



# St Mark's Pre-School Newsletter

## This Terms Activities

February 2025

We started January with a down in the jungle theme which was so much fun. We turned the role play area into a jungle café, with jungle themed paper plates and cups and some giant leaves, the children enjoyed taking orders and cooked up some yummy food. In the maths area we worked on our shapes by completing a jungle themed shape puzzle. In the creative area we had some fun with jungle themed finger painting, we spoke about the colours we were using. We went on safari and had to spot lots of animals hidden around the room and used our checklist to tick them off once we found them. In the nature area we had some cool jungle masks which the children loved using and found it very funny when they scared their teachers! As part of the fortnightly challenge the children made some amazing jungle inspired arts and crafts and loved showing them at show and tell.

We then moved onto our weather theme and living in England gave us lots of weather to talk about! On the literacy table we had some clothes sorting, the children thought about each item of clothing and when you might wear it, for example welly boots when it is raining. On the maths table we worked on numbers, and we had a number matching game. In the water tray we had some mini umbrellas and watering cans so we could make it rain, the water had blue glitter in it. In the tuft spot we coloured rainbows, talking about the colours we might see and what weather we need to make a rainbow. We also purchased some 'boom whackers' which we used to bang together to make thunder sounds. On the large carpet area, we worked on our balancing skills by balancing on the beams and trying not to fall into the water below!

Our final theme of the month was Chinese New Year, we found out it was year of the snake! We learnt how to say Happy New Year in Chinese. We also turned the role play area into a Chinese restaurant and we practiced using chop sticks which was a bit tricky! We also looked at Chinese writing in the literacy area and had a go at writing them. In the maths area we looked at the Chinese numbers too which look very too different to ours. On the last day we got to try some Chinese food, and the prawn crackers were so yummy.

During our forest sessions we had lots of different weather, we enjoyed some winter sun but also enjoyed splashing in muddy puddles!

We have also been lucky to purchase some new toys which the children have really enjoyed, especially the Paw Patrol figures.

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.

As a reminder, our opening time is at 9am and our doors tend to close at 9.10am, unless already agreed, please bring your child/children in within this time, as any time after interrupts our planned morning and takes us away from what we are doing with the children which can be unsettling for them.....Thank you.

# Friday Sessions

As you are aware we do not currently open on a Friday, however this is something we are happy to do if we have the numbers, please bare in mind that this would be a Forest School morning/day. We would also like to mention that we are unable to swap your child's morning/day to the Friday. The Friday would be in addition to your child's current morning/day.

Please let Lorraine know by Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February if you are interested.

# Labelling

Could we please remind all parents to label their child's clothes. 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 polos and jumpers.

# Half Term Topics

This half terms topics will be.

Week 1 – 07/01/25 – Down in the jungle

Week 2 – 13/01/25 – Down in the jungle

Week 3 – 20/01/25 – The weather

Week 4 – 27/01/25 – Chinese New Year

Week 5 – 03/02/25 – My senses

Week 6 – 10/02/25 – My senses and Valentines Day

# 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.

If you are unsure whether you are able to apply you can use the childcare calculator on the childcare choice's website.

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

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

# 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.

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 2:45pm 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 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 are not something we can check for when we enter the forest. 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/>

# Forest Clothing

The temperature is really starting to drop now, and we are finding the children are complaining of being cold when in the forest. We can't stress enough how important it is to layer the children up! If they are too hot, we can take a layer off, but once they are cold it is hard for them to warm up and it doesn't make it a fun experience. There is a kit list further below in the newsletter or we have attached a great visual which you should find useful.

## 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!

# 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 2.45pm, otherwise you will incur a late fee surcharge of £5.00 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.



# Two Year Funding

From April 2024, eligible working parents of two-year-olds can access their 15 hours childcare from the term after their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

From September 2024 - For eligible working families in England with a child between 9 and 23 months old can access their 15 hours childcare. Apply for your code from 12th May.

The link below will offer more information with regards to finding out if you are eligible to apply.

[Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#)

# 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](http://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 day 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 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.

# Consumables

From April we will be changing how we charge for the Consumables contribution.

This will now be charged at 48p per each hour that your child does with us; the cost will cover items such as;

Wipes  
Nappies  
Additional snack / Milk  
Tissues  
Arts & Crafts  
All nursery resources

# Fees

2yr old, 3hr session - £25.56  
2yr old, full day session - £44.73  
3yr old, Top up of funded hours - £7.00 p/h

# 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 \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://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](http://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

- Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February – Last day of term
  - Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February – First day of term
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## 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)