



Dear Parents and Carers,

What a fantastic start to the year we have had. The children have come back to school with such positivity and enthusiasm ready to embrace all that life at St Mark's has to offer.

Welcome

To all of our Reception children and their families and to Mrs Soane (our Year 5/6 teacher), thank you for joining the St Mark's school family.

T-Set

Thank you with your patience with Tea Set. I am sure you are all aware that a new allergy law was put in place from September 1st 2026 called Benedict Law. The PTA have been working very hard to ensure that Tea Set meets all of the requirements of the new laws. Thank you to the PTA for their hard work on this.

Communication

As you will have seen, we have changed how and when we send home letters and reminders. Please look out for the weekly reminder email on a Friday and we will endeavour to send other letters/messages home on a Thursday. Please ensure you read reminders and letters so that you know what is going on in school.

Prospective Parents

If you know any families with children in Nursery (who will be turning 5 from September 2027-August 2028) please encourage them to contact the school office to book onto one of our school tours for the September 2027 intake.

Parking, drop offs/pick ups and roads surrounding St Mark's

It has come to my attention that some parents have been parking/dropping off on the zig-zags outside the school and that a car has been reported to us for driving too fast along the pavement past pedestrians. Please ensure that you park and drive safely and legally when at drop off and pick up to ensure the safety of all of our children. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

We are in contact with Hampshire County Council to explore what support they can offer to ensure that all of the roads are as safe as possible for pedestrians.

We hope you enjoy reading what we have already been learning this term at St Mark's and what plans and activities we have for the year ahead.

Best regards,

Rachel Jones

Class Updates

Diamond Class has had a great start to the new academic year. Over the past fortnight, the class has shown great enthusiasm across the curriculum. Inspired by Baboon on the Moon, the children have been developing their narrative writing, carefully crafting stories that engage their readers and bring characters to life. Meanwhile, in maths, they have been building confidence with place value, working with numbers up to 10,000,000 and developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Stepping back in time, our historians have been exploring the fascinating world of the Vikings and the impact they had on Britain, with the lesson delivered by a famous Viking king, Gorm the Old. In Science, the classroom was transformed into a gold prospector workshop as the children investigated mixtures and used sieves to separate materials.



Emerald class have had an exciting start to their new project "Flying Hero" with a wonderful visit to the FAST museum. The children saw the replica of Samuel Cody's first aeroplane, explored the museum and even sat in the cockpit of a helicopter! We also had a paper aeroplane flying competition. Back at school we have been discovering more about Samuel Cody, early flight and how it has changed.



To begin this year, **Sapphire Class** have been learning about place value in maths - adding and subtracting from numbers up to 10, 000.

In history and English we have focused on the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. Here we played a trading game, swapping items that would have been vital to prehistoric civilisations.

Sapphire class have loved reading Stone Age Boy, creating their own story maps and inferring what the characters are thinking and feeling.



Ruby class have been learning all about themselves and how they have grown since they were a baby.

They matched the baby photo to the child, talked about being in nursery and explored each other's favourite books. Ruby class have started their time at St Mark's very positively and it is lovely to see their smiley faces coming into school each day.



Walktober is a challenge held each October to celebrate International Walk to School Month. School communities are encouraged to get moving by walking, wheeling and choosing other active and sustainable ways to travel throughout the month.

Vision Update

As of September 2025 our school vision is:

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 will be selected in Celebration Worship on Friday as 'Builder of the week' where they have shown dedication to improving in one of the CIRCLE values.

Congratulations...

...to **Mary** in Year 5 for earning a place in the **National Children's Orchestra**.

Congratulations Mary- we are so proud of you.



Attendance

Last year (2025-26) our whole school attendance was 95.8% which is significantly above the national figure of 94.7%. We are sure that we can aim as close to 100% as possible this year.



Thank you for supporting us by making the attendance and punctuality of your child at school a priority.

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.

Further information can be found at: [Attendance guidance for parents | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/attendance-guidance-for-parents)

Resilience and Independence

BUILDING RESILIENCE



Mistakes
are proof
you are
trying



Our focus this year is developing **resilient learners** who are **confident** when they face a **mistake** or a **challenge**. In school we will be using the following phrases/approaches please support us by doing the same at home:

- **3 before me**
- The power of **yet**
- **Have a Go Heroes**



We can't wait to see how much the children at St Mark's are going to grow in resilience, confidence and independence this year.

At the end of this newsletter there is a National College Guide to support parents to build emotional resilience in their children.

Thank you!

A massive thank you to the **PTA** for organising the school grounds tidy up on September 1st before the children returned to the school. It was lovely to see many parents and children helping make the school grounds look beautiful and tidy.

