

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



8th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,



With the arrival of a September heatwave it could only mean one thing - the return to school for the start of a new and exciting academic year! Hopefully you will have seen the new temporary school banners and colour co-ordinated balloons on the school fence on Wednesday morning as we celebrated our new adventure and journey together as **St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School**.

Thank you to all those parents/carers and friends of the school who have been praying for our new school and your kind messages of support and encouragement. As we all get used to our new name, please be assured that our vision, values, ethos and Christian distinctiveness remain unchanged by the amalgamation. If anything, it will be strengthened by a shared faith and gift of the Holy Spirit. Spare a thought for those staff working in the School Office, who have got to remember to answer the telephone with our new school name....some ingrained habits will take a while to break!

On the subject of telephones, we informed you last week that the number for the Primary School is **01277 223651**. Please do not call the former Infant School number, as this will soon be disconnected and no longer available. We have also re-recorded our answerphone message and the available options have also been changed and updated. Please do listen carefully to the new options – **Option 3** is now for the Finance Office. **Option 1** is to speak to the School Office. However, if you are calling to report a child's absence from school we are strongly encouraging you to use our Studybugs app. Please see information later in this newsletter.

It was wonderful to welcome you all back to school this week after what I hope was a fantastic summer holiday (although I am sure it may now seem a dim and distant memory!) Although we may all feel a little apprehensive about returning to school and getting up early once again it doesn't take too long to get back into the normal routines. It is a joy and delight to see our Primary School building full of children and staff with the sound of excitement and laughter permeating throughout the building. Once again, the children have demonstrated such confidence and resilience as they return after the summer holiday.

Today we were delighted to welcome Fr. Mark who leads collective worship every Friday morning. We are very appreciative that Fr. Mark continues to support our collective worship together. In addition to leading collective worship every Friday, Fr. Mark will also be leading class-based Eucharists this term. This involves a short Eucharist service in the KS2 classrooms or KS1 Hall with each class on a rolling weekly rota. It is a wonderful opportunity to see the Eucharist up close and a very intimate act of worship and thanksgiving.

Please do take the time to read the rest of this newsletter as it contains important information about the term ahead – thank you!

Welcome to our Reception Children



Mr Beales (Early Years Lead) and the Reception Team have had a busy week meeting parents and getting to know the new children about to join our school at the 'All About Me' meetings. A special welcome to all the new Reception children as you prepare to embark on your educational journey with us next week – we are all looking forward to getting to know you in the coming days, weeks and months ahead! At the 'All About Me' meetings we gave each new Reception child an olive wood holding cross from the Holy Land. Just like the children, each one of these crosses is unique and special – they all have a slightly different pattern and grain. These crosses are a reminder that God is always with us, especially during new experiences and challenges.

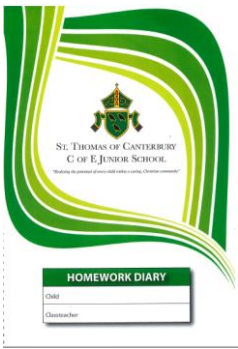
School Uniform

As a school community we take great pride in wearing our school uniform. Thank you for your support with our school uniform policy. Can I remind you that we have a strict school uniform code and children must only wear approved uniform. We have had to remind a number of children about appropriate footwear, jewellery and hair accessories. If you are in any doubt about what is permissible please check your child's homework diary if they are in KS2, or speak to your child's classteacher or the School Office. In the same way we will contact you if we are unhappy with your child's school uniform. All children should be wearing **SUMMER** uniform until the October half term.



I would also like to remind you that items of clothing with the school logo on can only be purchased from our approved school uniform provider – SmartyPants. We do not allow or authorise any other uniform provider to use our logo as this is in breach of copyright laws. Please do not ask SmartyPants or other uniform providers to logo items of clothing you have purchased elsewhere as this is strictly prohibited. The Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School have unanimously approved this decision and wish to remind you of this situation to avoid upset or disappointment.

