

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

12th January 2024

Happy New Year!

In this first newsletter for 2024, may I take this opportunity on behalf of everyone at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School to wish you a rather belated Happy New Year! I do hope 2024 has got off to a good start? I know I have been able to speak to many of you at the EYFS/KS1 and KS2 school gates since our return to school on 4th January and it is wonderful to see this new spring term getting off to a positive start. Although it is referred to as the spring term it feels decidedly wintery at present and the very dark mornings make it a struggle to get up! After the marathon of the autumn term, we have a sprint in the spring term as we try and cram in as much as possible. The second half of this term is only 4 weeks and 4 days!!

On Wednesday this week you should have received via Parent Hub the 'Dates for the Diary' list for this spring term. Please do keep them handy as it will allow you to take a full and active part in school life and ensure you don't miss some of those key dates and events. Please remember you can always access the dates via our school website as well – www.stthomaspri.org

The staff and I look forward to your continued support, trust and confidence over the coming term and hope once again we can continue to work in collaboration and partnership with you and your children.

Staffing Update

As we start this new spring term, I am delighted to welcome new members of staff to St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. **Mrs Natasha Ragheb** has been appointed to our wonderful catering staff and has taken up the post of Catering Assistant. I am confident she will be a great addition to Mrs Turner's (Catering Manager) team and help continue to meet the high standards we expect from our school kitchen. Mrs Ragheb has enjoyed getting to know the staff and children and I am sure you will wish her every success in our school community.

We have also appointed **Mrs Punitha Rangaraj** as an additional midday assistant (MDA) and she is now working every lunchtime to help supervise and safeguard our children during this very busy period of the school day. I am sure you will welcome Mrs Rangaraj as she embarks on her new role ably supported by Mrs Dansey our Senior Midday Assistant.

The Big Ambition – Have Your Say!

The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, has launched **The Big Ambition**, a national survey of children and young people across England.

The Big Ambition aims to hear from children across England on what they think is important! In the lead up to the next General Election, the Children's Commissioner wants to take children's thoughts, opinions and ideas to decision-makers, to make sure that the Government hears young people's voices on what they think needs to be done to make children's lives better in England.

So far, the survey has had an overwhelming response with more than 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers participating, making it one of the largest surveys of its kind.

There is now one final push before the survey closes. By participating in this survey you can make sure that the children and young people of Brentwood are fairly represented in the results.

Children and parents or carers can complete the survey here: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigambition

The Big Ambition survey will be open until Friday 19th January.



Help Us to Improve Attendance

**ATTENDANCE
MATTERS.**
ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

I know how the vast majority of our parents/carers work so hard and are dedicated to improving regular attendance, and this is one of our school top priorities too. So many of you are going above and beyond to ensure your children are on time and in school every day – and I want to say thank you once again for the brilliant work you are doing. Alongside our school's commitment to improving attendance, we are not alone in tackling challenges around absence. The Department for Education (DfE) and Local Authority (LA) are working with key partners like the

NHS, neighbouring local authorities and the Attendance Action Alliance to put a wide range of support in place.

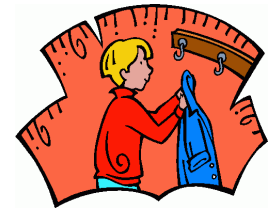
Although our attendance rates are generally good, they are not yet good enough! I am sure as parents/carers I do not need to remind you that moments matter, attendance counts – not just because of the importance of learning, but because of the wider holistic benefits for children's wellbeing and happiness.

At the end of last term our attendance rate for the whole school (Reception to Year 6) stood at **93.8%** This is against a nationally recognised attendance target of 96+%. Sadly our number of children identified as persistently absent (below 90%) or severely absent has also increased – 102 children in total.

Let this new spring term be an opportunity for us all to work at improving attendance rates across the school - like you, I want as many children as possible through our school gates this term relaxed, refreshed and ready to learn.

Coats!

With the cold, wintry weather arriving recently and a flurry of snow it is yet another chance to give a general reminder about coats. Rather worryingly we still have a growing number of children 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.