A thank you from the school to Wickes and B&Q for donating plants, top soil and slate and to Mrs and Mr Patsalides for sourcing the plants, soil, slate and for organising the event (and carrying lots of heavy bags). Please enjoy the photos on the following page.

If you are a keen gardener and would like to volunteer to help keep the grounds looking beautiful please let the school office know, as any support with this would be gratefully received.





Thank you also to the PTA for purchasing more play equipment for break and lunchtimes. The children are already enjoying using the new:

- Stepping stones
- Skipping ropes and equipment
- Ribbons and sashes and more...



And we can't wait until the Pickleball resources arrive. Thank you for helping us to make play times even more fun at St Mark's.

Playground markings

The children have been thoroughly enjoying the playground markings which were installed on both the High Street and Queen's Road playgrounds over the holidays.



Online Safety

At the end of this newsletter there is a National College guide for parents and carers about:



With tips about:

- Promoting safe game choices
- Rest breaks
- Setting a budget... and much more



Dates for diaries

Date	Event
Monday 28 th September	PTA event after school 3.30-4.30pm
Tuesday 29 th September	Reception Parents Meetings
Wednesday 30 th September 6pm-7pm	PTA meeting on Teams
Wednesday 7 th October 2.30pm*	Harvest Festival Service at St Mark's Church
Friday 9 th October at 9am	School tours for Reception September 2027
Friday 16 th October at 9:30am	School tours for Reception September 2027
20 th October 2026	Reception, Year 1&2 visit to Wellington Country Park
Thursday 22 nd October	PTA Disco
Monday 26 th to Friday 30 th October 2026	Half term
Monday 2 nd – Friday 6 th November	Year 5 & 6 Swimming (information to follow)
Tuesday 10 th November 3:30-6pm	Parents' Evening & Book Fair
Wednesday 11 th November	School Photos
Wednesday 11 th November 4.30-7pm	Parents' Evening & Book Fair
Friday 13 th November	Nurse Clinic in school (9-12)
Friday 20 th November	Children in Need
Monday 23 rd November at 9:30am	School tours for Reception September 2027
Tuesday 24 th November at 9am	School tours for Reception September 2027
Thursday 26 th & Friday 27 th November	School closed- WMAT Well-being Weekend
Wednesday 9 th December 5-6pm	Carols around the Christmas Tree (High Street Playground)
Wednesday 16 th December 2pm	Nativity at St Mark's Church
Thursday 17 th December	Christmas Lunch
Friday 18 th December 2026 1.30pm	Last day of term

*please note this is a change of time



10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

With increasing societal pressures, many children struggle with managing emotions, facing challenges and processing failure in a healthy way. This is why building emotional resilience in young people is vital for their mental health and personal success. This guide provides practical strategies for parents and educators to help children develop resilience and foster confidence, adaptability and a positive mindset.

1 ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Regularly engaging children in open dialogue fosters trust and emotional expression. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings freely without judgment. Set aside time daily, perhaps during dinner, to ask open-ended questions such as, "What's made you happy today?". This encourages children to express themselves openly.

2 MODEL POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Children often learn how to manage emotions by observing adults. By modelling calm and positive responses to challenges, you can teach them valuable emotional management skills. If you've had a difficult day, verbalise how you're feeling and explain how you plan to handle it, such as "I'm a bit worked-up, so I'm going for a walk to clear my mind."

3 TEACH PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Helping children break down challenges into manageable steps encourages a proactive mindset. Explain that every problem has a solution, even if it's not immediately obvious. For example, if a child is stuck on homework, support them in breaking the task into smaller steps, saying things like "Let's focus on just this first question for now."

4 FOSTER A GROWTH MINDSET

Encourage young people to view mistakes as learning opportunities. A growth mindset helps them see setbacks as part of the process, rather than something to be upset about. After a child loses a game or performs poorly on a test, for example, ask them what they've learned from the experience. This reinforces the idea that effort – and even failure – leads to improvement.

5 PROMOTE SELF-CARE PRACTICES

Teaching children about self-care helps them understand the importance of balancing work with relaxation to maintain emotional wellbeing. Parents and carers could start a screen-free hour before bedtime where the family engages in relaxing activities like reading, setting an example to the child for how to unwind.

6 BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Strong relationships with peers and adults provide a support system that enhances resilience. Encourage positive, respectful interactions to develop social skills. Playdates or group activities can be instrumental in teaching children how to resolve conflicts with friends by modelling and practicing calm communication.

7 SUPPORT EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Helping children to identify and name their emotions allows them to manage those feelings more effectively. When a child's upset, encourage them to talk to you about what they're feeling in an empathetic and supportive manner, and ask them why they might be experiencing these emotions.

