



### Dates for the diary

4 <sup>th</sup> April	Last day of term
7 <sup>th</sup> April	Easter holidays begin
22 <sup>nd</sup> April	First day of term (Tuesday)
12 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 6 SATs week
26 <sup>th</sup> May	Half term week
2 <sup>nd</sup> June	INSET day
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	First day of term 6
4 <sup>th</sup> June	Secondary transition talk for Year 5 parents (6pm)
9 <sup>th</sup> June	Phonics screenings this week for all Year 1 and some Year 2 children
17 <sup>th</sup> June	Sports Day
24 <sup>th</sup> June	New entrant parents' welcome evening
12 <sup>th</sup> July	Summer fair
1 <sup>st</sup> September	INSET day
2 <sup>nd</sup> September	First day of the school year for children in years 1 to 6.

### Friday 4th April 2025

We have come to the end of another term as the school year marches on; I hope you have appreciated the fantastic weather as much as we have at school.

This week Year 5 made us all proud with their amazing Easter Service and the children had a lot of fun at the Easter Egg hunt – huge thanks to the Year 1 parents for giving up their time and for their excellent organisation. Year 6 have been away on their residential visit and could not have asked for better weather. The school has been eerily quiet without them.

In this newsletter I want to start by taking a break from moaning about the selfish minority who block drives, park anti-socially, use someone else's car park and are rude to our neighbours. Instead, I want to thank the rest of you - the overwhelming majority of parents who are the loveliest group of human beings on this planet. April 16<sup>th</sup> will mark the end of my 13<sup>th</sup> Year as head at St James'; I would not still be here if it weren't for the parents, children and staff who make this place more than just a wonderful school, but an incredibly special community.

This newsletter starts with me going on about something for a bit too long before moving onto some actual school news.

### Bringing proper childhoods back

I think I have already talked about choices in a previous newsletter, and my own childhood screentime being limited to 3 turgid channels on a black and white TV with legs.



However, the Tutts also had a record player, on top of which lay "the record". "The record" had been delivered to our house by mistake, with no senders or forwarding address – it had just appeared on the doorstep. The album was "Ray Davies Button Down Brass", where contemporary pop classics were played by brass instruments. For six years, Ray Davies' trumpet was our on-demand entertainment.

The next step for on-demand fun was in 1981 when we bought a video player (VCR). With a VCR you could record the rubbish shows from the TV and then rewatch them again, but in slightly poorer resolution. You could also hire the latest movies...unless, like us, you had bought an obscure type of video recorder known as a Betamax; at the Video Inn (Pembury) there was a choice of hundreds for VHS, the main system, and the one that all my friends had. If you asked the guy in the shop for the Betamax options you were ushered behind a curtain to a small sub-room, where 5 or 6 unappealing titles sat, well-spaced out on the shelves.

To many modern children, it is very difficult to talk to them about our own childhoods, as they only focus on what we lacked in comparison – imagine a childhood so deprived that you do not even have a games console! Our children do not have the reference points to be able to appreciate how just much better we had it.

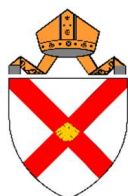
We played outdoors and talked, negotiated and cooperated with friends, face to face, rather than shouting at them through microphones. We pushed real world boundaries, taking risks and completely immersing ourselves in imaginative play. We did real den building with real sticks, trees, and mud. We read books and magazines; we even showed our parents (always in vain) how to programme a video recorder. When it rained, we built things from Lego or made a tent out of a blanket in our bedroom – we did not need to not rely on our parents to entertain us, but days out with them were something very special indeed. Sometimes we spoke to friends "online" via something called a telephone.

This is all quite a contrast to the wonders that modern children have available. For them, everything is accessible, on demand, all of the time. We used to get sent to our room if we misbehaved – it was a punishment; now we have to pry our children out from their wonder caves. We got our dopamine hit by watching a comedy show on TV with our families or riding our bicycles as fast as possible down a hill; now children get that every 8 seconds from a TikTok video or a video game designed to make them addicts. Social media notifications appear at least every 30 seconds, sometimes more frequently. At some point, children stopped going outside to play and adults stopped allowing them; as a coincidence, gadgets started appearing at exactly the same time to stop the children even asking.

