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TN2 3PR

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

2nd December	PTA Wreath Making
3rd December	Parent Rep Meeting - 9am
4th December	PTA Christmas secret present room
8th to 10th December	Infant nativity performances to parents
10th December	Reception Christmas singing performance 2.45pm - 3.10pm
11th December	Flu vaccinations (Nasal spray only)
15th December	Year 3 church service (2pm start) – Y3 parents welcome to attend
16th December	Christmas Lunch and Christmas Jumper day
17th December	RE day
18th December	Last day of term
4th January 2027	First day of Term 3

Newsletter - Friday 20th November 2026

Small changes can have unsettling outcomes. Have you ever woken up and spent the day feeling unsettled, as if something was not quite right with the world; something that you just couldn't pin down? That evening the mystery is solved when you realise that, while getting dressed that morning, you had put on a key item of clothing inside out. Last Friday was one of those days, and this time it had nothing to do with my attire. Microsoft Outlook, simultaneously our servant and overlord, decided to take a day off.

Well, small changes having a big impact is this week's theme. In keeping with the media's catastrophisation agenda, welcome to an "apocalypse special" edition of the newsletter. If printed onto A0 paper, a temporary shelter can be erected with only duct tape, groundsheet and string. We are going to cover contingency planning in the event of bad weather, power cuts and communication breakdowns.

Keeping the school running over winter is always a little more challenging, so let's be prepared well in advance. We aim to communicate any changes to our normal services by 7.30am at the latest, although we always aim for earlier than that.

Portents of doom seem to be a subject of conversation among some of the more children, with the daily news providing ample material to trigger all but the most desensitised 21st Century young brain. Let's just reassure them that the grown-ups have it all covered and avoid it as a subject of conversation at home when little ears are listening. Let's face it, the St James' community have seen it all, dealt with it, learned from it and moved on. The bigger things out of our control can look after themselves.

If you have been part of the St James' community you will already have read most of the protocols, but here they are again, just in case. The basic message is that, unless you hear otherwise, assume the school is open.

Snow

To every child's bitter disappointment, we don't close the school when it snows unless extremely severe – something last seen in the winter of 2017/18 with the "beast from the east" - which also failed to close the school. However, we will message via Arbor 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.

As above, decisions are made by 7.30am when possible, or as soon as a member of the school's leadership team is able to get to school, assess the situation and make a decision, although the default is always (and has always been) to stay open unless we have a compelling reason for closure.

We always appreciate seeing the children in school on time on snowy days – nothing is more disheartening for staff than leaving their house at 5am, struggling for an hour to get to work along sketchy roads and paths, helping to clear the site and then finding that children who live a short walk away have been taken sledging instead; teachers find they have half a class of disillusioned youngsters to entertain. If we have decent snow and children have appropriate clothing, we always take them outside to enjoy it.

Power Cuts

We have developed a contingency for a large scale/high impact power cut – again these are always more likely in winter due to high winds or extreme snow. Nobody is certain why we are being asked to stockpile tins of food at home, but common sense suggests large scale power cuts could be a possibility.

Power cuts can be at several levels, from a short-term local outage to something wider, affecting many key services, including the mobile network and water supply.

If you wake to discover you have no electricity at home and no mobile signal, your assumption should be that the school is open. We will put information onto a banner at the bottom of the drive as early as possible with key information. We have invested in some emergency equipment (LED battery lights for toilets, bells for fire alarms etc) to keep the school open during a temporary loss of power.

We will be unable to cook meals, send communications or heat the school during a power cut, so children should come with a packed lunch and very warm clothes. We feel it is preferable to open, if possible, to give the children as much normality as we can achieve. However, during a longer-term power cut we will have to consider how realistic this is, especially during a period of very cold weather. Absences during periods of uncertainty such as these will always be authorised.

If a power outage affects the school water supply, we will have no option but to close the school.

Water supply issues

We cannot open without a water supply. The plan during water outages will be the same as last year – an early arrival and decision, sent via Arbor. Bear in mind that this depends on my knowing there is a potential issue in the first place; a loss of supply overnight might mean you hear from us later than we would otherwise hope, and Arbor has an annoying lag between being messages sent by us and received by you. We will always try and meet that 7:30am deadline. The school's water supply early warning is provided by my mother-in-law who lives in Ferndale and rises early to make a cup of tea.

