



Dear parents and St James' staff,

I hope you are all looking forward to as happy and peaceful a Christmas as is possible at the moment. All Christmases have their own challenges, whether it is the cooking, frantic shopping or trying to keep the peace during a game of Monopoly. Another challenge for a more normal Christmas is deciding, well into the New Year, what to do with some of the left-over cheeses on the cheeseboard. If anyone has a use for a half pound of apricot, cranberry and walnut Wensleydale then I am all ears (I can tell you from experience that this does not make good cheese on toast).

This year however, Christmas will be different for most of us and it has been no different at school. Usually there would be at least seven Christmas play performances across the two halls and two church services. We have done our best to make this year as big a celebration as usual and it has been wonderful to see the effort the children have been putting into their nativities. We have recorded them and they will soon be available for you to watch so that you can share the magic. We will send details via ParentMail. Thank you so much to Fintech Finance for arranging and organising the recording of the infant nativity for us.

Yesterday we had an interschool carol singalong via Zoom, with other schools in the town. This morning I judged the most Christmassy classrooms. Well done Cherry and Badger!

The school talent show was the biggest yet, being watched on screen by 21 classes, each with an act to show the rest of the school. It was a sight to see - the children were absolutely brilliant. Thank you to Mr Hodges for compering.

Goodbye and best wishes

We must say good luck to one of our fantastic teachers, Sophie Stock, teacher of Fox class, whose baby is due imminently and who is beginning her maternity leave on Friday. We also need to say goodbye to Louise Vaughan who has been one of our amazing TAs, working in Chaffinch class this year, who is leaving us for pastures new. Thanks to both of you for all you have done, keep in touch and enjoy your own new beginnings next year.

Snow

It could happen. Please keep an eye on the school website and on kentschoolclosures.co.uk if there is heavy snow. It is always unlikely the school will close unless conditions are horrendous (other than one early finish, we have not closed over the last decade, much to the disgust of the children), but we may be unable to provide school lunches or need to partially close if staff are unable to get to school.

Regarding snow, just imagine the perfect storm of panic buying if that coincided with a no deal Brexit and harsher lockdown. As a piece of consumer advice, in a dire emergency a torn up cereal box will block your toilet.

New term

Term starts on Monday 4th January. If there are any last-minute government announcements over the holidays (via the press) regarding the start of term for primary schools, please wait until you have heard from us via ParentMail and continue to assume that Monday the 4th is the beginning of the new term unless we tell you otherwise.

Vacancy for a full time Teaching Assistant



We are looking for a Teaching Assistant to join our team. If you are interested, the details are on the Kent Teach website: [Teaching Assistant Teaching/Child Support at St James' CE \(Aided\) Primary School, Tunbridge Wells \(kent-teach.com\)](http://kent-teach.com)

Accelerated Reader Winners - Term 2

Highest individual word count: Xavier in Kestrel class with 1,553,934 words.

Highest amount of quizzes achieved: William in Deer class with 61 quizzes.

Highest class word count: Osprey class with 10,653,123 words

Applications for Reception places for September 2021

Just a quick reminder that the application window closes on 15th January.

Intra-School Cross Country

Over the past couple of weeks, the children have been participating in a (very muddy!) cross-country competition across the school. It has been an amazing effort with over 450 children participating. A huge congratulations to all our winning runners!

	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>
Year 1	Matilda - Chestnut	Ben - Chestnut
Year 2	Rebecca - Rabbit	Niko - Rabbit
Year 3	Bethany - Fox	Sam - Fox
Year 4	Hannah - Vole	Mohammad - Stoat
Year 5	Lara - Chaffinch	Petar - Swift
Year 6	Charlotte - Owl	Rory - Osprey

Mr Hodges

Forest School news

At Forest School we've had a wonderfully Christmassy creative term! The children have been helping make decorations - reindeer, Santas, baubles, stars, oil lamps, Christmas trees and hanging plaster casts. Despite the disappointment at the lack of snow, they have greatly appreciated the increasing mud and the several heavy downpours, never letting it slow them down but making the most of their time outside.

The staff have also been busy making a new roof for the shed and felling some of the smaller dead trees. Our next big project will be replacing one of our 38ft parachutes, which has sadly deteriorated and shredded overtime. If anyone can help us at some point later next year with this VERY big task, which may involve scaling the larger trees, please do get in contact - we'll need quite a team!!



Mrs Hadley



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all

While Christmas is a time to feel nostalgic, 2020 is not a year that I am going to miss any time soon (actually nostalgia is one of my pet hates, along with the terms “the science” and “craft ale”). Despite the collective trauma and suffering that this year has brought, it is important to consider the positives we can take into next year, particularly just how well our community did through very difficult, upsetting, challenging, and unsettling times. It is hard to remember just how frightening the world became in March; we have almost got used to the strangeness.

You all have a lot to be proud of and to be thanked for. I would like to thank all of the staff at the school for giving such a lot every day for the children, and doing it with such warmth, kindness and enthusiasm. I would like to thank the children who make this school the wonderful place that it is; throughout this year they have never failed to astonish us with their resilience and delight us with their joy for learning. I would also like to thank all of the parents and carers for their understanding, good humour and unfailing support through what have been extremely difficult times. You all deserve the best Christmas possible in the circumstances, and I am sure that you will all receive a well-deserved visit from Father Christmas; I cannot imagine a single one of you is on his naughty list.

I would like to give my sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones this year, or who have had their lives turned upside down or thrown into uncertainty through the impact of COVID.

Last week I decided to leave work a little early and take a long route home via the top of the Ashdown Forest, hoping to catch the sunset. When I arrived, puffing, at Kingstanding carpark the clouds had rolled in and the sunset was a dull grey haze. The thought struck me though that behind those clouds, just out of view, the sunset was still there, and probably spectacular; I just could not see it. The New Year is almost here, and together we can make it just as spectacular and wondrous, full of hope, joy and exciting new beginnings. It is hard to see right now, obscured as it is by the worries and uncertainties of COVID, economic hardship, BREXIT etc, but soon the New Year will dawn and, through us all working together as a community, we can nurture it into something very special indeed.

So, with this in mind, let us all look forward to an exciting New Year after Christmas. We can wave goodbye to 2020 and resolve to work together to make the New Year the golden time we all need it to be. With the community we have at St James’, we cannot fail.

Happy Christmas to you all and a very Happy New Year.

Thank you all as always,

John Tutt
Headteacher

