



St James' Church of England Junior School

Wellington Row, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7HG

Tel. 01946 695311

Email: admin@stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk

Website: stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Beattie

"With exploring minds, and faith; we grow and learn together."

Tuesday 6th September 2022

Dear Parents/Students,

Welcome back to the start of our 2022/23 school year. I hope that you have all managed to have some relaxation and fun over the summer break and the children are looking forward to starting a new school year with us.

We are busy preparing for the return of students on Wednesday in what promises to be a further step towards the way we operated as a school prior to the Covid outbreak. With this in mind, I thought it best to use my first letter of the year to outline our approach for 2022/23:

Changes to the timing of the school day - In June, the government announced rulings around the timings of the primary school day. To fall in line with this new guidance, our school day will now run from 8:45am – 3:20pm, which is an extension of 10 minutes per day and still avoids too much of a clash with St James Infant School, who will still end their school day at 3:15pm. It is important that children arrive promptly as learning begins at 8:45am and poor punctuality means that children are missing out on key learning. Classes will exit from designated areas of the building and there will be plenty of staff and signs on hand to help you find your way around in the initial days/weeks.

Uniform – Again, over the summer, the government gave indication of new rulings that would begin in September 2022, aimed at making the cost of uniform more affordable. Many of the suggestions have always been part of our school approach in making uniform affordable, long-lasting and ensuring that clothing is comfortable and not restrictive to being active.

We have always asked for a minimum of logos that are only essential for hoodies/jumpers and on our school PE kit. We promote Haig Embroidery as the cheapest and most local way to purchase hoodies/jumpers. We are supportive of families purchasing plain polo shirts and plain trousers/skirts without the school logo from supermarkets and aim to ensure that brands and logos are not seen on any footwear. Black shoes or black trainer shoes with no coloured logos are what is permitted. Again, we do not require the children to bring bags/book bags/stationary sets using St James' logo. We will keep to this approach again this year.



Second hand uniform – This year, we will be putting out a stall every Friday with boxes of second-hand uniform. Parents can take what they need and leave a suitable donation in an honesty box. To help stock this, if any families have any outgrown uniform including hoodies, trousers, skirts, polo shirts and PE kit that they would like to donate, we would be grateful in receiving this to build the stock on our second-hand uniform stall. We will endeavour to get the stall out every Friday (weather permitting) alongside any lost property we collect from the week.

School Attendance - The school has worked tirelessly since reopening to ensure that all children are supported in making up for lost time caused by school closure during the Covid pandemic. As a result of this hard work, we were really proud to receive historically high SATs results this year in Year 6 that sit significantly above the National Average for Year 6 leavers. In addition, children across Years 3 to 5 have been well supported by combinations of quality first teaching, emotional support/therapy, curriculum support groups in Maths and English and remote tuition with online partners. As a result, these year groups have made excellent progress upon school return which was highlighted in their excellent end of year reports.

However, despite these efforts our school attendance dropped significantly last year.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
School Attendance	95.9%	96.6%	96.6%	96.5%	97.7%	97.0%	94.8%

The table above shows how our attendance dropped significantly last year. Importantly, the figure above 94.8% **does not include Covid absence**. The number of children having an attendance of below 90% and falling into a category classified as ‘Persistent Absentee’ increased from 3 children to 25 children (approx. 1 in 7 students). Closer scrutiny of this group of persistent absentees, shows that they make less progress, struggle more with confidence in lessons and are less likely to achieve the expectant standards in reading, writing and maths.

This worrying pattern is of real concern to myself, my staff, governors and indeed representatives from the local authority who will be meeting with me regularly to closely monitor the situation. As a school we will be prioritising ways to ensure attendance improves through a combination of student rewards and active engagement with families whose children’s attendance falls below 90% and puts them in this persistent absentee category.

Homework - We are hugely appreciative of the role parents had to take during school closure. Our successful return to children coming back to the classroom and further validation from Ofsted is in partly down to the commitment of parents during this difficult time. We continue to be grateful of this. Thank you. However, another unfortunate consequence of the Covid impact is that we saw a decrease in the number of children (particularly in our new Year 3 students) engaging with weekly homework. This has had a negative impact on learning for these students. Again, school will prioritise this for this academic year with a new introduction of a homework platform called Atom Prime to supplement our weekly homework expectations. In the coming days, teachers will offer a welcome back letter to all parents that outlines the days and expectations of weekly homework. I would again like to reinforce the importance of



completing homework as a way of supporting children's progress in important areas such as reading, spelling and timestables.

Communications – I would encourage parents to check that they are receiving the weekly newsletter via email. It may be that your contact information needs updating and if so please come into the school office. In the meantime, you can access current and historic newsletters on the school website

www.stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk

As well as newsletters, you can access policies, Ofsted reports, particular class information on the dedicated class page and ongoing galleries of the children at work.

In addition to this, school will use email and text to send out letters and urgent messages, so please make sure you inform us of any changes to your email or contact information.

School Payments – For school payments, we use SchoolMoney. For those parents from St James Infants you will be very familiar with the layout, for others I can reassure you that it is very user friendly and much more accessible than previous cash payments. All parents will receive an invitation email asking them to log on, on Wednesday 7th Sep. From this point, you will be able to access payments for school dinners, clubs, trips and music tuition.

When reflecting on last year, there was so much to celebrate and be proud of when considering that we achieved under very difficult circumstances. Since September 2021, the school remained open throughout all Covid spikes. As mentioned before; the significant majority of our students continue to reach their potential with excellent test results and we have seen a return to a whole package of school enrichment that has helped inspire and enthuse our children once again. Whether the children have been perfecting their drama and singing skills on stage in our summer production, paddle boarding on the harbour, swinging out of trees on our residential or attending one of our after-school clubs, it is clear to see that they are relishing the opportunities that they have unfairly been starved of over the past 24 months. As the new academic year begins, we now look with great optimism to be able to offer more of the same and get back to business as usual.

If you have any questions on any of the above information, or any other matters regarding school, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

As always, may I offer thanks from myself and staff for your continued support.

Best Regards



Mr A Beattie
Head Teacher