Communications
Due to the wonders of modern technology, our school phones stop working if the internet shuts down. We can access Arbor via our mobile phones if we have a signal and will aim to communicate that way if possible. Short term internet outages are inconvenient but easily managed. Longer term outages would require more thought to manage communication between school and homes. Parents will need to correspond via letter or speak to the office/teacher directly. In an emergency, school staff would drive children directly to hospital if required.

Preparations summary
Well, that covers most potential issues. These events are all unlikely and will be managed (if they arise) through the whole community working together. Let's hope for a mild winter, oodles of electricity and ample water.

Teaching Assistant positions
We are currently advertising for 2 Teaching Assistants. If you have experience of working with children and would like to consider applying, please visit UK Teach for more information www.ukteach.com

Please contact me if you would like more information about the roles.

Penny Wardell

PTA contact details
If you need to get in touch with the PTA, the email address is: stjames.tw.pta@gmail.com
This can also be found on the school's website.

Is my child too ill for school?
It can be tricky deciding whether to keep your child off school when they are unwell. Please see the link for the NHS guidelines. As always please let the school office know if your child is unwell and not coming to school before 9.30am by calling the absence line on 01892 523006 (option 5) or emailing **office@st-james.kent.sch.uk**

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/

Flu Vaccinations 11th December
This is a reminder to parents to submit a consent or decline for the FLU vaccination via the Immunisation Service's website https://www.kentimmunisations.co.uk/
Please submit your preference by the **cut-off date 08/12/2026.**
Your school's unique code/URN is: KT118725"

If you would like any assistance or there are any digital inclusion concerns or you need information in alternate languages to support your school community, please get in touch.

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Telephone: 0300 123 5205
Email: kchft.cyp-immunisationteam@nhs.net
Live chat with us now
Text chat us now: 07700 140385

Phonics Workshop
We will be holding a Phonics Workshop on Thursday 3rd December from 3.20-3.45 in the KS2 Hall. This will be an opportunity to pop in and find out a little bit more about what phonics is, how we teach and some activities

you could use at home to support your child. It will be a fluid event so just pop in when you like and have a look around. Teachers will be on hand to answer any questions and to talk you through activities and guidance. The event is primarily aimed at Reception and Year 1 parents, but anyone is welcome.

Year 5 Able Writer's Day

On Tuesday 10th November, 6 children from Year 5 were selected to attend an Able Writer's Day at St Barnabus School. They had the opportunity to work with the author **Margaret Bateson-Hill** and produced some fantastic writing. The group were excellent representatives of St James', and we are really proud of them!



This is what the children thought:

'I really enjoyed making the Dragon fact file' – Charlotte.

'It was amazing to meet a real author and other people like me. She taught me more about how to write. Thank you, Mrs Dain, for picking me!' – Hazel.

'Fantastic fun with dragons, writing about them and drawing them. Definitely want to go next year!' – Alex.

'It was a very interactive and fun day. We got to write poems and had the chance to act things out as well. It was all based around mythical creatures, which made it really exciting!'– Niyaa and Aiden.

Tonbridge Tristar Aquathlon on Bank Holiday Monday 3rd May 2027: Primary Schools
We are delighted to announce that Tonbridge Lions have opened up the opportunity for children to begin to train for Triathlons. Please see attached poster, there are different categories for each age. This will be a wonderful way to promote another reason for your children to push their swimming and running ability.
Hopefully this will start the career of a next Olympian.

Eirene Naismith

Autistic Girls Network Webinars
Our cluster of schools have bought into this excellent resource for parents of girls with ASD, please have a look at the attached flyer to find out about the webinars the Autistic Girls Network are running. The first webinar is on 18th January at 8pm. No need to book and no limit on numbers of parents that attend.

Football
The boys' A and B teams have been in action recently, both being excellent ambassadors for the school and playing the game in the correct spirit.

