



St Mark's Pre-School Newsletter

This Terms Activities

February 2026

We began January with an exciting theme called "Down in the Jungle." On the literacy table, we explored a beloved book, "The Tiger Who Came To Tea," and even hosted our own delightful tea party, just like in the story, it was a wonderful way to bring the book to life and spark the children's imagination. At the creative table, the children practiced their cutting skills by cutting out snake shapes and then decorating them, which was both fun and great for developing fine motor skills. Meanwhile, at the maths table, the children engaged in sorting jungle animals by size, an activity that helped them understand concepts of size and order.

We excitedly moved on to our Superhero and Princess topic, and it was no surprise that it was a huge hit with the children! In the water tray, we added a magical touch by filling it with sparkly gems and playful mermaids, creating an enchanting experience. At the creative table, the children had the opportunity to design their very own superheroes or princesses, resulting in a fantastic array of unique and imaginative characters. On the literacy table, we had a copy of a Frozen book along with some character stick puppets, allowing the children to reenact the story and bring their favorite characters to life. Meanwhile, at the maths table, it seemed that some sneaky "bad guys" had locked up superheroes and princesses with colorful padlocks. The children embarked on a heroic mission to match the colored keys to the corresponding padlocks, eagerly working together to save the day.

We've been having a wonderful time exploring playdough and engaging in junk modeling activities. The children love the squishy texture of the playdough, which allows them to express their creativity as they mold it into different shapes. Alongside playdough, junk modeling has become a fantastic way for them to combine various materials and create imaginative projects. These activities not only boost their fine motor skills but also encourage problem-solving and teamwork. As they manipulate the playdough and assemble their models, they gain confidence in their abilities and enjoy working together to bring their ideas to life.



Can we please remind parents not to talk with the member of staff at the door in the mornings, they are required to make sure all children remain within the setting and to ensure their safety. If you need to speak with a member of staff, please feel free to approach another member of the team.

Half Term Topics

This half terms topics will be.

Week 1 – 05/01/26 – Down in the Jungle
Week 2 – 12/01/26 – Down in the Jungle
Week 3 – 19/01/26 – Superhero's and Princess'
Week 4 – 26/01/26 – Superhero's and Princess'
Week 5 – 02/02/26 – People who help us
Week 6 – 09-02/26 – People who help us

Fee Update

From April 2026 our fees will be increasing to the following;

2yr Morning session to £28.50
2yr Full Day session to £57.00

3yr Top Up £8.00 p/h

Consumables 70p p/h

Late Pick Up

We have noticed some parents are picking up their children late, can we please ask that parents are ready to collect their children from either 12pm or 3pm, otherwise you will unfortunately incur a late fee surcharge as per our Terms & Conditions within your contracts.

We appreciate that sometimes this can't be helped, so we just ask that you please call us and let us know.

Consumables

Voluntary Consumables Charge

Unfortunately, the government funding only covers for a standard, basic provision, the consumable charge enables us to provide your child with an enhanced provision naming some, but not all below. Therefore, we ask for .68p/h for each hour your does with us in order to continue to provide all that we do for your child/children.

If, however, we do not receive this consumable charge from the majority of parent's we will not be able to offer for all the additional that we provide, this is especially so for cooking and for those parents who cannot contribute, we will subside your child's cooking session but once every half term only instead of weekly.

This charge is broken down into;

Food consumables including, snack, cooking ingredients etc.

Non-Food consumables including suncream, additional nappies, nappy wipes and bags, cream, tissues etc.

Extra-Curricular activities including, seasonal crafts and celebrations, picnics, parental craft sessions, children's Christmas party and enhanced experiences visits from outside companies etc.

This is however, not a definitive list.

If parent's do not wish to pay this, could you please let me know and your Reasons.

September's Hours

As we look ahead to September, we are already beginning to see our days fill up. If you are considering adding any sessions or changing the days your child attends, we kindly ask you to inform Lorraine at your earliest convenience. This will ensure you have the first opportunity to secure your preferred sessions before we offer them out.

