



Dates for the diary

Remember that term dates and other dates are available on the school website via the calendar.

16 th December	Year 3 Christmas church service 2pm – Year 3 parents welcome to attend
17 th December	RE Day, Christmas jumper day and Christmas lunch
18 th December	Last day of term 2 Non-school uniform for Grove House (Key Stage 2)
19 th December	INSET day – school closed to children
5 th January	First day of term 3

Friday 12th December 2025

News has been restored and is now flowing through the school at excellent pressure, resulting in a bumper newsletter. Prepare yourselves for a tsunami of school news – in decades to come, people will still be speaking with awe and reverence about the school newsletter that was a bit longer than usual, but maybe a bit shorter than that particularly long one from a couple of years before.

Do you have your Christmas tree yet? Did you overestimate the height of your ceiling or the width of the space you intended it to go? Did it need aggressive pruning or full-scale sawing to wedge it in? Did the lights still work once you had untangled them? Did you let the children decorate the tree? Did you redecorate it once they had gone to bed?

Whatever your style, whether it's full "Tunbridge Wells High Street" (a dozen overpriced red balls – evenly spaced – plus three overpriced "traditional" handmade items creating a look which is both classic and joyless) or full "Tunbridge Wells Shopping Centre" (a mass of tinsel, lights which flash to the rhythm of Jingle Bells and glittered baubles in such volume that all the foliage is completely obscured), I hope it brings the magic of Christmas into your home.

Before we get started on the news, I wanted to thank the team for all their hard work and steadfast dedication to the children of St James'. They are an amazing and talented bunch, and I count myself as very lucky to work alongside them each day. 2025 may have ended in an unusual way for all of us, but you can honestly get through anything if you can do it together with kindness, trust and joy, and share the load.

We have had a magical week at school, with the children in Years 1 and 2 being amazing in their nativity performances and making all of us very proud indeed. Just an hour ago the children in Reception sang beautifully to up our Christmas ante. It is lovely to see such confidence in so many children from such a young age, but equally joyful to see some of the less outgoing children overcome their nerves and succeed so brilliantly. And there's more to follow next week with the Year 3 led church service!



Wednesday Christmas bonanza!

On Wednesday we have several Christmassy things happening at the same time:

1. Children are welcome to come to school in a Christmas jumper or any random festive accessory – please do not buy a jumper specially. I don't possess a Christmas jumper and hopefully never will – I am going to wear some tinsel or a novelty tie instead.
2. RE day is all day – children will be doing Christmas activities around the school and having (extra) fun all day.
3. Christmas lunch takes place in the hall. No need to order in advance and cost is £2.74 for Key Stage 2.

Boiled water notice, drinking water next week and school lunches

The boil notice has just ended, although we will continue using bottled water for drinking until the end of next week. Our water coolers need their filters replaced and I have had conflicting information about whether our stored water tanks need draining. To be on the safe side, they will be drained and professionally cleaned on Friday. For this reason, and since food has already been ordered, we will have another adapted menu (as we have had this week) for next week.

Menu for next week:

Monday: Main: Lasagna
Veggie: Jacket potato beans / cheese or tuna mayo
Pudding: Shortbread

Tuesday: Main: Basil and tomato chicken with rice
Veggie: Cheese and tomato Swirl
Pudding: Mousse

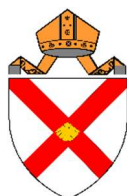
Wednesday: Christmas lunch

Thursday: Main: Fish and chips
Veggie: Falafel bites with chips
Pudding: Winter spice shortbread

I just want to thank our kitchen, and especially Dan our Kitchen Manager, for being so flexible and running despite the difficulties this week.

Mike Martin (MP)'s visit to the school

Fresh from helping us during the water outages, Mike Martin (Member of Parliament for Tunbridge Wells) came to our junior celebration assembly today to announce the winner of his Christmas Card Competition. We are very proud that the winner is a child from St James'. Mike presented Sophia with her certificate and prize in front of the school. Well done, Sophia!





Considerate parking

I have had messages from local residents who have school parents using their private designated parking spaces or blocking their driveways at drop off and/or pick up. I have to say, our neighbours are far more restrained than I would be in their situation, especially when the parent often argues with them. If you struggle to park near the school, please park further away or just walk the whole distance – from the results of our latest travel survey it would take less than 30 minutes to walk to school for almost all of our families and less than 15 minutes for 90% of them.

Food ordering plan from January

At present the Kitchen second guess the quantities of food to prepare each morning based on past experience and the food numbers they receive from the classes each morning at 10am. This has led to last minute menu changes or some menu options running low or running out, especially for the older children. It also means we have a lot of food waste as the kitchen are forced to overprepare – the quantity of waste we produce is something we are trying to reduce.

Therefore, from January onwards, parents will need to book their children's meal choices in advance. Choices can be made up to a week in advance. This way, the kitchen will always have exactly the right amount of food prepared. Children will be given a coloured wrist band to indicate their choice before going to the lunch hall.

I have worked at a school before where this happened, and the main issue was when parents had an overly optimistic view of their child's fussiness level. At school, children will not start magically eating something they would never eat at home and, unlike when I was at school, children will not be made to hold their noses and choke down some overcooked cauliflower while someone stands over them. Therefore, I encourage you to discuss the menu options with your child prior to making the selections.

More details to follow next week.

Smartphone free Christmas

At a recent meeting of headteachers across the town, Smartphone use among children was one of the main topics for discussion. It is highly likely that a significant majority of primaries and some secondary schools (from Year 7 onwards) will soon move towards a complete ban of smartphones on their school site from September 2026 – and highly likely that all the other schools will follow soon after.



