



St Mark's News

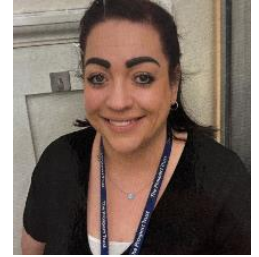


Date: 15th January 2026

Issue: 3

Dear Parents/carers,

Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you have all had a restful and enjoyable Christmas break. The children have returned to school with positive mindsets and ready to embrace all learning challenges this term.



Please enjoy reading about all of the events and activities we enjoyed taking part in towards the end of the Autumn term. Please also take a look at our new school website at: [Home | St Mark's Church of England Aided Primary School](#)

St Mark's Church:

Thank you to Reverend Dianna for supporting the school at: Remembrance, Advent (delivering our series of 4 Advent Worship) and at our Carols Around the Campfire event. Thank you also to the staff at St Mark's Church for welcoming us as part of Advent and for the use of the church and the church hall for our Nativity. We feel privileged, as a school, to be able to work in partnership with St Mark's Church.

PTA:

A big thank you to the PTA for organising the Christmas Fair and refreshments for the Carols Around the Campfire event. Thank you also for running the weekly Tea Set. The PTA work extremely hard to ensure that events are well planned and organised and we are very grateful for this.

Our Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) will be promoting and organising a '[Be Bright, Be Seen](#)' event on February 13th. They will be leading an assembly closer to the event to explain what the day will be about and to launch a competition for 'Be Bright, Be Seen'.

Staffing news:

Please welcome Mrs Miller as our new Admin Assistant this term. Mrs Watson has been working with Mrs Miller and has given her a thorough handover. Mrs Miller has worked in various schools before and is looking forward to meeting all of the families at St Mark's.

Miss Culverhouse has decided not to return to St Mark's after her maternity leave, and to dedicate her time to looking after her two young children. Mrs Williams will continue to work as SENCo at St Mark's for the remainder of this year. We wish Miss Culverhouse and her family all of the best.

Emergency Closure: We are hoping that snow/extreme weather will not impact our ability to open the school this term but if we do have to take the difficult decision to close the school (i.e. if it is unsafe for children to be on site or if we do not have enough staff able to get to school) then we will inform you via email and update our school website.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, here's to another happy and successful term. Let's keep filling each others' buckets (please ask your child/children if you are not sure what this means!).

Best regards,

Rachel Jones



Learning updates

During the Autumn term it was amazing to see more resilient and independent children at St Mark's. This term we will continue to encourage all of the children to take risks in their learning and see making mistakes as part of the journey of learning.

Please continue to empower your child/children to come and tell a grown up in school if they have a message for us (for example a missing jumper/cardigan/water bottle etc). This helps your child to be able to solve problems on their own and therefore, to feel more confident and resilient.

All of the children have been busy working very hard and learning lots- here are some of the highlights since the last newsletter:



Diamond class enjoyed researching about the History of Christmas and writing non-chronological reports about this. In DT, Diamond class enjoyed making artefacts which would have been used in Ancient Greece.

Ruby class enjoyed eating their Christmas Dinner together in the classroom and had a lot of fun making chocolate crispy cakes.



Emerald class loved their project *Dragon Designs*. They enjoyed working in groups to design and build castles with working drawbridges. They also designed and sewed their own dragons (and even had time to make me one too- Roary is in pride of place in my office!)



Sapphire class thoroughly enjoyed reading *The Barnabus Project* by The Fan Brothers. The children designed their own 'mash-up' pet to be sold and loved. Then the children wrote about the pets they had invented.

Vision

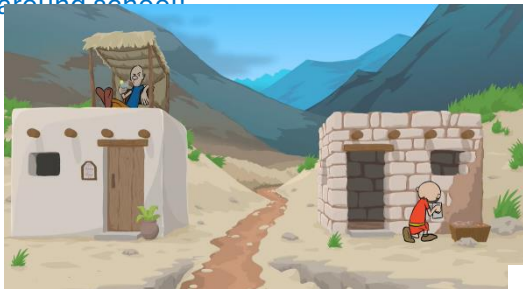


Living and Learning together- Building Firm Foundations

Our vision is for all children to develop a lifelong love of learning and sense of belonging, within a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive Christian community. All children have the opportunity to become free thinking, responsible citizens, whilst understanding and appreciating the wonder of our world. Children leave St Mark's with the confidence to live fulfilling lives, based on the teachings and example of Jesus.

Matthew 7:24-27

Children have been selected in Celebration Worship on Friday as 'Builder of the week' where they have shown dedication to improving in one of the CIRCLE values. They have been enjoying wearing their hard hats around school!



