

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

"Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14



NEWSLETTER

24th November 2023



Next Sunday (3rd December) we begin the liturgical season of Advent and I'm sure you will all be eagerly anticipating the daily ritual of opening the door on your Advent calendars or lighting your Advent candles from Friday (1st) next week. The count down now begins not only to the end of a busy autumn term but to Christmas itself. At this time of year it is important to be reminded of the gift of giving rather than receiving. As we are reminded in Acts 20:35 **"Remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"** Very often at this busy time of year it is hard to remain focused on the true meaning of Christmas; God giving us the ultimate gift of His son Jesus Christ. As much as we enjoy receiving Christmas presents let us also experience great joy in the gift of giving.

This gift of giving has certainly been in evidence in school over the past few weeks. Once again we had a fantastic response to the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal. We collected and safely sent off **121** shoeboxes this week which I am sure will be very gratefully received and bring much joy to the children receiving them at Christmas. This coincided with our fundraising activities for the annual Children in Need appeal held last Thursday. Thanks to your generosity we managed to raise an amazing **£1548.85!** Thank you to Class 6M, Mrs McKechnie and all those who helped organise and support this event. Finally, we had a wonderful response to our poppy appeal collection in support of the Royal British Legion at the beginning of the month. We sold out of all RBL merchandise and had very few poppies left too. We await to hear how much we raised and a final total!

Attendance Matters!

The Department for Education (DfE) and Essex Local Authority continue to communicate a clear message on the critical importance of not disrupting the education of children and young people by promoting regular school attendance and punctuality.

School attendance is mandatory and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children and young people to attend their education setting regularly continues to be a national priority which is fully supported by St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. All children must attend school every day and arrive on time. Sickness absence must be reported via the Studybugs app. Leave of absence will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances.

Last week we sent letters to parents/carers of children who have attendance of below 85%. These children are identified as 'persistent absentees' and we will want to identify any barriers to regular attendance and offer advice and guidance as appropriate.

Attendance Matters



School Performances 2023

The children and staff continue to work incredibly hard in preparation for the EYFS/Key Stage 1, Lower and Upper School Christmas performances which are fast approaching. Rehearsals are going well and all year groups are busy putting the finishing touches to their performance, before their performances go 'live' to an audience. The air of anticipation is really exciting! Can I please remind you that for health and safety reasons and in line with our fire regulations ticket allocation is strictly limited for each audience.

The morning performances generally have a few more spaces, but babies and toddlers can still be a distraction so please try to avoid bringing them if at all possible. I'm sure that there will be standing room only by the start times and, if you arrive late, you will need to come in by the rear hall entrance. **You must bring your ticket with you to the performance to gain entry.** We're very excited and I'm sure that you will enjoy the shows. After each performance we will be taking a retiring collection in aid of the children's chosen charity – **Little Havens Children's Hospice.**

I hope you will be able to give generously in your donations and support this very worthy charity.

St Andrew's Day – 30th November 2023



Now that we have determined the new names of our 4 Houses – named after our patron saints – St George, St Andrew, St David and St Patrick, we reach the first of their feast days. On Thursday 30th November we will be able to celebrate St Andrew's Feast Day!

On this day we are inviting all the children who are in St Andrew's House to wear non-school uniform and dress in their House colour which is BLUE. This opportunity is only for children in St Andrew's House as the other Houses will get their opportunity later in the academic year – March for St David's and St. Patrick and April for St George. We do hope that all the St Andrew's children encouraged by their House Captains will take pride in marking this event. In preparation, the children in St Andrew's House may like to research some facts about the life of St Andrew and share it with their classteacher.

PTA Christmas Fete

Thank you to everyone who started the process of supporting our PTA Christmas Fete today by making donations of jars, sweets and chocolates in exchange for wearing non-uniform. The PTA report a bumper harvest of donations that will be used at the Christmas Fete on **Friday 8th December, 3:30 – 5:30p.m.** in our school halls (both KS1 & KS2). This year the Christmas Fete will follow the same pattern as last year and will hopefully entice many people into the school halls getting everyone in the festive spirit. The KS1 and KS2 School Choirs will be performing and there is a rumour that even Father Christmas may put in an appearance! We hope the event will capture and promote the community spirit and hopefully everyone will find something of interest and even win a raffle prize. My thanks to the PTA Committee who are working so hard for the good of our school in organising this and other events raising additional money for the children at our school. Thanks to their time and dedication as well as your generosity we continue to be able to fund ideas, projects and additional resources that would otherwise be beyond our school budget. It is very much appreciated.

On that note, I am delighted to share with you that the PTA Committee have recently approved the funding of a new sound system in the KS1 hall. This has included 4 new surround sound speakers, a new amplifier as well as two wireless hand held microphones. This has recently been installed and has made a significant difference to the quality of sound in collective worship. Thank you to the PTA for their fantastic support!

Winter Reading Challenge

The Winter Reading Challenge is back, running from Saturday 25th November 2023 to Saturday 3rd February 2024. Lyra the plucky penguin is back once again! But this year, she's setting off on an even bigger journey...

Join Lyra as she travels around the world, finding out all about endangered animals. There will be 12 challenges for your child to choose from. Once they complete six of the challenges they will be rewarded with a certificate and a prize (while stocks last). The challenges will support literacy skills, confidence with reading and creativity, with many of the fun challenges able to be completed in the local library.

Lyra will be leaving on Saturday 25 November and returning on Saturday 3 February, but you can join her on her travels at any time!

You can sign up to the challenge by visiting any of our 74 Essex libraries, or one of our two mobile libraries. For more information, visit the Essex Libraries website.