Homework Diaries – Key Stage 2



I hope by now you have had a chance to look through your child's Homework Diary which have, once again, been kindly funded and donated by the PTA. You will notice that this year they continue to be in a more compact A5 size which will hopefully make them more manageable and fit into children's school bags more comfortably. One of the many aims of the Homework Diary is to communicate with you our vision for education whilst your child is at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. Our vision offers a framework for education based around Character Education and promoting wisdom, hope, community and dignity – it also offers rigour and academic excellence whilst providing an environment where young people know that they are not just valued for the results they get but for the people they become.

The Homework Diaries are invaluable in promoting and sharing information about your child's progress and conduct in school and also a good way for you to be able to quickly and easily communicate with the classteacher. If you do write a message in the Homework Diary for your child's classteacher please make sure your child brings it to their attention so we can respond accordingly. Please take care of them and ensure your child has it with them in school everyday. At this time of year we ask you to ensure you have been through the first few pages with your child and signed the Home School Agreement as well as all the permission slips which will allow your child to play a full and active part in the curriculum. Please try and have all these signed as soon as possible. Next week myself and Mrs Coughtrey will be visiting each classroom to add our signature to demonstrate our partnership for the coming academic year.

One area I would ask you to pay particular attention to is the page headed 'E-safety and Acceptable Use Policy'. We have updated our media parental consent form to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You will now need to give permission for the following by circling the yes/no option:

- Photographs/Videos – for use within school premises
- Photographs/Videos – for use in school publications
- Photographs/Videos – for use on school website
- Photographs/Videos – for use on MarvellousMe

In some diaries we have situations where parents/carers have signed the consent form but not circled their options. Please can you check you have completed it correctly so we are aware of your permissions related to each area. You can change your mind at any point to the consent given and we would ask you to indicate this in writing so we can update our records.

For those of you with children in Key Stage 2, you should be familiar with the app **MarvellousMe**. I am delighted to say that we will be expanding this communication tool in to EYFS and Key Stage 1 very soon! Please keep your eyes peeled for a letter with further details and information about how to sign up for this exciting way of sharing your child's school experiences with you!

EYFS & Key Stage 1 Parents' Information Evenings



This term we are delighted to be hosting our Autumn Term Parents' Information Evenings in the Key Stage 1 Hall. There will be two separate meetings – Reception and Year 1/Year 2. At these meetings the Year Group classteachers will be able to share with you some of the exciting things your children will be doing and learning as well as communicate our expectations and how you can help with your child's learning. It is a good opportunity to develop a strong partnership between home and school and all work for the benefit of your child.

The dates for the meetings are detailed below and we do hope that as many parents/carers as possible will be able to attend. **Please note, these meetings are for adults only and children are not permitted to attend.** Thank you.

Reception/EYFS Parents' Information Evening – Wednesday 13th September 2023 – 6:00p.m.

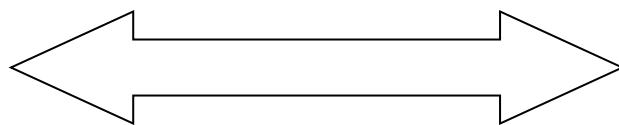
Year 1 & Year 2 Parents' Information Evening – Wednesday 4th October 2023 – 6:00p.m.

We look forward to seeing you!

Hair Accessories

We continue to notice and have some concerns around the size, style and colour of some hair accessories worn by girls to school. Our school policy sets out that *"when hair is long enough, we request it is tied back all the time, using plain green, black or white hair bands and clips."* Whilst many people adhere to the colours stipulated we have concerns about the size of bows and ribbons worn in the hair. Very often these bows become an unnecessary distraction and cause problems in the classroom.

Can I please ask that approved hair accessories are no bigger than 8cm (3 inches). Next week we will be giving children a 'gentle' reminder of what is acceptable.



8cm (3 inches)

Extra-Curricular Activities/Clubs



We are delighted that extra-curricular clubs will be continuing this term after the summer break. The staff will be meeting next week to finalise the extra curricular activities and clubs which will be on offer this term across the primary school. It would be a good opportunity to remind you that we do expect the children to show dedication and commitment to the clubs they attend through regular attendance and participation. We appreciate that in the first two weeks they may be trying them out but after this we expect them to make a firm and decisive decision about their attendance.

