

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope and pray you are well. It with great joy that I write to you to mark the of our Autumn term. As we know, Christmas marks the coming of Jesus, a symbol of hope and Good News. In continuation with this theme, it is my honour to be able to capture and celebrate the Good News and hope we have seen this term as a community of transformation founded on love, hope and trust.

Thank you for working in partnership with the school this term. You play a leading role in the continued success of St Mark's, and for that I am truly grateful. As you know, the school's mission is to transform the minds of the students and staff we serve (Romans 12) to allow all to live life to the full (John 10)- below are just some examples that highlight the impact of our relentless mission to do God's work on earth.



END OF TERM ARRANGEMENTS

The academy closes for the Christmas break on Wednesday 20th December. This will be staggered according to the times below. Students are required to remain in P3 for a slightly extended period.

Year	Finish
7, 8, 9	12pm
10, 11, 12, 13	12:15pm

Please ensure your child returns to the academy on Monday 8th January at 8:25am. Failure to return to school on this day may result in a home visit from a Senior Leader and member of the Attendance and Pastoral Team.

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AUTUMN TERM CELEBRATIONS

St Mark's Scoops More Quality Marks

As you are aware, over the past year, St Mark's Academy has been applying for The Framework for Exceptional Education (FfEE). The framework covers 12 strands of practice within a school:

For each strand there are four descriptors, showing different levels of practice: Beginning, Developing, Embedding and Transforming.

SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education

TEACHING AND LEARNING			
Climate for learning Respectful relationships Appropriate stretch and challenge Purposeful learning environments	Culture of reflection Developing learning skills Identifying and addressing barriers to learning Learner independence	Effective learning behaviours Positive behaviour for learning Explicit learning process Leadership of learning	Variety of teaching approaches Creative strategies and techniques Effective assessment Collaboration in learning
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE			
Engagement with key stakeholders Positive and embedded relationships Learner, parent and governor/trustee role in school improvement Engagement with all groups	Engaging with evidence and research Undertaking and using research Developing specialist knowledge Culture of innovation	Principled assessment Decision-driven data collection Formative assessment and feedback Impactful assessment on learners	Principled curriculum design Curriculum intent Personalisation Breadth and balance Ongoing curriculum review
LEADERSHIP			
Leadership through moral purpose Principled vision and values that promote social justice Evidence-informed decision making Commitment to leadership development and system leadership	Professional learning Professional learning Collaborative practice Staff progression routes	Quality assurance Strategic use of data and benchmarking Accountability Self-evaluation, monitoring and target-setting	Wellbeing Creating a positive, happy school environment Championing diversity and inclusion Creative, innovative and consistent support



St Mark's has now been awarded the highest possible mark of "transforming" for the six strands below.



I am proud to inform you that we are on track to achieve a "transforming" mark for the using a variety of teaching approaches and engaging with evidence and research strands.



Anthem Collaborative Review Day

In October, St Mark's welcomed Anthem's Executive Team and an external inspector to conduct a full review of standards within the academy. The day involved conducting over 40 lesson drop ins, meetings with Senior Leaders, Middle Leaders and ECTs, book looks and student voice. Some of the feedback follows:

- The vision encompasses a values-based system which provides an inclusive Christian ethos supported through the Bible scriptures. Creative and innovative leadership springs from an investment in the voice of stakeholders. This rests on the pillars of literacy, attainment and assessment and enrichment which promote an 'owner's mindset'. 'We create restaurant owners, not waiters.'
- The school collectively focuses in on literacy and oracy development, this was evidenced in lessons. In a Year 8 lesson, students were observed reading a play collectively. The quality of enunciation and expressive tonality was excellent.
- Regular diagnostic practices are evident across Years 11 to 13.
- Lead practitioners have absolute clarity around their roles and have impact on improving practice beyond their own departments. Their wider work with the 'Quality of Education team' to provide individual teacher support, as well as delivering CPD, is informed by whole school patterns and trends.
- The St Marks Way is consistently implemented across the school. It is underpinned by and refined in light of research. Staff at all levels can explain the cognitive science behind each step.
- CPD is responsive and leaders supermodel expectations for staff. There is a strong culture of openness with the mantra being that all teachers can improve following frequent feedback. This is tracked by leaders who are quick to act if staff do not develop quickly when action points are given.

anthem

Inclusion provides the purpose and meaning for everything.

