



# St Mark's C of E Junior School

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

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 9th January 2026

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

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Our Value in focus this term is Courage

## Headteacher's Message:

We're in full swing of 'Spring' Term, despite the particularly wintery weather! I do hope that you were able to have some special time with family and friends over the Christmas holidays. We're looking forward to all that this next term has in store.

**The New Year brings fresh opportunities to reset and to think about whether there are things in our lives that we want to do differently or even to try something new.** We have been reflecting on this together and how the value of **Courage** is needed when we **step out of our comfort zone** but that, when we do, we can **grow in confidence** and amaze ourselves with what we can achieve!

We also reminded ourselves that achieving a goal or a challenge can feel hard at times but the important thing is to remember that **we are not alone** and to take **one step at a time**. We will continue to unpack the value of **Courage** this term.



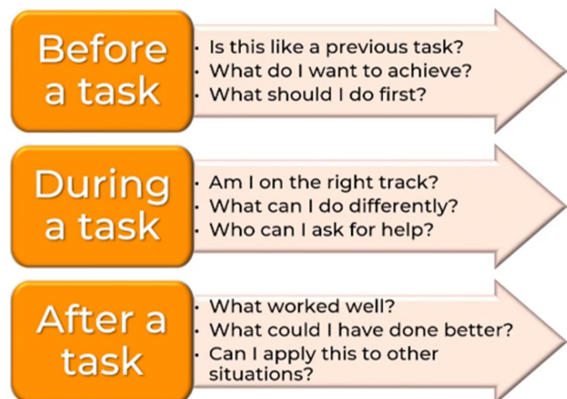
**On Thursday, we had a whole school session on 'How our brain works when we learn'.** We tested our knowledge with True & False statements and, through watching a short clip, we learnt that our brains have billions of neurons that make connections when we start learning and the more we challenge our brain, the stronger these connections become. Then came the key word of the session: **Metacognition**

**Metacognition means "thinking about your thinking."**

It's like having a little coach in your head that helps you notice what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how you can do it even better next time.

We use metacognitive thinking when we:

- **Plan** how to solve a problem
- **Check** if our idea is working
- **Change** a strategy if something is too tricky
- **Reflect** on what helped you learn well



These are some of the questions that we are using in our learning to help strengthen the connections in our brain so that we can learn with confidence and success.



In simple terms:

**Metacognition helps our brain become a stronger learner by paying attention to how we learn.**

These questions can be applied to all sorts of different contexts so please do try them out at home too!

*Have a super weekend,*

**Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team**



## Cheltenham Young Artists 2026

Last term, children at St Mark's were invited to enter the **Cheltenham Young Artist 2026** competition, based on the theme *My Favourite Things*.



The judges had a very difficult task, selecting just **50 artworks** from an impressive **450 entries**. These selected pieces will be exhibited at the **Gardens Gallery** on **Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th January**, celebrating the creativity of children from across the area. All shortlisted works have been professionally framed for display.

We are delighted to announce that the following pupils from **St Mark's** will have their artwork featured in the exhibition:

**Tegan (Class 5)** — *Ma Famille*

**Rex (Class 6)** — *I Love Heinz Beans!*

**Luke (Class 8)** — *"Checkout" My Favourite Logos*

Families and friends are warmly invited to visit the exhibition at **Gardens Gallery, Montpellier Gardens, Cheltenham GL50 1SW**, open from **10am–4pm**. **Entry is free**.

Please note that on **Sunday**, the exhibition will close at **2.30pm** to prepare for the awards ceremony, so early visits are recommended.



**Huge congratulations** to Tegan, Rex and Luke — we are incredibly proud of your achievements and look forward to hearing all about the awards ceremony!

Well done and thank you to everyone who entered the competition. The standard of entries was fantastic, and it's clear the judges had a very tough decision choosing the finalists.

### Lego Club News

St Mark's Lego Club has risen from 400th place to an impressive 40th place on the inter-schools competition leaderboard. As mentioned in our last newsletter, we were one of Fabretta's Favourites, earning us 15 points!

To top it off, Henry and Toby won Builder of the Week and received a certificate in today's Celebration Assembly. This was awarded for their Scarecrow build, in which they created a detailed farm scene including a scarecrow, farmhouse, tractor with crops, and animals. Well done to Toby and Henry — such a fantastic achievement!



This term's theme is Winter Olympics, which we are very much looking forward to.

Parents and pupils can visit the website and vote for their favourite builds by following this link and searching for St Mark's Church of England Junior School: [www.kidswithbricks.com/voting-page](http://www.kidswithbricks.com/voting-page)

### Teaching & Learning Owls

*Silver - Eloise & Tegan*

**Congratulations to our badge winners!**



## Extra Curricular Clubs Spring Term 1



### Monday

Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.30pm
Chinese Language Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm
Gymnastics Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Hockey Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Netball Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Recorders Y3-6	Lunchtime

### Tuesday

Orchestra Y3-6	12.30pm - 1.00pm
Book Club Y3-4	12.30pm - 1.00pm
Choir Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Tennis Y4-6	3.15pm - 4.10pm

### Wednesday

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

### Thursday

Brass Club Y4	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Coding Y6	3.10pm - 4.00pm
Kids with Bricks (Lego) Y3-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm

### Friday

Girls Football Y4-6	12.30pm - 1.00pm
Boys Football Y5-6	1.00pm - 1.30pm

*Please see club selections [table](#) for club dates!*

## School Term Dates

2025-26

Term 3: Mon 5th Jan - Fri 13th Feb 2026

Term 4: Mon 23th Feb – Fri 27th Mar 2026

Term 5: Mon 13th April – Fri 22nd May 2026

Term 6: Mon 1st June – Mon 20th July 2026

**Inset Days:**

**1st Sept, 2nd Sept, 24th Oct, 1st June 2026, 20th July 2026**



## Letters Sent Home

- In the Net—Year 4 Letter
- Leversfest26 Letter (Year 6)



2025-26

## Diary Dates



### January

Wed 14th - Year 5/6 Swimming Lessons Start  
Mon 26th - SEND Coffee Morning 9am Year 3&4  
Tue 27th - SEND Coffee Morning 9am Year 5&6

### February

Tue 3rd - Year 6 National Measurement Check  
Thu 5th - Rags Collection  
Thu 5th - Gymnastics Competition—9.30am-11.30am Yr 3 & 4  
Thu 5th - Gymnastics Competition—12-30 – 2.30pm Yr 5 & 6  
Mon 9th - Children's Mental Health Week  
Tue 10th - Safer Internet Day  
Thu 12th - Book Look  
Fri 13th - End of Term 3  
Mon - 23rd Start of Term 4

### Advance Notice of Some Key Dates

11th May - Y6 SATs Week  
10th June - Sports Day  
8th - 10th July - Y6 Residential  
16th July - Y6 St Mark's School Leavers Service - 1.45pm

## PE - Spring Term 1

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

**All swimmers to wear PE Kit on a Wednesday**

**Class 1: Tuesday & Thursday**

**Class 2: Tuesday & Thursday**

**Class 3: Monday & Friday**

**Class 4: Thursday & Friday**

**Class 5: Tuesday & Wednesday**

**Class 6: Wednesday & Thursday**

**Class 7: Wednesday & Friday**

**Class 8: Wednesday & Friday**



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

## Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Learning has finished for the term and will return again after Easter.