Activities at Home

Have you seen our “Home Learning Box”, there are a selection of activities that you can to share with your child at home.

Choosing an activity to do with your child is a wonderful opportunity for bonding and having fun together at home. Engaging in such activities not only strengthens your relationship but also supports your child's development in a playful and enjoyable way.

Please fill in the book to sign in and out your activity.

On the table you will also find the newest family's magazines and any other leaflets.



Mother's Day

On Monday, 16th March, we will be hosting a special Mother's Day Stay and Play event. This delightful gathering will take place from 9:30am to 11:00am.

We kindly ask that only children who attend on that day come along, and sadly, siblings cannot join in on this occasion. If you are unable to attend, we warmly welcome grandmothers, aunties, or a family friend to participate in your place.

We look forward to celebrating this special day together!

World Book Day

On Thursday, 5th March, we will once again celebrate World Book Day with lots of exciting activities! We would love for you to come dressed as your favorite book character, which is always so much fun. Don't forget to bring a book with you to share with your friends during the celebration. All children will receive a book token to enjoy. I wonder what your teachers will dress up as this year!

Best Start in Life

As of the 1st of September, a new website called Best Start in Life was launched, this is replacing the childcare choices website. The new website is designed to be a one-stop-shop for information for families.

This is also where you will find out about eligibility for the funded entitlements.

[Homepage | Best Start in Life](#)

The website is a great tool and gives pregnancy advice, advice on baby care, childcare support and getting children ready for school.

30 Hour Funding

In September 2025, 15 hours for working families with children under 3 will expand to 30 hours, meaning eligible working families will be able to claim 30 hours of childcare from the term after their child turns 9 months until they reach school age.

In addition to this, if you are eligible for FEET Funding you may also receive an additional 15hrs Working Parent's Funding giving a total of 30hrs per week.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible, please visit the below website page to apply.

[Homepage | Best Start in Life](#)

Once you have received your code, please give this to Lorraine.

Please don't forget to re-confirm your code each term!

Illness

We have found this term that a lot of children have been attending Pre-School when unwell. While it's okay for children to attend with a slight cold or cough, we are asking that children are to stay at home if they have a constant cough, unwell in themselves or their nose is constantly streaming with thick green snot as this is a sign of infection! Please see the picture below.

While it's lovely to hear that although your child is poorly, they want to come in because we are doing something fun on this day, please make this decision yourself based on how you think they are feeling and if they will cope throughout the morning/day, as well as passing on whatever they have onto others, thank you.

Children are not to attend Pre-School if they have had Calpol, we can't stress this enough as we try to limit the bugs from spreading!

Could we also please ask that you let us know in the morning if your child is not coming in and why, this could be a text or a phone call.

	Clear <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looking good – this is the 'normal' colour.• If your clear snot is runny, you may have an allergy, like hay fever.
	Yellow <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your body may be fighting off an infection.• Make sure you drink enough water and get enough rest to allow your body to recover.
	Green <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your body is likely working very hard to fight off an infection.• If you don't feel better after 7 days, contact a doctor.
	Pink or red <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may have blood in your snot.• Your nasal passage may be dry, irritated or damaged.
	Black <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You're a smoker or have been in an area with high air pollution.• It can also be a sign of a fungal infection, which is serious. Contact a doctor.
	White <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may have an infection or allergy.• If you're producing lots of white, grey or clear phlegm, this can signal that your asthma symptoms are worsening.
	Brown <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have dried blood in your nose.• Bacterial infections, like pneumonia or bronchitis, can cause brown phlegm.

Choking Hazards

Please find attached a table of choking hazards for children under 5yrs, and we please ask you follow their guidance.

Early years food choking hazards



Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>

and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

Labelling

Could we please remind all parents to label their child's clothes, snack pots, lunch boxes and bags.

This will make it much easier to make sure your child goes home with the correct items, especially as now many of them are wearing the same Pre-School tops and jumpers.

