



Newsletter – Friday 21st July 2023

Dear parents, carers and staff,

This will be my last newsletter for this academic year as we continue our journey through St James' and, for some of us, beyond. I am going to take the "egg" as the theme of this newsletter, as is fitting for a theme of endings, renewal and transition. My inspiration for this was seeing Tilly in Hedgehog Class bringing two miraculous tortoise eggs into school on Monday morning to show her class; miraculous as this particular tortoise had no special friend. More on eggs at the end of this letter.

In the meantime, we have a six-week break in which to rest and recover from a term which has been exciting, inspiring, frustrating and worrying in equal measures. I will be offering many thanks in this letter, but I have to begin with thanking Temple Grove and Rusthall St Paul's for being there for us when things seemed very bleak indeed, and they were not alone in offering help. They have made our children feel welcome and have given us help when we needed it most. We are truly grateful.

In two short weeks it will be my 50th birthday. When I started here at St James' I was just 38 – fresh faced and with a huge mop of golden, cascading hair which flowed across my face and shoulders like an alpine stream. No amount of self-care and daily moisturising will disguise the passing years. It is difficult to work out where all those years have gone. However, I can honestly say that I am prouder of our school now than I have ever been over the past 11 (and a bit) years. The team have a shared ethos where the children are always at the centre, where nothing is impossible (obviously within reason) or is "too much trouble" and who unfailingly go the extra mile whenever needed. They are a talented and wonderful group of people whom I would like to publicly thank from the bottom of my heart.

However, St James' predates me by quite a margin, and my 11 years and 3 months pale in comparison to many of our team members, one or two of whom have worked here for almost 30 years. We are incredibly fortunate to have a stable and loyal team, and it is always an emotional wrench when one of them leaves us for pastures new.

On that note, we are very sad to have to say "goodbye" to not one, but two long standing members of the St James' team. Becky Connell has worked in Year 2 this year and has been a member of the team since 2004. Sarah Moriarty has worked alongside Penny on our SEN team; she joined us in 2006. They have both given a huge amount to our school and are much loved members of the team. We will miss them enormously and wish them well in their lives after St James'.

You may or may not know that any member of staff who leaves the school has to go through a public ordeal in assembly – recent examples have been dance offs, karaoke and balance challenges. I have found the thought of going through these public ordeals significantly improves staff retention. Through a unique set of circumstances this summer, Sarah and Becky have somehow got away with it this year.

While we are sad to see two people leaving, we are also delighted to welcome back Holly Shortland and Clare Ball from maternity as well as a number of new members of the team: Tania Penfold who has already been doing some cover for us, is joining us on a full time basis in Year R and 2. Samantha Howden is joining us in September



to work in Year 2 and Gloria Wong joining us to work in Year 5. Finally, Lucy Peddar is joining us at the beginning of October to work in Year 4. We are very excited to welcome them the team.

Of course, we also say farewell to our Year 6 children today, and I know that both parents and staff will have mixed feelings of pride in their achievements and sadness as the children reach the end of this phase in their lives. At the Leavers' Service on Tuesday they once again showed us what a special group of children they are and how much they have enriched our school. We know they will make their new schools equally proud.

Buildings

I have been assured and reassured that the contractors are (mostly) confident that there will be enough classrooms open at the start of term to ensure that no children will need to be bussed to other sites. However, it is likely that work on the school hall ceiling and other rooms around the site will continue until the end of September. I will remain in contact with the contractors over the summer and will update you if this changes, although the priority remains to keep the children at St James' from the start of term, even if they are in temporary classrooms and have to move elsewhere within the school later in the term. Whatever the situation, if there is a shortage of classrooms, priority will go to Year 6 in September (as many of the children will be sitting the Kent Tests later that week), as well as those classes who have already been most affected.

So far the Junior building's electrics have been disconnected and the contents have been moved to a different site at a secret location in the north of Kent, guarded by a man and a dog (not to be confused with BBC TV's One Man And His Dog – similar name but different agendas).