I would also point out that the Year 6 Leavers' hoodie is not a substitute for a coat. Year 6 parents/carers will have received a separate communication via Parent Hub from Mrs Antrobus (Upper School Team Leader).

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.

Essex & Thames SCITT

We are delighted to be continuing our partnership with the Essex & Thames SCITT. This partnership involves the school working with Essex & Thames Primary SCITT to help train and produce high quality teachers. The continuing improvement of pupil progress and the well-being of children are at the heart of this collaboration and inform all aspects of the training. There is also a close relationship between the SCITT, Anglia Ruskin University and the school which provides an ideal environment for the exchange of ideas that informs practice across the partnership. As part of this work we have welcomed another SCITT student this term, **Mr William Hart** who will be on placement with us for the spring and summer terms. Mr Hart will be based in Year 5 and work closely alongside Mrs Antrobus in 5A. I am sure you will join me in welcoming him to St Thomas' Primary School and wish him every success on his placement with us.

Curriculum Information Leaflets for Parents – Spring Term 2024

Hopefully by now you will have received, via Parent Hub, a copy of the new Spring Term 2024 curriculum information guide for parents and carers. These are produced by teaching staff as a guide and indication of the themes and topics being covered this term. Please take the time to read this through and discuss it with your child. We hope it will give you some ideas about how you can support your child's learning and homework. We would highlight and promote the opportunities to research curriculum themes at the local library, via the internet or by visiting a museum. The most important thing is to talk to your child and find out what they have been doing and learning. Copies of this guide are now available via the school website by clicking on the appropriate Early Years, Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 boxes at the bottom of the home page. If there are any aspects of the work your child is covering which you feel you may be able to offer help or advice with then please approach your child's classteacher. Thank you for your support!

Year 3 Swimming



Lessons for the children in Year 3 (3DW & 3BW) will begin on Friday 2nd February 2024. 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 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.

School Eucharists

The Eucharists for this term have been communicated via the 'Dates for the Diary' sheet previously circulated and are also detailed below.

The **EYFS/Reception, Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3 Ash Wednesday Eucharist** (including class ashing) will take place on Wednesday 14th February 2024 at 9:15a.m. in the KS1 Hall.

The **Year 4, Year 5 & Year 6 Ash Wednesday Eucharist** (including ashing) will take place on Wednesday 14th February 2024 at 10:45a.m. in the KS2 Hall.

The **Maundy Thursday Eucharists** during **Holy Week** will take place on Thursday 28th March 2024 – Key Stage 2 at 9:30a.m. at St Thomas of Canterbury Church and EYFS/KS1 at 2:00p.m. in the Key Stage 1 Hall.

I do hope you will be able to join us for these services.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Primary School Admissions – September 2024

For those of you with younger children due to start school in EYFS/Reception in September 2024 now is the time to make your application. This applies to all parents of children born during the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020. You **MUST** now apply for primary school places as the closing date is **Monday 15th January 2024.** Please apply online by visiting www.essex.gov.uk/admissions

Education Sunday 2024

Fr. Mark and I have met this week to discuss the arrangements for Education Sunday.

Our annual church service to celebrate Education Sunday will take place at St. Thomas' Church on **Sunday 28th January 2024** starting at **10:00a.m.** This is a very special service of thanksgiving and a chance to offer thanks and prayers for the life and work of our primary school and all the people associated with them. We hope as many children and families as possible will be able to attend this very special occasion and come together as a school and church community. All children attending must wear their school uniform and will be expected to sit with their classteacher and other class members at the front of the church. Parents are more than welcome to stay and sit in other areas of the church for the service.



In order for us to get a clear indication as to how many children to expect and how many seats to reserve in the church, we would be very grateful if you could indicate with a note confirming your attendance in your child's reading diary (EYFS/KS1) or homework diary (KS2). Thank you.

Finally....

As you can see there is a lot going on already as we embark on this new term in school. Please do keep up to date with all communications sent out via the school with Parent Hub and the school website being your best sources of information.

Please continue to hold the life and work of our primary school in your thoughts and prayers.

Have a wonderful 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.