



Dates for the diary

26 th November	Christmas jumper sale
6 th December	Secret presents room
7 th December	PTA Quizmas event
10 th December	Years 1 and 2 Nativity - 9.30am Dress rehearsal younger siblings are welcome to attend.
11 th December	Years 1 and 2 Nativity - 1.45pm. First Performance (no younger siblings)
12 th December	Years 1 and 2 Nativity - 9.30am. Second performance (no younger siblings)
13 th December	Early Years Christmas singing performance followed by mince pies – 2pm start Parent Rep meeting 9am – apologies, wrong date here in the last newsletter
17 th December	Year 3 Christmas church service 2pm – Year 3 parents welcome to attend
19 th December	Christmas lunch at school – wear your Christmas jumper today!
20 th December	Last day of term 2
6 th January 2025	INSET day
7 th January	First day of term 3

Friday 22nd November 2024

Welcome to the last November newsletter of 2024 – once those advent calendar doors start being peeled back you know things are getting serious. Let us revel in this pre-festive serenity before the senility kicks in for us all.

There has been a lot of illness around recently, and it seems to be the same picture in other schools locally. Unfortunately, I had Covid over half term and seem to have been repeatedly unwell ever since. As always, my bravery and stoicism in the face of adversity has been an inspiration to the entire St James' team. If your child is too unwell to attend school, please call the absence line and let us know their name, class and the specific reason for their absence (rather than just "unwell") on every day of their absence. If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, the NHS has some useful guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>.

As I have mentioned before, mid-November is an important time for me – Mrs Tutt's birthday is at the end of this month and that is the one occasion each year that buying cards and presents falls on me. Obviously, in all relationships a significant amount of mind reading is expected, and true to form, I have been given precious few crumbs of information to base my decision on; all ideas welcome. I popped into Wildside Cycles after work this week looking for a present for Sarah, but accidentally ended up spending her birthday budget by buying something for myself – suggestions therefore need to be cheap. If you could also restrict any suggestions to gifts that can be purchased from one of the petrol stations on the way to Crowborough, all the better – with your help I can make Mrs Tutt feel really valued this year. Before anyone suggests screen wash, she still has plenty of that left over from our anniversary.

Snow

Yes, we have seen the first snow flurries which means it is that time of year again...so here goes:



Firstly, we do not close for snow unless conditions are truly horrendous – this has not happened in the last 12 and a half years I have been at St James'. We can never say never, and maybe if I open my front door one morning to find my house has been completely buried in snow overnight, I may throw in the towel and stay home, but I have not failed to get to work so far and do not intend to this winter either. Please always assume the school is open unless you hear otherwise from us via ParentMail – remember that closure is highly unlikely.

In the event of snow, we will decide on how to proceed after arriving at school – staff try to arrive by 7am and have made a decision by half past at the latest. Reasons for not opening could be very dangerous conditions across the site, no water, a heating break down or (knowing us) a polar bear on the rampage. We may have to make other announcements short of closing, such as asking you to give your child a packed lunch if kitchen deliveries are affected. Children should always bring gloves, wellies and a warm coat (yes – on occasion children do arrive in sandals, shorts/skirt and a pakamac in freezing weather) so they can play in the snow at school (if it is good snow and not watery slush or lumps of ice). If they do not have adequate clothing, they will have to stay inside and watch others have all the fun.

Please take care walking to/from school in the snow, especially on the paths nearby which can be slippery. Car and van drivers make dangerous decisions when the roads are snowy such as pulling out randomly at junctions, driving too quickly or random braking, which means they can slide out of control; obviously this is never their fault.

We do our best to clear paths across the site, but we are limited in number and sometimes there is a lot of snow to deal with. Please stick to any cleared paths around the school and keep your children with you.

Personally, I love snow – the routine commute becomes an epic adventure, especially when cycling. However, it very quickly gets to be a chore. Therefore, a day or two of snow, followed by a thaw and ongoing mildness is my preferred winter.

Catering contract

The school has made the decision to change its caterers; after Christmas, Harrison will take over from Nourish. New menus should be sent out before Christmas, and we will keep you updated until then. Unfortunately, there will be a slight increase in the cost of meals by 3p until April 2025, and then around 15p per meal after that. We are looking forward to working with them and are confident that this will be a positive change for the children.

While the transfer is going through, please do not make any payments for school meals after December 20th 2024. If you have monies owing to Nourish, please settle before this date or contact Nourish.

Year 1 Marvellous Middle.

We had a visit from The Animal Club because our Topic this term is 'All Creatures Great and Small'. We met Lola, Dolly, Pipsqueak and others. We found out about where the animals came from and lots of facts about what they eat, where they live and what makes them special. Did you know that some land snails can live for 15 years? Or that the hissing Madagascan cockroach can hold its breath under water for two hours? It also has two brains in case it loses its head! We had a chance to touch and hold the animals if we wanted. Year 1 had a marvellous time being so close to all these amazing animals.



