



Dates for the diary

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

9 th September	Early Years start part time
9 th September	Meet the teacher - Years 4 & 5
10 th September	Meet the teacher - Years 2 & 3
11 th September	Meet the teacher - Years 1 & 6
16 th September	Early Years start full time – coffee for new parents in the infant hall
18 th September	Meet the teacher – Reception
1 st October	Sharing learning (2:45pm until the end of the school day)
2 nd October	Sharing learning (8:45 until 9:15am)
8 th October	Carrot Wood this week for Year 3
15 th and 17 th October	Parent consultations
22 nd October	Year 2 Harvest church service 2pm – Year 2 parents welcome to attend
24 th October	Last day of term 1
25 th October	INSET day
28 th October	Half term week
4 th November	First day of term 2
17 th December	Year 3 Christmas church service 2pm – Year 3 parents welcome to attend
20 th December	Last day of term 2
6 th January 2025	INSET day
7 th January	First day of term 3

Friday 6th September 2024

This will be a very brief newsletter as there is not a very great deal of news to share at this point in the term; this is a news-lite edition. I had a lovely summer in the mountains of France and the (equally stunning) hills of Crowborough and I hope your summer was just as much fun; your children have been very keen to share their adventures with us. It has been lovely seeing the children back at school and seeing the teachers getting stuck into their new topics.

This week's torrential rain has definitely signalled the start of Autumn. The weather is getting increasingly extreme – personally I am disappointed that the new government has not already acted on this after (literally) 8 weeks in power. Even more galling is the quality of the weather forecasting. Five different forecasting organisations will give you five different forecasts and I am yet to understand how I can be standing in the pouring rain looking at a weather app on my phone telling me it is currently sunny with 10% chance of a light shower. How can we have reached 2024 and it is still more accurate to look out of the window and use "the force" (or find a field of cows – if they are laying down it will rain, or so my mum says) to determine what you need to wear that day? With this in mind, children will need to bring a coat every single day, no matter how positive the forecast looks, as we go outside in all weathers. They are also welcome to come to school in wellies and change when they get to school to avoid sitting in wet socks or tights.



It cannot have escaped your attention that no weird stuff has happened (so far) and no random closure emails needed to be sent at the last minute. As I said last term, this may just be the year that we become a “normal” school. I have had a few questions on the RAAC within the school over the last few days, and I think my newsletter with an update on this issue may have been missed by many. I have therefore repeated this section for any who may have missed it last time. I am pleased to say that the most recent survey, carried out in the summer holidays, confirmed that the strengthening mitigation work carried out in 2023 remains effective and safe.

RAAC update

A while ago I wrote to you about the school being placed into the Schools Rebuilding Programme (SRP) due to the presence of RAAC across much of the junior building. The RAAC has been mitigated through strengthening works and detailed structural surveys which take place three times per year; however, these are not a permanent solution.

We were told at the end of last term that we have been placed within Group 2 in the SRP. Group 2 schools will hear from a DfE project manager after April 2025 when site surveys and planning work will begin. This will take up to a year to complete, so no actual work is likely to begin until around April 2026. Building work will take around a year to complete, but could be quicker or longer depending on its extent.

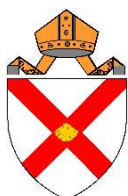
Until the site surveys have been completed, we will not know the scope or extent of the work that will be carried out, or how the ongoing education of the children will be managed to keep disruption to an absolute minimum. The work could just involve the junior building, it could include the infant building as well or it could encompass the entire site. We are also unsure whether the new government will have any impact on the suggested timetable, which is already fairly woolly.

Whatever happens, I am determined that the children will be educated on our St James’ site throughout the building work and that we remain together as a school – I want no repeat of children being bussed across the town. Obviously, I cannot make any guarantees as some of these decisions will be in the hands of others, but that will be a non-negotiable as far as I have the power to push it. Once I have more information I will of course share it with you.

Communication & email

The accessibility, omnipresence and lack of boundaries with email has, in my opinion, vastly reduced productivity in all spheres of life. When I started working 30 years ago (in a bank in Battersea), the post was dealt with by mid-morning; nowadays, keeping on top of emails can take your entire day and give the illusion of having done a productive day’s work, when in fact you have often done nothing at all to truly move the organisation forwards.