Builders of the week for Autumn term:

Trisha, Niyrika, Keegan, Rosie, Rey,
Esther, Elijah, Emerald class, Reuben
Hannah, Indiana, Oliver, Arlo, Marni and Maddie,
Arthur, Miyansh, Lola, Sapphire class, Mary, Mary,
Cecily, Desna, George, Evelyn and Ezra.



Attendance

Attendance



At the end of Autumn 1 our whole school attendance was 96.1% against the national figure of 94.6%. Let's keep working together to aim for as high as figure as possible. If you are unsure whether to send your child into school please refer to the NHS website: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)

If you, or your child, are concerned about your child's attendance please contact Rachel Jones (Attendance Leader) in school to discuss this further. There is also support and guidance for parents about attendance at: [Attendance guidance for parents | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Reminders about Penalty Notices:

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions (1 session is a morning or afternoon) or more, within a 10 week period, and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of Mrs Wright, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. This also includes children being late to school on 10 or more occasions after registers close at 9am, without good reason.

The Nativity

On Thursday 11th December the whole school walked to St Mark's Church to hold our annual Key Stage 1 Nativity. The children in Ruby and Emerald class performed confidently and the singing was incredible. It was a delight to have Key Stage 2 join in with many of the songs too.

Thank you to all of the staff and children for the time and effort which went into this amazing celebration.



Years ½ and ¾ Multi-Sports Events

Children from Emerald and Sapphire classes had great fun attending multi-sports events held at Calthorpe Park School in December. The children loved taking part in lots of Christmas-themed sporting activities and demonstrated their CIRCLE values throughout. Thank you to Mrs Smith and Mrs Collinson for accompanying the children.



Remembrance

On 11th November we held a Remembrance service outside in the front playground with Reverend Dianna leading us in prayer. We placed the poppy wreaths, one made by each class, in the centre of the playground. Prayers and poems were read by children from across the school.



St Mark's Musicians

It has been lovely to have some of our children play us in and out of worship, sharing their talents with us. So far, Mary has played the French Horn and Lyra played the piano- thank you girls, the music you played was wonderful. Thank you also to Miss Sandberg who entertained us with her piano playing on the day of our Christmas dinner.

If your child plays an instrument and would like to play for the school please encourage them to come and talk to Mrs Jones about it.



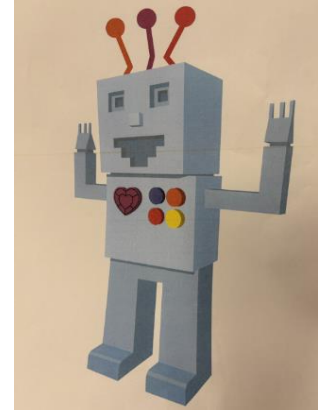
Christmas Events

Thank you to the children and the staff for making Christmas at St Mark's such a magical time. In December we enjoyed taking part in the following activities and events: the Advent procession to St Mark's Church; the choir attending One Day at Christmas (at Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre); singing carols at The Tea Shop Around the Corner; the Nativity and Carols by the Campfire. Here are some photos from the many events we attended/supported.



Online Safety- Use of Phones and Devices

Lots of children have come back to school after Christmas very excited about new devices (e.g. phones, gaming consoles, tablets, TVs, smart watches etc) they have received. The digital world around us is very exciting, however, with the excitement, unfortunately devices and internet use comes with a wealth of risks for all of us. Please refer to the school website for guidance about how to ensure your child is safe when accessing the internet and the digital world: [St Mark's Church of England Primary School - Stay Safe Online](#)



Mobile phone and smart watch technology has advanced significantly over the last few years and continues to evolve. Many phones and smart watches now offer internet and e-mail access, alongside standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording. Smartwatches are therefore not permitted to be worn to school, as staff are unable to monitor them closely enough to ensure they are being used appropriately and safely.

A pedometer or similar gadget that counts steps only is fine, but any smart watches/device that is able to send/receive calls or messages, can access the internet or take photographs/videos/sound recordings is treated the same as a mobile phone and they are not allowed to be used by children on site. A standard analogue or digital wristwatch may be worn. If you are unsure whether your child's watch is appropriate, please speak to us about it.

Please remember that children are also not allowed to have phones in school (with the exception of year 6 where children can bring their phones and must hand them into the school office for the day). Children are not allowed to use these devices on school premises.

If a child brings a device into school which does not fit in with the guidelines above please be aware that, in order to safeguard everyone, children will be asked to hand in the device to a member of staff. The device will be stored at the school office, and a parent/carer will be asked to come and collect it. Please note that the school cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage to any personal items brought to school.

