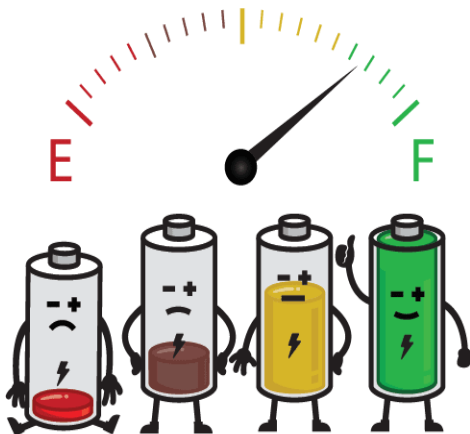




# NEWSLETTER

20<sup>th</sup> October 2023

The cold snap at the beginning of the week reminded us that we are in the season of autumn and that we have been blessed recently with some unseasonably warm weather! I think most of us resisted the temptation to put on the heating but a few extra layers were definitely needed. Further on in this newsletter is a final reminder about the need for winter uniform after half term – [please read this carefully](#).



The last few weeks of this half term have certainly been very busy and I am sure you are all looking forward to a well deserved break next week and a chance to recharge your batteries. Amongst other things, we are delighted that both our Year 6 residential trip to Rock UK, South Wales and our Year 5 residential visit to Letton Hall, Norfolk have taken place and given these children a memorable off-site experience to enrich our curriculum delivery. It was wonderful to welcome back our children, parent volunteers and staff in Year 5 from their adventures in Norfolk today and I am certain that these children will enjoy sharing their highlights of being away on a residential trip. I am sure you will join me in thanking all those involved in planning, delivering and attending the trip to Norfolk - there will be some very tired children and adults returning home today!

It also seems hard to believe that our children in Early Years Foundation Stage are now coming to the end of their first half term in our primary school – how this time has flown by! Over the past 6 weeks, it has been a joy to witness how the Reception children have approached the various experiences, activities and challenges in school. They have worked so hard to learn daily routines, make friendships with their peers, establish relationships with adults and build up their confidence and resilience to learning. I am sure you will have some tired children who are looking forward to a rest next week!

## Parents' Evening

We are thrilled to already have **60%** of our parent community signed up for parents' evening since our booking system opened on Tuesday this week through our online virtual platform, SchoolCloud.



Our Autumn Term Parents' Evenings 2023 are once again being conducted virtually via video appointment. Our previous experiences of using virtual video appointments for Parents' Evening shows a greatly increased attendance rate and the ability to ensure the meetings are conducted in a timely and efficient manner. It also means you can join from the comfort of your own home without

having to come back to the school on a cold, damp autumn evening. Virtual appointments also help manage work commitments, avoid the need for child care and cuts down on journey times. We do plan to have hybrid (face-to-face or virtual) Parents' Evenings in the Spring Term 2024 as well as our usual 'Open Classrooms' opportunity on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

On Tuesday we sent out details via Parent Hub regarding how you go about booking video appointments with your child's classteacher. Appointments will be available on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November and Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 between 4:00p.m. and 7:00p.m. The appointments will be kept strictly to 10 minutes per child.

As with our face to face appointments children must not attend these virtual video meetings as it is important that they are conducted in a professional manner and parents/carers and classteachers can have discussions without interruptions and maximise the limited time. The meeting should be conducted in a quiet environment free from distraction.

## Staffing Update

I regret to inform you that **Miss Lydia Black**, one of our Key Stage 1 classteachers, will be leaving St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School at the end of this term (December 2023). Miss Black has tendered her resignation and will be moving on to another teaching position at a school closer to home in Chelmsford. I think she is looking forward to avoiding the A12! We are very sad to see Miss Black leave our school and I am sure you will join me in thanking her for her hard work, dedication and commitment to supporting our educational provision in our school over the past 5 years.

The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team have already started a process of recruitment and we are aiming to complete interviews after half term and appoint a new qualified teacher ready to take up post in January 2024. As always, this will be a rigorous process ensuring we appoint the very best candidate for the children in our primary school. We will keep you updated on progress through our fortnightly newsletters.

Please do pray for Miss Black as she prepares to leave our school and also for the recruitment process that lies ahead.

## **FINAL REMINDER – Winter School Uniform**

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that **AFTER** the October half term holiday all children must be wearing winter uniform.

