



# St Mark's C of E Junior School

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

Weekly Newsletter - Friday 1st May 2026

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

All enquires: [admin@st-marks.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-marks.gloucs.sch.uk)

Our Value in focus this term is Friendship

## Headteacher's Message:

We are really excited to introduce a new feature in our playground – the 'Friendship Buddy Bench'. The idea for the Buddy Bench came from the House Captains. At the beginning of the year, they were asked to think about changes that they would like to make in school to help everyone feel happier and more included.

One thing the house captains talked about was how, at times, children can feel lonely at playtime. They wanted to find a simple way to help and ensure that no one feels left out.



The PTA very kindly agreed to fund the Buddy Bench, so we could make it happen, and **we are very grateful for their support. Thank you!**

This term, our school value is **Friendship**, so we felt this was the perfect time to introduce the Buddy Bench and explain how it can be used by everyone in school.

The Buddy bench has been placed in the sensory garden and can be used by any child who is feeling lonely, would like someone to talk to, or would like to join in a game. Sitting on the bench lets others know that they would welcome a friend. The bench will be visible to everyone, encouraging others to check if someone is ok, extend the hand of friendship and invite them to play.

The inscription on the bench reads: **"We sit, we chat and ask each other questions, we leave as friends with all good intentions"**, which we thought was a very fitting reminder of how we live out our value of friendship.

Thank you again to the PTA for your support in purchasing the bench for the children.

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

## Teaching & Learning Owls

**Bronze - Lilyana, Dexter, Maximus and Neve**

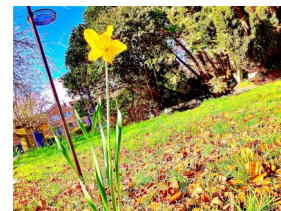
**Congratulations to our badge winners!**



## Photography Competition



You may remember from our newsletter a couple of week's ago, that Lilly, Amelia and Rex were selected to receive awards from the Cheltenham Camera Club at the Gloucestershire Young Photographer of the Year Ceremony.



On Wednesday, the children attended the ceremony at the Bacon Theatre, where they were presented with their certificates. Lilly received a **Highly Commended** award (a top five position) for her Sunflower photograph, and Amelia was crowned the **overall winner** for her photo **'Reflected Sole'**. **This is a truly outstanding achievement - congratulations to you all!**

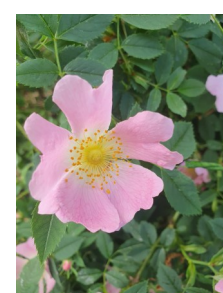
We are also delighted to share that several other children had their photographs selected to appear in the audio visual presentation that was shown on the evening.

Congratulations to the children featured below whose work was chosen. This is a fantastic accomplishment, especially given the exceptionally high standard of the competition, which received over 1000 entries overall — very well done!

All photos can now be viewed on our [website](#).



**Ayla - Wildfire**   **Jeremiah - Spring Beginnings**   **Harvey - The Boys**   **Neve - Sunday River Walk**   **Heather - Nature's Beauty**

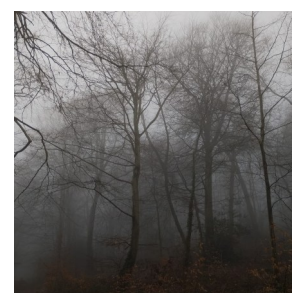
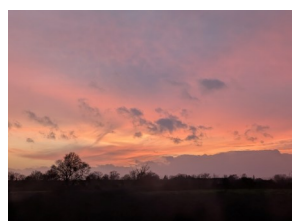
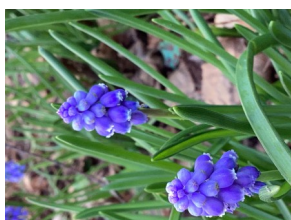


**Amelie - Glorious Grapes**

**Evie - Citrus Sky**

**Bobby - Shard**

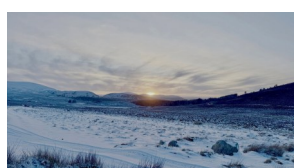
**Olivia - Foggy Day**



**Hasvi - M5 at Night**

**Thea - Snowy Sunset**

**Maximus - Podium Finish**



## Requests for Leave of Absence

Should you need to request leave of absence for your child please call into the school office to collect a 'Absence Request' form. This form must be completed and returned to the school and your request will be considered by the Headteacher.

**Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice.**

Our primary goal is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

**MOMENTS  
MATTER,  
ATTENDANCE  
COUNTS.**

## CPSFA Football News

You may remember that Tommy and Ethan have been representing St Mark's this year, playing for the Cheltenham Primary Schools Football Association (CPSFA) Under 11s team. Back in October, CPSFA took part in the Southern Counties League Cup. The boys played extremely well that day, finishing **top of their group and winning Group B** by beating Gloucester, Cardiff, Bath and Newport A.

This success took them through to the next stage of the Southern Counties League Cup tournament. On Saturday April 25th, following a brilliant tour to Italy at the beginning of the month, CPSFA travelled back to Bath to compete for the trophy.

The team once again performed superbly, winning group 1 against Caerphilly, Dacorum, Newport B. This set up a semi-final place – a significant achievement in itself – where they beat **Swansea A 1–0 to reach the final** against Chiltern & South Bucks.

The final was a great spectacle, with both teams playing excellent football. The game finished 1-1 at full time, leading to a penalty shoot-out. Unfortunately, CPSFA lost 3–2 on penalties to Chiltern & South Bucks.

The boys delivered outstanding performances throughout the day, and every player contributed brilliantly.

Well done to the whole CPSFA team. Tommy and Ethan, we are incredibly proud of your achievements and the way you have represented your team. Huge congratulations to you both!



## Performing Arts Showcase

Congratulations to the children who took part in Emma Ward's Dance and Performing Arts Spring show, *Land of Make Believe: Where a Magical World Awaits*.

You may remember that in the Autumn term of 2024, the PTA funded drama lessons for the entire school, delivered by Emma Ward. It is wonderful to see so many of you catching the performance bug and stepping onto the stage with such confidence and talent.

Performing at the wonderful Bacon Theatre, the children delighted the audience with a vibrant showcase of dance, musical theatre and songs from much-loved shows including Narnia, Aladdin, Willy Wonka and How to Train a Dragon.

Every performer was fantastic and clearly worked incredibly hard to bring this magical show to life.

**Well done to you all!**



## Online Safety Video

This month's Online Safety video theme is **Navigating Group Chats**.

*This video provides a quick overview on group chats, potential risks, dealing with peer pressure and using the blocking and reporting tools.*

Please click [here](#) to view the video on our website.



## Athletics News

Lyra, Joshua and Arthur competed in the Young Athlete Open at Prince of Wales Stadium last weekend, representing Cheltenham and County Harriers.

Lyra did exceptionally well, coming away with three medals - bronze in the Under-12 Girls' hurdles, long jump and 100m sprint.

Congratulations to you all!



## Celebrating Indie's Achievement



We're proud to share that Indie in year 6 has been awarded the Forest Green Girls Academy **Manager's Player of the Season**.

Selected by the Head of Academy from a group of 60 players across three age groups (U10–U14), this recognition reflects her outstanding resilience, commitment, and continuous progression throughout the season.

A fantastic achievement—well done, Indie!

## Readathon Purchases

We wanted to share an update on how your generous Readathon sponsorship has been used so far.

Our first batch of books has arrived, including titles chosen by the children themselves to encourage reading for pleasure, as well as books to complete our class reading sets. The children have also been thoroughly enjoying the Little Wandle books, and we were delighted to purchase titles from their newly released higher-level scheme thanks to your support.

In addition, we have received a beautiful fleece blanket for our class reading corners, helping to create a warm and inviting space for the children to enjoy their books. More items are on the way, including beanbags, pillows, and of course, even more books!

Thank you once again for your generosity. The children are incredibly excited and inspired to read.



## *Learning Highlight of the Week*

**Class 1 & 2:** The learning highlight for Year 3 this week has been Outdoor Learning. The children worked together to build pyramids using natural resources such as bamboo, sticks, mud and grass, securing their structures with string. This hands-on activity links closely with their current topic on Ancient Egypt.