Tuesday Forest School

All children need to bring in their own forest school backpack. This backpack needs to be big enough for the children to have a complete change of clothes, (top/bottoms/pants/socks) nappies and a spare set of waterproofs in, but small enough that they are able to carry it. They will also require a small named water bottle to go in this backpack.

We recommend that the backpack has a chest strap, as this helps the bag from slipping off the child's shoulders as they walk.

All children joining us for lunch will need to bring a packed lunch with an additional drink and ice pack. Drop off and collection for both 12pm and 3pm will be from the cricket club.

Can we please ask that you let the teachers partner up the children for the walk into the forest, they are partnered up on age and ability following a pre-organised list. The children can find it upsetting if they are moved after parents have let them choose who's hand they would like to hold.

Thank you.



Forest School Winter Kit

Now the weather is becoming cooler I would like to give you the kit list for our Forest School sessions.

- Warm layers i.e. – vest, long sleeved top and fleece/jumper – thermal or ski items are warmer. Legging's underneath jeans or joggers – thermal or ski items are warmer.
- Wellies/walking boots/ski boots with wellie warmers or ski socks
- Heavy duty waterproof coat and trousers- please do not send children in all in ones as this means when having a nappy change or using the toilet they will get cold!
 - Waterproof mittens on elastic
 - Waterproof hat
 - Neck warmers are safer than scarves
 - Please label everything!

Please remember if it is a bit colder your children will need extra layers to keep warm.

Please don't forget to apply insect repellent to your children. Please also check for your child for ticks after each forest school sessions. Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that live in woods and long grass, they attach themselves to skin that brushes past them. A tick bites into the skin and feeds on blood before dropping off a few days later. Ticks can cause Lyme disease, which is a bacterial infection that can be spread to humans by infected ticks. Some people suffer with flu-like symptoms in the early stages of the disease.

These include: a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery, headaches, muscle and joint pain and tiredness and loss of energy. Not everyone with Lyme disease gets the rash.

For more information on Lyme disease please visit
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/>



LAYERING BASICS FOR COLD WEATHER

Following the OMFS Layering System will help children and adults stay warm in the chilliest and wettest of conditions!

There's no such thing as bad weather - if you're dressed for it!

BASE LAYER

Base layers are the most important part of any layering system. Long underwear and socks can vary in weights depending on the weather. Choose synthetic or wool material - **never cotton**.



Down sweater & fleece pants



Wool sweater & nylon pants



MID LAYER

Mid layers help to create a pocket of warm air around the body. Material should always be based on the temperature, thicker mid layers for colder days. Again, cotton is not a good choice for a mid layer, think wool or fleece with nylon pants for warmer days. *Multiple mid layers can be used when the conditions are cold.*

OUTER LAYER

The Outer layer is responsible for keeping the elements out and warmth in! At Forest School it is essential that this layer is waterproof on both the top and bottom, even when dry outside. If in a rain coat, on colder days, add another jacket for warmth.

Snow suit



Rain suit



HEAD, HANDS & FEET

Head - always wear or bring a winter toque, lighter weight toques can be used for warmer days.

Hands - while mini mitts are nice to have on hand for dexterity, winter mittens (not gloves) are needed for all days when temps below 5°C.

Feet - insulated rain boots are needed when temps are below 5°C. Winter boots should be used when the temp will stay below 0°C for the day.



EXTRAS

An extra sweater, pair of wool socks (suitable for the temperature), and up to 3 extra pairs of mittens should be in the pack at all times!



STAY WARM, LAYER UP!

Internet Safety

Online safety advice More and more pre-schoolers are using their parents' computers, smartphones or tablets to play games, use apps, and watch their favourite TV shows. There are simple things you can do to make sure they're using the internet safely. Copy and paste the following link for further online safety advice. www.internetmatters.org

Working in Partnership with Parents

We would like to thank all the parents who log in, makes comments and add their own observations onto Tapestry. We value our partnership with parents and this is a wonderful tool to enable us to do this. These home observations give us a chance to see things we are unable to observe within Pre-School and provides great topics of conversation between your children and all the staff.

