



Dates for the diary

21 st July	Year 6 leavers' service at the church 2pm (all Y6 parents welcome)
22 nd July	Last day of term
1 st September	INSET day
2 nd September	First day of the school year for children in years 1 to 6. Reception stay and play sessions (am and pm)
8 th September	Reception start part time Meet the teacher Years 4 and 5 (2:45 – 3:15pm)
9 th September	Meet the teacher Years 2 and 3 (2:45 – 3:15pm)
10 th September	Meet the teacher Years 1 and 6 (2:45 – 3:15pm)
11 th September	Year 6 Kent Tests (11+)

Friday 18th July 2025

Well, the summer holidays have finally arrived for us all - and now the end is near, and so we face the final curtain [of this school year]. The end of term routines, performances and rites of passage are nearly complete, with Year 6's leavers' service taking place this afternoon. The children and staff of St James' will begin their summer adventures as they awake on Wednesday morning.

We are very sorry to hear of the illness outbreak that has affected more than 10% of the children in this school this morning, and looks set to keep them off school tomorrow too. Unusually this appears to have struck all siblings simultaneously, as well as many of the parents' dialling tones that have now changed to the international type.

We have informed the local Public Health Protection Team and they are now carrying out unannounced home visits to gather swabs to determine the cause. I sincerely hope that this does not impact the summer holiday plans of those families affected.

In addition, I would like to offer my sympathies to parents whose children are *genuinely* absent/unwell and are missing the end of term celebrations. I hope they make a speedy recovery and have a great summer break.

The magic of summer

Do you remember the magic of your childhood summer holidays? I know I am older than you, and therefore my memories might be more sepia toned than rose tinted. I also think I have written enough about life as a child of the 70s and 80s which, for me at least, was defined by playing outdoors with friends, exploring and risk taking. I



know there are some children who will spend these precious summer weeks glued to a screen – let's all give our children the summer they deserve.

Risk is something that our human brains find very difficult to assess, especially as we are bombarded with contradictory and fear inducing messages via the news and random social media shares. For example, the concept of stranger danger is well embedded, when statistically children are at far greater risk from people they know well. It seems hard to grasp, but children playing in the park are at less risk from harm than from having access to a screen with unrestricted internet access in their own bedroom.

Before we go on with the genuine school news, let's start with this summer's greatest risk – the wasp.

Wasps

You may have noticed a particularly high number of wasps this year. Not only are there more of them, but they seem significantly more “aggy” than usual as reflected in the numbers of stings of staff and children. If there are any wasp experts among the parent community, can someone please explain?

So, let's get to the question of the summer: waft or freeze? Which is the best approach when menaced by a wasp – Britain's most feared creature. Waving arms randomly sometimes does the trick, but can lead to being stung; others say that staying still (supposedly in the hope that the wasp gets bored and looks for fun elsewhere) is better, but can also lead to getting stung. Please do take some time to teach your children your preferred approach; at St James' we always favour passive resistance, staying as still as possible until that wasp decides to annoy someone else.

Unlike wasps, when a bee stings it is an act of self-sacrifice. If human beings disembowelled themselves when attacking another human, I think that the course of human history would have been very different. Unfortunately, like wasps, humans have an infinite ability to inflict suffering on others.

We should all “be more bee” and think before acting, in the understanding that harming or upsetting others also harms ourselves. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the entire school community for living the school values of love and kindness every day; I know that very few schools have parents that are as connected and supportive as you are and you will forever have my deepest thanks for being such special people.

Just to balance the argument, wasps are also pollinators. Apparently not very good ones but they can do it. If there *are* any wasp advocates among the parent community, please share their many other benefits.

Staffing update

We are very sorry to be saying “goodbye” to three of our Teaching Assistants. Amy Powley has been working in Year 6, Jennie Clarke in Year 1 and Sue Hooke in Forest School. Each of them has given a huge amount to the children at this school and will be very sadly missed. I wish them well for the future and hope they stay in touch as they move onto pastures new.

Year 6 play

On 14th July and 15th July, Year 6 performed their fantastic production - The Pirates of the Curry Bean. Everyone who watched it enjoyed it immensely, and as one of the performers, I can tell you the whole of the year group were thrilled to be performing it as well.



The Pirates of the Curry Bean featured many hilarious scenes, including a memorable mop dance and many outstanding performances that wouldn't look out of place in the West End!

To the Year 5's that watched Tuesday's performance, good luck for your show next year! Thank you to Mr Fern, Mr Stevens, Mrs Holland, Miss Stock, Ms Lewis, Mrs Powley and Mrs Rowsell for helping us - we had a blast!



Isabelle W, Osprey Class.

