



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

16 <sup>th</sup> May	PTA JamesFest
19 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 2 church service 2pm – all Y2 parents' welcome
20 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 3 trip to Lullingstone
25 <sup>th</sup> May	Half term
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	Sports Day (change of date)
4 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 4 trip to Wakehurst Place
8 <sup>th</sup> June	Phonics & tables checks this week
9 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 5 parent consultations
10 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 6 trip to Birling Gap
17 <sup>th</sup> June	New entrant meeting 6:30pm
30 <sup>th</sup> June & 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Parent consultations for all year groups except Y5
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Transition/taster day and Reception stay and play for new entrants
4 <sup>th</sup> July	PTA summer fair
8 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 6 play performances to parents
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Reception singing performance to parents (2:45pm) - note change of time
14 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 6 Leavers' service (2pm)
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Last day of term

### Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Dear parents and carers,

Sports Day conjures up mixed memories for many of us. During a sunny day in June 1980, I celebrated my greatest life achievement (1<sup>st</sup> place in the bunny hop skip), while during an unbearably hot day in June 1987 I suffered my greatest defeat (last place out the whole year group in the 800m race). On Sports Day we celebrate triumph and disaster in equal measure – can anything be more noble than the child who slips and falls, picks themselves up, wipes away a tear then staggers on to cross the finish line?

The experience of Sports Day as headteacher has equally mixed memories, and 2015 stands out more than most. At 6am that morning, the forecast looked bleak with a high chance of heavy rain, and it got worse at 8am, with ever darkening skies. At half past 8 I took the decision to postpone Sports Day which provoked an immediate and extreme reaction. Unknown to me, large numbers of family, friends and relations had booked time off work, or travelled many miles (some from overseas), to see the events and would now be bitterly disappointed. A group of parents felt the need to make their feelings known to me in a very vocal way. Below is an image from that day, caught on the school's CCTV.





Archive CCTV footage of parents storming the school gates, following Sports Day postponement, June 2015

Returning to my office, still reeling from this, the storm clouds soon parted and glorious sunshine bathed the school; the day could not have been more perfect for an afternoon of sport. What made it worse was when I rescheduled a week or two later, backed by an amazing weather forecast, the events were interrupted by a torrential cloudburst which put a stop to the whole thing.

This is a long-winded way of explaining that the decision to postpone until after half term is in the hope that the chance of rain is lower, that the temperature is a little less chilly and that we can all enjoy a dry day of sport and picnic food. I realise that parents love to see Sports Day (regretfully, I have never seen one as a parent), but the day is about the children, and they will have much more fun if they can run, jump and throw dry bean bags into hoops safely and are not slipping, shivering or sitting on wet grass.

Food options for Monday revert to the standard menu, with the revised Sports Day menu now moving to 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

### **Year 1 - Journey to Africa topic**



As part of their "Journey to Africa" topic, Year 1 have learned about the epic migration of the amazing swifts. They travel back to the UK each spring to nest and return to Africa in August. Did you know they have been around since the time of dinosaurs and do not stop flying for up to four years until they make their first nest? Mr Fleming has switched on the St James' swift call recording to try to tempt some of this year's swifts to make a nest in one of the nesting boxes up on the chimney of the KS2 building. Once swifts make a nest, they keep returning to the same one each year, so it would be wonderful to have some resident St James' swifts.

In the meantime, we have been super excited this week to see that there are currently three eggs and two swifts looking after them in the nesting box at the Oxford Museum Tower swift project. We will be checking in on them regularly to see when the swift chicks hatch out and fledge from their nest. If you would like to watch along too, the address is [Swifts in the tower | Oxford University Museum of Natural History](#)



### **Air quality around St James'**

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have been monitoring the air quality outside and around the school, Nitrogen Dioxide levels in particular which are caused by cars, vans and lorries. This is something that (courtesy of funding from Amplifi) we hope to monitor over the full school year. Areas monitored are outside the school on Sandrock Road, the school entrance and inside the school grounds.

The WHO recommended limit for an annual average for NO<sub>2</sub> is 10µg/m<sup>3</sup> of NO<sub>2</sub>, while the UK legal limit is 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Obviously, the monitoring was just for one month (April), but over that month, the average level on the paths/roads near the school was between 21 and 23µg/m<sup>3</sup> – or more than double the WHO recommended maximum, but below the UK legal limit. Further inside the school the levels varied from 15.62 by the school sign to 11.32µg/m<sup>3</sup> by the school main doors, again all over the WHO recommended limit.

Thankfully, the reading inside the school grounds was lower, at 8.94µg/m<sup>3</sup>

We will continue to monitor air quality levels and keep you updated.

### **Year 6 SATs**

I am very relieved to report that Year 6 have completed their SATs – the week went by very calmly and the children took it in their stride. Needless to say, we are all very proud of them.

### **Smartphone Free Childhood Update, the Government Consultation on Social Media curbs for children and their Guidance for under 5's on screen use**

Following another meeting for parents at the school last month, our movement continues to grow and reflects the national conversation about the harms of smartphones for children, as part of a wider consideration of the impact of a screen-based childhood, displacing the play-based childhood that we all had. We now have 35% of our school signed up to the Parent Pact - a great way of expressing your commitment to helping your child to navigate a key part of their childhood into adolescence without the malign influence of profit-driven algorithms shaping their young minds. <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/sign-the-parent-pact>

The slides from the talk are included with this newsletter, and more information can be found on the school website about why St James has been one of the leaders in considering the importance of this issue in our town - <https://st-james.kent.sch.uk/parents/st-james-is-a-smartphone-free-school>

The UK government are currently working out how they will commit to their pledge to bring in some form of age restrictions to harmful social media, and whatever new technological product comes next to try to mine our children's minds for profit (spoiler: its AI chatbots, your child's new "BFF"). There are only 12 days left to have your say - and there have been complaints about it being difficult to complete. So, if you are pushed for time but want your voice to be counted, the Raise the Age Campaign have produced a simple way to respond in 60 seconds: <https://raisetheage.eaction.org.uk/consultation>

In the meantime, the government have produced some great guidance for parents of under 5's about screen time with input from health professionals, as we now understand how much early experience with screens can affect children's development. You can find it here: <https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/screen-time-under-5s/>

If you have any questions or concerns, or to find out more information, please come and find our stall at the summer fair.

Dr. Erin Carroll, Clinical Psychologist and St James' Mum



## Key Stage 2 Accelerated Reader Challenges

We have celebrated with the following as winners of the reading challenges:

➤ **Winners for week ending 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
<b>Yudai</b> in Kestrel Class <b>512,049</b> words	<b>Kestrel Class</b> <b>1,167,063</b> words	<b>Yudai</b> in Kestrel Class <b>11</b> quizzes	<b>Chaffinch Class</b> <b>55</b> quizzes

- **Nightingale** and **Owl** also read more than one million words this week.

➤ **Winners for this week (15<sup>th</sup> May 2026):**

Individual Highest Word Count	Class Highest Word Count	Individual Most Quizzes Passed	Class Most Quizzes Passed
<b>Naomi</b> in Nightingale Class <b>259,591</b> words	<b>Nightingale Class</b> <b>1,267,256</b> words	<b>Charlotte</b> in Badger Class <b>23</b> quizzes	<b>Badger Class</b> <b>100</b> quizzes

Many congratulations to our winners. Every child's reading and quizzing really does make a difference so please keep encouraging lots of reading at home! Thank you.

Mrs Simpson

Have a great weekend and maybe see you tomorrow at JamesFest.

John Tutt  
Head Teacher