**Class 3:** In History, the children have been learning how Cheltenham has grown over time. They explored the significance of King George III's visit in 1788, a pivotal moment in the town's history. The King visited to benefit from the Spa waters for his health, which led to the establishment of the Royal Spa and the subsequent growth of Cheltenham.

**Class 4:** In English, Class 4 have been planning their end-of-unit writing based on *The Spiderwick Chronicles*.

**Class 5 & 6:** Year 5 have also had a year group highlight this week. In PE, they took part in a house competition, competing in a range of running races. They demonstrated fantastic sportsmanship by cheering on their classmates. They also enjoyed their first Reading Buddies session with Year 2 children from Benhall and have begun completing a Reading Buddies booklet about the school.

**Class 7:** In Science, Class 7 investigated spinners and explored the rate at which they fall from a height. They will also be taking part in a class competition later today.

**Class 8:** Class 8 have enjoyed PE this week, focusing on Athletics. They practised a variety of running distances, including 50m, 75m, 100m and 800m races.

## Extra Curricular Clubs Summer Term 1

### Monday

Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.30pm
Chinese Language Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm
Gardening Club Y3-4	3.15pm - 4.00pm
Gymnastics Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.05pm
Netball Y5-6	3.15pm - 4.00pm
Recorders Y3-6	Lunchtime
Rounders Y5-6	3.15pm - 4.00pm



### Tuesday

Board Games Y3-4	12.40pm - 1.10pm
Orchestra Y3-6	12.30pm - 1.00pm
Choir Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.00pm
Tennis Y4-6	3.15pm - 4.10pm

### Wednesday

Baking Buddies Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.30pm
Cricket Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.15pm

### Thursday

Coding Y6	3.15pm - 4.00pm
Kids with Bricks Y3-6	3.15pm - 4.00pm
Outdoor Learning	3.15pm - 4.15pm
Science	3.15pm - 4.00pm

## School Term Dates - 2025-26

**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



## Letter Sent Home

- Y6 SATs Breakfast Letter
- Y5&6 Swimming Gala Letter
- Y6 Residential Medical Forms
- Y6 Drayton Manor Trip



## Outdoor Learning - Summer Term 1

**Class 1: Thursday Morning**

**Class 2: Thursday Afternoon**

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.**



## 2025-26



### May

Mon 4th May - Bank Holiday  
Wed 6th - Cadbury World Year 5  
Fri 8th - PTA non-school uniform day for bottle/ teddy for Fair  
Mon 11th — Thu 14th - Y6 SATs Week  
Sat 16th - Summer Fair  
Tue 19th - Book Look  
Wed 20th - GWR Trip Year 6  
Fri 22nd - End of Term 5

### June

Mon 1st - Inset Day (no children in school)  
Tue 9th - Y6 Leavers Service, Gloucester Cathedral (Pupils only)  
Wed 10th - Sports Day  
Mon 15th - Midsummer Concert 6.30pm  
Wed 17th - Drayton Manor Y6 Trip  
Fri 19th - PTA Lido Evening  
Tue 23rd - Year 6 Production Matinee Performance  
Tue 23rd - Piano Recital (Mrs Bennett's Pupils & Parents)  
Wed 24th - Year 6 Production - Evening performance  
Wed 24th - Whole Class Photos and Year 6 Leavers Photographs  
Thu 25th - 'Explore our World' Day Year 5 at Bournside  
Mon 29th - Fri 3rd - Bournside Transition Week  
Tue 30th - Rags Collection

### Advance Notice of Some Key Dates

8th - 10th July - Y6 Residential  
16th July - Y6 St Mark's School Leavers Service - 1.45pm

## PE Next Week

**Class 1** need to wear PE kits on **Tuesday** and **NOT Friday** – for **week commencing 4th May only**.

**Class 3** will be having PE on **Tuesday** and **Friday** next week (week commencing 4th May) and will need to wear PE kits on these days.

## PE - Summer Term 1

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



**Class 1: Friday (Please see box above)**

**Class 2: Tuesday**

**Class 3: Monday & Tuesday**

**(Class 3 Please see box above)**

**Class 4: Tuesday & Friday**

**Class 5: Tuesday & Thursday**

**Class 6: Tuesday & Thursday**

**Class 7: Monday & Wednesday**

**Class 8: Wednesday & Friday**

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