



# St Mark's C of E Junior School

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

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 13th March 2026

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

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Our Value in focus this term is Courage

## Headteacher's Message:

Thank you and congratulations to the children who took part in the St Mark's Readathon. We are so impressed by the number of pupils who participated in the readathon and completely blown away by the total number of hours the children have spent reading! The level of enthusiasm and commitment shown by the children is outstanding. As a result, we decided to award prizes to the child who read the most in each class, as well as crowning an overall winner. **Well done to all our class winners, we are super proud of you all.**

We are delighted to announce that the winner of this year's readathon is **Lena from Class 7**, who read for a staggering **26 hours and 48 minutes!!!** What an incredible achievement—very well done, Lena.

**Rufus from Class 2** took home the prize for the highest amount of sponsorship money raised. Many congratulations, Rufus!

We were also delighted by the generosity shown through the sponsorship donations. **In total, the Readathon raised an outstanding £1,411.** These funds will be used to purchase books for our new reading spine, as well as to enhance our class libraries. We may also be able to purchase some more beanbags for the library, to make the children's library time that little bit more cosy and inviting.

We must also say another **thank you** to everyone who supported our Book Fair. The event raised £600, which means that St Mark's will receive £382 of free books for class libraries! We will share further updates once the books have arrived at school.

A reminder that the Spring Parents' Evenings will take place next week. If you have not yet booked a slot, please contact the school office, who will be happy to assist you. We are extremely proud of every child at St Mark's, and Parents' Evenings provide a valuable opportunity to discuss your child's progress and development over the year.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support as we work together to ensure that all children at St Mark's are able to grow and flourish.

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



## Teaching & Learning Owls

**Gold - Ayla & Bella**

**Silver - Arthur & Amelie**

**Bronze - Seb, Jesse & Charlotte**

**Congratulations to our badge winners!**



## Learning Highlight of the Week

Class 1: In Art, the children have been learning to draw a Nightingale using their pencil sketching skills.

Class 2: Class 2 went on a locality walk around Benhall. They observed 7 different types of land use and annotated their findings on a base map.

Class 3: The children enjoyed DT this week, where they have been building Roman Chariots out of wood. They were tasked with cutting the wood themselves and using a glue gun to assemble their chariots.

Class 4: In PSHE, the children have been creating their own 'Zones of Regulation' posters. *Zones of Regulation* is a framework that categorises emotional states into four colour-coded zones (Blue, Green, Yellow, Red). This helps children to build self-awareness and regulation skills so they can better manage their emotions.

Class 5: DT was also a learning highlight for Class 5. Using cereal boxes and moss, twigs and grass they gathered from the school grounds, the children created models of a river. They then used key vocabulary they have learnt this term to label their rivers.

Class 6: In Music, Class 6 have been learning about Western South African music. This week they used African drums to bring their musical piece to life.

Class 7: Music was also a highlight for Class 7. They have been creating their very own musical scene, based on a specific event they remember from their time spent at St Mark's. They wrote a song, produced a script and developed choreography for their scene.

Class 8: In English, the children completed a 'slow write' about a diver and a shoal of fish. Slow writing is a teaching strategy that encourages pupils to take a deliberate, step-by-step approach to crafting their writing. By focusing on one sentence at a time, pupils can concentrate on the individual building blocks of strong writing – grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and style.

### Mock Trial

On Tuesday, a team of 12 year six pupils attended the *Mock Trial* at the University of Gloucestershire. The children had spent weeks preparing their case for the prosecution based upon a fictional scenario, with each child playing a role to support this. These roles included: the victim, the defendant's friends, prosecution solicitors, other witnesses, a legal adviser, a courtroom artist, a courtroom reporter and magistrates.

The children competed against a team from Greatfield Park and were brilliant in asking probing questions of witnesses as well as answering questions from the other team, especially when under cross-examination. Despite a "not guilty" verdict, our final position within the entire competition (not just against the team that we faced in court) is still yet to be decided as we score points based upon our performance against all schools in the competition.

