



St James the Great Newsletter

@STJGreat

7th September 2018

Welcome back! I hope that you all had a restful holiday. The children certainly seem ready to be back, and several parents look like they were ready for them to be back at school too!

The staff worked incredibly hard on the two INSET days and some very useful discussions took place alongside this. Part of this related to our school ethos, which we felt needed to be further developed and a greater understanding of what we stood for as a school community and what we wanted for the children in our care and our expectations of staff, children and parents.

We celebrated Mass today and I would like to thank Father Deo, Father Len and Deacon Ged for coming in today – it was a lovely occasion. The Year 6 children received their new ties with a special blessing reminding them of their roles and responsibilities this year and asking God to help and guide them.

Please can I remind parents that school starts at 9am. The new side gate will close at 9am and then children need to go into school via the office. I would also like to remind parents that we have a uniform policy which I would ask that families adhere to – this includes some guidance on hairstyles. Whilst I have relaxed some of the rules, I request that no designs are to be cut into boys' hair and that any shaved sides are blended into the main cut, not stepped. Girls should have their hair tied back so that they are able to work without it falling into their face and will also help with not providing easy access for headlice! (And yes, boys get headlice too.)

You will have no doubt noticed our new fencing – indeed it's impossible to miss it. Please bear with us whilst we try to sort out the automation. This is the final bit of the project which I have been wanting completed since I started at St James the Great. It is my hope that this will provide an even safer environment for the children and staff. I have heard parents asking about how we can afford this when I continue to complain about school funding. The answer is very simple. I apply every year for something called a Condition Improvement Fund – this is from central government and we applied for this under safeguarding, thankfully, we won the bid. We did not get the grant I applied for to improve the doors and windows in the junior block unfortunately. I will keep trying! As for school funding – it remains an issue. The Department for Education sent out guidance yesterday effectively telling head teachers to stop using the school as a platform for political views.

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-warns-school-staff-over-expression-of-political-views/> Please be assured that when explaining the challenges faced by schools I am not expressing political views, but keeping the community informed and I would do this regardless of the political party in power at the time. Interestingly, the Education Select Committee yesterday criticised OFTSED for not highlighting the funding issues faced by schools.

Play Equipment – Thank you to the Friend's Association for the wonderful exercise equipment. It is designed specifically for junior children, not infants. Please be aware that if your children are playing on the equipment after school, they are your responsibility.

Mr Parry resigned with immediate effect before the end of term. We will be advertising for a new caretaker next week. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to Mr Finnegan for stepping in at short notice over the holidays with Miss Falconer to cover the site management responsibilities. They both worked incredibly hard and the school looks in great shape for the return of staff and pupil.

Mrs D'Aranjo resigned during the holidays and we wish her well as she spends her time looking after her grandchildren.

Welcome to our new staff Miss Johnson in Y5 and Mr Humphreys our new School Business Manager. They have settled in very quickly and are already establishing themselves within the school community.

We will shortly be advertising for an office assistant responsible for admissions and for updating the school website amongst other duties. Keep an eye out for this next week on the school website.

Football on Saturdays will start again next week. It will be free until half term and as ever, volunteers are welcome – there are opportunities to study for FA coaching badges if you are committed to the club.

Irish Dancing classes resumes this Saturday and next Tuesday in the Performing Arts Centre. All boys and Girls are welcome. (Adult classes are also available) Contact Bridie Willis.

Please keep last years' Year 6 children in your prayers. They have just started secondary school and for some it will be rather daunting with many changes. I have seen some over the past few days and all have had smiling faces to go with their oversized blazers and extremely heavy bags! I will be seeing more at various Y7 Masses in the evenings of next week so will continue to keep an eye on them!

Parent meetings next week for meeting the teachers and information.

Y6 Thursday 13th 5pm

Y5 Wednesday 12th 3pm

Y4 Wednesday 12th at 3pm

Y3 Tuesday 11th 2.45pm

Y2 Tuesday 11th 3.00pm

Y1 Thursday 13th 2.45pm

27th Soundsteps Parent Demo

28th September Macmillan Coffee Morning

October 15-19th Year 6 residential trip

20th October Half Term break.

Further dates will follow next week

Our key thought for this term comes from an Australian army officer,

“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.”

Interestingly this chimes with something Father Deo said with the teachers in mind today at Mass, we have to keep in mind that part of our mission as a Catholic school is to develop our children in such a way that they become the best versions of themselves in a world which increasingly day and night wants them to be like everybody else. Your children are all unique and wonderful in their own way and that is how it should be and how we want it to remain.

Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to an even more successful year ahead.

C. Andrew

Head teacher