As the father of two teenage boys (and one twenty-year-old man), watching Adolescence has been tough. In the final episode, the father and mother ask each other whether they were good parents, and whether having a child, out of sight in their room and glued to a screen every evening was just something all children did these days. I admit that I gave in and followed the rest of the sheep by buying my children a phone for secondary school; I also admit that, once they reached their teens, they had games consoles in their rooms.

Unless we want our children to have poor social skills, poor physical fitness and 8 second attention spans, we need to ask what type of childhood we are enabling through our actions or inactions. How is this preparing children for fulfilling adult lives? We need to ask ourselves whether we are doing a good enough job to give our children a childhood with such happy memories.

Adolescence is about much more than Smartphone addiction and is probably more pertinent to parents of older children, but these habits start young. Screentime is seductive and addictive – tablets are often used as a



childminder. Children in St James' (and nationwide) demonstrate repeatedly that they are too young to manage appropriate communication via social media; if we are honest many adults struggle with this too.

I know that many parents now see Year 6 as the time for a new phone, and some might be tempted even sooner. For the sake of your children, I urge you to think again and leave it just a little longer. Maybe consider a new bicycle instead of the latest console. I hope that the current groundswell keeps moving forwards so that we can make childhood that magical experience that many of us are lucky enough to remember. In fact, why not use your WhatsApp groups to work together to "hold the line", resist that pressure and preserve the magic of childhood.

### **Staffing news**

After 31 years at St James', Angie Pierce has taken the decision to retire, with her last day being the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Angie's contribution to our school has been incalculable, and her wisdom, sense of humour and experience will be sorely missed by us all. Just to name a few of her roles, she is the school office manager, admissions manager, DSL, FLO and my PA. I think we can all agree that 31 years is plenty for anyone, and we cannot thank her enough for all she has done; I would personally like to thank her for being such a connoisseur of my toilet humour. We wish Angie well in her retirement and hope she will stay in touch.

Eleanor Calvert leaves to begin her maternity on 25<sup>th</sup> April and we wish her all the best for her exciting new adventure in parenthood; we are looking forward to meeting her baby soon.

### **Year 1 Superhero Day**

On Monday Year 1 came to school dressed as heroes - there were superheroes, such as Spiderman and Wonder Woman, and everyday heroes, such as doctors, police officers and vets. There were three different missions to make sure the heroes were trained and ready for anything! A very energetic circuit training mission made everyone tired, sweaty and super fit! The heroes also had to work in groups to decide which materials to use to protect an egg so that it could be dropped from a great height. A creative mission involved making superhero masks and badges. The heroes had to persevere and use all their hero resilience to make the eye holes and attach the elastic! In the afternoon they used their learning from the Supertato story to create their own evil vegetable characters and make up stories with them. By the end of the day, everyone was fully trained and ready to go home for a rest!



Mrs Ledger

### **Year 2 trip to Hever Castle**

Year 2 had a fantastic trip to Hever Castle on Wednesday last week. We were so lucky with the weather and had a lovely day. It was fantastic to see the castle that we had been learning about and to see where Anne Boleyn had



lived. Highlights inside the house were seeing her jewellery and some of the swords, as well as seeing the bedroom that King Henry VIII slept in. We also enjoyed sketching the castle and having our lunch outside in the beautiful grounds.



#### **Year 4 to Dunorlan park**

On 1st April, our Year 4 children enjoyed a fantastic trip to Dunorlan Park to complete their geography topic for the term. The children practised using 4-figure grid references to read maps, applying their skills in a real-world setting. The weather was beautiful, and the children had a great time exploring the park while reinforcing their learning!



