



St Mark's Pre-School Newsletter

This Terms Activities

January 2026

We would like to start off by saying Happy New Year!

We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas filled with joy and laughter.

We are looking forward to all the fun and learning we will have as we step into 2026.

December brought a very exciting month here at St. Marks Pre-School with our last topic of the year, Christmas!

The children were buzzing with excitement as we explored the magic of this festive season together. On the literacy table, we had the Nativity set out for children to explore and learn the story of the first Christmas, it was a delight to see their curiosity and enthusiasm as they engaged with the story. Over at the creative table, our budding artists crafted their very own baubles, each bauble was filled with colour and creativity.

The tuft tray was transformed into a winter wonderland where children decorated Christmas trees with tiny lights and baubles.

We had fun with some Christmas-themed size ordering on the maths table, the children have been sorting different objects by size, which helps them understand concepts of order and comparison in a playful and engaging way, they really enjoyed this festive learning activity!

December of course meant the return of our rather cheeky Elf called Cracker, Cracker arrived with a special letter from Father Christmas, explaining why Cracker was visiting us. The children were so excited each morning to come in and find what he was up to. Cracker enjoyed reading a story to Spiderman and Barbie, ziplining and warming up with a piece of toast. Cracker also joined us in the Forest with his very own visor!

We also had our Christmas stay and play, we had lovely morning and the children enjoyed the Christmas activities with their parents, we also managed to enjoy a mince pie and a tea/coffee.

We also had our fantastic Christmas party which even included a bouncy castle, with a slide, the children (and staff!) had so much fun and we all enjoyed the yummy party food.

After all the excitement and busy few days, it was time to relax with a movie and pyjama day, we all got cosy and watched some films and had a special treat of popcorn too!

What a busy but wonderful month we had.

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

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.

School Admissions

If your child was born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022, they will be eligible to start school in the school year beginning September 2026.

You can apply for a Surrey school from 3rd November 2025; this will close on 15th January 2026.

[Primary, infant and junior school admission applications - Surrey County Council](#)

You can apply for a Hampshire school from 1st November 2025; this will close on 15th January 2026.

[Applying for a reception place \(Year R\) | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)

Story Time

We are thrilled to announce that Vicar George will be visiting us once a month to read a short story to the children. It's such a delightful opportunity for the little ones to enjoy some magical stories and learn new things. We are so grateful to Vicar George for sharing his time and stories with us!

Junk Modelling

Our Children will be diving into creative junk modelling activities over the next few months. To help make this a fun and imaginative experience, we kindly ask for donations of clean and safe items such as small boxes, tubes, lids, and fabric scraps. These will be transformed into amazing creations by our young artists.

Thank you.

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.

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 themself 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.



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



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.

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.

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!

Pick Up

Please can we ask parents when picking their children up when at the hall that you do not allow your children to run in the graveyard and over the graves! Unfortunately, we have had a couple of complaints about this, these are peoples loved ones and this needs to be respected. We understand that in some areas there is a path but as we know children don't always stick to these!

Could we also ask that parents don't allow their children to run around the side of the building, both sides are used as exit points, and we have had a few near misses of children running around the side and nearly bumping into children leaving.

Reminders

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 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.

For those children who take part in our Forest school session and who wear wellies, please make sure you add either thick ski socks or fleecy welly boot liners or both to keep your child's feet warm.

Also, a reminder that we will be leaving for the Forest promptly at 9am, If you are running late and not there or ready to leave unfortunately you will need to walk your child over to us in the forest. The longer we are waiting at the cricket car park for children to arrive is upsetting for the children already there and waiting to go.

Activities at Home Box

This box will be available every morning for you to choose an activity to share with your child at home.

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

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.

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 bought 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!

Bags and Welly Boots

Please remember to bring a bag in for your child with a full spare set of clothes in, to be left on the trolley in the foyer area. Please also remember to bring in welly boots on the days your children attend.

The children are encouraged to be independent in their dressing so shoes with Velcro rather than laces please.

Book Bags

Every two weeks the children will be able to choose a book to bring home and share with you. Once your child has finished their book you can bring back their book bags and place them in to their keyworkers box.

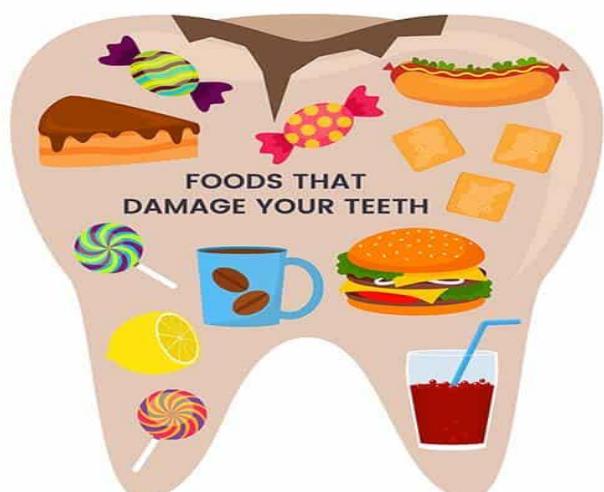
This is a great way for the children to share stories with you and encourages the joy for reading.

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/conditions/pregnancy-and-new-born/childrens-teeth/)



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

- Tuesday 6th January – First day of term
- Friday 13th February – Last day of term
- Monday 23rd February – First day of term

Birthday Stars

- Floriarna
- Ezra

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

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