



## Newsletter – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear parents and carers,

### Road closure

We were anticipating the road outside the school to be closed and resurfaced on Monday. We fully expected a skilled team of engineers with state-of-the-art equipment to swoop in at 9:29 and 59 seconds to begin a highly efficient project that would leave the road surface outside so smooth it would make those looking upon it physically weep with admiration. Unfortunately, other than two random road cones appearing near the school (subsequently removed or stolen), nobody turned up and nothing happened. If only someone could have predicted it! We have had no more notices since the letter I sent to you last week, but will let you know when we do.

### Ofsted

You will have seen lots in the news recently about Ofsted, so I thought I had better say something about it. We are due Ofsted at any time; in fact we have been told to expect “the call” on a daily basis over the last few years. Ofsted call between 10:30am and 2pm the day before an inspection team arrives. The team is then in the school for two days. The outcome of the inspection will partly depend on who turns up on the day and their experience or their interpretation of the criteria upon which schools are judged. The school is graded according to the inspection framework – this changes significantly every other year or so and then schools quickly try to align what they do to fit in with whatever Ofsted now feels is important.

Since I arrived in 2012, the school has had two inspections; one in 2013 and one in 2017, both of them at the then junior school. The infant school was last inspected in 2008. Due to the nature of the amalgamation, the junior school had to close while the infant school expanded to a full primary. We are therefore officially running on an Ofsted that is 15 years old. In that time the inspection criteria, and how Ofsted judge schools, has changed beyond all recognition.

The pressure on teachers and school leaders is significant, as we all put a huge amount of effort, time and love into our schools, so much so that it is hard (for me at least) to imagine life without St James'. We are a successful school with fantastic teachers and children who make us proud every day; I expect every headteacher across the county feels exactly the same. That being true, the fear of letting down the whole school community and seeing 11 years of my life reduced to a single (perhaps unflattering) and highly publicised word is a constant, daily pressure.

This is not meant to be an apologia in advance, just an honest and public show of support for my colleagues across the country, especially considering the recent news. In fact, I am proud of my team and the school we have built together and am always happy to show it off to anyone. This is our school and, personally, I love it deeply.

As a last word on Ofsted, I would encourage all of you to comment on Ofsted's ParentView as the team will take your views into account. After “the call” we will put out another request, but the tight turnaround means it is often too late for many people to have their say. I very much doubt I will have the moral courage to refuse them entry. I have, however, always removed all references to Ofsted from letters since my arrival at the Junior School in 2012.



### **Year 1 Superhero Training Day**

On Thursday, Year 1 children were put through their paces during their Superhero Training Day. They had their problem solving, teamwork, creative and listening skills challenges throughout the day to see if they were worthy heroes. The children remembered that not all heroes are 'superheroes' as we know, and they can be around us in our daily lives. We had a wonderful day and can confidently say we have some real heroes in our midst!



Miss Greenfield

### **Year 2 trip to Hever Castle**

On Thursday, Year 2 had a fabulous finish to their 'Kings, Queens, and Castles' topic with a trip to beautiful Hever Castle, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. Although there was a quick downpour when we first arrived, the rest of the day was blessed with spring sunshine. As we walked around the gardens bursting with Spring flowers, we had a Tudors quiz. In the castle, we learned much more about Anne and her family. The whole day was magical, and various children reported that it was 'the best day ever!'



Mrs Williams

### **Netball update**

Both our netball teams did fantastically well at a recent tournament between the Tunbridge Wells and district schools. The A team won every match and were winners of their section so went through to the final where they met the B team.

The B team's journey wasn't quite so smooth. In the first match we had to play with 4 as the rest hadn't arrived yet! In spite of this they managed a fabulous draw. They then drew the next match and then had to shoot goals to



go through to the semi-final which they won. They then met our A team who were just too strong. We were so proud of their dedication and determination. This means that St James' held both first and second place, a massive achievement.

Then on Thursday evening, and in driving rain, in a standalone match the A team beat Claremont by 8 goals to 3.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing PE team who are totally extraordinary - in particular Miss Gibson and Mrs Naismith – and, of course, the amazing children themselves.