Gift a Book at Christmas Scheme



Earlier today you should have received a separate letter via Parent Hub about the launch of our 'Gift a Book at Christmas' scheme. The idea of this new initiative is to seek parental support in enhancing both our EYFS/KS1 and KS2 school libraries so that all our children have access to the very best books and continue to develop a love of reading. We do hope that either as individuals or as a family you may be able to donate a sum of money (via Parent Pay) to help us purchase new books.

I do hope you will see this as an opportunity to buy the school a Christmas present! Thank you for your support in this exciting scheme.

Christmas Dinner & Jumper Day

The primary school Christmas dinner will be served on **Tuesday 19th December 2023**. I am sure this will be a wonderful festive treat and we are all looking forward to a traditional Christmas meal - staff and children alike! To make the day even more festive we are asking all the children and staff to wear their Christmas jumpers – normal school uniform should be worn on the bottom half!



Main Course

- Roast Chicken & stuffing (Vegetarian option – Sage and onion topped Quorn fillet)
- Gluten free pigs in blankets
- Roast potatoes
- Carrots/peas
- Yorkshire pudding
- Gravy (gluten free and suitable for vegetarians)



Dessert

- Chocolate Christmas pudding muffin
- Christmas jelly (suitable for vegetarians)
- Mince pies and cream

If your child has opted for a school dinner on this day they will receive the Christmas meal. The usual menu for this day will NOT apply. If your child normally has a packed lunch but would like the Christmas dinner on this date you will need to arrange for payment via ParentPay and inform the School Office by **Friday 1st December**.

On Wednesday 20th December 2023 the menu choice will be the usual All Day Breakfast.

NOTE: When we return after Christmas on Thursday 4th January 2024 the menu will continue with **Week 2** choices.

Christmas Postboxes



I am sure many of your children will soon be busy writing Christmas cards for their friends, teachers and other staff at school. The Christmas postboxes will be appearing in school on Monday 4th December 2023. The postbox will be sorted on a daily basis and cards delivered and distributed to your children in their classes. Can I remind you that it is very important to ensure you address the envelopes properly to ensure they reach the right person. Please remember to write the persons full name if known, (Christian & surname) as well as their class, e.g. Bob Smith 2B. Please remember this is an internal delivery postbox only.

Christmas Party Day – Wednesday 20th December

As in previous years the children will be holding their class parties which will take place on the afternoon of Wednesday 20th December. This is a great opportunity for the children to celebrate the festive season with their classteacher, other adults and friends. It is also a nice way to unwind at the end of a very busy term! Due to a very busy school diary the parties are taking place on the same day as the school Christmas Eucharists. The children will need to come to school in their normal school uniform but will be allowed to change at lunchtime into their party clothes (non-uniform). Please send your child's change of clothes in a named carrier bag.

The children must wear 'sensible' casual clothes that will allow them to take part in the normal school day routines as well as enjoy the special activities in their classes. There is no charge for this event. **It goes without saying but normal school rules still apply! We do not allow the children to dye their hair, wear make up or jewellery. Please make sure all clothes are named!** The PTA have very kindly given each classteacher across the primary school £1.50 per child towards these parties and games – THANK YOU!

Christmas Eucharists – Wednesday 20th December

We very much hope you will be able to take the time to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas with us this year. We have two Christmas Eucharists in school on the last day of term (Wednesday 20th December). There will be a Reception, Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3 School Eucharist at 9:15a.m. in the Key Stage 1 Hall and one for Year 4, Year 5 & Year 6 at 10:45a.m. in the Key Stage 2 Hall. The Eucharists, led by Fr Mark, will include a number of Christmas readings, Christmas Carols and performances by the school choir. Please come and join us!

News from St Thomas' Church

This Sunday is the feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday in the Church's year and the day when we celebrate the kingly authority given to Jesus following his ascension into heaven. We have our usual Sunday services with said Mass at 08.00, Sung Mass at 10.00 and Evensong with Benediction at 18.00. In addition at 12.00, we have our monthly Family Mass which enables families to worship together as the service is shorter, the talk is interactive and there are activities for the young people to do. The singing is led by the children of the choir and other children are involved as servers, readers and sidespersons. This is a good opportunity for all our recently confirmed children to come together and make their communion and a great introduction to the worshipping life of the church for those who are part of our school and would like to find out more. Please do come along, everyone is welcome.

Cally Shanley reminds us that the following Saturday, the 2nd of December, we are looking forward to the Annual Christmas Youth Concert beginning at 19.00 in St Thomas' Church. With performances from St Thomas' Kids, Essex Dance Theatre, St Thomas' Primary School and Becket Keys School, this is an evening not to be missed. Suitable for all ages, please bring family and friends and no tickets are required. There will be a licensed bar and a retiring collection. We look forward to seeing you there!

The day after is the First Sunday of Advent, our morning services are at 08.00 and 10.00 while in the evening at 18.00, the choir will lead a very special Advent Carol Service when we move through the church, moving from darkness to light as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The music and readings will help us understand this time of Advent and all our welcome to this moving act of worship.

Looking further ahead....

December Family Mass is on Sunday 10th December

Chilli and Carols around the Christmas Tree from 17.30 on Friday 15th December

Nine Lessons and Carols at 18.00 on Sunday 17th December

Finally.....

St Thomas of Canterbury Church are holding their Christmas Concert on **Saturday 2nd December 2023**. Doors open at 6:30p.m. with the concert starting at 7:00p.m. There are a range of performers and performances including our very own KS1 and KS2 School Choirs. The concert will end at around 9:00p.m. I do hope many of you will be able to go along and support this event.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope we can bring the end of term to a successful conclusion.

Have a lovely 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

A Christian community where children are known by name and loved, which empowers them to learn and to grow in faith, knowledge and fellowship.