Next week we will issue a special 'Clubs Edition' of this newsletter with more detail and information. We are hoping to start extra-curricular clubs and activities in the week beginning **18th September 2023**.

Key Stage 2 Lower School Swimming



Swimming lessons for 4S, 4B & 4M begin next Friday (15th September) and I would like to remind parents that we very much rely on your payments to cover the cost of swimming lessons of **£45 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 represents 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.

I would like to remind you that swimming forms part of the National Curriculum for PE at Key Stage 2 and is not optional. Please ensure your child has the correct swimming kit in school on Fridays. 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. Children in 3BW and 3DW will be swimming later in the academic year but if you wish to pay for your lessons now this is also available via ParentPay. 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 from the school office for £3.50 – these must be paid for in advance on ParentPay. 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.

Parent Prayer Group Meeting

Another way in which we celebrate our Church School Christian distinctiveness and look to offer fellowship as a school community is through our weekly Prayer Group meeting. This group meets every Wednesday morning at 9:00a.m. in the Key Stage 2 library to pray for the life and work of the school, the wider community and also to spend some time in personal prayer and quiet reflection. In previous years we have had a modest but very dedicated group that meet to offer our weekly thoughts and prayers. If you would like to join us each week or just drop in when you are free we would be very pleased to welcome you to this group. It is a relaxed, friendly, informal group and no one is asked to pray or read aloud unless they wish to. For those that attend they find it an uplifting and refreshing part of the week and solid friendships have been formed over the years. I do hope you will be able to join us next week.

PTA AGM



At this time of year the PTA constitution states we are obliged to hold their AGM to elect committee members for the academic year as well as encourage new members to join. It really doesn't matter how much or how little you can help – all are welcome! This year the PTA will be discussing how it will work for and include everyone in the new Primary School.

The **PTA AGM** will be held on **Friday 15th September 2022 at 2:30p.m.** in the KS2 school hall. Hopefully many of you will be able to pop along just before school pick up time to find out a bit more about the work of the PTA and perhaps get involved. I do hope more people will try and get involved this year and help assist with the popular events which are run across the course of the academic year. Please don't be shy in coming forward and speaking to a member of the PTA! By attending the AGM you are not committing to anything so please don't not come through fear of being volunteered or roped in. Your attendance at the AGM could be support in itself!

School Photographer

We have arranged for our school photographer to visit all the children in the Primary School next week. Kittle Photographic will be in school next **Tuesday 12th September 2023 for Key Stage 2** and **Thursday 14th September 2023 for EYFS/KS1** to take individual photographs. This is a wonderful opportunity to capture your child at the beginning of the new academic year looking smart and happy in their school uniform. The children will be taken to the school hall throughout the morning in their new classes to have their pictures taken.

In Key Stage 2, many parents prefer for their children to wear their winter uniform on this occasion (shirt & tie) although wearing our current summer uniform is perfectly acceptable. If you choose for your child to wear their winter uniform then it must be worn on this day only. Summer uniform remains in place until the October half term.

I do hope your child will be able to look smart and presentable and bring their best smile!

Absence When Recovering From Diarrhoea or Vomiting

We are very mindful that at all times of the year and especially as we move in to the autumn and winter months children will experience periods of illness and sickness. At the beginning of a new academic year I would like to remind you of the advice that we follow from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) regarding their guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings. The guidance is in place to protect the school's pupils and staff and reduce the risk of acquiring an infection at school. The guidance from the UKHSA in such situations is to request that the pupil does not attend school until completely symptom free for **48 hours**.

Studybugs

As we begin this new academic year we continue to promote the use of Studybugs, a more efficient and secure system for reporting your child's absence due to illness. Many parents have already downloaded the app and I would encourage all parents (especially those in EYFS and KS1) to do so as soon as possible even if you don't think you will use it! You can also report absence via your laptop or PC from <https://studybugs.com>

All absence due to illness must now be reported via Studybugs and School Office staff will remind you of this if you ring up to leave a message. This new system helps us track sickness related illness more closely and also provides you with reassurance, advice and guidance from the UKHSA. Thank you for your support.

