



Dates for the diary

7 th January	First day of term 3
11 th February	Year 1 led church service 2pm start – Year 1 parents welcome to attend
14 th February	INSET day
17 th February	Half term break
17 th March	Year 6 start bikeability
1 st April	Year 5 led church service 2pm – Year 5 parents welcome to attend
4 th April	Last day of term
7 th April	Easter holidays begin
22 nd April	First day of term (Tuesday)

Friday 10th January 2024

Welcome to the first school newsletter of 2025; Christmas is over for another year and decorations have come down, thankfully including those outdoor house decorations that seem to have the carbon footprint of a medium-sized commercial airport. Apologies for the lack of newsletter in the last week of term – I am deeply sorry that the joys of Christmas turkey had to be balanced with the sorrow of cold turkey on the school news front. I hope the following paragraphs satisfy your unfulfilled school news cravings. My excuse is that I missed most of the last week of term as I had a nasty case of flu. This seemed to get better, then worse and then linger through the holiday; it lingers still. My experience seems to have been a pretty common one, and hopefully illness did not impact your enjoyment of Christmas this year.

If you have children in the relevant year groups, I hope that last term's Christmas performances were as special to you as they were to me. There is something gloriously nostalgic and deeply moving about small children singing "Away in a Manger" while wearing donkey ears, tea towels or sugar paper crowns on their heads.

The Tutt family children are a fair bit older than our children at St James', with the youngest being 14 and the oldest almost 20. At this age they are as difficult to buy for as a middle-aged uncle; on Christmas day we kept up the spirit of Christmas by exchanging some festive bank transfers on our phones, with half-hearted "cheers" coming in return. Treasure these magical primary school years with your children, as Christmases are just not the same once they have grown up.

The year ahead is an uncertain one in many respects. While we cannot guarantee that 2025 will be an incredible one for the wider world, we can commit to working together to help make your children's precious primary school years the best they can be. None of us can control what happens to us and to the world around us, but we can all decide to meet every challenge with a positive mindset and with kindness and joy in our hearts. Bring on 2025 – St James' can't wait!



Yearly Progress Reports

I am writing to tell you that this year we will be sending our school reports electronically rather than via a paper copy - we're slowly moving into the 21st Century! Those families who had children with us last year will have received their child's attendance report via Insight Tracking (our assessment platform) last summer and, at the end of next term, we will be using this same platform to provide our Yearly Report in this way too. We will provide more information about the practicalities of this nearer the time.

As a school we have a duty to ensure a copy of every child's progress is shared with each parent with Parental Responsibility. To make this possible we may be in contact with you to request an email address, if you have Parental Responsibility and we do not currently hold this information, so that our Parentmail system is up to date and your child's report can be sent to you by Insight next term. If there is any reason why you do not wish to share your email address, please let us know. Similarly, if you have any queries regarding Parental Responsibility please feel free to get in touch with me.

Lucy Hayward.

School budgets

You may have read that headteachers nationwide have concerns over their school budgets, and that outgoings are beginning to outstrip incomes. Actually, this has been the case for many years, and smaller schools with fewer children have been struggling for some time. However, larger schools such as ours have also been working with tighter budgets and are having to make some difficult decisions about where to prioritise spending.

Donations from the PTA have been invaluable over the years and have made a massive impact on what we can deliver as a school. Our all-weather running track allows us to complete the daily mile all year round, as well as increase our playtime space – this was funded by the PTA. Our school iPads and a significant number of pupil laptops allow us to successfully deliver the IT curriculum and support many other subjects – also funded by the PTA. These are just two of the most recent examples of how valuable the St James' PTA and your donations are to our school, and I would like to give huge thanks to the PTA team and all in the community who support their hard work on behalf of our children.

Snow and ice

We do our best to keep the school grounds clear of ice but, as you may have noted on Thursday morning, some areas can get missed or get worse in a short space of time – what was watery slush at 7am seemed to turn to ice after several hundred feet had walked upon it. We have a large site and our site manager arrives very early to make it safe for all of us, however we cannot guarantee that every square inch will be clear of ice – we prioritise paths and steps. Please take care when moving around the site on icy days and keep your children with you. The information below is repeated from an earlier newsletter, but I thought it worth repeating.

Firstly, we do not close for snow unless conditions are truly horrendous – this has not happened in the last 12 and a half years I have been at St James'. We can never say never, and maybe if I open my front door one morning to find my house has been completely buried in snow overnight, I may throw in the towel and stay home, but I have not failed to get to work so far and do not intend to this winter either. Please always assume the school is open unless you hear otherwise from us via ParentMail – remember that closure is highly unlikely.

In the event of snow, we will decide on how to proceed after arriving at school – we try to arrive by 7am and have made a decision by half past at the latest. Reasons for not opening could be very dangerous conditions across the site, no water, a heating break down or (knowing us) a polar bear on the rampage. We may have to make other announcements short of closing, such as asking you to give your child a packed lunch if kitchen deliveries



are affected. Children should always bring gloves, wellies and a warm coat (yes – on occasion children do arrive in sandals, shorts/skirt and a pakamac in freezing weather) so they can play in the snow at school (if it is good snow and not watery slush or lumps of ice). If they do not have adequate clothing, they will have to stay inside and watch others have all the fun.