Primary applications

The window is now open to apply for a place at St James' if your child is due to start school in September 2025. You need to apply via the KCC website in addition to completing a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) which you will need to complete and return to Angie in the school office. Both the online application and the paper form are necessary for a successful application. If you have any questions, concerns or issues during your application please get in touch – we are always happy to help you. You have until the 15th January to make your application. There is only one St James' in the Tunbridge Wells/Sevenoaks area but, just in case, our school number is 3322.

Sporting update

We had our first competitive netball fixtures, and the A and B team won all of their games against St John's and St Augustine.

Team A 12-0 against St Augustines

Team B 4-1 against St Augustines

Team B 7-2 against St John's

The teams were very polished as a result of Miss Gibson's fantastic endless coaching. Help supporting her would be gratefully received.

We had fun taking children to Chimera for a climbing event this week and they thoroughly enjoyed going up heights without any fear. The hour-long session passed very quickly. Chimera centre is an amazing venue, and they have lots of other tailored sessions for children to have the fun of trying this challenge.

Mrs Naismith

Times Table Rockstars

Thank you so much to guitar legends Mr Varma and Mr Brown who played the children through their Rock Stars challenge day. The children had an amazing time, looked fantastic and several balding/bald staff members enjoyed the excuse to don a wig. Massive thanks as well to Mr Wyke to organising such a fun day – rock music will now forever be linked to times table practice, for better or worse.



PE kit

Although it is getting cold out there, the children go still outside for their PE sessions. Please ensure children have PE jumpers and long bottoms to change into. Remember that there is no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothes.



Parent Rep meeting

If you are a parent Rep and free for a meeting after drop-off on Friday 13th December, then it would be lovely to meet you to talk about how the term has started, what the school's plans are for the year ahead and share thoughts and ideas. We will meet straight after drop-off and will do our best to keep it under an hour in length.

Diabetes/Elsa Study

The NHS have recently introduced The ELSA Study: Screening of Children for type 1 diabetes and we have been approached by Kent's nursing team to facilitate this at school.

The ELSA screening programme uses a simple finger prick test to find out a child's risk of developing type 1 diabetes. We feel this is an important study to be involved in. We have had several children in the past who developed Type 1 diabetes suddenly and I know those parents would have welcomed the ability to know earlier of their child's predisposition to the condition.

The ELSA study tests children using a finger prick blood test to find markers in the blood (autoantibodies) that tell us a child's risk of getting type 1 diabetes in the future. 3 out of 1000 children will test positive for these antibodies, but we have no way of knowing which 3 children this will be without testing.

Screening children offers an opportunity to pick up type 1 diabetes sooner and stop children from becoming too unwell. Children at high risk can be monitored and could enter research studies aiming to delay the start of type 1 diabetes. Every family who takes part in the ELSA study is helping us to understand more about type 1 diabetes.

A letter giving more information will be coming out to parents next week. We will also include an information pack as well as a "What to expect" leaflet for the children. The actual screening session is booked for 3rd February 2025.

We will also be arranging for the nursing team to visit school closer to the screening date. They will be available at the end of the school day to answer any queries you may have at this time.

ASD Support group for parents.

We have been offered an opportunity for selected parents to attend a support group for those whose children have recently been diagnosed with Autism. These will be weekly supportive sessions in a small group where pertinent topics will be explored and then discussed to support parents. They will start sometime in January and last for approximately 6-8 sessions.

The support group will be run by Louise Brackpool who is our contact from the Educational Psychologist team this year.

If you think that this is something you would be interested in exploring further, please email us on senco@st-james.kent.sch.uk and we will be able to give you some more information.

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

Here are the overall winners from last week (14th November 2024)

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
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Sasha in Chaffinch Class 294,995 words	Osprey Class 1,484,900 words	Naomi in Dormouse Class 20 quizzes	Dormouse Class 93 quizzes
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Here are the overall winners for this week (**21st November 2024**):

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
Polly in Vole Class 893,771 words	Kestrel Class 2,801,811 words	Franklin in Osprey Class 16 quizzes	Osprey Class 67 quizzes

A special mention to these classes, who read more than one million words this week:

- **Vole** Class – 1,634,133 words
- **Osprey** Class – 1,424,979 words.

A massive “Well Done” to all our winners.

If you need inspiration for “something to read” then the links below may help.

Here you’ll find new and upcoming children’s books; recommendations include fiction and non-fiction.

[New Books on BooksForTopics](#) | [Recommended children's booklists sorted by age or topic...](#)

Here you’ll find children’s book recommendations sorted by primary key stage, year groups and ages. [Booklists By Age on BooksForTopics](#) | [Recommended children's booklists sorted by age or topic...](#)

Happy Reading!

Mrs Simpson

Kindest regards,

John Tutt

