



Newsletter – Friday 26th February 2021

Dear parents,

As you will have seen in the news, all pupils are returning to school on 8th March. The guidance schools have been provided with is identical in almost every way to what we were given in September, and so our plans will be much the same as they were before Christmas. However, we are making some changes so please read on for the details.

Before I get started on that, I just wanted to say how excited we all are at the school to see the children again. We have missed seeing them each day and I know that the children have missed seeing each other. After all of the time the children have had at home, I know you will agree that it will be a huge blow to children, staff and parents if we have further outbreaks at school causing bubbles to close and children to stay at home and return to home learning. I know that you will all do your best to follow the guidance as closely as possible to minimise the risk of further closures, and of course transmission of the virus. We will do our best too.

I know I promised no jokes, but there are a couple of lighter items at the end, including news of the dance competition.

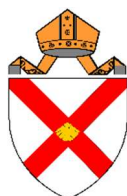
Drop off and pick up

We are changing the way that drop off and pick up will run, to give parents more flexibility and to try to spread the numbers we have on site at any one time. It is essential that we are able to maintain social distancing at drop off and pick up, and we all have a big role to play in this. We are hopeful that this will speed up the process and mean that there is no need for any parent to have to spend any time waiting on site.

We are again asking for a maximum of one parent per family to enter the school to drop off or pick up the children. Please wear a face mask on site, and consider keeping it on while negotiating the more crowded paths on the way to/from school.

The school gates will open to all children at 8:40 each morning and remain open until 9:00. This gives you 20 minutes to drop off your children.

We have a timetable (see below) which gives timings for each year group to help to reduce crowding. If you have more than one child, they can be dropped off at either the time for the earliest child or the latest. If you are able to keep to the drop off times, it will help reduce crowding. Once you have dropped off your child(ren), please leave straight away via the one-way system.



We will be continuing with set times for the end of the school day, and these are also in the table below. You can pick up all of your children at the same time as the latest child's finishing time.

Entrances and exits are the same as they were before Christmas.

Years	Start time	Home time	Entrance/Exit
Reception	8:50 until 9:00	3:00	Early Years
Year 1	8:50 until 9:00	3:10	Infant entrance
Year 2	8:50 until 9:00	3:00	Year 2 gate
Year 3	8:45 until 9:00	3:10	Year 3 side gate
Year 4	8:45 until 9:00	3:10	KS2 playground
Year 5	8:40 until 9:00	3:20	KS2 playground
Year 6	8:40 until 9:00	3:20	Main entrance

Again, please do not wait in the car park at drop-off or collection as there will be no need.

We will continue to use the one-way system that has been successful so far. Parents and children need to enter via the vehicle gate and leave through the infant path and pedestrian gate. Miss Hayward and I will be able to help anyone who needs it.

If our more flexible drop-off system does not work, we will revert to our pre-Christmas system. Please help to make it work by not arriving early (nobody needs to be on the school site until a few seconds before 8:40am) and by making the drop off as quick and efficient as you can.

Anxiety

We know that coming back to school is going to be extremely exciting for some children, and extremely worrying for others. The children's wellbeing will be our top priority in those first few days and weeks back at school. If your child is very anxious about coming to school please get in touch with their teacher.

St James' Bubbles

We will continue to work on the basis of year group bubbles of 90 children. Therefore, all children from the same year group will be able to arrive, play outside and leave at the same time. We will maintain distancing between classes within year groups while inside the school buildings where possible. That way any outbreak should be contained to a single class.

If there is a confirmed case at the school we will let parents and staff know the class which has been affected, but we will not let you know the name of the child/family unless this is essential for public health reasons, and we will do so only for the families who need to know. We will follow the advice of Public Health England in these situations, although we reserve the right to make any decision we feel necessary for the welfare of pupils and staff.

If your child becomes symptomatic while in school, you will be contacted and asked to collect them straight away. Please make sure that the office has at least two, up to date, emergency contact numbers on file. Please be patient with us if we seem over-cautious – I am sure you will understand why. If your child has any of the recognised symptoms as listed by the NHS - a high temperature (37.8



degrees or higher), a new, continuous cough or a loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste - we will ask you to keep them and their siblings at home until you have them tested and found to be negative (we will ask to see a copy of the result).

Child minders and after school clubs

Childminders and after school clubs can drop off and collect children from school, even if the children are from different bubbles. As with families with children in different year groups, we ask that childminders do not arrive on site early and do not wait on the school site. Children can attend after school clubs as they usually would. This is all within the government's guidance. We expect childminders to take appropriate steps to minimise risk. After school clubs (including St James') will do their best to maintain as much separation between bubbles as they have the facilities to achieve.

St James' Breakfast/After School Club will reopen on 8th March.

MSporti will begin football clubs from 8th March on the usual days. We will let you know when other clubs are due to restart.

Lunches

Hot lunches will be available to all children and as usual children need to tell their teacher at registration.

Playtimes

Playtimes will be staggered to ensure bubbles are separated and will always be outdoors. Therefore all children will need coats every day, regardless of how warm and sunny it may seem at the beginning of the day. Please ensure that children in Years R to 2 have their wellies in school as we will be making more use of the field from now on to help maintain distancing between groups.