Please take care walking to/from school in the snow, especially on the paths nearby which can be slippery. Car and van drivers make dangerous decisions when the roads are snowy such as pulling out randomly at junctions, driving too quickly or random braking, which means they can slide out of control; obviously this is never their fault.

We do our best to clear paths across the site, but we are limited in number and sometimes there is a lot of snow to deal with. Please stick to any cleared paths around the school and keep your children with you.

Spelling Shed

The Spelling Shed – powered by EdShed – is our new spelling platform. It is built with students, teachers and parents in mind and aims to make spelling fun and simple for all to enjoy. All children in Years 3 – 6 will be taught a different set of spellings in school each week. This will be through a range of whole class, group and independent activities. Each child will also get their own login to access weekly assignments and games on the Spelling Shed website. Year 2 will also begin to use Spelling Shed to support their existing spelling teaching.

I have attached a step-by-step guide that explains how you can help your child access Spelling Shed from home. In the coming terms, we hope to organise some in-school competitions such as a 'spelling bee' to motivate our wonderful students even further. So, please watch this space!

If you have any questions, please contact me and I'd be more than happy to help.

Miss Stock

Poppy Appeal news

Thank you so much for taking part in this years' Poppy Appeal. I'm delighted to tell you that St James' has raised the fantastic amount of **£922.22**, with the total raised across all the Tunbridge Wells schools being **£7209.11**. Thank you once again.

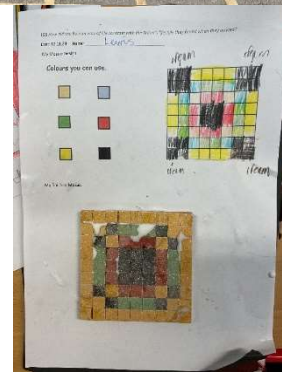
Year 4

Year 4 had an incredible time designing and building their very own Roman chariots as part of our Design and Technology Day last week. The children worked enthusiastically, using their creativity and teamwork to plan, construct, and decorate their chariots.





Year 4 have also handled replicas, learnt to march as an army, made mosaics, and had a Roman Bathhouse experience. The fantastic finish has been to watch the story of Boudicca, as told by Horrible Histories.



Early Years

The children in reception had a really busy half term leading up to Christmas. They have enjoyed completing lots of Christmas crafts, practising for their singing performance and participating in a special themed RE day to support their understanding of the Christmas story.



The children certainly deserved a well-earned and fun-filled break. We hope you had a very Happy Christmas and we have loved seeing you all again in the New Year.

EYFS Team



Sewing club

In sewing we have been experimenting with beadwork, and decorating some Christmas trees – it's been lovely to see how focused and involved they have been with their creations.



Mrs Fabian

Mindfulness club

In these mindful club pictures we were trying out some dinosaur stretches, ankylosaurus, flying pterodactyl and triceratops pose.





Mrs Fabian

Free junior lunches for years 3 to 6 in January

Remember that, once again, our amazing anonymous donor has offered to help out this festive season by paying for all junior lunches in the month of January. Therefore, if your child is in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) they can have a school lunch for free from the start of next term until the end of the month (7th until 31st January). I do not need to tell you quite how generous this is. If you feel you can afford to pay for your lunches, but would like to help out, please make a donation to one of our local food banks. However, this is a gift to the children of the school and nobody should feel under any pressure to make a contribution. I cannot thank our wonderful donor enough for their kindness.

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

Here are the overall winners from **13th December 2024:**

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Jessie in Nightingale Class 295,866 words	Owl Class 2,084,808 words	Aneesh in Badger Class 35 quizzes	Badger Class 145 quizzes

- Osprey, Vole and Chaffinch class also read more than one million words this week,

Here are the overall winners from **20th December 2024:**

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Samit in Stoat Class 427,028 words	Kestrel Class 1,854,971 words	Naomi in Dormouse Class 14 quizzes	Osprey Class 79 quizzes

- Osprey and Stoat also read more than one million words this week.

Winners for Term 2 2024:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed



Isabelle W in Osprey Class 1,864,095 words	Osprey Class 10,126,549 words	Naomi in Dormouse Class 72 quizzes	Badger Class 543 quizzes
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- Ten of our classes in KS2 read more than one million words during Term 2. Wow!

Word Millionaires for Term 2 2024:

Pupil	Class	Word Count
Isabelle W	Osprey	1,864,095
Maja	Osprey	1,701,993
Aaron	Vole	1,618,467
Polly	Vole	1,509,811
Naomi	Dormouse	1,433,280
Lux	Osprey	1,292,610
Benny	Vole	1,208,694
Samit	Stoat	1,190,265
Minghao	Owl	1,119,292
Jessie	Nightingale	1,118,490

Many congratulations to all our winners and a huge well done to all our readers for their achievements last term. We kick off this term by celebrating this week's overall winners (**10th January 2025**):

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Naomi in Dormouse Class 604,593 words	Osprey Class 2,279,867 words	Naomi in Dormouse Class 25 quizzes	Stoat Class 64 quizzes

- Dormouse, Stoat and Owl also read more than one million words this week.

Keep Reading everyone!
Mrs Simpson

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