**EVERY STUDENT
EVERY LESSON
ALL THE TIME**





Celebrating Black Excellence

At St Mark's we have the privilege of teaching at, or attending, a school where the community is beautifully diverse. During the months of October and November 2023, teachers and students worked collaboratively to plan an exceptional range of activities to celebrate the achievements of black people. When I think about the love, tolerance and hope demonstrated throughout the celebrations, I am once again reminded what an honour and privilege it is to lead this unique community. A huge thank you has to go out to Mr Young for his exceptional leadership of the event.

It is our mission at St Mark's to use the gift of education as a powerful weapon to break down barriers established by racism and celebrate diversity and the contribution of black people to our world, country and school. In response to the BLMM, St Mark's students pledged that we will not be satisfied until 'justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream' (Amos 5:24).

Please read an article published by SSAT to celebrate the event.

[St Mark's Academy - St Mark's Academy Hosts Star-studded Black Excellence Evening. \(anthemtrust.uk\)](https://www.anthemtrust.uk/st-marks-academy-st-marks-academy-hosts-star-studded-black-excellence-evening)





A Sensational Enrichment Day

As you know, St Mark's is a school that is dedicated to both academic and character excellence. We believe it is part of our mission and vision to provide a transformational enrichment and careers offer that allows students to develop their character and cultural capital. The academy holds three enrichment days a year. This year we continue to respond to student voice and organised trips for each year group. See the table below for the list of activities.

Please find details of our full enrichment offer at the following link:
<https://www.stmarksacademy.com/parents/enrichment>



Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
The British Museum	Natural History Museum	Spark! Charity Employability Workshop	Jack Petchey Speak out challenge	Greenwich / Ice skating	UCAS / Planning University / Apprenticeship trips	



Exceptional Safeguarding Practices

On Thursday 7th December, we welcomed Anthem's Safeguarding Lead to the academy to conduct a deep dive into our practices. Please see the beautiful comments he made about safeguarding within the school:

"St Mark's Church of England Academy exemplifies an unwavering dedication to safeguarding practices. PSHE and Personal Development stand out as strengths within the academy. Leaders demonstrate a commendable ability to articulate the designed curriculum and convey a clear vision for evaluating its impact. This clarity in communication is indicative of a strategic approach to the development and refinement of the curriculum over time. The culture of the academy, as revealed through discussions with leaders and students, underscores a genuine commitment to fostering the holistic development of students. Notably, the review notes that this commitment is not only articulated by the academy's leadership but is also mirrored in the perspectives of the students themselves. The students' testimony underscores the effectiveness of the academy's approach, emphasizing their perceived support and confidence in seeking guidance from trusted adults within the institution. The academy demonstrates strong attendance rates, consistently above national averages. This commendable achievement is attributed to the implementation of a robust system that ensures the prompt follow-up of all absences. The proactive approach to attendance management is a noteworthy strength, reflecting the academy's commitment to maintaining high levels of student engagement."

Staff Farewells

Mrs. E. Ajuka

Joined the academy on 13/06/2022 as SLT Business Assistant. During her time, she has provided invaluable support to SLT, as well as our Anthem Community Council, in her role as Clerk. She has mostly recently stepped in as the beacon of our front-of house, with the warmest of smiles and infectious positivity every morning.



Mrs. S. Weston

Started on 10/09/2007 as a Library Assistant. She took on additional role as Personnel/HR Assistant in 2008, until she was eventually promoted to HR Manager in 2015. She then took a step back to work p/t in Sept 2019, as HR Assistant.



Ms. K. Taylor

Started in 01/11/2004 as Teaching Assistant and progressed to Assistant SENDCo where she works to transform the lives of students with SEND needs.



Mr. D. Morris

Joined the Academy on 23/03/2020, in the midst of COVID lock-down. He has supported the Facilities team endlessly and invaluable support as our in-house mini-bus driver.