The A team won two more matches in the West Kent and Tonbridge league at Leigh Academy - beating Slade 4-2 and St John's 3-1. They maintain their place at the top of the league, with one match to go - against long-time rivals Claremont in December.

The B team put in a solid performance against St Barnabas, with a hard-fought 1-1 draw.
Well done to all the boys for their effort and attitude, and a huge thanks to parents for their support.



	P	W	D	L	PTS
1. St James	5	4	1	0	14
2. Claremont	4	2	2	0	10
3. Hildenborough	4	1	3	0	9
4. Slade	5	2	0	3	9
5. Langton Green	4	2	0	2	8
6. Sussex Road	5	0	2	3	7
7. St John's	5	1	0	4	7

Mr Fern

Forest School News

After a relaxing half term break, we arrived back at Juniors Forest School to the shock of our parachute lying in our fire circle, the supporting rope severed in the high winds during one of the storms we had. Sadly, as it fell it caught on trees and ripped in several places so had to go in the bin.

We have now bought a replacement parachute and rope and simply need someone to climb up one of our really tall trees to thread the new rope through the pulley on our cable. Mr Tutt did volunteer, but we prefer to keep him safely on the ground**!**

If anyone knows a local tree surgeon we can employ, please do pass on their number to us.
In the meantime, we are praying for dry weather and are asking parents to make sure the children have fully waterproof coats and trousers to wear during our sessions.

Even if it's not raining over-trousers (and extra pairs of warm socks!) will help to keep the children warm as the cold, winter weather arrives.



The People's Emergency Briefing

The People's Emergency Briefing was screened in the junior hall on Wednesday, giving the audience a chance to learn more about the effects of climate change and, importantly, some positive steps we can take to cope with it. Thank you very much to Ms Hayward for making this possible and to Mr Wyke for the work he put in organising it, along with a team of parents and other volunteers from our community. Charlie's Angels in Camden Road kindly

provided delicious pastries, all rescued by them from being wasted. The film features a panel of experts who explain the effects of global heating on their particular specialism, based on the evidence, and somehow left a positive feeling by showing that there are still things we can do about it. The audience, which included Judi (Vicar of St James Church) and lots of people from the area, were really engaged in the following discussion and had so many good ideas about community-based ways of helping ourselves and each other.

Mr Wyke and Kelly Wilcox will be looking at more ways we can make some positive changes at the school, if this is something you would like to help with, please do get in touch. **kelly@bakerwilcox.com**

If you wanted to attend but missed this screening the next one in Tunbridge Wells is hosted by Cripps and B Local Kent on Thursday 18th, for more information and to book a free place visit:
https://www.tickettailor.com/events/carleycoaching/2478468

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

Our winners for last week, **13th November,** were:

	Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Year 6	**Aaron** in **Owl**	**Kestrel**	**Raffi** in **Kestrel**	**Kestrel**
Year 5	**Charlotte** in **Chaffinch**	**Chaffinch**	**Issac** in **Chaffinch**	**Chaffinch**
Year 4	**Seb** in **Stoat**	**Dormouse**	**Gianna** in **Dormouse**	**Dormouse**
Year 3	**Athena** in **Badger**	**Badger**	**Louis** in **Badger** and **Wiktoria** in **Fox**	**Fox**

- A special mention for **Kestrel** as they read more than 3 million words last week!
- **Owl** and **Osprey** read more than 1 million words last week.

Our winners for this week, **20th November,** are:

	Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Year 6	**Kate** in **Osprey**	**Kestrel**	**Naomi** in **Osprey**	**Kestrel**
Year 5	**Charlotte** in **Chaffinch**	**Chaffinch**	**Avira** in **Nightingale**	**Chaffinch**
Year 4	**Gianna** in **Dormouse**	**Dormouse**	**Gianna** in **Dormouse**	**Dormouse**
Year 3	**Athena** in **Badger**	**Badger**	**Amber** in **Badger**	**Badger**

- **Kestrel**, **Owl** and **Osprey** all read more than 1 million words this week.

Congratulations to our overall winners in each year group. Please keep reading everyone - some week's results are a close contest so every word read and every quiz passed really does count.
Mrs Simpson

Have a great weekend.

Kindest regards,
John Tutt