Most of the ceilings have been removed and work is beginning on reinforcing the roof.

The new block in the centre of the school will finally be completed at the end of this week. This will be the new staffroom and two additional group teaching rooms. We'll have to think of an appropriate name for it and perhaps a small ceremony to officially declare it open.

Thank you to you

We have been completely overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of so many parents in this final week of term. On behalf of the school's Senior Leadership Team, Admin team, site manager and our teaching teams, I would like to express our profound gratitude. It's been quite a year but I can't imagine a better school (parents, children and staff included) to go through this experience with and honestly cannot believe how lucky I am to be part of this incredible St James' community. Thank you so much for your generosity, kindness and support this year.

Wilder Kent Awards

We are very excited to be able to announce that Kent Wildlife Trust have awarded the school **Wilder Kent Silver Award** in recognition for all our hard work over the last year to protect wildlife and create wilder spaces around our school. In considering our award, they looked at all the amazing work everyone has done to protect wildlife, to increase our sustainability, to reduce our carbon use and to engage with nature. This is an awesome achievement of which the whole school can be very proud, well done!





Year 3 topic

In Year 3 topic lessons we found out that ancient Greek vases tell us a lot about how people used to live in Ancient Greece. We thoroughly enjoyed having a go at making our own vases. Here are some of Badger Class's finished ones. We began by making the pot, then we painted a base colour all over it. Finally, we added decoration in the style of Ancient Greek artists.

Year 3 have had an adventurous term, riding in style at the top of double decker buses, settling into borrowed classrooms, playing in new playgrounds and even having our own little hall for assemblies. We would like everyone to know that St Paul's School in Rusthall has been extremely kind and welcoming to us and we are very thankful. Our children will move on to Year 4 with extra special and unique memories as well as having more resilience than they previously did. We (the Year 3 teachers) are very proud of all our children.



Year 4 topic



Year 4 have had a fantastic finish to our Anglo-Saxon topic. We have made broaches, repaired the hut with wattle and daub and made pewter coins with runes on them. We then used all our Anglo-Saxon learning to answer our topic question, 'Where the dark ages really dark?

A message from the School Council

TURN OFF YOUR CAR ENGINE

This is a notice for all of the parents/guardians who are sat outside of school with their engines on.

When you leave your engine on, you have a huge carbon footprint which can greatly increase global warming. Polar bears are getting stranded because you are not turning off your engines. In addition to this, you can also be killing nature around us. You are wasting energy for no reason.

Don't waste energy by leaving your car on. Also, fumes can generate from a stationary car and pollute the air making people sick and unhealthy. Just by walking to school you can save somebody's life!

School Council members and their classmates have been working hard to share the environmental messages agreed by all the children. They have been creating posters which will help our school to be more planet friendly. Thanks to everyone who has given up some of their lunchtimes to make these beautiful posters.



Rusthall St Paul's

This academic year will mark the end of my acting leadership of Rusthall school and of St James' involvement. Originally, we had agreed to support the school until Easter 2023, and this was further extended until the end of this academic year. Rusthall is a truly lovely school with a wonderful team which I have been proud to be a part of. I have no doubt they will do extremely well under their new leadership team as a member of the Inspire Trust.

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges 2022 - 2023

It has been a great pleasure to look back at this year's reading challenges and to see all the achievements of each year group, class and individuals. Wow! All children have engaged in and enjoyed their reading activities, and as such are clearly developing their love of reading. A huge WELL DONE to all children and many congratulations to the overall winners for this academic year in each year group:

Year 6

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Faith in Owl Class with 4,614,740 words	Kestrel Class with 25,930,117 words	Chloe in Owl Class with 82 quizzes	Osprey Classes with 643 quizzes



Year 5

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Divit in Chaffinch Class with 12,487,152 words	Chaffinch Class with 46,695,970 words	Divit in Chaffinch Class with 390 quizzes	Chaffinch Class with 1,551 quizzes

