



ST JAMES'

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

3rd March 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Spring Term Week 8 Headteacher Update

Today is Secondary School Offer Day where children in primary schools find out whether or not they have secured a place at their chosen high school. This year was yet again the most competitive year in the history of St James' with 664 applications for 165 places. This, again, is a significant increase on the increase we saw last year. This clearly demonstrates how our exceptional school is viewed by the local community. The number of children applying to St James' has more than doubled since 2019 and hence it is so competitive for places at our great school. We are delighted to be welcoming our September 2025 Year 7 cohort to the St James' family and we are already working closely with primaries to ensure that their transition is smooth and seamless.

We are moving our school's social media presence from X (formerly Twitter) to BlueSky. This change will allow us to continue sharing important updates, celebrating children's achievements, and engaging with our school community in a safe and user-friendly environment. Our new BlueSky handle is [@stjamesheadle.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/stjamesheadle.bsky.social), and we encourage all parents and carers to follow us to stay informed about school events, news, and successes.

On Wednesday last week, children took part in a language outreach programme at Cheadle Hulme High School, organised in conjunction with the British Council and GCHQ. The first session focused on the transformative effects languages can have, from opportunities to travel the world, to broadening horizons and building strong personal skills that can be taken forward into any corner of life. The second session, led by GCHQ, looked at real-world applications of languages in the intelligence community, with children practising decoding messages, and using their cultural knowledge to create a report on a fictional drug smuggling activity. The children were enthusiastic and engaged well in the event, representing the school admirably and gaining a fantastic understanding of the amazing impact that languages can have on their career and future lives.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of Lent. Morning Prayer will be led by the RE Faculty, with ashes available for those who wish to receive them. During Form Time, there will be a Celebration of the Word focused on the Ash Wednesday theme, where prefects will distribute ashes to children in each form. Children will take an active role in leading the celebration, with teachers facilitating, and Form Time will be extended by ten minutes to allow for reverence and reflection. At lunchtime, Fr Samuel will celebrate Mass in the Chapel, during which ashes will also be distributed.

As a Diocesan school we are asked to support Caritas in their St Joseph's Penny Box Appeal this Lent. Caritas do fantastic work with schools, health and social care agencies and the voluntary sector. The Community Support Service supports children and families to overcome adversity and disadvantage they face, particularly where these are affecting their emotional well-being, mental and physical health. Caritas work holistically, helping families to overcome a wide range of daily challenges and they do this through one-to-one and group work or working jointly with other appropriate agencies. Whether it be counselling, listening ear, bereavement, or community support groups, the support offered empowers families to effect lasting change and enjoy a happier family life. Caritas relies on funding, and schools remain one of their most important sources of income, especially in their annual St Joseph's Penny Box Appeal, enabling them to continue their work helping those in need. We will be organising an Easter fundraiser here in school and would be grateful for any donations of chocolate (chocolate bars, Easter eggs, boxes of chocolate) for a raffle we will organise. These





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donations can be handed in to your child's Form Tutor. If you wish to make a monetary donation, you may do so via ParentPay. As always, we are grateful for any support you can offer.

We have an exciting week ahead with a range of activities planned to celebrate and promote World Book Day on Thursday 6th March. There will be a 'Favourite Books Treasure Hunt' where children scour the school for clues to work out which books are the favourites of different members of staff. We will 'Drop Everything and Read' during period 4, and the children will hear a short story that has been divided into five parts so they get to hear the next instalment in each lesson of the school day. There will be a wide range of activities taking place in the library: book quizzes, extract and title match ups, bookmark decorating, to name just a few. As in previous years, we will also have members of staff embracing the theme of fairy tales through costume and fancy dress - a brilliant opportunity to engage the children in discussion about books and reading! With reading for enjoyment firmly placed as a priority at St James', this is a fantastic event to raise the profile of reading and engage all children with a range of texts and activities.

I hope you have a fantastic week, if you need any support, please don't hesitate to get in touch at headteacherpa@stjamesheadle.co.uk.

Yours faithfully

Mr A Pontifex
Headteacher

