



### Dates for the diary

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

15 <sup>th</sup> December	Last day of term & class parties
24 <sup>th</sup> December	Father Christmas visiting tonight
2 <sup>nd</sup> January	INSET day
3 <sup>rd</sup> January	First day of term
17 <sup>th</sup> January	School discos all years – booking & volunteer sign up open

### Newsletter – Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December

Dear parents and carers,

At this morning's staff panto to the infant children (starring Mr Jacob of course as Peter Pan) I was hit in the face with a whipped cream pie. The cream seems to have got into every part of my face and under my fingernails, and despite increasingly desperate attempts to remove it, the warmth of my skin seems to have already fermented the remaining traces; the world now smells very slightly of cheddar cheese. Short of drastic action (something like a wire brush and Dettol) I'll reek of gorgonzola by 7pm this evening. What better way to begin the final newsletter of the year and what better way to sum up 2023.

Way, way back in the past, when life was simpler, when structural engineering guidance was only a concern to those who structurally engineered stuff and water supplies were plentiful – January 2023 – the New Year began deceptively calmly.

The first few months of the year were themed by shifting piles of gravel in the school car park and national strikes, along with a bizarre and short-lived widespread shortage of fruit and vegetables. Then, in April, we had the “Happy Police” (Ofsted) spreading joy at Rusthall and the less said about June the better. For our newer parents it can be summed up as water shortages, RAAC, parking, coaches and a deer.

I don't know if this is a common experience, but on rare occasions I have moments of clarity, where for a few seconds I almost step outside myself and the reality of my entire life as well as the current situation and its wider significance suddenly comes sharply into focus. In 2023 that moment came during a June lunchtime as I walked out onto the school playground, in discussion with Stuart (our site manager) about relocating Rabbit class, and saw a fully grown deer with intimidating antlers bounding across the playground. After 2023 I do not think there is much left that we can be phased by.

We have focussed a lot on the negative so far in this newsletter, as well as lingering odours, the annoying and the weird, so let's look at some of the positive news for the year.

We have a brand-new building in the middle of the school as well as a new IT suite. Our school library is being refurbished. Our school results were strong again for progress and attainment at the end of Year 6. Our children had amazing learning experiences in every year group and our staff team showed me again how talented and dedicated they are to the children. Our parent community remains as strong and connected as ever. We have



thrived in spite of adversity. St James' is in a good place for 2024, and hopefully 2024 will be in an equally good place for us all. I am prouder to be a small part of all of this than I have ever been, and I am truly grateful to every single person that makes St James' the amazing school that it is.

### **Staff update**

I just wanted to say another goodbye and massive "thank you" to Shane Jacob who is leaving us this week after 15 years at St James'. Andrea Brustar is going to take his place in Maple Class as their TA. I also wanted to wish Laura Willis all the best as she begins her maternity leave. We will miss them both!

Here is a photo of Mr Jacob in his last assembly doing the dressing up challenge:



### **Free junior lunches for years 3 to 6**

I just wanted to pass on all of our sincere thanks to our lovely donor who has paid for the junior children's lunches this month. I have had many kind words, thank yous and good wishes from parents to pass on, so what better way to do that than in the school newsletter.

### **Year 5 and 6 Choir**

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December Year 5 and 6 choir members walked to Birkin Lodge Care Home to sing some carols to the residents. The children all sang beautifully and I was super proud of them all. A 100-year-old resident, who had not really been out of her room for the past 5 years, came out of her room especially to see the children sing and was so moved by the performance that she cried the whole way through. I may have shed a few tears myself.



Mrs Holland

### **Year 3 visit to the Amelia Scott**

Each Year 3 class had an enjoyable session at the Amelia Centre last week. We were delighted at how much information the children remembered. The lady who spoke to the children was excellent and the children really enjoyed themselves - they hadn't realised how heavy bronze was or how thick and soft a deer skin was! Thank



you to all the parents who gave up their morning to accompany the children (and who helped out with hearing readers before we left). A truly Fantastic Finish to our topic.

Mrs Sparks

### **PE uniform news**

Black shadow stripe shorts are now available to purchase from Price & Buckland for the KS1 PE shorts. There are no green shorts in stock so we are moving over to black for the whole school. However, there is no need to change if people still have green shorts, and these will still be an accepted part of the school PE kit until they all wear out.

### **Ready, Set, Read! Winter Mini Challenge**

Would your child like to join the Reading Agency and Kent Libraries Winter Reading Mini Challenge? Following the success of the Summer Reading Challenge, the Ready, Set, Read! theme continues in this Winter's free online reading challenge, encouraging all children to keep up their amazing reading habits over the winter holidays.

It's easy for your child to join in! Head to [wintermini.org.uk](http://wintermini.org.uk) to sign them up now! There they will find fun activities to do and be able to earn rewards for reading.

Simply encourage your child to read three books or more of their choice up to 19 February 2024 to unlock a limited-edition online badge and a special Winter Mini Challenge certificate to print out and keep.

Wishing all the children lots of fun reading!

Ms Simpson

Have a fantastic Christmas.

Kindest regards,

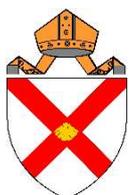
John Tutt

### **PTA news**

Tickets to Exciting Science and Legoland are available to book for the New Year.

We would like to express our huge thanks to Rebecca Milburn for organising and running the Santa Run that raised over £900 with two match funders pending: Gayle Joyce with £170 and Matthew Brown with £155, which will then total £1230.

Thanks also to Jane Woolcott who ran the raffle which raised just short of £1000, with 1101 tickets sold.



And lastly, a huge thank you to Suzy Morrow, who has put in a great deal of work organising everything behind the scenes—from compiling present room lists, with over 1100 presents on, to sorting gifts for each room and all the in-between.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