Mrs Schone

#### **Reflection Garden Taskforce**

This term, we have established a taskforce of Ronnie, Pheobe, Olivia and Leila to work hard on restoring the Reflection Garden. So far, the children have worked independently to tidy the gravel path, removing all the weeds and raking it to make it beautiful. They have also helped with digging over the old flower bed, carefully removing the invasive and smelly weed, Tri-cornered Leek, along with lots of brambles and ivy. Whilst working, we found all sort of treasures including worms, woodlice, millipedes and centipedes as well as decorative pebbles that had been grown over with weeds. We will continue to work on this project next term and if you are gardening over the Easter break and find you have spare plants you have no need for, we will gratefully receive them for our restored flower bed!







Mrs Greenaway

### **Transition to secondary school talk**

If you have a child in Year 5 (or Year 4 if you would like a head start), then at 6pm on 4<sup>th</sup> June I am giving a talk in the KS2 hall about the transition from primary to secondary school. The aim of the evening is to make the choices you have clear, describe the process for making an application and explain the 11+ processes. This will also give Y5 parents some information prior to their meetings with their teachers at the beginning of June. It should be finished by 7pm, but those who have had enough are welcome to leave at any time before that.

### **Sunshine!**

Spring has arrived! After Easter it would be a good idea to give your child a hat to bring to school and apply some suncream to noses etc before they leave the house. Some children have been coming to school in sunglasses. UV light causes damage to the eyes so we can see why parents might give their children a pair to bring to school. We are fine with children wearing sensible sunglasses (after all, many children wear glasses all of the time to support their vision), but we will remove them if any safety concerns arise – you would be surprised how some children can turn even a humble pair of sunglasses into a dangerous object.

### **Sport update**

Well done to our year 5 swimming team who came 7th in the recent swimming gala in the Tunbridge Well's schools on Thursday. We were up against a fierce competition of schools from this area, who also had their year 6 children in their teams and we are very proud of their wonderful result. We managed to achieve 4 silver medals, one bronze and a cup for best divers' performance. An awesome result!

Our year 3 and 4 had their first gymnastics competition on Wednesday at the Angel Centre in Tonbridge. They had less than a month to prepare for the event and they really performed like true stars learning a floor routine, vault, and beam sequence. We now are really excited for next year's event.

Congratulations to the year 3 and 4 Boys football team who came second in their recent football tournament. After a tentative start they managed to find a unified team spirit and produced a great result on the 4th and 5th match. As a result of this they came second and have managed to go through to the finals at the Angel Longmead stadium in Tonbridge in June. A really tremendous result!

Mrs Naismith

### **Harrison school lunch price rise**

Harrison have increased their prices from 1<sup>st</sup> April for children in the juniors (Key Stage 2 – years 3 to 6) **from £2.65 to £2.74.**



## Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

Here are the overall winners of our reading challenges for the last few weeks. Can you spot what's the same and what's different?

### Winners for week ending 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
<b>Kate</b> in Dormouse Class <b>287,627</b> words	<b>Dormouse</b> Class <b>950,527</b> words	<b>Naomi</b> in Dormouse Class <b>21</b> quizzes	<b>Stoat</b> Class <b>63</b> quizzes

### Winners for week ending 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
<b>Kate</b> in Dormouse Class <b>325,172</b> words	<b>Dormouse</b> Class <b>1,001,708</b> words	<b>Naomi</b> in Dormouse Class <b>16</b> quizzes	<b>Stoat</b> Class <b>80</b> quizzes

### Winners for week ending 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025:

Highest Individual Word Count	Highest Class Word Count	Highest Individual Number of Quizzes Passed	Highest Class Quizzes Passed
<b>Kate</b> in Dormouse Class <b>631,643</b> words	<b>Dormouse</b> Class <b>1,931,494</b> words	<b>Kate</b> in Dormouse Class and <b>Eileen</b> in Stoat Class <b>23</b> quizzes	<b>Stoat</b> Class <b>183</b> quizzes

These classes also read more than one million words this week:

- **Stoat** Class – **1,277,414** words
- **Vole** Class – **1,032,865** words

A huge well done to all the children for their reading achievements.

This Easter holiday, please keep reading!

Mrs Simpson

Kindest regards,  
John Tutt

