



Newsletter – 2nd October 2020

Dear parents,

Thank you so much for your support with the wearing of face masks at drop off and pick up times; it is hugely appreciated. Please do not worry if you forget every now and then; you do not need to feel embarrassed. If the overwhelming number of us are wearing masks, it will help to protect the school community.

Inevitably, the Tutt family (or at least a small part of it) had to join the ranks of those needing to have COVID tests last week. My 15-year-old son had lost his sense of taste and smell during a heavy cold and had started an enthusiastically chesty cough. As the loss of sense of taste and a new persistent cough were among the symptoms, I could not in fairness go against the government's advice; that same advice I have been repeating ad nauseum to anyone who has asked. I had also begun to cough more frequently, so thought I had better get tested at the same time.

We therefore entered self-isolation on Thursday and I again shared my work desk (the kitchen table) with a fractious 10-year-old. With persistence, and by re-completing the form on the government website every 15 minutes or so, we managed to book a test in Croydon for later that day after only three hours of trying.

What followed that afternoon was a bleak, dystopian and dehumanising experience; to be fair though, I had driven to Croydon many times before, so knew what to expect.

The test centre staff on the other hand were absolutely lovely. Considering that they had to say the same thing in the same way to hundreds of people, one after the other, day after day, they were polite, friendly and helpful. Thankfully, the tests came back negative late Friday night.

The key message here is that, if you are well enough to drive, booking a test at a test centre is achievable with persistence and the results are returned far more quickly than they would be with a home testing kit.

New Chair of Governors

We have a new Chair of Governors. Rev. Jim Stewart has stepped back as he has a large and ever-growing number of commitments at present, although of course he remains a key member of our governing body. Stephen Pollard, the previous Vice Chair, was voted in as our new Chair of Governors last week. Huge thanks to Jim for all he has done and continues to do for our school, and congratulations to Stephen. Also, congratulations to Karen Dunn who was voted in as our new Vice Chair.



Applying for a place at secondary school

The deadline for secondary school applications is the 2nd November. All applications are now online; if you do not have access to the internet please come and see us and we will help you apply here at school. If you wish to complete the form earlier than the deadline (this is advised), you can then make changes to it right up until the deadline. Kent's admissions guidance can be found here:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/17930/Secondary-admissions-booklet-all-areas.pdf

As the Kent Tests are taking place later than usual, parents of children who have taken them will not know the results until after the deadline. Therefore, this year you can select up to 6 schools. You should choose them in preference order, putting the school you would like them to go to the most at the top. If you would like your child to go to a grammar school and they are taking the test, put the grammar school(s) at the top. If your child is not successful in the tests, the first non-grammar you have chosen will become your de facto first choice. Putting the same school many times will not increase your chances of being allocated it and putting only one school down means you risk being allocated any school in Kent with places available.

I put a video on the school website last term in which I talk at length on choosing secondary schools. It is located under the **Parents** menu and then **Year 5 information**. Be warned though that, like Croydon, it is a bleak, dystopian and dehumanising experience.

I have said it many times before, but please remember this is your choice and not your child's; they are not equipped with the knowledge to make an informed decision. Do not worry, later in life your grown-up child will blame you just the same whether you choose their school for them ("how could you send me there?!") as if you let them make the choice for themselves ("how could you just absolve all parental responsibility by letting me choose – I was only ten?!").

What I will say though is that in Tunbridge Wells we are blessed with amazing secondary schools – there really are no bad choices; it is just about deciding which school will best suit your child. Please look at the school websites for information on their virtual open days. We also have some information and prospectuses on a few local Secondary schools in the main entrance foyer.

Blended learning on the Microsoft Teams platform

You should have received a letter from Miss Hayward explaining the changes we have made to how we deliver learning in the event of a full or partial lockdown or if your child has to isolate due to Covid-19. Teachers will be sending out more information this week about how to log on to Microsoft 365 Teams and will be setting work from today. Your child only needs to complete this if they are absent.

Please take the time to get to know the system and feel free to ask if you have any questions or if you need any support with this. You will also have received two Acceptable Use of Technology Policies as forms on ParentMail; one to sign as a parent/carer and one to sign with your child. If you have more than one child, you will have received a set of forms for each child. Apologies that this means filling out duplicate forms however we need this information for each child. The Parent/Carer form can be completed once on the behalf of all your children.



