



# St Mark's C of E Junior School

*Growing together, becoming all we are created to be*

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 13th December 2024

[www.stmarksjunior.com](http://www.stmarksjunior.com)

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Our Value in focus this term is: TRUST

## Headteacher's Message:

This week, the whole school community has been devastated by the sudden loss of Miss Matthews.

There has been tremendous support amongst the whole school community as we uphold each other in this time of acute grief and sadness.

Today, time was given for children to talk together in their classes about feelings they may be experiencing; quiet rooms have been dedicated for one-to-one and small group sessions and activities were planned to provide structure but in a more relaxed, slower paced approach, enabling those who need it, time to talk and share. The day has been naturally subdued but with a real sense of calm and peace.

We know that every one of us will experience grief in different ways and at different times. We will continue to do our utmost to support and comfort the children as best we can over the coming days, weeks and months. Please do let us know if there are specific needs that arise and we can work with you in ensuring your child is supported in the best possible way.

My deepest thanks for the many messages of condolence and encouragement; these words have been a great source of comfort to the whole staff team.

Attached is a document that we are using at school to help inform our conversations: '*Helping children cope with loss, death and grief*'; I hope this might be helpful to you as parents too, as we navigate this journey together. Please also see attached a guide to the range of services available in Gloucestershire to support the Mental Health of children and young people, containing links to resources which, again, may be of help.

As mentioned yesterday, we aim to keep next week's school events generally scheduled as normal; please see dates overleaf.

I will be in touch on Monday with a decision regarding the Christmas Services.

With my warm wishes for a peaceful weekend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Fitch'.

**Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team**

## *Learning Highlight of the Week*

**Class 1 & 2:** DT Day - Today Year 3 have been very busy in the hall sewing outfits for their Teddy Bears. They have really enjoyed learning how to sew as well as designing and making the outfits.

**Class 3:** Following on from last week the children in class 3 have now created a frame for their buzzer games.

**Class 4:** Class 4 have also enjoyed continuing to design their buzzer games this week.

**Class 5:** The children really enjoyed going to the Pantomime and this probably could have been everyone's learning highlight this week! It is really inspiring for children to go and see a live Theatre performance and, when asked, three quarters of the class said that they would have loved to have been up on the stage performing too!

**Class 6:** Class 6 excelled in their PE lesson this week. They played two matches of Bench Ball lasting 15 minutes each. Mrs Beames commented that the children were absolutely brilliant in the sportsmanship and comradery that they showed. Well done class 6!

**Class 7 & 8:** Year 6 took a trip to Asda to buy resources for their Christmas Fair. They had a budget of £15 and plan to make products on Monday to sell at the Fair on Tuesday.

## Calm Corner

A huge thank you to Mrs Edmondson and Miss Ryman, who have been using their artistic skills to create a wonderful space for the children in our entrance area. The stencil work they created is so beautiful and reflects the meaning of our school vision brilliantly, with the willow tree leaves symbolising the unique part each of us plays in the school. Thank you also to Mrs Hicks for her vision and for overseeing the project.



We hope that the children will enjoy spending time in this space, which will be an area for quiet play and reflection.

## Football News

On Monday some of our year 5 and 6 boys played in matches against Charlton Kings Junior School. Our team which is made up of mainly year 6 boys won 2-1 in what was a very close match.

Our other team (mostly year 5 children) took on the challenge of playing a year 6 CK team and lost 6-3. In what was another competitive match.

Congratulations to both teams. Win, lose or draw we are always proud of the team players that you are and very impressed by the skills you show on the pitch.



## PTA Reminders

### Christmas Fair and Year 6 Business Link —Tuesday 17th December

The Year 6 Business Link/Christmas Fair will be taking place next Tuesday 17th. **Just a reminder that the classes will be coming down to the Fair during the school day and so please send in a little bit of cash with your child to school on Tuesday morning.** The Fair will continue after school and the PTA will be selling refreshments. We would welcome any cake donations to sell at the Fair and so if you can supply any cakes please bring in on Tuesday. We hope you can come and support this event and help us and the Year 6s raise some money.



### Discos—Wednesday 18th December

On Wednesday 18th we have the Christmas disco—Years 3&4 6-6:45pm and Years 5&6 7-8pm. On the night please bring a water bottle, the entrance slip with £2 and change for sweets, glow sticks, tattoos and bracelets. Please do not bring phones, your own food or wear heels or heeled shoes.

**Collection will be under the Willow tree and no children will be allowed to leave without an adult.**

## St Mark's Cheltenham Food Bank Christmas Collection

The run-up to Christmas is often exciting and busy time of preparation, but it's important for us to remember those who may need a helping hand at this time of year. With that in mind we will be collecting items for the Cheltenham Food Bank over the next couple of weeks. If you would like to contribute please see the list below of essential items that would be gratefully received.