**Special mention and congratulations to Grace, who won a prize for the best costume on the day—well done Grace!**

**A huge well done to those who took part. Not only did they do so with enthusiasm but fantastic commitment to their roles, with many often using time during lunchtime for extra preparation. An enjoyable afternoon for all.**



### Important Reminder About Safe Driving and Parking Outside School

We have received reports of dangerous driving and inconsiderate parking outside our school.

As a school community, we need to work together to ensure that everyone travels to and from school safely. We kindly ask that you do not drop children off on the zigzag lines outside the school or near the entrance to the school car park. These areas must remain clear to ensure that pedestrians can enter and leave the school safely.

Keeping these areas free of vehicles is essential for protecting children and families as they arrive at and leave

**NO  
DROP-OFF**





## Quicksticks Hockey Tournament Success

On **Monday 9th March**, one of our hockey teams participated in the **Quicksticks Hockey Tournament**, showcasing their skills and determination. It was brilliant to see how well they played, especially considering that for many, it was their first experience playing in a tournament.

The team's fantastic sportsmanship was evident throughout the day, as they worked seamlessly together, demonstrating excellent passing and communication on the pitch. Their teamwork was instrumental in achieving such great results, culminating in our **first-place finish** in the group stage.

**In the final match against Bishops Cleeve, the excitement was palpable as the score remained 2-all until the very end. With a thrilling goal scored during injury time, our team secured the gold medal!**

We are incredibly proud of each student for their hard work and commitment. Their achievements reflect not only their skill but also their dedication to supporting one another. Well done, team!



## Big Walk and Wheel

From **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March**, St Mark's will be taking part in the **Big Walk and Wheel**, the UK's largest inter-school cycling, walking, wheeling and scooting challenge.

It's free to take part and there are daily prizes to be won!

Big Walk and Wheel inspires pupils to make active journeys to school, improves air quality and tackles congestion around our school.

### How can you take part?

Please encourage your child / children to walk, use a wheelchair, scoot or cycle to school on as many days as possible during the event.

We would love for as many pupils to take part as possible but also realise that this may be difficult for some families. However, even parking your car a little further away and walking for a short distance counts towards the challenge!

If you would like to find out more please do check out their website

[Big Walk and Wheel 2026 -Parent and caregiver resources](#)

## Cross Country

Last Friday, Chris, Charlie, Henry, Beau, Oliver, Arthur, Josh, and Freddie, were invited to Ashley Manor for their final cross country race of the season.

Similarly to the girls' race last Thursday, it was a fast-paced event. The hill at Ashley Manor is always a challenge, but the boys tackled it expertly with determination and resilience.

Well done on your fantastic placings in the race, and thank you for representing St Mark's so well in cross country this year.



## Reading Award

A huge well done to Oliver in Class 7, who has completed the Year 6 reading list! Even more impressively, Oliver has completed the school reading list every single year since starting at St Mark's. This is a truly outstanding accomplishment.

It's clear that Oliver has a real love of reading and books, and we are all mightily impressed by his dedication and enthusiasm. As Oliver prepares to move on to secondary school, we hope his wonderful zest for reading continues to grow and flourish.

Congratulations, Oliver—what a fantastic achievement!



## Youth for Christ Visit - 9 Square in the Air

On Wednesday afternoon we welcomed **Youth for Christ** into school to play *9 Square in the Air* with some of our Year 5 and 6 children. They were promoting our **Wellbeing focus; Be Active and Take Notice**, encouraging the children to stay active while reflecting on an important message.

*9 Square in the Air* combines volleyball and 4 square into the ultimate game that gets everyone playing together, regardless of skill level. The player in the centre square (the "king" or "queen") serves the ball. If the ball drops in a player's square or if they hit it out of bounds, they are out. When someone is out, they go to the back of the line, and all other players rotate toward the centre.

During the session, Youth for Christ linked the game to the parable of **The Prodigal Son**. In the game when a child is out, it represents the prodigal son leaving home, wasting his inheritance, and ending up in a state of destitution and separation from his father. When a player is out, they go to the end of the line and eventually re-enter at square one. This parallels the son's journey back home—a humble return to the Father's house, acknowledging his unworthiness.

The aim of the game was to reach the centre ("King/Queen" square). This could be seen to represent the father's joyous, unconditional acceptance of the returning son in the parable and the son's restoration to a position of honour.