Year 4

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Isabelle W in Vole Class with 6,670,956 words	Stoat Class with 22,880,757 words	Isabelle W in Vole Class with 185 quizzes	Stoat Class with 1,268 quizzes

Year 3

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Jessie in Badger Class with 2,360,366 words	Badger Class with 8,001,165 words	Arion in Deer Class with 196 quizzes	Deer Class with 1,677 quizzes

Year 2 also started participating in the reading challenges during Term 2. Here are their overall winners:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Lara in Hedgehog Class with 468,391 words	Rabbit Class with 2,218,627 words	Daisy in Hedgehog Class with 85 quizzes	Rabbit Class with 1,094 quizzes

Accelerated Reader Upgrade

Exciting news! Accelerated Reader is being upgraded during the summer holiday. The new changes will provide us with significant enhancements to the program for our use in school, as well as improve the children's experience. Unfortunately, this upgrade means that Accelerated Reader will not be available for the children to use to take quizzes on books they read over the holiday.

Summer Reading Challenge

Has your child enrolled yet? I would strongly encourage all children to continue with their reading over the summer by participating in the Kent Libraries Summer Reading Challenge. This year's theme is "Ready, Set, Read!" It's completely free to join and there are lots of activities being organised in our local libraries to take part in. For more information, please visit <https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/>
How many books can we, as a school, read this year?

Happy Summer Reading everyone!

Ms Simpson

Summer fair update

The PTA raised an amazing £6,633 at the summer fair. Thank you so much to Kirstin, the whole PTA team, all those who helped on the day and who came along to make it such a special occasion.



Final thoughts

Continuing the theme of eggs from our introduction, eggs have long been a symbol of new beginnings, transition and rebirth; our children are finishing one phase of their education this week and transitioning into another.

Eggs have always had a mixed reputation in the Tutt household – tasty and versatile on the one hand, but also with an ominous and far darker side to them.

When I was a child, the fear of being “egg bound” was an accepted fact. It was the reason why an omelette was made with only 2 eggs and that a serving of boiled eggs maxed out at 2. Knowing that, at any time, an excessive consumption of eggs could trigger being “egg bound”, helped me (indeed, helped humanity) keep their egg intake moderate.

You can imagine my shock when, just this week, I learnt that everything I thought I knew about the binding effects of eggs on humans was wrong – we cannot be “egg bound”. In fact, the phenomenon of egg-binding only applies to chickens.

I have therefore spent five decades worrying for absolutely no reason. I could have eaten as many eggs as I liked. When I watched Paul Newman (as Cool hand Luke) eat 50 hard-boiled eggs in one hour for a challenge, I now realise that the challenge was just eating them all, not (as I had assumed before) grappling manfully with the painful after-effects.

This illustrates how easy it is to form life-long assumptions, and how easy it is for them to be completely erroneous. Being open to new learning, new thinking and having the courage to fail, persevere and succeed lies at the heart of the school’s philosophy of the importance of a growth mindset. Pierre De-Coubertin, the founder of the International Olympic Committee famously declared that “...the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle.” Less famously, Nathanael Greene, an American general in their revolutionary war defeated the British in the Southern Colonies in 1781 despite losing every single battle he fought while outnumbering the British more than 2 to 1 on each occasion (“We fight, get beat, rise up and fight again”); he won simply by never giving up.

Therefore, let us finish this term by embracing the obstacles in our path that have made this term such a challenge. All they have shown is that in such times of adversity, our school community have worked together, with the skill, kindness, love and the will to succeed to continue to make us the special place that we are.

Have a lovely summer, a good break, and I hope we can all get some rest and recuperation over the next few weeks.

Kindest regards,

John Tutt

PS. Remember that the first day back at school for the children is Tuesday 5th September.

PPS. I will update you at the end of the summer break with the latest news on the school buildings.

PPPS. That’s it – goodbye, thank you and see you in September.