We hope that you enjoy seeing what your children do during their time with us and this is also a wonderful keepsake of their journey with us which you will keep once they move on from Pre-School.

Surrey County Council also have some great resources and ideas of activities to do with your children at home.

We will add a couple of examples and the link for you to take a look.

The first few years are the most important in your child's learning and development. As a parent or carer, you have the biggest influence during this time and there are a number of ways in which you can help with their early development.

[Early learning and development - Surrey County Council](#)

Writing tips

3 to 4 years

- Play throwing and catching games together.
- Let your child help you around the house, pegging out clothes (the family's or their toy's), using a dustpan and brush, washing up, wiping the table and squeezing out the sponge as they clean the windows.
- Cook together - let your child peel and chop, mash up food, put cake mixture into cases or spread butter on bread.
- Have lots of different materials to cut and stick so your child can make pictures, patterns and models.
- Build with blocks and interlocking blocks, like Lego, to make towers and buildings.
- Let your child cut out pictures from magazines, comics, catalogues and old cards.
- Make people, animals and other objects from play dough.



"What I Like"

- Making cards and sending messages to my friends and family (or Father Christmas) and making lists.
- Drawing and painting pictures and patterns.
- Cutting and sticking.
- Making my own books.

"What I can do"

- Start to know that writing means something and I'm saying what my marks mean.
- Recognise my name and some familiar words and signs.
- Write some letters in my name and other familiar words, like dad.
- Dress and undress myself and I am beginning to fasten and unfasten zips and buttons.
- Concentrate and sit still for longer.



Your child needs to practise making small marks using a pencil or crayon. Shoulder and arm muscles are developing and using their hands and fingers to make different movements will help them to strengthen their wrist, hand and finger muscles.

This leaflet is from a series of five, each leaflet covers a different age range from birth to five years old. Children develop at their own rates and in their own ways. The ages are suggestions of typical ranges of development.

If you have any concerns about your child's development, speak to your GP, health visitor or someone at your local Sure Start Children's Centre.

You can find all the leaflets and more advice about child development on the Surrey Family Information Service webpages

www.surreycc.gov.uk/earlylearning



Maths tips

2 - 3 years

- When singing counting rhymes and songs, such as Five little ducks, act it out using your fingers or objects that your toddler can see and touch.
- Make the most of dressing, bedtime, shopping and other everyday activities to count stairs, buttons, cups, or anything else. Talk about lots, one more or less and how many.
- Help your toddler sort coins by shape or size, big and little, on to plates or into bags, purses or jars.
- Play hide and seek games and talk about where you found them - in, on or under?
- Give your toddler different sized containers to fill and empty at bathtime.
- Point out shapes, patterns and numbers when you're out shopping or at the park. Talk to your toddler about things being round, pointy, having corners, or being the same or different.
- Play skittles or hopscotch and give your toddler objects that are different weights to throw. Talk about how heavy or light they are, and how far or high they can throw them.



Did you know?

Every day brings opportunities for your toddler to learn about numbers, shape, space, sorting and matching.

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Count
with me

Maths tips
for parents



"What I Like"

- To play with lots of interesting objects, so that I can explore their weight, shape and size.
- To hear you talk about simple shapes, sizes and patterns, so that I can learn how to recognise and use the words myself.
- Playing with blankets and boxes that I can hide in, on and under.

"What I can do"

- Say some numbers in the right order.
- Recognise that things are different shapes and sizes.
- Give you one or two objects when you ask me to.