Ms. A. Jahangir

Joined 04/01/2023 as IEC Coordinator. She has been an incredible colleague and supported the running of our behaviour systems.



A quick rundown of a packed sporting calendar

Our incredible Y10 & 11 Basketball Team were victorious against Raynes Park, on Friday 15th December, finishing with a score of 32-26.

The Y11 and Sixth Form Football Team won against Harris Academy Wimbledon by an astonishing 7 goals to 1!

St Mark's have hosted 2 regional primary school PE events this year, so far, which were a great success. A big thank you to the following sixth formers that helped run the event: Blessing, Jermaine, Ifina, Aisosa, Gilbert, Benaiah, Elijah, David

Students in KS3 have learned and developed skills in a multitude of different activities since the start of the year, including basketball, football, rugby, badminton and health related exercises (HRE).

We have a sixth form basketball fixture vs Bishop Thomas Grant on 17th January at home – supporters welcome!

PE Enrichment Clubs

A reminder about PE enrichment clubs that will continue to run after Christmas:

- Year 7/8 football – Tuesdays 3.30-4.30pm on Astro
- Badminton club – Tuesdays 3.30-4.30pm in Sports Hall (this will not run whilst exams are on over Feb)
- Cricket nets – Wednesday lunchtimes in Sports Hall
- Year 9/10 football – Thursdays 3.30-4.30pm on Astro
- Rugby club – Thursdays 3.30-4.30 on Astro
- Boxercise club (KS4) – Friday lunchtimes in Boxing Gym
- KS4 basketball – Friday lunchtimes in Sports Hall
- KS3 basketball – Friday 3.30-4.30pm in Sports Hall







Oxbridge Excitement, University & Careers

Some of our high potential achievers took a trip to explore what life could be like for them at Oxford University. They were hosted by Merton College and undertook a workshop at the world-renowned Ashmolean Museum.

On 5th December - Sarah Les, the first student in our history to secure a place at Cambridge led a session with our year 13 cohorts as a Cambridge Ambassador. The session focused on motivation, study skills and university pathways.

As part of our Enrichment Day, on 13th December, a wide range of university partners in conjunction with The Elephant Group, led session in school about university finance, apprenticeships and opportunities post-16.

We're also excited for CJ, a current Y13 student, who has been invited to attend Cambridge to interview for a course in Medicine. We wish her the best of luck!





A LUXURY STAY IN PARIS

After the success of last year's visit, the St Mark's MFL department are delighted to organise a trip to Paris once again!

We will be staying at the incredible Chateau de Grande Romaine where all meals are catered, students can go swimming and evening entertainment takes place.

The trip includes a day in the city of Paris where we will take a boat trip down the Seine and climb the Eiffel Tower! We will also revisit last year's highlight and spend a day at Disneyland Paris, with the chance to go to both parks and enjoy all it has to offer.

We are really looking forward to offering this exciting opportunity for our students to experience a taste of French culture and get outside of their comfort zone.



SACRED VALLEY PERU EXPEDITION

EXPEDITION TO PERU

We have, once again, partnered with Camps International to give our students a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take part in an expedition to Peru next Summer.

Students will have just over a year to raise funds to participate, so please support how you can!

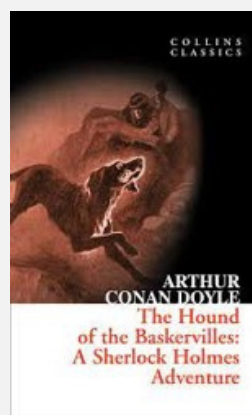
Last year, the 2 students who visited Kenya has the most amazing time!





KEY STAGE 3

This term in Key Stage 3 we kicked it off with all things gothic! Year 7 were taken on a wonderful journey through 'The Monkey's Paw', 'Dracula' and so much more. Year 8 threw themselves into the mind of Frankenstein and his monster, learning about power, identity and social responsibility. Year 8 took these big ideas and transferred them over to the incredible World Poetry scheme. Year 9 became expert detectives working alongside Sherlock Holmes, uncovering the truth behind the curse of 'The Hound of The Baskervilles'. Well done to all for your continued hard work!



