



Dates for the diary

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

8 th September	Reception start part time
10 th September	Kent Test (11+) Year 6
11 th September	PTA second hand uniform sale
14 th September	Reception start full time
21 st September	Reception meet the teacher (2:45pm)
22 nd September	Year 1 and 2 meet the teacher (2:45pm)
23 rd September	Year 3 and 4 meet the teacher (2:45pm)
24 th September	Year 5 and 6 meet the teacher (2:45pm)
16 th October	Kent Test results to parents
20 th October	Year 3 Carrotty Wood over next 4 days
20 th October	Year 4 church service 2pm - Year 4 parents welcome to attend
26 th October	Half term week
3 rd & 5 th November	Parent consultations
11 th November (pm)	Sharing learning
12 th November (am)	Sharing learning

Friday 4th September 2026

Welcome back to a new school year. It was lovely to see the children again today looking keen to learn and share their summer adventures, as well as their teachers getting stuck into their new topics.

As you know, this year will be a little different to usual, if you can ever call a year at St James' "usual". I will be at here for two days each week, and Miss Hayward will look after the day to day running of the school – this year will be a joint effort; to be fair, it always has been. On the other three days I will lead Sir Henry Fermor School in Crowborough to support them while they seek to recruit a permanent headteacher.

Over the two schools there are 1036 children – please forgive me if I get some names wrong or go blank. I have challenged myself to learn every single one of them, but being the sort of person who even mixes up the names of their own children, this might take some time. If you hear me call out the wrong name on the gate, let me know.

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. Therefore, please read through some important messages to help make the start of the school year as successful as possible.



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.** 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 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 changed last year 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

Health and safety has become (rightly) a national obsession, with the one massive blind spot (from 99% of the population) being the 130,000 or so people are killed or injured each year due to people driving cars, vans and lorries (a disproportionate number of the victims being children).

Please drive very slowly if you are bringing your car onto the school grounds. Park outside and walk in if collecting from clubs. Any driving on school grounds needs to be done 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, 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 regularly, and we will ask for reimbursement if this happens; we have CCTV covering the school car parks.

I would also like to ask that parents do not drive into the school carpark unless dropping or collecting from the Wrap Around Care. Please keep your speed very low indeed.

As suggested last year, we will need to close the car park completely to parents if we witness any unsafe driving.

Pupil Premium

- Just a reminder that if your child is eligible for 'Targeted' 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,
- 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)
- 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.

PTA Second hand uniform sale

The PTA will be holding a second-hand uniform sale on Friday 11th September. This will be at morning drop off from 8.40am - 9am.

Contact details

If you have recently moved or changed your contact details, please update this on Arbor. Please also ensure any other details are accurate such as medical conditions, doctors' surgery and emergency contacts.

I hope you have a lovely weekend! The weather looks set to improve, so enjoy it while it lasts.

Kindest regards,
John Tutt