8 ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE

Giving children opportunities to make their own decisions boosts confidence and problem-solving skills. A good example of this would be letting children choose and pack their own lunches for school, guiding them with options but allowing them to assume responsibility for the task to help them take ownership.

9 DEVELOP COPING STRATEGIES

Teaching children techniques like mindfulness, deep breathing or journaling can help them to manage stress. Show them how to perform breathing exercises when they're feeling anxious, and practise this regularly. Reinforcing this behaviour in young people will make it easier for them to use these techniques of their own accord during stressful moments.

10 CELEBRATE SMALL WINS

Recognising effort, no matter how small, reinforces perseverance and encourages children to keep trying. After a child completes a difficult task, makes progress on a project or reaches another type of personal goal, praise their efforts. Emphasise the hard work they've put in and be sure to let them know how proud you are!

Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, which works with schools on improving their mental health provisions.



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Top Tips for SETTING BOUNDARIES AROUND GAMING

If your child loves video games, then you'll probably be aware that how long they spend gaming – and what they're actually playing – can occasionally become a source of concern or conflict. The UK's trade body for interactive entertainment, Ukie, has recently launched a campaign to promote safer and more responsible gaming among young people – with parents and carers helping by setting sensible and fair boundaries. Our guide has tips on key areas where you could agree some healthy ground rules for your child's gaming activity.

PROMOTE SAFER GAME CHOICES

Deciding which online games are OK – and which should be avoided – is tricky. Some titles allow children to cooperate or compete with strangers, which creates potential risks. Watching your child play online for a while could provide more insight into a particular game, while the parental controls on most consoles allow you to limit who can chat to your child or send them friend requests. Remind your child of the hazards around strangers online when you discuss this boundary with them.

ENCOURAGE REGULAR BREAKS

Help your child understand the need to take regular breaks, playing in shorter bursts rather than marathon sessions. Bear in mind that some games (such as role-playing games) require time investment from the player, while others (online team games, for example) can't be stopped or paused at a moment's notice. A quick break every hour or so is good practice, and you could suggest some things to do in these breaks, such as having a drink of water or getting some fresh air.

AGREE SPENDING LIMITS

There's no doubt that gaming can be expensive, and younger players often don't realise how much paying for digital items and subscriptions can add up to. Many young gamers love to buy new skins or upgrades for their character, so you could settle on a fixed amount that your child is allowed to spend on in-game items each week or month. This sort of boundary will not only help your child to manage their expectations but will also make you more aware of the price of these items.

DISCUSS AGE RATINGS

Children often ignore the age ratings on games – or are unaware they even exist. If you're happy with your child playing a particular game even though it's rated above their age, then establish that as a boundary: emphasise that you've made an exception, and talk about what age ratings mean and why they're important. You could add context to this boundary by browsing games' boxes together while shopping, discussing why some games might have earned certain age ratings.

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CENSORED

Meet Our Expert

Daniel Upcombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality and Web3. He has also written 15 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.



FACTOR IN FRIENDS

If your child is a keen video gamer, the chances are that they'll have other gamers among their social circle, too. When friends visit, do they instantly dash to their console or computer? You could put boundaries in place before their guests arrive by agreeing on a length of gaming time. Bear in mind, though, that they may try to extend this once they're together. Try coming up with activities or challenges for them during screen breaks – if they join in, they earn a little extra time on their game.

ENJOY GAMING TOGETHER

Setting time aside to play video games together can be an enjoyable bonding exercise. Undeniably, some young gamers may be less enthusiastic about a parent or carer joining in, but it can be a productive way of encouraging them to share their hobby with you. Setting goals or tasks might be useful: if they love Minecraft, choose something to build together; if Fortnite's their favourite, ask to try out some of the fun game modes, like Prop Hunt, which don't require high skill levels.

TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS

Help your child to monitor their emotions as they play. Discuss what is (and isn't) an acceptable level of competitiveness to show while gaming. Are they allowed to trash talk other players, for example? Can they notice when they get angry if they lose? Do they think these emotions are healthy? Some games can provoke anger, but others can bring joy, humour and the thrill of overcoming a challenge. Try to steer your child towards games that tend to produce these more positive feelings.

BE PREPARED FOR TROLLS

A frequent problem when gaming online is other players who are deliberately troublesome. Make sure your child knows how to report and block someone who makes their experience a negative one. Between you, decide if or how they should deal with these online trolls. Talk about where your child's boundaries are in terms of what they think is acceptable: what behaviour by other users is merely frustrating, and what crosses the line to become upsetting or abusive.

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Source: <https://hipolapp/about/privacy.html>



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