Girls' County Cricket Finals

I had a lovely day out with the Year 4/5/6 girls' cricket team at Ashford a couple of weeks ago. I cannot tell you how proud I was of every child who came along and represented St James'. Mainly thanks to the incompetence of their coach for the day (me), the results did not go well, but the children played the game with huge smiles and great determination. It is worth remembering that these were the finals, and we were in the top 8 of all schools in the county – of which there are at least a million. We had a fabulous day out!



Mr Tutt

Year 2 walk to the park

On Friday 11th July, Year 2 went to Grosvenor and Hilbert Park. It was a boiling hot day and we darted from shady patch to shady patch trying to keep cool(ish). The children completed a tally chart of the wildlife they spotted as we walked around: numerous dogs, butterflies, dragonflies, water boatmen, pigeons and two buzzards were



amongst the wildlife recorded, but no rats much to the disappointment of some of the children! Year 2 then presented the information in a block diagram once we'd got back to school and cooled down a bit. Well done Year 2, and a very big thank you to all the parent helpers.



Mrs Clarke

NELFT Online Parent Workshops

The Emotional Wellbeing Team are offering the following Online Parent Workshops during the Summer holidays - Starting Primary School, Starting Secondary School, Understanding ADHD, Understanding Anxiety, Understanding ASD, Understanding behaviour, Understanding resilience. Please see the attached posters for details and QR codes to register. There is also a poster for OSI (online Support and Intervention) for learning tools and techniques on how to support your child with anxiety.

Mrs Wardell

Parentmail

We are moving onto a new platform for school information management and communication. From September 2025, we will be using Arbor for an increasing number of services and stopping Parentmail for comms and payments. Please do not make any payments via Parentmail after lunchtime tomorrow (22nd July). More information will follow. By wrapping a number of services into one provider, the school will make a significant cost saving, as well as having the use of a more advanced platform.

Smartphone Free Childhood update

We now have 223 children whose parents have signed the pact which is 35% of our school community and an incredible increase in a relatively short period. It would be fantastic to keep up the momentum – please do add your name to the pledge to help our children have the childhood they deserve.

I have repeated our policy below, so please read carefully to avoid any unnecessary confiscations next year. Thank you so much for your support.

No Smartphones in school policy reminder from September 2025

As you know, we do not allow children to bring phones to school unless there are special circumstances and parents make a request to me. From September we will not allow children to bring in smartphones to school under any circumstances.

If you feel that your family have extenuating circumstances, then following a direct request to me, we may allow a non-smartphone (also known as a brick phone – costing around £20) to be brought to school and handed



Please note that this supersedes any prior agreement made with any individual family.

Dear Parents

A colorful illustration for the 'Story Garden' Summer Reading Challenge. The scene is a vibrant garden with a green lawn, a wooden fence, and a blue sky with white clouds. In the center, a large green sign reads 'Story Garden' in a playful, bubbly font. Below the sign, a small grey stone path leads through the garden. Various children are depicted in different poses, engaged in reading or playing. On the left, a boy with glasses and a red shirt is reading a book. In the center, a girl with pigtails is running. To the right, a boy is sitting on the grass reading, and another girl is standing nearby. In the background, a boy is sitting on a large rock, and a girl is sitting on the grass. The overall atmosphere is cheerful and encourages reading during the summer.

Summer Reading Challenge

Story Garden

sent Libraries

Many children illustrated by Sue Smith, Suzanne and Sam - The Reading Agency 2015

- If your child is a member of the library, take them to your local library so they can sign up for the Challenge.

- If your child is not yet a member of your local library, it's easy to become one. Just take them into your local library and ask for membership – it's **FREE!**

Magic Place



There are **Discovery Days** taking place throughout the summer holiday. Each week a different sensory theme is explored and there are hands-on activities for children aged 4 – 11 years. The Days begin on 30th July and run to 23rd August. They are completely **FREE**. To find out the themes, days, times and more information, please look here - [Discovery Days: Discover, Explore, Create - Amelia](#)

Park Safaris are returning to Tunbridge Wells this summer. They are aimed at families with children of all ages and participants have an opportunity to discover the wildlife which exists right on their doorstep. There is a small charge for these events and places need to be booked in advance. See separate links for more details about the events:

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- **Thursday 14th August** at **St John's Recreation Ground** [Park Safaris - St John's Recreation Ground - Amelia](#)
- **Thursday 28th August** in **Grosvenor Park** [Park Safaris - Grosvenor Park - Amelia](#)

I hope your child has lots of fun reading, discovering and exploring this summer!
Mrs Simpson

Have a lovely summer, and see you all in September when the adventure starts all over again.

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

