



Governor Newsletter

December 2024

Message from the Chair of Governors

Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, and Students,

As we approach the festive season, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a fantastic and eventful first term here at St. James.

This term has been filled with hard work, learning, and growth. Highlights include the introduction of our new assessment system, improvements in our targeted attendance levels, and exciting developments in our curriculum - particularly in Maths and Art. These efforts, led by Mrs. Murphy and her team, are already making a significant impact on our school community.

We have also embraced the joy of the season with wonderful seasonal festivities, including performances, crafts, and celebrations that have truly brought the spirit of the holidays to life. A special mention goes to the newly formed PTA, led by Becky and Sam Gibbins, for their incredible support and enthusiasm. The efforts of the PTA have already begun to enrich our community, and we look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in the coming year.

This term, we saw the completion and use of the new reception canopies, which are already providing a brighter, more welcoming environment for our youngest learners. It is a testament to the school's commitment to improving our facilities for the benefit of every student...and there will be more developments in the pipeline for the rest of the year, so do keep a look out.

On behalf of the governing body, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mrs. Murphy and her fabulous team for their unwavering dedication. Their continuing efforts ensure that St. James continues to thrive as a nurturing and inspiring place for our children.

Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful festive season, and a prosperous New Year.
Warm Regards,

Greg Pearce
Chair of Governors

In this newsletter you can expect:

What we do as Governors

How our board is organised

What we have done this term

Safeguarding



What the Governors do at St James

We thought we would take this opportunity to remind parents of the role of Governors. We have three primary roles:

- We provide a strategic view, setting the general direction of the School and how it should best develop. We carry this out by reviewing and agreeing priorities, targets, and policies. We then monitor the implementation of those.
- We act as a critical friend. We work closely with Mrs Murphy and the Senior Leadership team to understand the challenges faced in managing a school, and we question and challenge in a positive manner to ensure the best possible outcomes for the pupils.
- We ensure accountability – as the responsible body for the school, we are accountable to our pupils, parents and carers for the decisions we make as a Governing Body, and for the academic and personal developmental progress our pupils make. Additionally, part of our job is to hold the school to account on behalf of the various stakeholder groups (the parent community, staff, Local Authority and the Diocese) of whom we are representative members.

It is important to remember that we are not involved in the day-to-day operations of St James, which are run by Mrs Murphy, Mrs Cowden and the School staff.

For more details about who we all are, our profiles can be found on the Governor pages of the School website [here](#).

How our board is organised at St James

We meet as a full Governing Board at least twice a term in person. It is at these meetings that we receive updates from Mrs Murphy and her team as to the key events in the School, updates from the Governor committees (see below) and discuss matters that impact the school as a whole.

In addition, we have three sub-committees that focus on particular areas and typically meet 1-2 times a term:

- Finance and Accommodation: chaired by Greg Pearce, this committee is responsible for monitoring expenditure and income and links the priorities in the School Improvement Plan to the budget. The Committee also plans ahead (preferably for three years) by reviewing the priorities in the School Improvement Plan and factors such as pupil projections, condition of the school and the realistic lifespan of equipment/resources to determine potential pressures on the budget.
- Personnel and Equality Committee: Chaired by Ellie Field, this committee oversees the school's staffing, including recruitment, pay, appraisals, staff wellbeing, and professional development. It also promotes Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) among staff, students, and parents/carers, ensuring a supportive and inclusive school environment
- Learning and Welfare: chaired by Andrew Short this committee considers matters relating to curriculum, academic performance, SEND, Pupil Premium, extra-curricular activities, uniform, length of school day, attendance of pupils and safeguarding.

We also have a number of individual specialist governor roles.

A list of those, together with the composition of the committees, can be found [here](#).

What we have done this term: Our Committee updates

Learning and Welfare

We have continued to monitor the curriculum being deployed at St James and ensure it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. We have had a particular focus on pupil attendance in the last 12 months as the overall school attendance figure in the last year has been below our school target. We have been pleased to see that number climbing back up due to the measures that we and the SLT have implemented and thank you, the parents and carers, for your support in this. In addition, at our last meeting in December, we reviewed the school uniform policy and made a small number of tweaks to ensure that the uniform is not gender specific.

Finance

We continue our monitoring of expenditure against the school's plan to ensure the best outcome for our children. This term, and the forthcoming, will see continued investment in the school's facilities, including the upgrading of outdoor spaces for Early Years (EYFS), the installation in January of a new canopy to enhance the breakfast and afterschool clubs offering. Our finite resources are continually being monitored to ensure they are being focussed on resources to support the best outcomes in learning and development for our students.

Personnel

We continue to prioritise creating a supportive and sustainable working environment, fostering staff development and wellbeing. We are dedicated to the professional growth of all staff and committed to ensuring our students achieve the best possible outcomes. New staff members have settled in well, and we are already seeing their positive contributions to the school. We have monitored high-quality CPD opportunities. Since September, robust training aligned with the School Development Plan has equipped staff with skills to further enhance teaching and learning. Notable training includes White Rose Maths Intervention, an increase in qualified First Aiders, and whole school EDI training. We continue to monitor and evaluate our efforts to promote EDI, and ensure that all members of our school community feel valued and supported. As part of an EDI review, the new website and marketing efforts have enhanced recruitment and admissions arrangements.



Safeguarding

A crucial part of our role as Governors is to oversee and monitor the safeguarding procedures and promote a strong safeguarding culture at St James. The recent and tragic event at another local school shows how important a role safeguarding needs to play. As Governors we oversee the School's compliance with all relevant legislation, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) which all staff, governors and volunteers must read and adhere to. KCSIE sets out the key measures that a school must implement – for example, ensuring that all people working with children, whether staff members or parental volunteers, must have a valid DBS certificate, and implementing and publishing a robust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Whilst we are not involved in handling individual issues, we support and challenge the leaders at St James to maintain this strong culture. This is carried out particularly by the governor responsible for safeguarding, Andrew Short. Andrew meets twice a term with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Cowden, to discuss matters relating to safeguarding, conduct periodical visits around the School, and monitor and observe the deployment of the PSHE curriculum.

As for the wider Board, safeguarding is a standing agenda item at every single Governing Board meeting where the Board is kept up to date with the relevant information.

To remind you all, the key personnel are:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Mrs Cowden
- Deputy DSLs: Mrs Murphy and Mrs Wales
- Safeguarding Governor: Andrew Short

Should you have any safeguarding concerns, please use the email address:

DSL@stjames-veybridge.surrey.sch.uk



Thank you for reading!