



St Mark's C of E Junior School

Growing together, becoming all we are created to be

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 6th March 2026

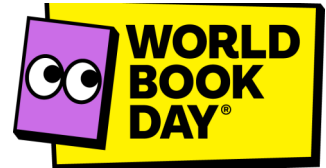
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Our Value in focus this term is Courage

Headteacher's Message:

We have enjoyed a fantastic week, celebrating the wonderful world of books! From **author workshops** to **book fairs** to **sharing our learning with children from Benhall**— it's been action packed!



One of the highlights of the week was having the pleasure of hosting St Mark's Speaking Out Competition, and what an incredible event it was! We were absolutely blown away by the talent on display in both the individual poetry category and the class poem competition.

Each performance was delivered with confidence, clarity, and wonderful expression and intonation — not to mention the fabulous choreographed actions and dynamic presentation throughout. Our judges certainly had a very tough job choosing the winners!

And the individual winners are...

Year 3: Rufus, Year 4: Jesse, Year 5: Honey, Year 6: Elena and Lena (joint winners - it was simply too close to call!)

A huge well done to every child who bravely took to the stage in the individual poetry competition. It takes incredible courage to perform in front of an audience, and we could clearly see how much rehearsal time, dedication, and commitment went into perfecting each poem. You are all superstars!

Now onto the hotly contested class poem competition. It truly was a fantastic showcase of teamwork and creativity. Any one of the classes could have been crowned winners — they were all *that good!*

In the end the judges had to make a decision and crowned **Class 1 the Lower School winners**, with their poem *Sick* by Shel Silverstein. The judges praised Class 1 for their fantastic pace, timing and delightful expression throughout the poem. Well done Class 1.



Class 6 won the Upper School with their poem, *The Tin Can* by Margaret Mahy.

The judges commented that the children performed with great clarity and to a very high standard. They were particularly impressed that the class maintained a strong and lively beat throughout the performance.

Thank you to all the parents and families who supported the children in practising for the competition, as well as those who came along on the day to watch and cheer them on.

What a wonderful celebration of confidence, creativity, and performance. We are so proud of you all!

It was also a real pleasure for St Mark's children to meet with children from Benhall yesterday. St Mark's performed their Speaking Out Class poems to the children and then shared reading time together. It was a lovely collaboration, bringing our two schools together.

A huge thank you as well to Andy Seed for visiting St Mark's today - you can read more about his visit on page 2!

Well done to the children who have been taking part in the St Mark's readathon and collecting sponsorship. Payments can still be made over the weekend via ParentPay, but will close on Monday, when we will calculate the winners to be announced on Friday. Please remember to hand in your sponsorship forms and Readathon tracker forms on Monday, in order to enter the competition.

Many thanks for your support in making this week such a success for the children and my thanks, too, to **Miss Thornhill, our Reading Lead**, who has co-ordinated the fantastic events.

Have a super weekend, Mrs A Fitch and the Staff Team

Author Workshops



Today we had the privilege of welcoming local author Andy Seed to St Mark's. Andy began the day by delivering an inspiring, funny and engaging assembly about what life is like as an author. The children and staff were captivated as he shared his stories about his travels, awards and what it feels like to receive one of his books in the post for the first time – a moment he said still feels just as magical every time it happens.

Andy also gave the children the chance to answer questions about authors and books, and they impressed him with their knowledge and enthusiasm. Some pupils were even rewarded with fun moustache pencils for their fantastic answers!



Throughout the day, Andy ran individual workshops with each year group. During the Year 3 and 4 session, he spoke about his "Interview with a..." book series. He explored different writing techniques and explained how he uses these to bring his books to life. The children also had the opportunity to ask their own questions and learn more about the writing process.

Year 5 & 6 had great fun learning about Andy's puzzle mystery books. He even brought in a full sized sarcophagus to show the children!

We hope Andy's visit has inspired some of our budding young writers to realise that becoming an author is something they could achieve too. At the heart of being an author is a love of reading and books – something we are proud to encourage at St Mark's.

Benhall Stream Geography Fieldtrip



Following on from class 5s visit to Benhall stream last week, which you may have read about in last week's learning highlight, this week it was Class 6s turn to visit the stream to take part in the outdoor investigation.

During their visit, the children carried out a range of investigations, including examining pollution levels, testing water quality, measuring water depth and observing local wildlife.

They children took great pride in their investigations and made some brilliant observations about the stream and environment. Well done Year 5!

Book Fair

Thank you to everyone who came along to our Book Fair this week, run by a brilliant Read with Robyn. We hope you enjoyed browsing the books— it was fantastic to see so many of you there.

There is still time to order books online, however the link will close on Monday. You can complete an order form by clicking [here](#). Shortly after, a payment link will be sent to your phone.

The school receives 60% commission from all sales, helping to raise valuable funds for our whole school community. We will let you know how much was raised and which books we have purchased for the class libraries for everyone to enjoy.

Books ordered at the fair and online are due to arrive in school in a couple of weeks time and will be hand delivered to your child's class. Thank you again for your continued support!



Learning Highlight of the Week



Class 1: Class 1 enjoyed the drop everything and read sessions whilst wearing their cosy clothes on World Book Day.

Class 2: The highlight of the week for Class 2 was the Speaking Out Competition. They thoroughly enjoyed performing their poem 'The FA Cup Under the Sea', by Ian Bland.

Class 3: The children were really inspired by Andy Seed's visit today. The assembly and workshop captivated their imaginations.

Class 4: Class 4 enjoyed meeting children from Benhall this week. They particularly enjoyed performing their Speaking Out poem again and sharing their work with children from Benhall.

