

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CE JUNIOR SCHOOL

"Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community"



NEWSLETTER

24th February 2023

I do hope you all had a wonderful half term break last week and managed to make the most of some of the unseasonably warm and sunny weather. It was certainly great conditions to get out and about and start to spot the emerging signs of spring in our environment.



prepare for events in our personal lives, such as a wedding or birthday, Lent invites us to make our minds and hearts ready for remembering Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

This week we also entered the liturgical season of Lent. We were delighted to welcome both Fr. Mark and Fr. Matthew in to school on Ash Wednesday where we held a class-based Eucharist in 4B followed by the imposition of ashes for those that wished to receive the sign of the cross on their forehead. Lent is more frequently seen as a time of solemn observance and preparation for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. From its start on Ash Wednesday until its conclusion on Easter Sunday, Lent is a traditional time for fasting or giving something up or abstinence. Just as we carefully

Others will choose to give up just one item for Lent, more commonly a 'luxury' such as chocolate! It is also becoming increasingly common for people to give up other things in order to refocus their faith during this time; such as watching TV, going to the gym, even computer games! And, of course, more and more Christians are turning to the **4oacts challenge** as a way of doing Lent differently; using simple daily reflections and acts of generosity as a way of putting others first during preparations for Easter. This week we have been exploring the 4oacts challenge in collective worship – ask your children to talk to you about it!

Finally, you will be aware that we had a busy end to the last half term with some unexpected visitors with us on the Tuesday and Wednesday before we broke up. I would like to thank all those parents and carers who contributed their feedback, views and comments via the Ofsted questionnaire. We are now awaiting the final Ofsted report following our Section 8 inspection and very much look forward to sharing this with you soon.

Industrial Action

Next week sees the second scheduled date for planned industrial action by the National Education Union (NEU). The remaining dates are:

- Wednesday 1st March 2023
- Wednesday 15th March 2023
- Thursday 16th March 2023

Each school in Essex will be affected differently by the strike action depending on the number of staff who are members of the NEU, the number that decide to strike on the dates above and other issues of absence the school may be experiencing such as staff illness. Each school will undertake a risk assessment to determine what education provision it may be able to make for children on the days the strike will be held.

It is also important to understand that as Executive Headteacher I am able to ask staff in advance who will be taking strike action; however; NEU members do not have to provide this information until the actual day of the strike action, and there are legal limitations on who can be asked to cover for striking colleagues. I am doing everything possible to minimise any disruption to your child's education at this time but if there is high level of staff taking industrial action on any given day, this may not be possible.

At this moment in time having undertaken an initial risk assessment for Wednesday 1st March 2023 I am expecting both St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant and Junior Schools to be **OPEN** as normal.

For each of the future dates we will assess the potential impact and communicate our arrangements nearer the time to manage your child's education whilst the industrial action is underway. Many thanks for your support and understanding.

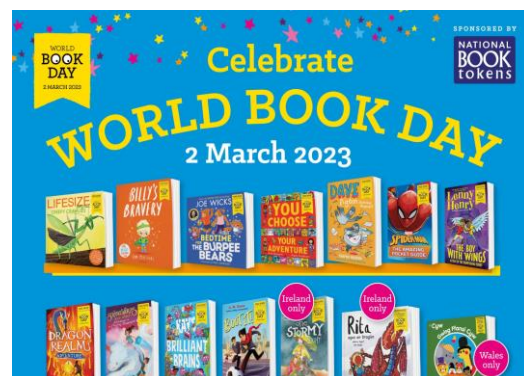
Letton Hall October 2023

A letter is being prepared to send home next week for all children in **Year 4** with initial details and information about the Letton Hall residential trip taking place in October 2023. Please make sure you read this carefully and take note of the key dates and actions if you would like your child to take part in this exciting opportunity once they are in Year 5. We have tried once again to keep the cost of this trip to an absolute minimum but have also had to include the rising costs associated with travel, insurance and accommodation. I do hope we can take as many Year 5 children as possible in October as this activity really helps with team building and getting to know each other and their teachers at the beginning of the academic year. If you have any questions or concerns related to this matter please speak to Mrs Lawrence in the School Office.

World Book Day 2023

I am sure many of you will have noticed from the dates issued back in January that **Thursday 2nd March 2023** is World Book Day 2023. As we have done in previous years we are hoping to be able to celebrate this day by inviting your children to dress up as their favourite book character. This is a day devoted to celebrating good books and literature and I hope we can do this in style!

The children will be undertaking lots of book related activities in their classrooms across the course of the day, and to get them in the spirit we are asking them to come to school dressed as one of their favourite book characters. The emphasis is once again on simple costumes and you do not need to go to great lengths or vast expense to provide a costume for this day. The children can wear their costumes to school and it would be even better if they could bring a copy of the book from which their character comes. Please bear in mind that the children will be completing normal lessons throughout the day so the costume needs to be practical for school. For the same reason we ask that the children do not wear hair dye or make up. The staff are going to join in with the fun and festivities and I am sure we are all looking forward to seeing what costumes and characters emerge! The children **do not** need to pay anything to dress up and at the end of the day they will come home with their World Book Day voucher which they can exchange at a local book shop for one of the World Book Day special titles or money off a full-priced book.