### **Lateness**

We are having an increasing number of children arriving late. Obviously, once in a blue moon, we are all late for something. However every day we have a significant number arriving late and this is now occupying the whole office team in ferrying children to classrooms for the first 15 minutes of each day. Learning starts very promptly at 9am, so some children miss the start of their first lesson almost daily. If your child arrives after the registers have closed, they are marked absent for that whole session (this is not a St James' rule, but local and national guidance which we must follow).

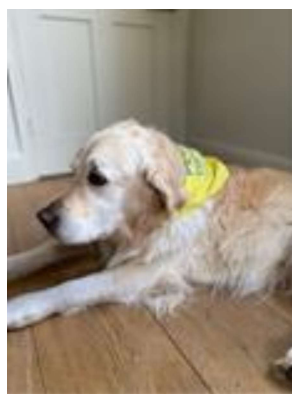
Please ensure your child is through their respective school entrance by 8:55am at the latest so they are ready to start the day feeling settled and ready to learn. If getting your child to school on time is something you find tricky, please speak to Mrs Pierce in the school office and we will support you.

### **Mobile phones and other smart devices**

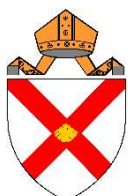
We would like to remind you that pupils (of any age) are not allowed a mobile phone at school. If you feel that it is vital for your child to have a mobile phone in school, then we would ask you to explain, in writing, the reasons for this. If we as a school agree, permission will be granted in writing. The same goes for other smart technology enabled devices such as smart watches which are not suitable for children to bring to school. Any mobile phones, or similar devices will be confiscated by staff on sight to be returned to a parent at the end of the day. If the child continues to bring the device after this, then it will be confiscated for a week.

### **Reading Dog**

We are very fortunate that Mrs Peet is now bringing in her Pets As Therapy dog Polly into school on Friday mornings. Polly loves listening to stories and some of the children will have an opportunity to read to her each week.



Mrs Wardell



## Nuts

As an extra bit of public information, peanut butter does contain nuts, as does Nutella. Please do not put either in your child's sandwiches. Pesto (less obviously) also contains nuts.

## Vacancy for a Teaching Assistant & Midday Supervisor

Please visit the Kent Teach website if you are interested in joining our lovely team as one of our Teaching Assistants or Midday Supervisors.

## Teacher strikes

Negotiations are currently ongoing between the unions and the DfE and no future strikes have been announced.

## Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges 24.03.23

We continue to challenge the children to read as frequently as possible. Each week, we review every class' word count (how many words have been read by each child and each class altogether) and quiz count (how many quizzes have been passed) and we celebrate with those children and classes who have the highest scores.

Here are **this week's winners**:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
<b>Divit</b> in Chaffinch Class <b>1,292,024</b> words	<b>Chaffinch</b> Class <b>5,512,211</b> words	<b>Jessie</b> in Badger Class <b>43</b> quizzes	<b>Deer</b> Class <b>245</b> quizzes

We have also been reviewing each class' word and quiz count in one week, so a special mention to:

- **Swift** Class who read **1,149,874** words in one week
- **Mayenna** in Swift Class who read **383,354** words in one week
- **Deer** Class who successfully passed **57** quizzes in one week
- **Alexander V** in Deer Class who passed **9** quizzes in one week

Many congratulations to all our winners. Keep reading!

Ms Simpson

## Dates for the diary

Here are some dates for the remainder of the term ahead. If you visit the calendar on the school website, the diary dates can now be imported into Google calendars.

24 <sup>th</sup> March	Pupil reports sent home today
28 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 5 led church service – Y5 parents welcome to attend
29 <sup>th</sup> March	Easter RE day
31 <sup>st</sup> March	Last day of term – a member of our governing board will be on the gate in the morning
17 <sup>th</sup> April	Children return to school Year 6 leave for their residential week
1 <sup>st</sup> May	Bank holiday
2 <sup>nd</sup> May	INSET day – school closed for children
8 <sup>th</sup> May	Bank holiday (coronation)
9 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 6 SATs week begins



29 <sup>th</sup> May	Half term week begins
5 <sup>th</sup> June	Children return to school
21 <sup>st</sup> July	Last day of term
1 <sup>st</sup> September	INSET day
4 <sup>th</sup> September	Children return to school
	New Reception children stay and play

Kindest regards,  
John Tutt