YEAR 11

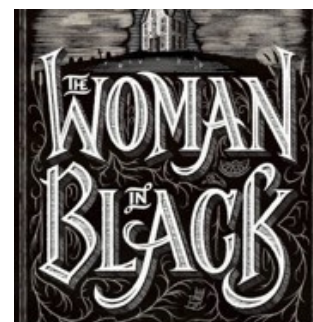
A HUGE congratulations to the Year 11 students for their dedicated efforts, resulting in impressive mock exam outcomes! As a result, Year 11 have been placed into targeted class groupings to enhance their preparation for upcoming exams. Each new class will focus on specific skills to ensure the highest outcomes for all in summer exams. Do remember to keep up to date with your English revision timetable. Well done Year 11 on your hard work and keep it up!

ENRICHMENT

Our wonderful bookworms and aspiring writers were committed to attending their after-school enrichment led by Miss Shkodra, perfecting their skills and re-writing history in just 100 words! We have seen publications with 'Young Writers' and even more entries submitted this term! A big well done for all your hard work and efforts. Keep writing!

KS5 BOOK CLUB

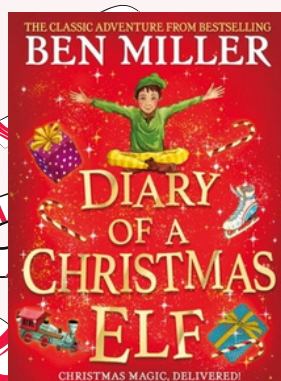
In our KS5 Book Club, led by Miss Lanham, students are currently reading the captivating gothic novel "Woman in Black" by Susan Hill. KS5 Book Club is designed to expose students to more fiction and build students' confidence sharing their own responses to texts. Well done KS5 on your hard work, we can't wait to read more texts over the year!



Christmas Reading List

This Christmas holiday, the English Department recommends some fantastic Christmas reads!

- Little Women by Louisa May Alcott
- Diary of a Christmas Elf by Ben Miller
- Sherlock Holmes: The Christmas Demon by James Lovegrove





BOOKTUST BOOKBUZZ 2023

We kicked-off the new term in September with our annual Bookbuzz event.

BookTrust is a UK children's reading charity, dedicated to getting children reading that works across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. BookTrust was founded in 1921 by Hugh Walpole, Stanley Unwin, Maurice Marston and Harold Macmillan and the Late Queen Elizabeth II was also a recent patron.

Bookbuzz is an initiative of the Trust whereby every year 7 student across the country is invited to watch a short, but engaging, video of authors talking about their books and then to take the difficult decision of choosing one book from the range to take home and keep - free of charge!

2023 saw 16 outstanding titles by talented children's authors, engage, enthrall, and excite our year 7s about their books and we completed the exercise by giving the books out to students in the week following the October half term. BookTrust also provide extra copies of the copies to ensure these can also be available to students from the Academy library.



PREMIUM SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP LIBRARY CARDS

Merton Council, via the Merton Library Service, has once again generated library cards for KS3 students. Current Year 7 students have been issued with their cards enabling them to make use of the services of the 7 libraries within the borough of Merton (Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, Pollards Hill, Raynes Park, West Barnes, Wimbledon), as well as a wealth of online opportunities.

Merton libraries have an unprecedented collection of literature including Manga, the Classics, Comics, Fantasy, Historical stories, Horror, Romance and LGBTQ+ to name but a few. If any year 7 has not received a library card directly from the Academy, please do visit any of the 7 Merton libraries, either virtually or physically where staff will be able to help. In addition, please do make contact with the Learning and Resources Manager at the Academy who can re-order any lost or misplaced cards.

The Benefits

- Access to hundreds of child/teen eBooks and eAudiobooks which can be downloaded on your computer or mobile device. Visit www.merton.gov.uk/libraries for more information.
- Access to the library public computers, the internet, and free homework printing (5 black and white prints or 2 colour prints per visit)
- Access to digital resources such as Britannica, OUP and PressReader.