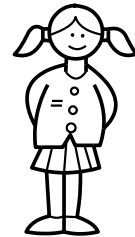
### **GIRLS' UNIFORM**

#### **Winter**

*[Must be worn for the second half of the autumn term and spring term]*

#### **EYFS/KS1**

Grey skirt or pinafore dress, **\*white polo shirt, \*bottle green cardigan or jumper**, White/grey/black socks or plain green/grey/black tights.



#### **Key Stage 2**

Grey skirt or pinafore dress,  
white shirt, school tie,  
**\*bottle green cardigan or jumper**,  
White/grey/black socks or plain green/grey/black tights.

### **BOYS' UNIFORM**

#### **Winter**

*[Must be worn for the second half of the autumn term and spring term]*

#### **EYFS/KS1**

Grey trousers (or shorts), **\*white polo shirt, \*bottle green jumper**  
Grey or black socks only.



#### **Key Stage 2**

Grey trousers (or shorts),  
white shirt, school tie,  
**\*bottle green jumper**,  
Grey or black socks only.

### **This means all children in Key Stage 2 wearing ties and white shirts with collars.**

Shoes need to be sensible black leather with soft soles. 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.

Jewellery can cause problems in school due to Health & Safety requirements. Children may wear an inexpensive watch (no Smart watches) to school providing it is not too big or colourful and they will not be distracted by wearing it. No bracelets, rings or necklaces are permitted. Children are not allowed to wear earrings for PE under any circumstances so it makes sense to leave these at home altogether. However, if you insist on your child wearing earrings please ensure they are plain gold or silver studs and that they are capable of taking their earrings out themselves.

May I also remind you that long hair must be tied back with a black, white or green hairband. We prefer boys to have short hair. Children's hair should not be coloured or have patterns shaved into it.

## Great Ormond Street Hospital

Many of you will be aware that over the past academic year we have been supporting the children's chosen charity 'Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital' (GOSH). Each year the children choose a charity, facilitated through the CATS reps (School Council) across the primary school, and consider how they can plan and deliver a variety of fundraising events, including our Peter Pan pyjama day back in January 2023. This has also included retiring collections from school performances and productions, as well as the KS2 Music Concerts in the summer term.

Thanks to your hard work, generosity and support I am delighted to announce that we have raised a fantastic total of **£3907.59** – which is an amazing achievement. Next half term, we are hoping to welcome a representative from GOSH to come and speak to the children about how this money will make a positive difference to those children receiving care or support through this hospital. I know how much the children have enjoyed supporting this very worthy cause.

Now we turn our attention to this year's charity. After much debate, deliberation and moral dilemmas the children, supported by their CATS reps, have voted to support **Little Havens Children's Hospice**. Little Havens provides specialist care and support for babies, children and young people living with complex or incurable conditions, from Essex and the surrounding boroughs. I know this is a charity close to many people's hearts. As we move through this academic year there will be lots of opportunities to support Little Havens and I hope you will give generously to this very worthy cause.

## Operation Christmas Child 2023



### Operation Christmas Child

A PROJECT of SAMARITAN'S PURSE

Over the past couple of weeks during collective worship Mrs McKechnie and Mrs Moran have spoken to the children in Key Stage 2 and EYFS/Key Stage 1 about the work of Operation Christmas Child, a charity we have continued to support for many years. Once again we are asking the children and you

as parents/carers to support Operation Christmas Child through their annual shoebox appeal. If you would like to purchase a flatpack, decorated shoebox they are now on sale at school for **50p** each...while stocks last! Thanks to your generosity all our shoeboxes and the gifts they contain go to children suffering through war, poverty, natural disaster and disease in countries in Eastern Europe and beyond. I hope in the run up to Christmas and on Christmas Day itself you will spare a thought for these children receiving our shoeboxes! Last year we managed to package up and send off **98** shoeboxes for this appeal – let's see if we can beat this total this year!!

## The Royal British Legion - Poppy Appeal 2023

After half term we will be quickly moving in to the month of November. As a school community we always turn our thoughts and prayers to 'remembering' and the act of remembrance. This is our chance to remember before God all those men, women and children who have been affected by war or conflict, both in this country and around the world, as well as mark the ultimate sacrifice made by service men and women. As in previous years we will once again be supporting the work of the Royal British Legion and making poppies available to the children and adults for a modest donation. These will be on sale from Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October up to and including Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November. The House Captains will be visiting each classroom after lunch every day to collect donations and distribute poppies – a minimum donation of 50p is suggested. It would be a fitting tribute if on 11<sup>th</sup> November every child was able to wear their poppy with pride.



