



ST JAMES'

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

15th December 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Autumn Term Week 15 Headteacher Update

Last week, our school proudly received the **SEND Inclusion Award** from Optimus Education, a significant achievement that reflects the unwavering commitment of our staff to ensuring every child is supported, understood, and able to thrive. You may have noticed our updated letterhead, which now carries this prestigious accreditation and symbolises the hard work that has taken place across the school. This recognition celebrates the countless hours devoted to early identification, inclusive teaching, and strong leadership rooted in the belief that every child matters. At St James', all children, regardless of their starting points, needs, or backgrounds, are truly valued members of our family. This award stands as a powerful endorsement of our inclusive culture and the profound impact it has on the lives and outcomes of our young people.

As we approach the end of term, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your continued support of St James' throughout this first term. It has certainly been a lengthy one, yet it seems to have passed remarkably quickly. Later this week, our Autumn Term newsletter will be shared, and I encourage you to take a moment to read it, particularly the sections relevant to your child's year group, as it truly reflects the strength of our school community and the commitment of our children and staff.

We also say goodbye to two valued colleagues. Mrs Grainger, who first joined St James' in 1996 before returning to us around 2006, has been an integral part of our community for many years. Her passion for drama has inspired countless children, and the outstanding results her children have achieved are a testament to her talent, dedication, and high expectations. Her school productions have been a highlight of the St James' calendar, giving hundreds of children the chance to shine, grow in confidence, and discover new talents. We are deeply grateful for all she has given to St James' and wish her every success and happiness in her new role.

We also bid farewell to Mr Dowisha, who returns to Australia after being with us for just over 12 months. We thank him for his contribution to our school and wish him well as he begins his next chapter.

A reminder that school will finish at 12:15 pm on Friday 19th December, and buses have been arranged accordingly. Tomorrow, we will come together for our whole-school Mass led by Fr Samuel, a cherished opportunity to conclude the term by living out our core values of family, faith, and excellence.

Yesterday, we marked the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, a moment in the Church's year that invites us to pause and rejoice as we draw closer to the celebration of Christ's birth. The pink candle on the Advent wreath symbolises this spirit of joy, something that feels especially meaningful within our St James' family. Amid the busyness of the season, it is a gentle reminder to notice the joy around us: in the achievements of our children, the dedication of our staff, and the everyday acts of kindness that strengthen our community. As we continue through Advent, may we be inspired to nurture a school family rooted in faith, love, and service.

Last week, the Local Authority informed us that an error had been made in their published term dates for the 2026–2027 academic year, as they had miscalculated the required number of days in school. As a result, we





ST JAMES'

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

have had to adjust our calendar to ensure our children receive the correct number of learning days. Unfortunately, this has had a knock-on effect on our scheduled INSET days. Updated INSET dates, including necessary amendments to July 2027, have now been published on our school website. Thank you for your understanding as we make these changes to remain fully compliant and maintain the high-quality education our children deserve.

I hope you have a fantastic Holy Christmas and a very happy New Year when it comes. Our staff will also be taking a well-deserved break over Christmas period, spending time with their families, and as such will be unavailable via email, thank you in advance for not contacting them. A reminder school re-opens on Monday 5th January, if you need anything in these final few days, please contact headteacherpa@stjamesheadle.co.uk

Yours faithfully

Mr A Pontifex
Headteacher