SCHOLASTIC BOOKFAIR

We once again took the opportunity in late September to bring new books into the Academy via Scholastic, the educational book seller.

Scholastic is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, connecting educators and families through accessibility, engagement, and expertise. The organisation is a leading provider of literacy curriculum, and a producer of educational and popular children's media.

Scholastic reimburses a percentage of the sale of all books sold at the fair to enable the Academy to buy further stocks for our library.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD

We are proud to be able to support students on their journey throughout the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

A number of current students and leavers, have chosen to carry out their Bronze and Silver Award Volunteering option within the St Marks Academy library, a chance to learn new and varied skills and tasks that can potentially be used in life.

Good luck and best wishes to Davina, Efe, Cailin, Akshitha, Xiaoying, Marina, Lydia, Tomiwa, Gwen and Emma, not to mention ex-students Elliana, Fatmata, Priscilla and Louise to name but a few!



ANYONE FOR CHESS!?

Chess seems to have taken on its own personality in recent years at the Academy with students from year 7 to year 13 (and all those in between), playing the game before school, during breaks and lunch and after school at a dedicated enrichment club on Thursdays from 3:15 – 4:15!

We therefore declare our intention to launch a whole school Chess Tournament in January 2024 and not before time as the last occasion did this was in 2019 with 60 participants! Let the games begin!!!!



BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH 1958 - 2023



Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was a British writer, dub poet, actor, musician and professor of poetry and creative writing. He was included in The Times list of Britain's top 50 post-war writers in 2008.

We mourn the passing of this talented and engaging author of many titles some of which are located in the Academy library, including: Face, Gangsta Rap, Liam, The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah, Refugee Boy, Talking Turkeys, Terror Kid and Windrush Child

We are thankful that we have these titles which can be enjoyed by current and future generations of students and staff.



Y8 GEOGRAPHY TRIP

The year 8 Geography trip to the Natural History Museum was a resounding success. Students were incredibly well-behaved and exhibited exemplary conduct throughout the day. To test their knowledge and understanding of the exhibits, the students completed a quiz as they walked around the exhibits with excellent completion levels recorded. They demonstrated a keen interest in the mammal and bird exhibits, particularly fascinated by the colossal skeleton of a blue whale and the intricate flight mechanisms of various birds. The precious rock exhibit also captured their imagination, as they marvelled at the beauty and rarity of these natural wonders. The trip proved to be an invaluable learning experience for all the students, enriching their understanding of Geography and sparking a lifelong passion for the natural world.

HIGH POTENTIAL ACHIEVERS (HPA)

This term of wonderful HPAs at St Marks have been hard at work crafting their own Journey of Transformation Passport. Alongside Assemblies to celebrate their success to date, we are thrilled to share that some of our fabulous Y10 students were invited to Kings College Wimbledon for an enriching Art of Learning Workshop. We look forward to another term of HPA enrichment, including escape rooms, a trip to the Globe and science workshops!

Y8 PROGRESS LEADER MESSAGE

It has been an exciting term for Year 8 as they find their feet and adjust to no longer being the youngest in the school!

It has been a pleasure to see the students developing their talents across all their subjects and exploring new things such as poetry in English, badminton in PE and the chance to take up a second modern foreign language.

This term culminated in a fantastic trip to the Natural History Museum where the pupils had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of tectonic plates which they have been studying in Geography. The students displayed exemplary behaviour and had a wonderful time exploring the museum and completing a quiz.

I look forward to seeing what comes next for Year 8 and watching them grow and mature throughout the rest of school year.

Miss L Hart Dyke, Year 8 Progress Leader

KOREAN CLUB

We also had a successful and well attended Korean club this half-term in MFL. Students have been immersing themselves in Korean culture with an amazing cooking experience and also showing their artistic skills by decorating traditional masks. Looking forward to seeing what they get up to next term.



STEPLAB

Did you know that St Mark's is one of only 12 Steplab teaching hubs in the country!?

This means that teachers, from across the country, are welcomed to our school to learn from the way we train and develop our teaching staff as we our school is seen as a model of best practice!

