



Newsletter – Friday 6th October 2023

Dear parents and carers,

While the new Reception children have barely settled into their new classes I have already begun the tours for new parents with children hoping to start here in September 2024. In the words of Darth Vader “the circle is now complete”. The continuing circle of school life is laid out below in the dates below – we have made a few additions so please check the calendar carefully.

I wanted to say a few words about the diversity of St James’ school. We are extremely fortunate to have a rich variety of cultures, religions, ethnicities and first languages at St James’ (a third of our children have English as an additional language) and our wonderful multiculturalism partly defines us as such a strong and connected community. Whichever wind brought you and your children to this town and to our school, it is one that we welcome and celebrate.

Read on for some hard-hitting, essential news items. Please be warned that there are references to parking in this newsletter; reader discretion is advised.

Assemblies for parents

These are held at the church rather than our already overcrowded school halls. Each year group will lead a service at the church and parents from that year group will be invited to attend. The first is our Harvest Service on 17th October at 2pm. It will be led by the Year 2 team, and parents of children in that year group are invited to join us.

Voluntary contribution

The school gratefully accepts voluntary donations which are used to pay for special activities and ‘extras’ for the children; payment can be made on Iris Parentmail +Pay and we suggest £15 per family per year. I will reiterate that this is a voluntary donation, and no parent should feel under any pressure to contribute, although of course this is greatly valued by the school.

Sharing learning

Following the parent consultations on 7th and 9th of November, we have set two sharing learning sessions on 14th and 15th November. Parents are welcome to come into school and see what their children have been getting up to at school! All parents/carers are very welcome. In the morning session, please come straight into your child’s class with your child. In the afternoon session please go to the usual entrance/exit point in the school. You are welcome to come to both sessions of course if you have more than one child or, if you can only make one session, then you can move freely between classes.

Church car park

Please do not park in the church car park to drop off or collect your children. It is a private car park for use by the church or parents of the pre-school, in much the same way that a parking space/drive at your house is not



available for use by the general public. Staff and parents have been unable to park at the pre-school and they have asked those of you who are using the car park to kindly stop.

Attendance – some reminders of our school policies

At St James', we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for children's success and fulfilment. Our school target for attendance is **96.5%** minimum, or no more than **6 days** authorised absence **per school year**. Each school day is split into two sessions; morning and afternoon which means that if they are absent for a morning or afternoon, they have missed one session and if they are absent for a whole day, they have missed two sessions. We know that every family's circumstances are different and are always happy to talk to you about what support we can offer if your child is struggling to attend school. If this would be helpful, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Angie Pierce (Family Liaison Officer), Penny Wardell (SENCO) or Lucy Hayward (Deputy Headteacher).

The school's attendance policy is available on the school website under "About Us" and "Policies".

Late for school

If your child is late for school, please can you walk them to the reception area and sign them in using the Entrysign screen in the foyer. Please enter the reason for lateness (do not put **Late** as a reason). Remember the gates close at 8:55am.

A member of the office staff will open the door for your child so they can walk to their classroom. All infant children will be escorted to their classrooms by a member of staff. Persistent lateness is very disruptive for the child and we will need to investigate if it continues. Please let us know as soon as possible if there is a specific reason for your child to be continually late.

Illness

Please call the school absence line or email the school office and the class teacher if your child is unwell and unable to come to school. Please let us know the following information:

Name of child

Name of class

Reason for absence - eg. high temperature. Please do not say poorly, unwell, 'under the weather' or tired.

You can find more guidance here (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>) if you are unsure about whether your child is well enough to come to school.

Covid - Testing of children is not recommended by the NHS, and please check the use-by dates on any tests if you do choose to use them as many are now out of date. However, if your child has tested positive (via a valid test) for Covid then please keep them at home for 3 days. After this time, if they are feeling well and do not have a high temperature they can return to school.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Doctor's and dental appointments should be made after school hours, if possible. Please email the office and the class teacher in advance of a hospital appointment attaching the appointment letter, if possible.

Religious Observance

All religious days will be authorised absences if they are approved by the religious body to which the parents belong. Please give the office and the class teacher plenty of notice.

Agreed absences in term time

Headteachers are unable to grant leave for holidays, and can only agree absences during term time if there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and is at the headteacher's discretion.



Where leave is granted the headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Headteachers are unable to give retrospective approval. Penalty notices may be issued in certain circumstances.

Dates for the diary

These are on the school website so please take a look (under “parents” and “calendar”).

9 th October	New PTA volunteers welcome meeting – 2pm in the infant hall
17 th October	Year 2 led Harvest Service at the church – Y2 parents welcome (2pm start)
17 th – 20 th October	Year 3 Carrot Wood residential
20 th October	Last day of term
30 th October	INSET day – school closed for children
31 st October	Children return to school
7 th & 9 th November	Parent consultations (3:30pm until 6pm)
14 th & 15 th November	Sharing Learning (afternoon 14 th and morning 15 th)
24 th November	Flu immunisation for all year groups
4 th & 5 th December	Year 4 Christmas play (mornings)
6 th , 7 th and 8 th December	Infant nativities - all infant parents welcome & details to follow
12 th December	Year 3 led Christmas church service (2pm start) - Y3 parents welcome
15 th December	Last day of term
24 th December	Father Christmas visiting tonight
2 nd January	INSET day
3 rd January	First day of term

Have a lovely weekend and, as always, sincere thanks to you all.

Kindest regards,

John Tutt

