



Dates for the diary

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

23 rd September	Meet the teacher Reception classes
15 th October	Year 4 Harvest church service 2pm – Year 4 parents welcome to attend
17 th October	Last day of term 1
20 th October	Half term week
27 th October	First day of term 2
28 th – 31 st October	Carrot Wood this week for Year 3
4 th November	School photographer in today
6 th November	Flu immunisation for whole school
4 th & 6 th November	Parent consultations
8 th – 10 th December	KS1 (Year 1 and 2) nativities
12 th November	Sharing learning (2:45pm until the end of the school day)
13 th November	Sharing learning (8:45 until 9:15am)
16 th December	Year 3 Christmas church service 2pm – Year 3 parents welcome to attend
18 th December	Last day of term 2
19 th December	INSET day
5 th January	First day of term 3

Friday 12th September 2024

First allow me to welcome you back to a sparkingly brand-new school year. Apologies for the lateness of this first newsletter, but we have been transitioning to a new system (Arbor) and I wanted to be sure this would be received by everyone before I sent it.

Summer finished and Autumn began more abruptly than usual, with a downpour on the first day of the school year, although we have to admit that we had lovely summer weather this year – I hope everyone managed to enjoy it.

The school year has begun and your children have already started their learning adventures. Over the course of the year they may learn the answers to some of education's most baffling questions, such as:

- Why did pirates always stain their treasure maps with tea?;
- Can I get away with the same dressing up toga for Roman and Greek dressing up days?;
- How can my child learn complex mathematical problem-solving skills at school but still be incapable putting dirty clothes into a laundry basket?



The answer to these questions (possible not the last one, which could be unsolvable), as well as countless others, will be answered in the coming weeks, months and years.

I hope you have a lovely weekend. Please choose the weather forecast which promises to deliver the better weekend weather and enjoy!

Arbor

As you are hopefully already aware, we now use Arbor for all our school communications and payments. You need to set up an account by following the link we sent out to you. You can also put the Arbor app on your phone. If you are struggling with Arbor, and have tried the help pages without success, please ask one of us to help you.

[Log into the Parent Portal and the Parent App – Arbor Help Centre](#)

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, 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.

If you have a problem or a concern, we really want to hear from you – communication is vital; however 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.

I ask teachers not to check or respond to messages after 5pm, and emails may not be read on the same day they are sent – teachers spend most of their day in front of the children and not on their computers checking their inboxes. If your concern is urgent, please speak to a member of staff on the gate or in the office or give us a call.

Phase leaders

Our phase leaders each look after one of four 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	Lucy Coward	lcoward@st-james.kent.sch.uk
Years 1 and 2	Sarah Greenfield	Sgreenfield@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

We are a Smartphone Free School

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 smartphone at school. If you feel that it is vital for your child to have a mobile phone (a brick phone for example) 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.

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.

Safety 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.

In addition, please always keep toddlers under your immediate control while in the school car park. Please do not allow them to scooter or run between the parked cars. We have had staff cars damaged recently, and we will ask for reimbursement if this happens; we have CCTV covering the school car parks.

Free School Meals and Pupil Premium

If you apply for Free School Meals and your child is eligible for Pupil Premium, the school receives additional funding. We offer to support parents with funding the following:



- Free school meals in Key Stage 2
- School uniform – a jumper or cardigan, one PE t-shirt and one PE long sleeved top per school year,
- Milk (parents still need to apply via Coolmilk website),
- 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, music lessons).
- Subsidies may be available for school trips, including Year 3 Carrot Wood and Year 6 residential trip.

If you think you might be eligible, please see the attached link. Apply for free school meals

If you would like any help finding out what other financial support you may be eligible for, please ask Jane Woolcott in the school office.

Penny Wardell & Jane Woolcott

St James' Orchestra Club – Free Taster Session

St James' Primary School has a thriving orchestra club – now recruiting from Years 4, 5 and 6. Any child able to play 3 notes on their chosen instrument can come along.

The orchestra meets weekly in the music room, from 12.10 – 13.00 on a Wednesday in the lunch hour, and the cost is £7 per session. This will include all tuition and personalised music parts supplied which are adapted to your child's level of skill.

Please see the attached flyer from Yvonne Smith, our Orchestra Leader.

Mrs Piper

Early Years

A huge welcome to all of the new children and their families that have started at St James' this week. The children have started to settle really well and are already adjusting to the new routines of school life.

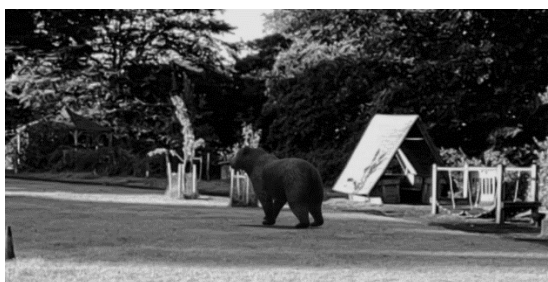
On Monday 15th at drop off, families of the new children in Early Years are invited to a welcome coffee at 8.45am in the KS1 hall. This is kindly being held by the PTA and it is a perfect opportunity to meet each other as you become part of the St James Primary school family. Vikki Turtle, one of the NHS Educational Mental Health Practitioners that supports our school will also be there. Please drop your child and make your way to the small hall next to the Early Years entrance if you would like to meet some of the other parents.

The EYFS Team

Year 1 news

Earlier this week, Year 1 were surprised to hear that a family of bears had been lost on the way to their new home at a wildlife park in Kent! Everyone had a good look outside during playtimes and on their way to and from school. The children could barely contain their excitement when they discovered that one of the bears was spotted on the Forest School video camera, which usually spots squirrels, foxes and badgers if we are lucky! Fortunately, the wildlife park quickly sent out their team to collect the bears, who are now settling into their new home and being looked after by the wildlife park team. Year 1 had lots of knowledge to share about bears and are now looking forward to exploring more animal facts and activities in their "All Creatures Great and Small" topic.





The Year 1 team

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 season 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.

Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

"Children should learn that reading is a pleasure, not just something that teachers make you do in school."
(Beverly Cleary).

As we start a new school year, we begin the reading challenges in Key Stage 2. Each week, we celebrate every class's reading achievements – the number of words read and the number of quizzes passed. Here are our most recent overall winners for the last two weeks.

➤ Winners for week ending 5th September 2025:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Reuben in Owl Class 690,822 words	Owl Class 1,580,164 words	Florie in Nightingale Class and Reuben in Owl Class 10 quizzes	Nightingale Class 45 quizzes

In addition, these classes also read more than one million words last week:

- Nightingale (1,358,836 words)
- Chaffinch (1,070,048 words)
- Osprey (1,068,509 words)
- Swift (1,020,413 words)

➤ Winners for week ending 12th September 2025:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
Katie in Nightingale Class	Nightingale Class 1,164,070 words	Charlie in Dormouse Class	Dormouse Class



471,320 words		47 quizzes	264 quizzes (69 books; 195 articles)
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- Dormouse class also read more than one million words this week (1,088,237 words)

Many congratulations to all our winners. Keep reading everyone!
Mrs Simpson

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

