



Newsletter – 9th December 2022

Dear parents and carers,

We have a fairly short festive newsletter this week; short and dense, packed with good old fashioned, honest to goodness news. Brace yourselves for a torrent of facts which are vital, not just to the smooth running of school life for the next seven days, but quite possibly to the very fabric of space-time itself...

Free school meals for Key Stage 2 for the last two weeks of term

Our anonymous donor reminded us again this year how lovely people can be. I have had so many requests from parents to thank them, that I thought I would do that here and publicly. A lovely act of generosity has made a lot of people feel brilliant and is something wonderful to celebrate. Thank you from all of us to that very special person.

As a reminder, if your child is in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) they can have a school lunch for free until the end of this term.

Christmas tree news

We bought a real Christmas tree last weekend – this obviously came sheathed in plastic netting which, once cut, emptied at least a third of the tree straight onto the floor. Mrs Tutt and Henry then decorated the mangled and balding remains as best they could. Pure Christmas magic.

Christmas update

The last two weeks of this term are among the busiest of the whole school year. The Christmas nativities were absolutely wonderful thanks to the hard work of the teachers and the fantastic talents of the children. Thank you again to all of the adults who helped. Mrs Pierce worked hard to organise all of the tickets and gently reminded me earlier that I had not thanked her at the end of the Friday final performance. So, as I write this holding a steak over one eye, I would like to publicly thank her for all the hard work, as well as Mr Fleming who put together the stage and set up the seats for every performance.

Next week we have the Year 3 led church service on Tuesday, the Christmas lunch, jumper day and secret presents room on Wednesday and Mrs King's amazing RE day on Thursday. On Friday, classes are having parties, pantomimes and a talent show for KS2. It will all be even more fun than it sounds.

Snow

To every child's bitter disappointment, we don't close the school when it snows unless the Ice Age is replayed on the streets of Tunbridge Wells. However, we will message via ParentMail and update the Kent School Closures website if we need to make any special arrangements. If the weather is bad, food deliveries can sometimes be affected, or kitchen staff may struggle to get to school. If there are any special arrangements, we will let parents know as early as we possibly can. If too many staff are unable to get to work, we may need to partially/fully close the school – I only say this as it is a remote possibility; it has never happened before.

Other selections from the school top 10 of winter things that can go wrong include the boiler breaking, pipes freezing or the whole school becoming encased in a giant solid block of ice, impenetrable to anything but a prototype space drill designed by Bruce Willis and a team of top NASA scientists.



If you do not hear from us on ParentMail, please assume school is open as usual.

Staff news

Sadly we are saying “goodbye” to several members of staff next week. Juliet Walters has worked in the finance team for the last 32 years or so – a new school record. Lindsay Ayton has worked for St James’ for 8 years as the finance manager and done an outstanding job keeping the school finances in order. Dawn Johnson also works in the school office on matters including front of house and attendance, and is also leaving us after 12 years at the school. We are going to miss all of them greatly.

We have appointed a new finance manager, Milu, who starts with us in January and we look forward to working with her.

School leadership arrangements from January

As you know we have been supporting our friends at Rusthall St Paul’s this term and this will continue into the New Year. This has been a very busy term, managed with our small team working across two schools, so in order to ensure St James’ continues to have the leadership capacity it needs, I have arranged for another person from a different school to take over the Head of School role at Rusthall after Christmas. This means that Lucy Hayward can remain at St James’ throughout the week. I will continue to spend time supporting the Head of School as Acting Executive Headteacher and our SENCo team will continue to give SEN support.

I would like to publicly thank the whole leadership team here for all of their support and their unfailing willingness to help others. I have asked a lot of them this term and they have not hesitated to help.

Closing date for primary applications

If you have children due to start school next year, the closing date for applications is the 16th January. Applications can be made on line through the Kent website.

Poppy appeal

This year we raised an amazing £592.25. Thank you all so much.

Year 3 Christmas Church Service

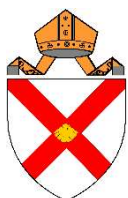
Year 3 parents are invited to come and watch the Christmas church service, led by Year 3, on Tuesday next week and starting at 2pm. After the service all of the children will be walked back to the school for collection as normal. Only Year 3 can be collected from the church; children not collected from the church will be walked back to school for collection from school as usual.

Assessment week

Last week the children took part in assessment week. This is important as it allows us to see how the children are progressing, made adaptations for the next term and look to see how we can support the children in the best possible way. As a part of this week the children did some writing and sat some tests – they all did brilliantly. We keep things as low key as possible.

RE day, 15th December

The children are taking part in a special RE day across the whole school on 15th December. If possible, we would like the children to bring in an empty 50cl water bottle which is (if you can spare it) half filled with uncooked rice. Please can all children make sure they have warm coats and wellies on that day.



Year 1 plea

Next term, the Year 1 topic will be 'Heroes and Villains'. We will be thinking about real life heroes and would love to kick off our topic with a visit from members of the emergency services or similar (we are thinking police officers, fire fighters and nurses/doctors/paramedics - however, anything similar would be amazing). If any parents work in one of these roles and would be willing to come in for a morning in the first week or two of the new term and speak to the children about what you do, please contact Miss Greenfield via beechclass@st-james.kent.sch.uk.

Beulah Road

Please take care if coming to school or going home via Beulah Road – I know that many of our families either live on that road or use it to travel to and from school. As you will know it is a one-way street, but this is often ignored by drivers who drive the wrong way, sometimes at speed, placing unsuspecting children and adults at risk. Please be careful when crossing the road and look in both directions.

Parent reps

Thank you to all those who attended the meeting last week. As soon as I have managed to collate a mailing list I will send out the minutes of the meeting.

Thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank every single member of staff who works at St James' and makes it the very special place that it is. I cannot thank them enough for all that they do every day for the children. I am a very lucky and very proud headteacher.

Dates for the diary

Here are some dates for the diary:

13 th December:	Year 3 led Christmas service (2pm start)
14 th December:	School Christmas lunch (change of date...again)
14 th December:	Secret presents room (PTA)
15 th December:	RE Day
16 th December:	Last day of term
4 th January:	First day back for children
10 th February:	INSET day – school closed for children
w/c 13 th February	Half term week
28 th March:	Year 5 led Easter church service
29 th March:	Easter RE day
3 rd – 16 th April:	Easter holidays
17 th April:	Back to school Year 6 residential week

Happy Christmas to you all and a wonderful New Year!

John Tutt

