

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

15th December 2023



The month of December continues at a pace and I am sure you are all continuing to open your advent calendars during this final countdown to Christmas. With only 3 school days to go until we break up for a well-deserved rest there is still so much to pack in!

Don't forget that on Wednesday 20th December we will come together as a school community in fellowship to celebrate our 'Preparing for Christmas' Eucharists with Fr. Mark in the school halls. Reception, Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3 will hold their service at 9:15a.m. in the Key Stage 1 Hall with Year 4, Year 5 & Year 6 starting at 10:45a.m. in the Key Stage 2 Hall. We do hope many of you will be able to join us in this special act of collective worship.

I would like to take this opportunity, once again, to congratulate all the EYFS & Key Stage 1 staff and children on their superb performance of *'The Angel That Nearly Missed It All'* last week. I am sure there were some very proud parents/carers, grandparents and other family members who were amazed at the confidence and talent on display...it certainly got us all in the festive spirit of Christmas! Following the retiring collections after the three performances we raised a fantastic **£653.40** for our school charity.

This week it was the turn of our Lower School children to put on a wonderful Christmas performance of *'Bethlehem – The Musical'*. It was a joy to watch and to witness the amazing individual gifts and talents being showcased. The children certainly made us smile, giggle, laugh and groan at some of the jokes – well done to everyone. My thanks also goes to all the staff who have worked so hard to ensure all the performances were of such a high quality despite the many challenges we have had to contend with – mainly sickness absence. It is hard to convey to you how much time, effort, energy and love go in to these performances from all the staff involved. At a tiring end of term I am proud that their dedication was justly rewarded. Thanks to your generous donations at the end of the Lower School performances we raised a further **£374.65** towards our chosen charity – **Little Havens Children's Hospice**.

Next week we look forward to our Upper School Christmas Carol Service taking place at St Thomas of Canterbury Church. The performances are:

- Monday 18th December @ 2:00p.m.
- Monday 18th December @ 6:30p.m. **[ADULTS ONLY]**

If you are due to attend this event, please can I remind you that you **MUST** bring your ticket to gain entry to the performance. Audience numbers are limited to 200 per performance.

On Tuesday (19th) and back by popular demand, we will be holding another festive treat as the children and staff from across the primary school take part in the festive **'Santa Dash'**. This involves completing the Daily Mile whilst listening to Christmas music and wearing an assortment of Christmas hats and hairbands. It is a great opportunity to see our school community coming together with the older children helping out the younger ones to clock up the laps. By the end of the afternoon I am sure there will be a few red faces, red noses (Rudolph would be jealous!) but huge smiles all round.

The celebration of Christmas brings much anticipation and joy at this time of year. In school we have been focusing very much on the true meaning of Christmas during our journey through Advent focusing on the qualities of hope, peace, love and joy. I do hope that many of you will be celebrating Christmas and the incarnation of Christ by attending church on Christmas Day. At the end of this newsletter there are further details about services taking place at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church this Christmas, including **Carols & Chilli** taking place TODAY.

On behalf of all the staff at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School may I wish you and your families a safe, happy and Christ-filled Christmas and a wonderful start to 2024! I hope you get a chance to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas amongst the festive preparations and rejoice at the birth of Jesus Christ.

Staffing Update

Next week we will be saying a fond farewell, thank you and good luck to **Miss Lydia Black** as she prepares to leave St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School and move on to a new school in January 2024. I am sure you will all join me in thanking her for her commitment and dedication to our school and wish her every success for the future.

Following a robust recruitment process over the last few weeks, I am delighted to announce that we will be welcoming a new classteacher to our school after the Christmas break to take up post in the Year 1/Year 2 class (21B) in Key Stage 1. **Mrs Jenny Burrus** will be taking over responsibility for teaching 21B from January 2024...and we don't even need to change the class name!! Mrs Burrus is an experienced classteacher and is moving from a school in Basildon to join us here at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. Mrs Burrus has already spent some time in school meeting the staff and children and preparing for the new spring term. I am sure you will all make Mrs Burrus feel very welcome as she comes to join our school community. Please do hold Miss Black and Mrs Burrus in your prayers.



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.

In the New Year we will continue to monitor and contact parents/carers of children who have attendance of below 90%. 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.

January 2024 Return

January 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

The children return to school for the start of the spring term 2024 on **Thursday 4th January 2024**.

Please note there is no non-pupil professional development and training day and all children and staff return on this date.

Thursday, January 4, 2024

REMINDER: Christmas Party Day – Wednesday 20th December

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. The PTA have very kindly given each classteacher £1.50 per child towards these parties and games – THANK YOU!



PTA – Thank You!

I am sure you will wish to join me in thanking the PTA Committee and all the volunteer helpers who organised the school Christmas Fete last Friday in the school halls. This is the first time we have held the event as a primary school making use of both school halls. The event was very well attended and both our Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 choirs attracted many parents/carers and other visitors as they performed a number of Christmas songs – both old and new. Congratulations to all the lucky raffle winners and I hope everyone found something to buy, enjoy or keep you entertained. As I said at the beginning of the Christmas Fete, every penny spent at this and other PTA events goes into our school allowing us to provide the very best resources and experiences for your children. In recent weeks, the PTA Committee have very kindly pledged additional funding to our Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) to purchase new resources for the classrooms as well as provide new equipment for the outdoor areas. Keep your eyes peeled because they will be appearing soon!!

St Thomas of Canterbury Church – Advent & Christmas 2023

Fr. Mark warmly invites you and your family to celebrate Advent and Christmas at St Thomas of Canterbury Church. Over the Christmas period there are a number of services taking place at St. Thomas'. Please take a look at the church website for further details – www.st-thomas.org.uk or telephone 01277 201094.

These include:

- **Friday 15th December**
Carols & Chilli Around the Christmas Tree (5:00-8:00p.m.)
- **Sunday 17th December** (Advent 3) - 6:00p.m. Nine Lessons and Carols
- **Sunday 24th December - Christmas Eve**
 - 4:00p.m. Christingle Service for younger children
 - 6:00p.m. Christingle Service
 - 11:30p.m. Midnight Mass
- **Monday 25th December - Christmas Day**
 - 8:00a.m. Mass of the Dawn
 - 10:00a.m. Sung Family Mass



Everyone at St Thomas' Church is looking forward to welcoming members of our school community as we celebrate together this amazing gift of God's son, born in Bethlehem all those years ago and who continues to call us to worship, to live in love and fellowship and to serve those in need.

Sunday worship continues into the New Year and on Sunday 7th January 2024 St Thomas' Church will celebrate the arrival of the wise men at Epiphany.

Finally....

On Monday and Tuesday morning this week the children across our school thoroughly enjoyed the Hurricane Productions pantomime of 'Peter Pan' in the school halls. The cast from Hurricane Productions were very complimentary of our children and how engaging and responsive they were!

Christmas Jumpers - On Tuesday 19th December we are all looking forward to tucking in to our school Christmas dinner prepared by our wonderful Catering Team. To get us all in the festive mood we are asking the children and staff to wear their Christmas jumpers! Children should still wear school uniform on their bottom half, including school shoes.

Last week we received confirmation from the Royal British Legion that St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School raised **£832.14** towards the annual Poppy Appeal – well done!

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

Wishing you all a safe and happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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.