



St Mark's C of E Junior School

Growing together, becoming all we are created to be

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 13th February 2026

www.stmarksjunior.com

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

Our Value in focus this term is Courage

Headteacher's Message:

We have had a wonderful end to the term, marked by a vibrant and reflective **Children's Mental Health Week**. Throughout the week, pupils took part in a wide range of activities designed to help them think about how we keep our brains healthy.

After half term, we will be continuing this important focus as we begin learning more about the **5 Ways to Wellbeing** – practical, simple actions that support mental health every day. You can read more about this in the section below. We look forward to building on the brilliant understanding the children have already shown and working together as a whole-school community to put these ideas into action.

For now, I wish you all the very best for a lovely half-term break. Thank you for your continued support, enthusiasm, and partnership throughout this busy term. We hope the week ahead brings plenty of rest, fun, and time with family and friends, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back after the break on Monday 23rd February.

A reminder of the change to school day timings, effective from Monday 23rd February:

All children to be in school **by 8.45am** (gates open the usual time of 8.35am). **Pick up at the new time of 3.15pm**

Have a super weekend,

Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team



House Captains Launch the '5 Ways to Wellbeing'

Yesterday, as part of **Children's Mental Health Week**, our House Captains led an engaging and thoughtful presentation introducing the children to the **5 Ways to Wellbeing**. These five simple actions are widely recognised as key steps that help support positive mental and emotional health:

- **Connect** – building strong relationships with friends, family, and the people around us.
- **Be Active** – moving our bodies in ways that are fun and make us feel good.
- **Take Notice** – paying attention to the present moment, noticing the world around us, and appreciating the little things.
- **Keep Learning** – trying new activities, developing new skills, and staying curious.
- **Give** – showing kindness, helping others, and contributing to our school community.



After half term, we will be exploring one of these aspects each week. With the support of our School Council Representatives and House Captains, children will be invited to think about practical, meaningful ways we can bring each of the 5 Ways into our daily school life. We look forward to seeing the thoughtful ideas and positive actions that will grow from this whole-school focus.

Learning Highlight of the Week

Class 1: In Geography, the children have started studying our local area. They explored our grounds, thinking about where we are located in Benhall and observing what surrounds us. They discussed what the environment is like at this time of year. The children also created journey sticks using string, attaching small natural objects to represent features they saw along their route.

Class 2: In Art, the children explored different pencil grades, creating a range of mark making textures, in preparation for their drawing of a nightingale.

Year 4: Year 4 have had a joint highlight this week. In English, they have thoroughly enjoyed writing onomatopoeia poems. In addition, they have been busy perfecting their Samba routines in dance.

Class 5: Class 5 have also been writing poetry inspired by rivers. They have been focusing on using figurative language, including personification, alliteration, similes and metaphors, as well as experimenting with rhyme.

Class 6: The children enjoyed a competitive game of bench ball this week. The children reflected on what they had learned from the PE lesson. Through the game, they developed their teamwork skills and demonstrated excellent sportsmanship. They recognised the importance of being both a gracious winner and a respectful loser.

Class 7: In PSHE, the children sketched their own islands based on the theme of 'belonging'. On their islands, they included all the things that comfort them and help them feel safe and valued.

Class 8: Inspired by the Street artist Banksy, the children designed and created their own graffiti tags.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING!

On Monday, Eleanor and Riana proudly represented St Mark's at the Cheltenham finals of the *Look Who's Talking* Oracy Competition. It was a wonderful morning filled with inspiring speeches from children across 20 different schools in Cheltenham.

The range of topics was fantastic. Eleanor captivated the audience with her enthusiastic speech about her love of bouldering, while Riana delivered a thought-provoking presentation on Artificial Intelligence. Other fascinating subjects included volcanoes, beekeeping, rap music, girls football, hedgehogs and space, to name just a few.

The standard of speaking was incredibly high. Judges were looking for strong expression and projection, confidence, engaging content, purposeful hand gestures as well as genuine passion and commitment to the chosen topic. Each participant also had to respond to a question from the judges at the end of their speech.

