

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 1

Class 1: Thursday Afternoon

Class 2: 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

Diary Dates

December

Fri 20th - End of Term 2

January

Mon 6th - Start of Term 3

Tue 11th - Safer Internet Day

Tue 11th - Year 6 School Beat Session

Tue 11th - Book Look

Thu 16th - Year 5 First Swimming Lesson

Fri 17th - Year 6 First Swimming Lesson

Fri 24th - Rags Collection

Advance Notice of a Few Dates

Tue 8th April - Easter Service 9.45am

Tue 10th June - Sports Day

PE - Autumn Term 2

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



Class 1: Monday

Class 2: Wednesday

Class 3: Tuesday and Wednesday

Class 4: Tuesday and Friday

Class 5: Tuesday and Thursday for non-swimmers

Class 6: Tuesday and Thursday for non-swimmers

Class 7: Tuesday

Class 8: Tuesday

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