Since our ban took effect in September, the number of online safety issues, concerns, or incidents of online conflict between children in Year 6 have fallen very sharply from being a regular weekly occurrence, to none in the last first months. As you will appreciate, this is not only better for the children's mental health but gives our teachers more time to plan and deliver learning and engaging activities instead of investigating and dealing with these issues.

With this in mind, and with all recent research highlighting the negative impact on young brains of screen time/smartphone use I would encourage parents to think twice before buying a smartphone for your children this Christmas.

Silent Nights – Carols at St James church

On behalf of Gary Valentine & the care team at GM Valentines we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the children for coming to sing for us at Silent Lights. Their performance was truly wonderful and brought so much joy and warmth to the evening.

This was the first of many, and it was incredibly special to see the community gathered together outside by candlelight. The children's voices helped make the night memorable for everyone who attended.

A special thanks also goes to the teachers and parents who came along to support the children. Your time, encouragement, and presence made the evening even more meaningful.

Please pass on our gratitude and congratulations to all the students, staff, and families involved. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and celebrate with your families and friends, always remembering those who are not with us anymore. Merry Christmas to you all

Reflection Garden Taskforce – Bulb Planting

After my request for donations, we were inundated with bags and boxes of bulbs including daffodils, grape hyacinths, tulips, hyacinths, ranunculus and alliums from lots of very generous families. Undaunted by the huge quantity, our taskforce of children from Years 3, 4 & 5 worked hard to dig holes of the correct depth, choosing the best location for each flower. They even kept working through the pouring rain!

Despite all this hard work, there were still lots of bulbs unplanted so Mrs Douglas, Mrs Williams and I were joined by some willing parents (Natasha Cullen, Seamus Foley and Anne Dunphy) and we planted more bulbs across the whole school from the Juniors' playground to the Infants' playing field and even outside by the Juniors' gate. We are very much looking forward to the spring when hopefully all our hard work will result in a beautiful display of flowers.

A massive thanks to all those who kindly donated bulbs, and to the hard-working children and adults who planted them!

Mrs Greenaway





Football News

St James' football teams travelled to Paddock Wood for their last games before we break for Christmas.

The girls' team continued to show their dominance, beating their Paddock Wood counterparts 4-0. This makes it five wins out of five for the girls so far this season and we end 2025 at the top of the West Kent Premiership with 15 points and 27 goals scored.

The boys took a first-half lead against a strong Paddock Wood team but unfortunately conceded a goal deep into a stoppage time that Sir Alex Ferguson would've been proud of, to draw the game 1-1.

Well done to both teams, and we look forward to more football after the Christmas break!

Harrison Christmas crowns

Children have been given a Christmas crown today at lunchtime if they wanted one. This is for them to decorate and wear at Christmas lunch on Wednesday if they would like to. The best one from KS1 and KS2 will win a Harrison's teddy bear. If your child didn't pick up a crown today and would like to do this, please come to the office to collect one.

Poppy Appeal Update

Thank you so much for taking part in this year's Poppy Appeal. I'm delighted to tell you that St James' raised a very impressive **£582.37**, and the total raised across the schools in Tunbridge Wells was **£8121.79** which is roughly a £900 increase on last year.

House point Winners

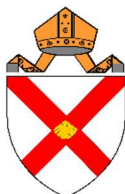
The house point winners for Autumn term are Grove - **congratulations** to all the children in this house! Children from Grove are invited to come into school in their own clothes on **Thursday 18th December** (the last day of term).

Accelerated Reader Update

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

In November, we celebrated the overall winners of the Accelerated Reader Challenges as follows:

➤ **Winners for week ending 7th November 2025:**



Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Sasha in Osprey Class 409,115 words	Kestrel Class 2,790,283 words	Arion in Deer Class 17 quizzes	Badger Class 106 quizzes

Osprey Class also read more than two million words this week (**2,207,376** words) and **Owl** Class read more than one million words this week (**1,715,095** words).

➤ **Winners for week ending 14th November 2025:**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Ben K in Osprey Class 307,475 words	Osprey Class 1,334,667 words	Gianna in Badger Class 22 quizzes	Badger Class 132 quizzes

Kestrel Class also read more than one million words this week (**1,006,880** words).

➤ **Winners for week ending 21st November 2025:**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Eileen in Swift Class 264,011 words	Chaffinch Class 913,155 words	Gianna in Badger Class 18 quizzes	Badger Class 120 quizzes

➤ **Winners for week ending 28th November 2025:**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Joshua in Swift Class 431,540 words	Swift Class 1,473,152 words	Reuben V in Fox Class and Frankie in Vole Class 13 quizzes	Fox Class 74 quizzes

Kestrel Class also read more than one million words this week (**1,084,013** words).

➤ **Winners for weeks ending 5th and 12th December 2025:**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Gianna in	Kestrel Class 2,227,300 words	Henry in Deer Class	Badger Class



Badger Class 404,245 words		30 quizzes	157 quizzes
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These classes read more than one million words this week:

- Nightingale – **1,396,898** words
- Owl – **1,339,793** words
- Chaffinch – **1,346,428** words
- Osprey – **1,182,531** words
- Dormouse – **1,114,380** words
- Swift – **1,094,367** words

The overall winners for this term (Term 2) will be announced at the start of next term!

Wow! What a lot of reading there was! I'm really excited about who will win in the next few weeks. Keep reading everyone!

Have a lovely weekend when you get there and try to go easy on the mince pies.

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