We are extremely proud of both Eleanor and Riana for their hard work, courage and excellent representation at such a prestigious event.

Netball Festival

Last Friday, our netball players took part in a netball festival against St John's and Leckhampton Primary at The High School Leckhampton. On what was a rather drizzly evening, the girls rose to the occasion and played some fantastic matches. Throughout the festival, we secured wins, earned a draw and battled hard in games where we were narrowly defeated, gaining valuable experience in each one.



The girls should be incredibly proud of themselves. Their teamwork, enthusiasm and positive attitude shone through.

They represented St Mark's superbly and are all very much looking forward to their next match after half term!

Football Festival



Yesterday our Year 5 & 6 football teams took part in a football festival at Cheltenham College Prep School. Both teams played with heart, resilience, and excellent teamwork. All players showed real dedication and gave everything on the pitch — passing with confidence, moving into space, and supporting each other at every opportunity. The teamwork was excellent, with every player contributing and giving their best, demonstrating great commitment from start to finish.

They exemplified the values we encourage when taking part in sport — respect, effort, and sportsmanship — and were all a credit to St Mark's throughout. Well done to both teams you all did St Mark's very proud!

Year 6 - Won their group with 3 Wins & 1 Draw. Final lost 1-2 - Tournament Runners Up

Year 5 - Won 4 & 2 Draws - Final won 3-2 on penalties— Tournament Winners

What an amazing achievement for St Mark's with both teams getting to the final.

A big thank you to Leo's Dad Mark for helping the year 5 team and to Mrs Campbell for your unwavering support and dedication.



Author Visit - Reminders

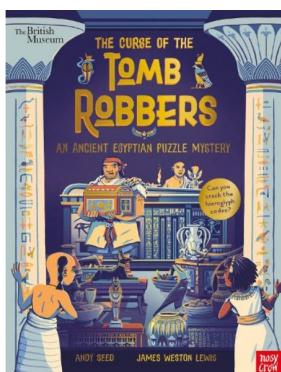
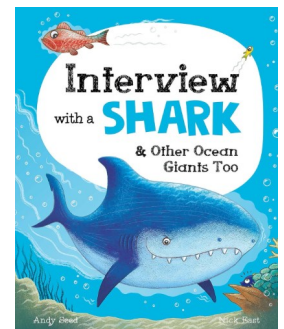
We are looking forward to welcoming author **Andy Seed** to St Mark's on **Friday 6th March**. Andy will begin the day with a whole-school assembly, followed by interactive workshops for each year group.

Workshop Focus

- **Year 3 & 4 pupils** will be exploring Andy's 'Interview with a...' book series.
- **Year 5 & 6 pupils** will focus on Andy's puzzle mystery books

Contribution Towards the Visit

To help cover the cost of our Book Week author visit, we are asking for **contribution of £2.52 per child**. Please make payment **via Parent Pay by Friday 27th February**, if you are able to do so.



Pre-ordering Books

If you would like to pre-order a signed book:

- Please return the completed pre-order form and cash to the school office by **Friday 27th February**.
- The order form has been emailed to you. If you require a printed copy, please call into the school office.
- Money must be placed in a named envelope along with the completed form.

*Alternatively, Andy will be running a **book signing stall after school on Friday 6th March**. He will bring a wider selection of titles, and **contactless payments will be available**.*

Readathon—Monday 23rd February to Friday 6th March

St Mark's readathon starts straight after half term. We will hand out **Sponsorship and Reading Tracker forms** to the children on **Monday 23rd February**. Please look out for these on the first day back after half term!

There are exciting prizes to be won for both the most money raised and the most time spent reading! Sponsorship money can be paid as a single payment **via your ParentPay account from Monday 23rd February**.

Teaching & Learning Owls

Gold - Indie

Silver - Beca, Ruby, Darcie

Bronze - Lyra & James

Congratulations to our badge winners!



Gloucestershire's Young Photographer of Year 2026

We are delighted to announce that we have once again been invited to take part in Gloucestershire's Young Photographer of the Year Competition. Having won Best Overall School for the past two years, we couldn't miss the opportunity to enter again — and we hope you're up for the challenge once more!