Class 5: In Science, Class 5 conducted an experiment involving creating a chemical reaction by mixing vinegar and bicarbonate of soda. They were asked to observe whether the two substances created an irreversible or reversible reaction.

Class 6: Class 6 also enjoyed meeting children from Benhall this week. It was a lovely opportunity to perform their class poem again, as well as share their World Book Day activity work, based on the book 'The King who Banned the Dark'.

Class 7: In PE, the children had fun taking part in circuits, as part of their fitness unit.

Class 8: In Art, class 8 have been creating their own Banksy-style banknotes.



Deputy Headteacher Interviews

We wanted to let families know that on **Thursday 12th** and **Friday 13th March**, we will be holding interviews for the position of **Deputy Headteacher**, in preparation for 'passing the baton' from Mr Sim, who—as you know—will be finishing his time at St Mark's in September after 28 years of incredible commitment and dedication.

Thursday will be a particularly full and exciting day, as we are keen for the children to be involved in the process as much as possible. Our School Council representatives have been busy gathering thoughtful and imaginative questions from their classes, ready to put to the candidates during their pupil interview panel.

We look forward to keeping you updated and will share news of the appointment as soon as we are able.



Uniform Reminder

Please see the reminder below regarding our school uniform expectations.

Girls should not be wearing flared trousers for PE or as part of their standard school uniform.

PE Kit Requirements

- Round neck T-shirt in house colour - school logoed if possible
- Navy or black shorts, or a plain navy tracksuit
- Plain navy tops, or school jumper/cardigan
- No branded tops

School Uniform Requirements

- Grey trousers, of appropriate style
- Tailored grey shorts / skorts, skirt or pinafore dress, straight or pleated, of appropriate length
- White polo t-shirt
- A logo embroidered navy-blue jumper or cardigan
- White, black or grey socks
- Traditional black shoes or smart, completely black trainer style shoes
- Navy blue striped or gingham dress – optional (Summer term only or in particularly hot weather during Spring term)

Please ensure all items of clothing are clearly labelled with your child's name.

Quicksticks Hockey Tournament

We are thrilled to share the highlights from our recent Quicksticks hockey tournament! Our team delivered an impressive display of teamwork and resilience, finishing in a commendable fourth place. Each player contributed to the success of the team, demonstrating excellent sportsmanship throughout the matches.

The team's excellent passing skills created exciting scoring opportunities, leading to some fantastic goals that had everyone cheering from the side-lines.

It was fantastic to see how well everyone worked together, supporting one another both on and off the pitch. Even when faced with challenging moments, when the score was not in our favour, the team did not give up. Their determination and perseverance were truly commendable, reflecting the spirit of our school values.

Well done, everyone! Your hard work and dedication made us all incredibly proud.



Wildlife Quiz

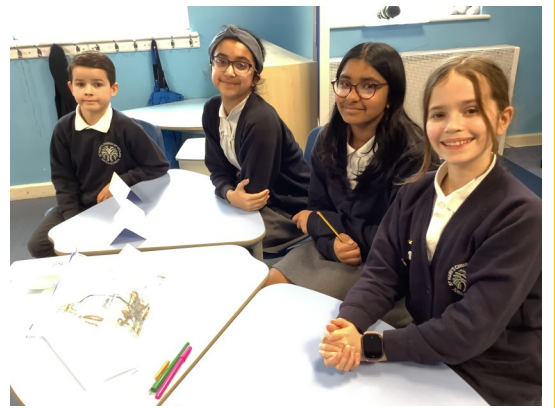
On Tuesday St Mark's proudly hosted a wildlife quiz. We were delighted to welcome teams of four children from **Christchurch** and **Richard Pates**, alongside our very own **St Mark's** team.

The children faced some challenging questions, which they tackled with great confidence. Even when they weren't completely sure of an answer, they offered some brilliant and well thought-out guesses!



There were numerous rounds covering wildlife, flowers, shrubs, and trees. The competition was strong throughout and we faced some very tough opposition, making the event even more exciting.

A huge congratulations to Jess, Riana, Mya and Charlie for participating and demonstrating such impressive knowledge. You represented St Mark's brilliantly — well done!



Cross Country

On Thursday we took a small team of girls to Ashley Manor for the final cross country race of the season. It was a fast paced race, with some extremely long and arduous hills which our runners tackled with true grit a determination.

Well done to Summer, Stella and Evie for competing for St Mark's this year. We are incredibly proud of you all.

Good luck to the boys who are racing today!



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!

Health and Wellbeing Survey

As part of our Personal Development and PSHE curriculum, pupils will be invited to take part in a confidential and anonymous survey on health and wellbeing, led by Gloucestershire County Council. This survey helps us gather pupil voices and identify areas for improvement; this process adheres to UK GDPR and has been approved by the council's Information Governance team. Children in Y4, Y5 and Y6 will be completing the survey during the week beginning 16th March.

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



March

Fri 13th - Class 2 Locality Walk 9.45am
Mon 16th - Class 1 Locality Walk 9.45am
Tue 17th - Parents Evening
Wed 18th Parents Evening
Wed 18th - PTA Meeting the Hatherley 8pm
Thus 19th - Y4 National Roman Legion Museum Trip
Thus 19th - Y5 Waterways Trip
Fir 20th - Class 2 Locality Walk 9.45am
Fri 20th - Red Nose Day
Tue 24th - Class 1 Locality Walk 1pm
Wed 25th - In the Net Production Year 4 at Lakeside
Thu 26th - PTA Easter Themed Cake Sale & Competition
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

- Cadbury World Year 5 Trip
- Reading Scheme Letter



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