Please let us know if you do not have access to a computer/the internet so that we can try to make alternative arrangements in the event of your children needing to self-isolate.

Drop off and pick up

Apologies if gates have been closed early at drop-off time. Registers do not close until 9:15am, so please do not feel under pressure to arrive exactly on time. I have reminded all of the staff not to be over zealous in closing the gates.

Please can parents of children in Reception continue to maintain social distancing after the children begin entering the school and then leave the site as promptly as possible. Parents are waiting perfectly right up until the children begin going inside, when social distancing seems to be forgotten as they surge towards the school entrance. The same happens at pick up. Please can parents stay further back in the car park and let the children come to you; teachers will not let the children go until they have seen their parent.

Please can all parents also keep all of their children under their immediate control at all times while on the school site and please do not allow them to run between the parked cars.

If you are dropping your child at the gate, please park on the road, not on the driveway entrance or the yellow zig zags, as this poses a crossing hazard for other families arriving. If you come by taxi please ensure the driver knows too. We would also be grateful if Year 6 children could not arrive any earlier than 5 minutes prior to coming into school (9:05 onwards). Thank you.

Stranger danger and road safety

If your Year 5/6 child is walking all the way or part of the way to/from school please take some time to talk to them about stranger danger and crossing the road safely. You should practise the route with them and talk through some “what if” scenarios so they are well prepared. Remember that children should not be bringing mobile phones into school unless you have made an arrangement with the child’s teacher. Phones will make your child less safe: there is a risk of theft and some children walk to school looking at them and paying no attention to their surroundings.

Coats

This may seem bizarre, but some children are arriving without coats. In fact, last week a Year 5 child walked through the gates in the morning, in the pouring rain, declaring that he had forgotten his coat. As you know, we take children outside in all but the harshest of weather, so please ensure they have a coat every day, even if it seems sunny that morning.

Voluntary Donation

The school gratefully accepts voluntary donations which are used to pay for special activities and ‘extras’ for the children; payment can be made on Parentmail +Pay and we ask for £15 per family per year. I will reiterate that this is a voluntary donation, although of course greatly valued by the school.

Accelerated Reader – KS2 classes

Accelerated Reader is our online reading programme that is used to assess your child’s understanding of a text. Within school, your child will take a termly test which will give them a reading zone. This zone chooses appropriate books for your child’s understanding. Once your child has read a book, they will then complete a quiz on that book. These quizzes include questions that focus on the comprehension or



vocabulary. These are completed independently and class teachers will monitor closely to ensure your child's book and zone are accurate.

If you would like to access Accelerated Reader at home, please copy and paste this link:
<https://ukhosted71.renlearn.co.uk/2240930/>

This link is unique to our school and will only work with your child's log in details. Please contact your class teacher if you are unsure of these details. If your child chooses to complete quizzes at home, please make sure this is done independently. If your child has a reading record, please record that you have read with them and completed the quiz at home.

If you would like help when selecting books for your child to read at home please follow/copy this link, where will find books that are within your child's zone: <https://www.arbookfind.co.uk/>
If you have any problems or questions, please contact your class teacher.

Miss Stock & Mrs Simpson

Accelerated Reader Winners - 02.10.20

We have all been so impressed with the engagement of reading since the start of the term. Much like last year, we will continue to celebrate those children and classes that achieve the most in our AR reading awards. Please see this week's winners below:

Highest individual word count: Lily from Kestrel class with 1,317,635 words.

Highest amount of reading quizzes achieved: Charlie from Fox class with 25 quizzes.

Highest class word count: Kestrel class with 6,676,052 words.

Well done everyone and please keep reading!

Miss Stock

Football kit sponsorship

If anyone out there would be interested in sponsoring our football team and funding a new football kit for our team, please contact Mr Hodges: mhodes@st-james.kent.sch.uk

Healthy Eating Week

It was Healthy Eating week this week and Year 2 have been celebrating healthy snacks and lunches as well as learning about food groups and which foods are needed to help us stay healthy in science. This is a good opportunity for all parents to have another look at what they are putting in their children's lunch boxes and providing for snacks. Some of the children's packed lunches seem to contain enough sugar to power a dozen humming birds for a few weeks. Also remember that snacks should be a piece of fruit only and also that that we are a nut free school.

Have a lovely weekend and thank you all, as always.

John Tutt
October 2020