Operation Encompass

St Mark's Pre-School have taken the opportunity to join the Operation Encompass scheme which will run jointly between local early years settings, schools, Surrey Police and Surrey County Council. Operation Encompass has been designed to provide early reporting on any domestic incidents that occur outside of 'normal' school hours and might have an impact on a child in their setting. Operation Encompass will ensure that the settings' Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy DSL, is informed the next morning that there has been a domestic incident or if a child has been reported as missing. Through sharing this information with the DSL and/or deputy DSL the setting can ensure that the child/ren are supported in the most appropriate way. For more information [click here](#).

Mrs. Odam's Fortnightly Challenge

Every fortnight Mrs Odam will be setting an exciting challenge for you and your child to complete at home.

The challenge will be uploaded onto tapestry every other Monday and we would love for you to add your pictures and comments onto tapestry any time before the next challenge is set, so we can see how well you have done.

We believe this will be a great way to gain stronger links between Pre-School and home and involving parents within their child's learning and development.

Show and Tell Table

The children very much enjoy bringing items in from home to share with their friends at the end of the session. This is a great way for the children to listen to others and share what they have, building speech and language development. The show and tell table is the red table, located at the front of hall by the main entrance. **We ask that items being brought in are theme related or something special, for example if they have had a birthday or been somewhere for a visit or an achievement such as a certificate or badge.** The themes can be found on the first page of the newsletter under what we have been learning about. The themes are also always displayed on the poster above the table and changed weekly if your child is unsure of what they can bring.

Proud Clouds

Our children all love to achieve new things. At Pre-School we want to hear all about it too! Proud clouds are shared with everyone at the end of the session. Proud clouds are a chance for you to share what your child has achieved i.e., learning to count, riding a bike, becoming independent in getting dressed.

These are all massive achievements, and we want to share it. If your child has done something amazing, please write it down on a coloured shape which can be found on the parents table and give it to a member of staff.

Once it has been read out it will be attached to our proud clouds which can be found on the garden door windows. Please ask if you have any questions about proud clouds.

Sustainability

We're teaching the children about the importance of taking care of our planet in fun and engaging ways. Whether it's through recycling crafts or learning about how plants grow, we're helping our young learners understand that small actions can lead to big changes!

Oral Health

As part of the early years' foundation stage (EYFS, 2021) we are required to support oral health.

A regular teeth cleaning routine is essential for good dental health. Follow these tips and you can help keep your child's teeth healthy.

[Children's teeth - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Healthy Lunchboxes

We ask parents to provide a piece of fruit for snack time, please make sure this is labelled. We will provide additional snack such as toast, flatbread and crumpets etc. as well as water or milk to drink. We ask parents if their child brings grapes for lunch or snack, they need to be cut in half length ways and not left whole or cut width ways. Grapes are the perfect size to block a child's windpipe and pose a choking hazard.

Lunches, please ensure that your child's lunch box is also a healthy one, please, no big bars of chocolate, sweets or fizzy drinks. Please could we ask that the food in your child's lunch box is healthy and has good nutritional value to it.

For example: A sandwich/wrap/roll with nutritional filling i.e., cheese, ham, chicken etc. or pasta. A piece of fruit / vegetable sticks Yoghurt / cheese
Crisps / popcorn, small treat

We want to promote a good varied diet with our children but following the Healthy Lunch Box values which the schools also adept. As a reminder, please no large bars of chocolate, large chocolate biscuits, sweets or fizzy drinks.

For ideas of lunchbox ideas please visit

www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes



Facebook Page

Please take a look and like our Facebook Page (St Mark's Pre-School) to receive daily/weekly notices, diary dates and also to find out what we have been doing with your children throughout the week.

[St Mark's Pre-School | Facebook](#)

Diary Dates

- Friday 13th February – Last day of term
- Monday 23rd February – First day of term
- Thursday 5th March – World Book Day
- Monday 16th March – Mother's Day stay and play
 - Friday 27th March - Last day of term
 - Monday 13th April - First day of term

Birthday Stars

Keep up-to-date with the latest information, diary dates, Forest School sessions and more,
on our Website and Facebook page;

[**www.stmarkspreschool.info**](http://www.stmarkspreschool.info)