



Dates for the diary

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

10 th February	Year 1 Church service – 2pm start. Year 1 parents are welcome to attend.
12 th February	Last day of term
13 th February	INSET day – school closed
16 th February	Half term week
23 rd February	First day of term 4
25 th February	Year 6 Parents Residential Meeting - 6 until 6.30pm
4 th to 6 th March	Y4 Amelia Scott visit (1 session per class)
4 th March	Secondary schools transition meeting – 6pm (change of date)
5 th March	World Book Day
16 th to 18 th March	School book fair
23 rd March	Year 6 residential week
31 st March	Year 5 Easter Church service 2pm – Year 5 parents are welcome to attend.
1 st April	RE day – Easter
2 nd April	Last day of term 4
3 rd April	Easter holidays
20 th April	First day of term 5

Friday 23rd January 2026

We have a week of virtual normality, which is fortunate as my well of water jokes is now empty; hopefully we can fall back into the welcoming blanket of obscurity after our town's moment of fame. You will be relieved to know that this newsletter contains genuine, non-water-based school news. Be warned though, the content might be a little dry.

To give you a brief window into our world, a major event for some of the children this week was the discovery on Tuesday of a dead rat on the wooded bank, the details of which have been shared with relish. While a dead rat might be a big deal for the children (to be fair, my interest was piqued), my highlight was the amazing Young Voices performance at the O2 – more on that below.

Thank you

I would like to say another yet another “thank you” to the parents of St James’ for the e-card I received on Monday – I was totally overwhelmed by the 200 messages. I am not ashamed to say I became emotional reading all of them written to me and the team here at the school – and had to read it in portions. It was an incredibly lovely thing to receive.



Thank you too for your generous collection for the whole staff team – we are looking forward to deciding what to spend it on and I have already had some suggestions from them. We love St James' and its incredible community.

Stephen Pollard

Stephen was a governor of St James' for many years, and Chair for over 10. As shared in a previous message, he sadly died before Christmas and on Tuesday his funeral was held at St James' church, led by Judi. It was a lovely service and an opportunity to find out more about his rich life of public service and numerous interests. For our part, it was the chance to celebrate the life of a person who made such a huge contribution to St James' and has offered such wise guidance, always given with humour and kindness, over so many years.

Young Voices at the O2

Year 5 and 6 choir performed at The O2 arena on Tuesday 20th January and were a part of the largest children's choir in the world. They all did so well: sung their hearts out for hours on end; showed off their best dance moves and were brilliantly behaved throughout the whole day. It was an absolute pleasure to take them along for an experience of a lifetime!



Mrs Holland

Secondary school transition meeting

On 4th March, in the junior hall, parents are invited to a talk on the secondary options once your children have left Year 6. Usually Year 5 parents attend, although others are welcome, although if your child is any younger than Year 4 this may be premature (unless you enjoy listening to a man talking in a school hall) as a lot can change in a few years. The meeting will cover the options available and some information on the 11+ Kent Tests for those unfamiliar or unsure. This meeting is earlier than usual to give Year 5 parents plenty of time to make some big decisions.

This meeting is for adults only please. As a warning, it will be me doing the talking. The meeting usually lasts around an hour but can be longer if there are questions. Parents are welcome to leave when/if the realisation dawns on them that their precious time is being wasted – most usually choose to stay out of politeness.

Early Years

The children in Early Years have started their terms topic 'Tell me a story.' They have been engaged with the story of Princess Eliza and the Wizard. They have been busy making posters, painting pictures and making traps to catch the Wizard. Princess Eliza went missing but thankfully the children have now found her. Next week Early Years will continue their topic with other favourite stories.





Playmobile donations

If anyone has any Playmobile at home that is no longer wanted and you would be happy to donate some of it to the school, we would love to have it. Please drop off at the school office.

School lunch survey

Unfortunately, the recent events have put a delay on several areas that I wanted to work upon, school lunches being among them. Over the next few weeks, I hope to get the breathing space to catch up!

I would be very interested to hear your opinions on our hot lunches. I realise that you are not the people eating them, but I am sure your child will have given you some feedback or you will have looked at the menus. Please do not complete the survey unless your child has eaten them recently (since September 2025).

Harrison is the catering company providing the meals, and our kitchen manager has been visiting another school to see how things could be done differently. Obviously, school lunches are prepared on very tight margins, but there are always ways to improve.

Please be completely honest in your responses and submit by the end of next week (30th January). Thank you in advance for your support with this. You can take the survey by clicking the link below:

[St James' school lunch survey – Fill out form](#)

“Dear John letter” from the Secretary of State for Education

Finally, before the Accelerated Reader announcements, I would like to share an email I received this morning from the Secretary of State for Education, Brigit Philipson. It is always great to have external recognition for the hard work of our staff and children

Dear John,

Congratulations to you and your team on the excellent outcomes the disadvantaged pupils at St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School achieved at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. Your school's performance places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement.

This success reflects the dedication of your staff and the hard work of your pupils. It shows what can be achieved when ambition and commitment come together. Thank you for everything you do to give children the best possible opportunities to succeed.



Your school's achievements demonstrate what is possible, and I hope you will continue to share your experience and best practice with others. Even the strongest schools can go further. We encourage you to lead the way as a system leader - sharing effective practice, championing networks, supporting collaboration, and helping raise standards across the sector.

Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to your staff and pupils. I look forward to working with you as we strive together to raise standards for all.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget

Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State for Education

Winners for this week – 23rd January 2026

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Naomi in Nightingale Class 311,713 words	Chaffinch Class 1,180,910 words	Imogen in Deer Class 18 quizzes	Badger Class 129 quizzes

Have a great weekend.

John Tutt
Head Teacher