The Royal British Legion have also supplied us with some further items that can be purchased to support their charitable work. The House Captains, supported by the School Office staff, will be taking charge of these items on sale alongside the poppies, beginning after half term. Below is a list of the items on sale:

- Poppy zip pull – **50p**
- Poppy silicon wristband – **£1.00**
- Poppy snap band – **£1.50**
- Poppy reflector – **50p**

If you would like your child to purchase one of these items then please bring in your money to school. For the younger children in EYFS/KS1 you may want to pop it in an envelope labelled with your child's name and the item you wish to purchase. Please send in the correct money as we are unable to provide change. Stock is limited so once they're gone, they're gone!

## Year 2-3 Admissions for September 2024

Although we have now amalgamated to become a primary school, we have one **FINAL** year that requires our Year 2 parents/carers to apply for their Year 3 places in our school. Owing to the fact our consultation period and amalgamation was agreed late in the last academic year, we were unable to meet the admissions consultation deadline to prevent this happening for the September 2024 application window. Moving forward for future years, applications will NOT need to be made as is the case for all primary schools.

For this year the process for Year 2 to Year 3 transfers for Year 3 admissions for September 2024 requires that parents/carers of current Year 2 children in our school need to make a formal application to the Local Authority and can do this via their website [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions).

The admissions round opens on **6<sup>th</sup> November 2023**, for parents/carers of children to apply for a Year 3 place for September 2024.

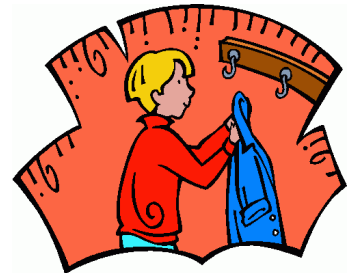
The statutory national closing date for applications is **15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**.

After half term I will be writing to all the parents/carers of children currently in Year 2 explaining the importance of making this application through the Local Authority. However, if you know of parents/carers who are in this position please can you remind them of the importance of making this application before the deadline.

In the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 we are looking forward to welcoming some of these parents/carers as they visit the school for our Year 2 Parent Tours. This is an opportunity for them to learn a little more about Key Stage 2 and to see the school in action over the course of the afternoon.

### Coats!

With the colder, wet weather now starting to appear I would like to give a general reminder about coats. Rather worryingly, we still have a growing number of children across the primary school who seem to come to school without a coat. Many of you may arrive by car in the morning but the children still need a coat in school to wear at morning break and lunchtime. Please ensure your child has a coat in school every day and that it is clearly named. The staff are constantly reminding children to put their coats on during the day and we hope by wrapping up we can prevent coughs and colds developing. Thank you.



### Parking

This week has seen a number of vehicles manoeuvring dangerously at the start and end of the school day in the vicinity of the school car park entrance. Some parents/carers are using this space as a turning circle, or pulling in and then reversing dangerously in to the oncoming traffic. There have also been some 'near misses' involving pedestrians (including children) crossing this entrance. Please can I remind all parents/carers that there is no access to the school staff car park and that the entrance/exit driveway **MUST** not be used for dropping off or as a turning space. We all need to act responsibly to protect our school community from harm. Thank you for your support in this matter.



## Finally....

**IMPORTANT REMINDER** - As you are well aware, the statutory closing date for applications from parents/carers of Year 6 children (for a secondary school place in Year 7 from September 2024) is **31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.**

I would like to remind any parents/carers of Year 6 children who have yet to submit an application, that they must do so by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

Applications can be made via the Essex website [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions)

We have previously shared with your children details of the Baytree Shopping Centre - **Design a Christmas Character Competition**. Mrs Stonebridge had originally set the closing date for entries as 17<sup>th</sup> October to allow for her being away at Letton Hall with Year 5 and the half term break. Following further details from the competition organisers we are now able to extend the deadline to **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023**. This might make for a good, creative half term project!! Please see flyer distributed with this newsletter.

Thank you for your continued support this term and I wish you a safe, peaceful and enjoyable half term holiday next week.

**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](mailto:admin@stthomaspri.essex.sch.uk)