<b>Tinned Soup</b>	<b>Biscuits</b>
<b>Tinned Beans</b>	<b>Christmas treats such as Mince Pies</b>
<b>Tinned Meat</b>	<b>Nappies</b>
<b>Pasta</b>	<b>Washing up Liquid</b>
<b>Rice</b>	<b>Washing Powder</b>

*The Food Bank are unable to accept any fresh produce.*



A representative will be coming to school on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December to collect the items and so if you are able to donate in this way, please bring to the office by Thursday 19th December.

**Thank you for your continued generosity in enabling us to support these charities.**

### Class 2 Marble Treat

Class 2 will be having their marble treat on Wednesday 18th December and so the children can wear their own home clothes for the day.



### Stone Age Outdoor Learning Days Y3

We are delighted that Mr Oakey will be leading Year 3 Stone Age Outdoor Learning days on the last week of term.

**Class 2 - Tuesday 17th December**

**Class 1 - Wednesday 18th December**

The children should wear non school uniform that they do not mind getting dirty.

**Please ensure they wear warm clothing and have coats and wellies!**



### W/C 16th December

**Mon 16th** - Year 6 Making day

**Tue 17th** - Rocksteady concert for Rocksteady Parents 9.30am

**Tue 17th** - Christmas Fair from 3.15pm

**Children to bring in change in the morning**

**Tue 17th** - Stone Age Outdoor Learning with Mr Oakey Class 2

**Wed 18th** - Stone Age Outdoor Learning with Mr Oakey Class 1

**Wed 18th** - PTA Discos Y3 & Y4 – 6-6.45pm / Y5 & Y6 – 7-8pm

**Wed 18th** - Thursday Lunch Menu

**Thu 19th** - Caterlink Christmas Lunch (Festive Menu Only—Lunches have been pre-ordered)

**Fri 20th** - End of Term - School Finishes Normal Time 3.10pm

### Christmas Calendar Dates



## Extra Curricular Clubs - Autumn Term 2

### Monday

Boys Football Y5-6	FINISHED
Baking Buddies Y3-6	FINISHED
Gym Club Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Chinese Language Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm
Netball Y6	FINISHED
Recorders Y3-6	FINISHED
Running Club Y3-6	FINISHED

### Tuesday

Orchestra Y3-6	FINISHED
Tennis Y4-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm

### Wednesday

Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.30pm
Cyclestars Y3-6	FINISHED
French Club Y3-6	FINISHED

### Thursday

Girls Football Y4-6	FINISHED
Coding Club Y6	FINISHED
Choir Y3-6	FINISHED



## 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**



## Letter Sent Home

- SkillZONE Trip Year 5 Letters



## Outdoor Learning - Spring Term 1

### Class 1 & 2: Every Thursday

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



### December

Mon 16th - Year 6 Making day  
Tue 17th - Rocksteady concert for Rocksteady Parents 9.30am  
Tue 17th - Christmas Fair  
Tue 17th - Stone Age Outdoor Learning Class 2  
Wed 18th - Stone Age Outdoor Learning Class 1  
Wed 18th - PTA Discos Y3 & Y4 – 6-6.45pm / Y5 & Y6 – 7-8pm  
Wed 18th - Thursday Lunch Menu  
Thu 19th - Caterlink Christmas Lunch (Festive Menu Only)  
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 and Thursday**

**Class 2: Wednesday and Friday**

**Class 3: Tuesday and Wednesday**

**Class 4: Tuesday and Friday**

**Class 5: Tuesday and Thursday**

**Class 6: Tuesday and Thursday**

**Class 7: Tuesday and Friday**

**Class 8: Monday and Tuesday**



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

## 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.



**Applications for holiday FSM vouchers for December 2024 Winter holiday will be open from midday 25 November until midday on 6 December.**

Voucher emails will be sent from week commencing 16 December. Please check your junk/spam folders during this period as sometimes the vouchers end up there.

If you have not received their vouchers by 23 December, please submit a query via the Microsoft Form [HERE](#).

This Winter holiday period, 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 we 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.**

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

**Families who have signed up previously do not need to re-register for December 2024 holiday vouchers** - they will already have been included. Families that have previously signed up will need to contact Gloucestershire County Council 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 Gloucestershire County Council are encouraging parents that have not previously signed up, to sign up as soon as they can.

Please note Gloucestershire County Council will check eligibility for the scheme by cross-referencing with the term-time free school meal register. You can register by visiting the [apply for free school meals](#) page.

**Using vouchers** – vouchers 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. Vouchers not received should be queried via the Microsoft Form [HERE](#) by the end of the holiday period.

**For any parents 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.**

## Move More Camp @ St Mark's Reminder

A reminder that *Move More* will be running an activity camp in the holidays at St Mark's on 2nd and 3rd of January.

They offer an award winning delivery and a huge range of activities.



## A Very Regency Christmas

The Regent Arcade in Cheltenham are running some Christmas activities for families which they have asked us to share with you.

Please see link below.

<https://www.regentarcade.co.uk/Article?id=939>