Year 3 Swimming



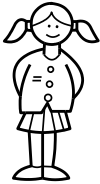
Lessons for the children in Year 3 (3BW & 3S) began TODAY. I would like to remind parents that we very much rely on your payments to cover the cost of swimming lessons of **£4.5 per child**. In recent years we have seen the cost of pool hire rise at St. Helen's as well as the cost of swimming teachers increasing. I hope you will agree that this remains excellent value for money. If there are reasons why your child cannot take part in swimming lessons this must be discussed with your child's classteacher or the School Office. Please ensure your child has the correct swimming kit in school on Friday's. Please could we encourage you to make a prompt payment via our online payment system www.parentpay.com. If you feel you may have difficulty in paying this amount and would like to discuss this confidentially then please arrange to speak with Mrs Lawrence in the School Office. Thank you for your support and understanding in this matter.

May I remind you that all children have to wear a suitable costume for swimming (no beach wear!) and a swimming hat. Swimming hats are available via ParentPay at a cost of **£3.50**. It is a really good idea to write your child's name on their hat in large letters in a thick permanent marker as this helps the swimming teachers to call their names and also reduces the risk of it becoming lost.

Staffing Update

I regret to inform you that Ms Jen Passmore will be leaving St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School on Friday 3rd March 2023. Ms Passmore is one of our fantastic team of Teaching Assistants and Midday Assistants that work tirelessly to support the children with their learning and provide care and supervision at lunchtime within our school. Ms Passmore and her family have recently relocated some distance from Brentwood and it is with great sadness that we prepare to say goodbye. I am delighted that Ms Passmore has managed to secure a similar role in her local school and our sad loss is very much their gain! I am sure you will join me in thanking her for her loyal service and dedication to our school and wish her and her family every good wish and success for the future.

School Uniform – Reminder!



I would like to take this opportunity to remind parents that **AFTER** the Easter break all children must be wearing summer uniform as set out in the school prospectus. The Governing Body continue to uphold high expectations by regularly reviewing and tightening up the uniform policy and we would request that all parents adhere to this. From the beginning of the summer term all children must wear summer uniform as set out in the school prospectus and homework diaries.

All girls in Year 3 & 4 must wear the green checked gingham dresses as part of regulation summer uniform. Girls in Year 5 & 6 may choose to wear either the green checked gingham dresses or a white school polo shirt with logo with a grey skirt.

Boys need a white school polo shirt with logo and shorts or trousers – also in grey.

Shoes need to be sensible black leather shoes (not boots) with soft soles or leather sandals (black or brown). Black trainers are not permitted. We do not like lights or toys in the shoes so please bear this in mind when you are purchasing any new shoes, especially from Clarks. Incorrect or inappropriate uniform will be flagged up in the new term by putting a gentle reminder sticker in your child's homework diary. Please help support us in achieving greater consistency, smarter presentation and a sense of pride – thank you.



A reminder - jewellery can cause problems in school due to Health & Safety requirements. Children may wear an inexpensive named analogue or digital watch to school providing it is not too big or colourful and they will not be distracted by wearing it. Smart watches are not permitted in school. Smart watches can cause issues with data protection and data security if these devices are trying to access our school Wi-Fi or have the ability to record and/or capture video or audio. No bracelets, rings or necklaces are permitted.

Parents' Evening

Hopefully from the dates shared with you back in January you will have noted that Parents' Evening will be taking place on **Wednesday 29th March** and **Thursday 30th March 2023** – 4:00 – 7:00p.m.

Further details will be shared soon and how this will be organised for the spring term meetings. We will continue to use the SchoolCloud system as a booking portal and offer a hybrid meeting option – meaning you will have the option to attend remotely or face-to-face. We appreciate that many parents found attending remotely more convenient and eased the pressure of travelling and childcare whilst others are keen to have in-person meetings. Hopefully the hybrid option will suit everyone's requirements. Please look out for this letter with booking details and SchoolCloud Parent Guide.

NOTE: If you have recently changed or updated your email address please inform the school office as soon as possible as the email address you book with and the one we hold on our MIS system must match. This is for security and safeguarding reasons.

Finally....

Thank you to all those parents/carers and interested parties that have contributed to the consultation on a proposal to amalgamate St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant & Junior Schools with effect from 1st September 2023. This consultation period closed at 5:00p.m. yesterday. All the views, comments and feedback will now be analysed by the two separate Governing Bodies before deciding on any next steps in this process.

On Wednesday you should have received a Parent Hub message with details of how to order and purchase The Real Easter Egg. Working in partnership with St Thomas' Church we are offering you the opportunity to purchase The Real Easter Egg which also shares the Easter story. There are 4 varieties available and details are listed via your Parent Pay account. All orders must be received by Friday 3rd March 2023 at the latest.



I wish you all a wonderful weekend – see you on Monday!

Mr D. Moran
Headteacher



DO LENT
GENEROUSLY

And...please remember if you have any questions or queries or comments feel free to contact us:
admin@stthomasjnr.essex.sch.uk