Our Digital Leaders will be leading the school in an assembly and in activities for [Internet Safety Day](#) on February 10th, please look out for information we will be sending you, closer to the time, so that we can continue to work together to support our children to be safe.

Thank you so much for your understanding in this. Safeguarding all members of the school community is vital and it is great that we can work together to do this. Please do get in contact with me if you have any questions about this.



Attached to this newsletter is a help sheet for parents and educators from National College about memes. Please speak to Rachel Jones (DSL) if you have any concerns about your child's online activity.

Dates for your diaries

Spring Term	Event
Wednesday 21 st January	Sapphire Class visit to Fishbourne Roman Palace & Gardens
Tuesday 27 th January 3.20pm	PTA Second Hand Uniform sale
Tuesday 10 th February	Internet Safety Day
Thursday 12 th February 3.20pm	SATs information evening (school hall)
Friday 13 th February	Be Bright, Be Seen day
16 th -20 th February	Half term
Tuesday 17 th March and Wednesday 18 th March	Year 5/6 Bikeability
Tuesday 17 th March 3.30-5.30pm	Parents Evening
Wednesday 18 th March 4.30-7pm	Parents Evening
Friday 20 th March	Red Nose Day
Thursday 26 th March	Am-Pause day in school Pm- Easter Service at St Mark's Church Led by Sapphire Class
Friday 27 th March 1.30pm	End of term

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MEMES

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Memes may look like simple jokes, but, for many teenagers, they form a shared cultural language. Quickly created and reworked, they spread across social media platforms as images with text or short videos. Nearly eight in ten teenagers share memes (79%, YPulse), making them part of daily life. While memes encourage creativity and participation, they can also spread misinformation or reinforce harmful stereotypes.

SPREADING MISINFORMATION

While memes help to communicate complex topics, they can also spread misinformation. Memes may sometimes include content presenting false facts or biased viewpoints, especially around health, politics, or current events and, as they're designed to be shared quickly, young people may not question their accuracy.

EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Memes are widely circulated, and not always age-appropriate, meaning young people may encounter explicit language, sexual content, or graphic imagery, even without searching for it. As memes spread fast on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp, it's nearly impossible to filter them completely.

MASKED MESSAGES

Some memes are designed to be confusing or layered with hidden meanings, making them hard for parents, and, sometimes, other young people to understand. Online groups often create these memes to look like inside jokes, but they can sometimes conceal offensive, harmful, or misleading content.

HIDDEN HARMS & LOSING SENSITIVITY

When serious topics like violence, racism, or mental health are turned into jokes, children and young people may become less sensitive to these issues over time. While a funny meme may seem light-hearted, it can carry messages that belittle certain groups, encourage risky behaviour, or mock personal struggles. Repeated exposure through memes can make harmful behaviour seem normal or less important. Over time, this can blur their understanding of what is funny versus what is discriminatory, harmful, or damaging to themselves and others.

PERMANENT DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Unlike spoken jokes, memes leave a trail. Created or shared memes can resurface later and be misunderstood, even if intended as harmless. Once online, memes may be copied, saved, or spread beyond a young person's control - digital actions can follow them into their future, shaping how they are perceived by peers, teachers, or even employers long after the original meme has been shared.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Talk regularly with young people and try to understand their online world - discuss what they find funny about the memes, and why. By listening without judgement, you build trust, making it easier for them to come to you if they see something harmful. Open conversations also help children and teens think critically about the messages behind memes rather than simply accepting them at face value.

MODEL HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Show children and teens positive online behaviours, such as taking breaks from screens, avoiding late-night scrolling, and engaging in offline activities. Setting clear routines around screen time at home can help to reinforce healthy boundaries and reduce the risks of overuse. By modelling balanced technology use, adults can help children and young people see that digital entertainment, including memes, should be just one part of life.

TEACH DIGITAL LITERACY

Help children and young people learn to question where information comes from and whether it's reliable - developing media literacy skills prepares young people to understand and navigate through their future online lives. Show them how memes can sometimes exaggerate or misrepresent facts for laughs, and encourage them to check credible sources when memes claim to present truth.

FOSTER EMPATHY ONLINE

Remind children and young people that memes should never come at someone else's expense. Encourage them to think about how a meme might make another person feel before sharing or creating it. Highlight examples of positive memes that celebrate creativity without hurting others. Fostering empathy, respect, and kindness in digital spaces will help them become more aware of promoting a safer, more supportive online culture.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Cristina Moreno-Almeida is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Culture at Queen Mary University of London. She specialises in memes, online networks, and youth culture, examining how digital spaces shape identity and everyday life.



See full reference list on our website



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