Forgotten items

Please make sure your child has everything they need for the school day on arrival. If you forget something, please do not come back to school to bring it in. Staff are remaining within their classroom areas and we do not want any unnecessary movement around the site. You will appreciate that 630 children and 80 members of staff at any one time on a small site means we have to take many precautions to maintain social distancing and the separation of bubbles. If your child forgets their lunch, they will be provided with a school lunch and we will invoice you. If they forget their PE kit they will do PE in their uniform (in my day it was "vest and pants!") as long as they have appropriate footwear. Please see below for more information about uniform.

School uniform

The children will need to be in full school uniform with a full PE kit. The PE kit must go home on a Friday and be washed before being returned to school on Monday morning. There will be no sharing or lending of PE kit. If, like me, you bought your children new school shoes before Christmas and now they no longer fit, please do not worry. For the time being, children should wear school shoes if they fit, but if not they can wear appropriate footwear (trainers etc – no ballet pumps or fashion boots). If your child has put on a huge growth spurt and has outgrown items of PE kit, they can be ordered via the school office (KS1) or online via Parentmail (KS2). Sweatshirts and Polo shirts can be purchased via Price and Buckland or via the Secondhand Uniform Website. On the 8th though, if school jumpers etc do not fit, then children can wear something appropriately subdued for those first few days. If children do not



have a PE kit at the start of term for any reason, we would like them to bring a pair of trainers in that they can leave in school to avoid their school shoes getting messed up.

Attendance

You may also have seen that attendance at school will be compulsory from 8th March. This will not apply if the pupil or their household has been asked to isolate. If this is the case, please email a picture/scan of the letter to the school office.

Track and Trace & testing

St James' will be engaging fully with the NHS Test and Trace programme. All staff members have home testing kits and test twice each week. There is no plan for primary aged children to be tested.

Face masks

The guidance for primary schools in England is that children do not need to wear face masks in school. I understand how anxious some adults or children may be about returning to school. If you would like your child to wear a face mask at school then they will be allowed to do so. We will not, however, be policing this on behalf of parents – i.e. if a child wears a mask following their parents' wishes and then chooses to take their mask off in school, we will not ask them to put it back on again.

Adults within the school buildings must wear a face mask and wash their hands immediately upon arrival. We request that parents continue to contact their child's class teacher via email with any enquiries.

Laptops

If you have borrowed a laptop from school, please return it to the school office when you drop off or collect your child in the first week back. Hopefully this will be the last we see of remote learning but if we do have to close a bubble, you will be able to borrow a laptop should you need it.

St James' Virtual Dance Competition

Thank you to everyone who sent in their fantastic dance routines for our competition! We had lots of entries across all year groups, and it was so lovely to see you all enjoying yourselves. It was very hard to select just one winner in some of the categories, but here are the results!

The winners for each category were:

KS1 Individual - Mikiko (Oak)

KS2 Individual Novice - Isla (Dormouse)

KS2 Individual Excel:

1st - Darcey (Owl)

2nd - Saskia (Owl)

Joint 3rd - Kathryn (Swift) and Keelan (Swift)

Team Category: This was very hard to decide, so we have joint winners!

1st - Isla and Nancy (Owl)

=1st - Evie and Ashley (Chaffinch and Nightingale)



Congratulations to our winners and thank you again for all your amazing entries!

Some of our dancers were entered into the *TWKSSP Virtual Let's Dance!* competition for children in schools across the local area where we were very successful!

Isla (Dormouse) came 3rd in the Individual Engage category.

Darcey (Owl) came 2nd in the Individual Excel category.

Isla and Nancy (Owl) can 1st in the Team Excel category!

Congratulations girls! We will be receiving certificates once we are back in school.

Congratulations to our winners and thank you again for all your amazing entries!

Mr Hodges & Mrs Raistrick

Finally

Did anybody turn to board games over half term through pure desperation at the relentless weather and concern over the amount of time your children were spending in front of screens? Did anyone else discover that their children are unable to lose gracefully while playing even the most inane games imaginable? Did the endgame for Buckeroo become as intense as the final chess match in The Queen's Gambit? And when the children were winning, did the gloating become even worse than the tears?

In my view, there are two ways to go with this:

1. Do everything you can to let your child (or more accurately the stroppiest one) win. When you are trying to let your child win for some reason every dice you roll becomes a six; my solution is to distract and then pretend to roll the dice while they are not looking so you get a low number. This at least guarantees an easy afternoon if you are able to overcome your own urge to win.
2. Decide that your child needs a lesson in real life and grind them into submission by demanding every single penny when they land on Park Lane. This guarantees that your child gets a life-lesson and becomes used to losing. It also guarantees that you will still be finding houses and hotels under sideboards/chairs many weeks later, and that you will vow not to get the board games out again for at least another six months.

At home my preference is (of course) always number 2, but from 8th March let's go with number 1. We will stack those odds in the children's favour, keep rolling those low numbers and keep those children winning. As a community, I know that we will work together to do everything we can to keep the children in school - happy, safe, confident and learning.

See you on the 8th!

John Tutt

February 2021