Please keep any emails to the school brief and succinct as this really helps us stick to the things that matter. Any message longer than a paragraph is always better dealt with through a face-to-face meeting or telephone call. I ask teachers not to check or respond to messages after 5pm, and non-urgent messages may not be read on the same day they are sent. If you have a problem or a concern, we really want to hear from you – communication is vital; we will not be engaging in an exchange of emails if there is a complex issue that needs a resolution, but will arrange time to talk it through and give it the time and attention it deserves.



Phase leaders

Our phase leaders each look after one of three teams at St James'. As always, parents' first point of contact will be the class teacher, but if after speaking to them you wish to speak to someone else, they will be your second point of contact.

Team	Phase Lead	Email address
Early Years and Year 1	Lucy Coward	lcoward@st-james.kent.sch.uk
Years 2, 3 and 4	Kate Jones	kjones@st-james.kent.sch.uk
Years 5 and 6	Anna Holland	aholland@st-james.kent.sch.uk

September drop off and pick up timings

Year group	Drop off time	Finish time
R	0845 - 0855	1510
1	0845 - 0855	1515
2	0845 - 0855	1515
3	0845 - 0855	1520
4	0845 - 0855	1520
5	0845 - 0855	1520
6	0845 - 0855	1520

Mobile phones and other smart devices

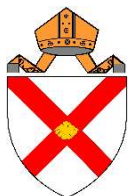
I'm sure you will all have seen discussion about children's use of mobile phones and other screens lately. We would like to make it clear that pupils (of any age) are not allowed a mobile phone at school. If you feel that it is vital for your child to have a mobile phone in school, then we would ask you to explain, in writing, the reasons for this. If we as a school agree, permission will be granted in writing. The same goes for other smart technology enabled devices such as smart watches, which are not suitable for children to bring to school. Any mobile phones, or similar devices will be confiscated by staff on sight to be returned to a parent at the end of the day. If the child continues to bring the device after this then it will be confiscated for a week. We really appreciate your cooperation with this.

Whilst I'm talking about phones, I'd also invite you to consider whether your child even needs an internet enabled mobile phone out of school or whether a more basic version, also known as a 'brick phone', would be better (more information about these types of phones is available here: <https://www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/best-for/kids-and-teenagers>).

Miss Hayward

Absence during term time

The guidance for schools has changed with regards to authorising absences during term time. A penalty notice must now be considered by all schools in England after 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years. The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days (reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days). More information, including any subsequent steps the school may take, can be found on the www.gov.uk website. The decision about whether to issue a Penalty Notice will be made by our school following due consideration of the circumstances of the absence. Please note that a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and



recreation is not considered by the DfE to be an exceptional circumstance, and therefore cannot be authorised by the school.

Safe driving within the school car park

Please drive very slowly if you are bringing your car onto the school grounds. Ideally please park outside and walk in if collecting from clubs or dropping at breakfast club. If you do drive in, please do so extremely slowly and carefully. Please use the pedestrian entrance if walking in/out outside of school hours or collecting from a club – not the driveway.

Pupil Premium

Just a reminder that if your child is eligible for Pupil Premium, as a school we offer to fund the following:

- Free school meals in Key Stage 2
- School uniform – one set of compulsory items per school year,
- PE kit – one set of compulsory items per school year,
- Milk,
- School swimming lessons (when available),
- One weekly after school club/extra-curricular club in school (including MSport Sports Clubs, Gabriella's Dance School, French Club, Spanish Club, Instrumental Music lessons, Bricks for Kids Lego Club – Year 2 only)
- School trips, including Year 3 Carrot Wood and Year 6 residential trip.

If you think you might be eligible, please see the attached letter about applying for Pupil Premium. Parents with children in Year 3, who have not applied previously, will now need to apply to benefit from continued Free School Meals.

Penny Wardell & Jane Woolcott

Meet the Teacher – Years 1 to 6

At the start of the school year, we invite all those parents (who are able) to come into school to meet their child's teacher. These take place on the days/dates at the top of this newsletter. The start time is 2:45pm and they will be finished by 3:10 in time for Reception parents to collect their children.

Sharing learning

This is a chance for you to come into school and have a look through your child's books. The dates for this term are at the top of this newsletter. Parents can come to one, both or neither.

Contact details

If you have recently moved or changed your contact details, please contact the school office to let them know.

I hope you have a lovely weekend! The met office forecast looks better than the BBC, so I advise you to choose that one.

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