The children had a fantastic time taking part and really enjoyed the session. We would like to say a huge **thank you** to **Youth for Christ** for coming in to work with the children and delivering such an engaging activity.



## PTA Easter Bake Sale & Cake Competition—Thursday 26th March

We're holding a Easter Bake Event on 26th March, and we'd love the children to get involved!

Children are invited to bake and decorate an Easter-themed cake or treat at home and bring it into school.

These will be judged, and the winners will receive a chocolate Easter egg prize.

**After judging, cakes can either:**

- Be taken home, or
- Donated to the bake sale after school.

**Bake Sale**

We would also be very grateful for any extra cakes or baked goods to sell at the bake sale.

All money raised will go towards supporting the school through the PTA.

**Thank you for your support!**



## 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!*

## Comic Relief - Friday 20th March

This year we will be laughing proud, joining in the fun, with our own special **funky groove** once again for **Comic Relief's, Red Nose Day**.



Taking part in one day of silliness will raise money for essentials every person needs to survive; food to eat, a safe place to sleep, a life free of fear and harm.

**We are inviting children to wear their own brightly coloured / funky fun clothes for the day with the addition of funky hair styles (optional). The crazier the better!**

We will be setting up a donations page on Parent Pay, with a suggested donation of £1, but you are welcome to donate what you can up to £10.00. When you go into the event on Parent Pay you will see two options '**Pay Full Amount (£10.00)**' and '**Choose Payment Amount**'. If you select '**Choose Payment Amount**' you can donate anything between £1 and £10.00.

**Thank you for your generosity and support!**

## 2025-26



### March

- 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

## 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



## Letters Sent Home

No letters this week!



## 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**

## Message for parents and families from Gloucestershire County Council.

### Free School Meal Vouchers issued for school holiday periods is changing

Free School Meal vouchers provided during school holidays which have been funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through the Household Support Fund are coming to an end. This is because the Household Support Fund is ending, and Free School Meal Vouchers for the spring school holidays will be the last vouchers available under this scheme. **A different fund, the Crisis and Resilience Fund is starting from Wednesday 1 April 2026.**

We know food vouchers during school holidays have been important for many families and that's why we're working hard to ensure those who need support the most can still access it through the new Crisis and Resilience Fund and other support that we are putting in place across Gloucestershire.

#### To find out more, please visit:

Gloucestershire's [Family Hubs website](#) to learn about the support available for families, including the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, which provides great activities and nutritious food for children and young people during the school holidays.

Look out for information about the incoming **Crisis and Resilience Grant Funding**, which will offer support for children and young people who are eligible for Free School Meals. Details on what you can expect and how to apply will be shared soon on the Family Hubs website.

### Spring holiday 2026

This Spring holiday, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) will provide families in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), who sign up to this offer, with vouchers to assist with food costs during the school holidays. The vouchers are funded through grant funding they 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 for one week. To find out more about the scheme, eligibility and to apply, please visit the holiday free school meal voucher webpage here: [Holiday free school meal vouchers | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Families who have signed up previously do not need to re-register for the spring holiday vouchers - you will already have been included. Families that have previously signed up will need to contact GCC with any changes to your circumstances (e.g. if the number of children eligible increases or decreases). To ensure GCC reach all those who are eligible, they are encouraging parents and carers who have not previously signed up, to sign up as soon as you can.

Please note GCC check eligibility for the scheme by cross-referencing with the term-time free school meal register, so please make you are registered beforehand. You can register by visiting the apply for free school meals page.

**Applications for holiday FSM vouchers for the spring holiday 2026 will be open from Tuesday 3 March until Friday 13 March. Voucher emails will be sent from week commencing Monday 23 March.**

Please check your junk/spam folders during this period as sometimes the vouchers end up there. If you have not received your vouchers by **Monday 30 March**, please submit a query by contacting [childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

**Using vouchers** – vouchers will only be awarded once you are registered for the scheme and cannot be backdated. Vouchers 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 that were expected but were not received should be queried by contacting [childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

**For any parents/carers wishing to update details of an existing application, please submit an update existing details request by contacting [childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfund@gloucestershire.gov.uk) so that your account can be updated.**