Entry details:

- Each pupil may submit one digital photograph
- Photographs may be colour or monochrome
- Image resolution must be 1920px wide x 1080px high
- The entire image must be photographed by the entrant
- AI-generated images are not permitted
- Each entry must include the pupil's name and the title of the photograph

Please see the full competition rules attached to this week's newsletter.

Additional information:

- Winners will be notified in **early April**
- Cash prizes will be awarded for **1st, 2nd and 3rd place**, additional photographs may receive **Highly Commended** or **Commended Certificates**
- The Winning entries, and all the other photographs selected by the judges, will be showcased at the **Awards Evening at the Bacon Theatre, Cheltenham on Wednesday 29th April.**

What do you need to do?

Take and submit to school just one titled digital image on any subject of your choice.

Entries should be emailed in **JPEG format** to

clerical@st-marks.gloucs.sch.uk

Deadline for entries is Friday 6th March 2026

St Mark's Photography Competition

We will be holding a St Mark's Photography Competition alongside this. Every entry that gets submitted will go in to both competitions. Photographs will be anonymously displayed and judged by staff. A prize will be awarded to the winner chosen from each year group.

We can't wait to see what you capture—Get snapping!

Caterlink World Book Day Book Design Competition

Caterlink are inviting children to take part in their World Book Day Book Design Competition. Children can collect a competition form from the school office.

How to Enter

- Use Caterlink's competition sheet.
- Design a food themed book and draw the front cover.
 - ◇ For example: James and the Giant Peach — but children are encouraged to be creative and invent their own food-inspired book idea.
- Once completed, please email the picture to: clerical@st-marks.gloucs.sch.uk
We will forward all entries to the Caterlink team.
- The deadline to hand in your entry is **Wednesday 25th February**. Caterlink will announce winners on World book day!

Prizes—Winners will receive a Golden Ticket for a book voucher.

caterlink
feeding the imagination



Extra Curricular Clubs Spring Term 2



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 (Ends 23/02/26)
Netball Y5-6	3.10pm - 4.00pm (Ends 23/02/26)
Recorders Y3-6	Lunchtime

Tuesday

Orchestra Y3-6	12.30pm - 1.00pm
Book Club Y5-6	1.00pm - 1.30pm
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 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!

Holiday Club C3 Church Cheltenham

Monday 17th August – Friday 21st August 2026

The C3 Church Cheltenham's Holiday Club is for children aged 5-11 years (just finished school year 6) and runs from 10am to 2:30pm each day. There is no cost for holiday club, but there is an opportunity for you to give a donation if you'd like to.

The Holiday Club is about fun, friendship and faith. At its heart, Holiday Club is Bible based and comes from a desire to teach children about who God is and why he sent Jesus.

For more information, please click [here](#). There is also a QR code on the Holiday Club's poster attached with this week's newsletter which will direct you to the booking page.



School Term Dates

2025-26

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

Term 4: Mon 23rd 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 June 2026, 20th July 2026



2025-26



February

Mon 23rd - Start of Term 4
Mon 23rd - Readathon Starts
Tue 24th GB Athlete's Visit

March

Mon 2nd—Fri 6th - Book Week
Wed 4th - Speaking Out Competition 9am
Wed 4th - Book Fair after School
Thu 5th - World Book Day
Fri 6th - Andy Seed Author Visit
Tue 17th - Parents Evening
Wed 18th Parents Evening
Wed 18th - PTA Meeting the Hatherley
Thus 19th - Y4 National Roman Legion Museum Trip
Thus 19th - Y5 Waterways Trip
Fri 20th - Red Nose Day
Wed 25th - In the Net Production Year 4 at Lakeside
Thu 26th - PTA School Discos

Advance Notice of Some Key Dates

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

Letters Sent Home



PE - Spring Term 2

**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 & Friday

Class 3: Monday & Friday

Class 4: Thursday & Friday

Class 5: Tuesday & Wednesday

Class 6: Wednesday & Thursday

Class 7: Wednesday & Friday

Class 8: Wednesday & Friday