Attendance & Punctuality



As we get off to a new academic year we want to develop good habits and routines – this includes being in school every day and on time! From being present at the gates this week I have noticed a number of families running late and I must stress to you the importance of being on time in the morning. When children arrive late to school it is often embarrassing for them as well as an unnecessary distraction for the other children and adults who have already settled and started their learning. At primary school age the children very much rely on their parents/carers to take responsibility for embedding these good habits!

We will be monitoring both attendance and punctuality closely this term and contacting parents where we have concerns. The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority have placed a big emphasis on both of these areas and encouraging schools to use statutory enforcement powers where necessary. This can lead to a penalty notice for irregular school attendance.

Keeping Your Children Safe!



It is vitally important that we know who is collecting your child at the end of the school day. In EYFS and KS1, to assist us in this we have previously asked you to complete a 'Going Home Arrangements' sheet – thank you to all those who have returned them. We use this information to ensure your child goes home safely and would ask you to inform us as soon as possible if there are any changes to the normal routine or change of designated adult.

For everyone's safety we ask that scooters are **NOT** ridden on the Primary School site under any circumstances. It is wonderful to witness the growing number of children scooting to school and parking them in the scooter park. Please remember that at the beginning and end of each day there are a lot of pedestrians on the school premises and we need to ensure everyone is safe.

A polite reminder that dogs are not permitted on the school site. This includes smaller dogs being carried. I would also ask you to be careful of where you leave your dog outside of the school gate. They should not be left unattended and please be mindful that not everyone is a dog lover – for some adults and children it can cause them distress and anxiety.

Jewellery is not permitted to be worn in school with the exception of small stud earrings. This is to keep your child safe and prevent unnecessary accidental injury to other children. Children are naturally very tactile. If your child wears earrings to school then they must be removed for PE lessons – your child will be expected to take them out and put them back in themselves. Adults cannot assist with this and we no longer cover earrings over in line with national and Local Authority guidance.

Key Stage 2 Healthy Snacks – NO NUTS!

We are proud to be a healthy school and promote healthy lifestyles and diet. We encourage you to send in a healthy snack for your child to eat at morning break. The vast majority of children do bring in a piece of fruit or healthy cereal bar. However we have observed a few children who are not eating a healthy snack! Please can we ask you to support us in this matter and remember that under **no circumstances** should children be bringing in crisps, chocolate, chocolate covered snack bars or sweets. It is also worth pointing out that a number of fruit based snack products marketed in the main supermarkets contain a very high sugar content and are probably not as healthy as you might think! The classteachers will be reminding the children about what constitutes a healthy snack.



Can I also remind you that we have a number of children across our school with severe allergies to nuts so please **do not** send in any snack or packed lunch items that obviously contain nuts. Thank you for your co-operation.

Year 6 Secondary School Applications – OPENS ON TUESDAY!

If your child is in Year 6, you can apply for a secondary school (Year 7) place between **12th September 2023** and **31st October 2023**.

Before you apply you should:

- check you live in the [Essex administrative area](#)
- read the [secondary school admissions booklet](#)

You may also want to check [the priority admission catchment area schools](#).

Online applications can be made from 12th September 2023 up to and including the 31st October 2023. Please ensure that your online application is submitted by 31st October 2023. Remember to re-submit after making any changes before the deadline.

All applications received after 31st October will be treated as late and will only be processed after all on-time applications. You are less likely to get a place at one of your preferred schools if you apply late.

You can get in touch with the School Admissions Team if you have a query about your application or if you are changing address.

Telephone: **0345 603 2200**

Email: admissions@essex.gov.uk

You might also find it useful to watch the following link: <https://youtu.be/Qoa8fio6WKY>

Finally....

Apologies for the length of this first newsletter. If you have read all the way to the end you certainly deserve a cup of tea! There is so much to share and I appreciate that many of you like to receive as much detail and advanced warning as possible. I am very excited at the prospect of the term ahead and the way we can all work together to ensure St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School continues to go from strength to strength.

Next week we will confirm some of the events/dates taking place across the course of this autumn term. Our usual 'Dates for the Diary' schedule should prove very useful in helping you prepare and play a full and active part in school life!

Have a great weekend.

Mr D. Moran
Headteacher

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