

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

9th February 2024



Next week we enter the liturgical season of Lent. Lent is more frequently seen as a time of solemn observance and preparation for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. From its start on Ash Wednesday (14th February 2024) until its conclusion on Easter Sunday, Lent is a traditional time for fasting or giving something up or abstinence. Just as we carefully prepare for events in our personal lives, such as a wedding or birthday, Lent invites us to make our minds and hearts ready for remembering Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

On Wednesday we are delighted to be welcoming Fr. Mark in to school to preside over our Ash Wednesday Eucharists to be held in the school halls. Parents/carers are very welcome to attend.

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

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

There will also be the imposition of ashes for those that wish to receive the sign of the cross on their forehead.

In your preparations you may decide to give up just one item for Lent, more commonly a 'luxury' such as chocolate! It is also becoming increasingly common for people to give up other things in order to refocus their faith during this time; such as watching TV, going to the gym, even computer games! And, of course, more and more Christians are turning to the **40acts challenge** as a way of doing Lent differently; using simple daily reflections and acts of generosity as a way of putting others first during preparations for Easter. After half term we will be exploring the 40acts challenge with the children in collective worship – ask your children to talk to you about it!

Respect For School Property

It saddens me to have to share with parents and carers our growing concerns over lack of respect for school property. This has become a particular issue with the way our children are behaving and treating the Key Stage 2 main toilet block (off of the Lower School playground). In recent weeks we have had broken toilet cubicles, graffiti on the walls, whole toilet rolls put down the toilet and toilet rolls removed from the individual cubicles. The staff have spoken at length with the children about this lack of respect for school property and Mrs Coughtrey (Deputy Headteacher) has also spoken with Key Stage 2 children collectively about this anti-social behaviour. This behaviour is distressing to adults and children and is costly to the school in repairing damage and replacing items that go missing. We take great pride in our school and are blessed to have such a proactive premises team, led by Mr Powis (Caretaker) who keep our school so clean, tidy and well maintained.

Needless to say, we are monitoring this area of the school very carefully and will take decisive action if any child/ren are caught damaging the school premises. Please can I ask you as parents/carers to reinforce the message at home about how we treat our school with decency and respect. I am confident that this type of behaviour is not displayed in your own bathrooms at home! Thank you for your support and co-operation in this matter.



Do You Have Time To Spare?

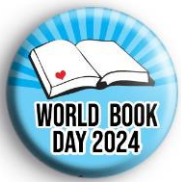
One of the most important skills we learn at school, a skill for life long learning, is being able to read! We have many confident and avid readers across the primary school and our two school libraries are a credit to our learning environment and stocked with rich and varied texts.

For our younger children in EYFS and Key Stage 1, reading on a regular (daily) basis is so important. Practising their key word vocabulary, phonic skills and decoding are all things that take determination and focus. I am aware that many parents/carers support their children with reading at home and this is greatly valued and appreciated.

However, for some children they need more opportunities to read to an adult and we are hoping that there may be some parents/carers who could spare an hour a week to come in to school and hear the children read in the classroom. This opportunity would be predominantly in EYFS and Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2) and be in the afternoon. No prior experience is necessary, just a willingness to sit with a child and hear them read offering support and encouragement.

If this is something you feel you could commit to on a regular basis then please contact the School Office with your details and when you would be available to volunteer in school. Volunteers would be subject to a DBS safeguarding check before undertaking this role. I do hope some of you will give consideration to this very worthwhile opportunity.

World Book Day 2024



I am sure many of you will have noticed from the dates issued back in January that **Thursday 7th March** is World Book Day 2024. As we have done in previous years we are hoping to be able to celebrate this day by inviting your children to dress up! This is a day devoted to celebrating good books and literature and I hope we can do this in style! You may also have spotted that on Tuesday 5th March we are very excited to be welcoming an author (James Campbell) in to school to work with the children.

The children will be undertaking lots of book related activities in their classrooms across the course of World Book Day, and to get them in the spirit we are asking them to come to school dressed as one of their favourite book characters. The emphasis is once again on simple costumes and you do not need to go to great lengths or vast expense to provide a costume for this day. The children can wear their costumes to school and it would be even better if they could bring a copy of the book from which their character comes. Please bear in mind that the children will be completing normal lessons throughout the day so the costume needs to be practical for school. For the same reason we ask that the children do not wear hair dye or make up. The staff are going to join in with the fun and festivities and I am sure we are all looking forward to seeing what costumes and characters emerge! The children **do not** need to pay anything to dress up and at the end of the day they will come home with their World Book Day voucher which they can exchange at a local book shop for one of the World Book Day special titles or money off a full-priced book.

Times Tables Rock Stars – PTA Sponsored Event

Thank you to all the children and parents/carers who supported our PTA TTRS sponsored event last week. Across the course of the week we saw many 'battles' taking place and I am pleased to be able to share with you the top 3 classes:

- 1st place** – 4S (Mrs Sprake) – 43,698 points
- 2nd place** – 6G (Mrs Gore) – 33,905 points
- 3rd place** – 3BW (Mrs Backhouse & Mrs Whitaker) – 26,204 points

NB: Parents/carers came in 15th place with 1,469 points!!

On an individual basis the top 3 children were:

- 1st place** – Sebastian Ball (6G) – 11,277 points
- 2nd place** – Alex Wright (6G) – 9,046 points
- 3rd place** – Leo Brescan (3BW) – 7,834 points



Congratulations to everyone who took part. Your participation will have improved your times tables knowledge and raised additional funds for the school – a double win! I am looking forward to learning from the PTA how much we have raised in total....watch out for further details!!

Staffing Update

I regret to inform you that **Mrs Clare Emery** will be leaving her post as Learning Support Assistant (LSA) and Midday Assistant (MDA) at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School at the end of this half term. Mrs Emery is one of our fantastic team of Learning Support Assistants and Midday Assistants that work tirelessly to support the children with their learning and provide care and supervision at lunchtime within our primary school. However, I am delighted that Mrs Emery will be continuing in her role as School Librarian as well as acting as the Clerk to the Governing Body.

We have also said a fond farewell to **Mrs Kelly Bonnett** who has resigned from her numerous positions within the school – Learning Support Assistant, Midday Assistant and part of our cleaning and premises team. Mrs Bonnett has been on long-term sickness absence and has also relocated with her family to Lincolnshire. Mrs Bonnett has had a long and successful association with our school and will be sorely missed. I am sure you will continue to pray for her full recovery and for her family as they start a new chapter in a new community.

Last week we also said goodbye to **Mrs Helen Thompson** who left her post as LSA and MDA. We will also be saying goodbye to **Mrs Ayesha Khanom** (Midday Assistant) who will be leaving her post in early March. I am sure you will join me in thanking them both for their loyal service and dedication to our school and wish them every good wish and success for the future.

Over the past few weeks we have had a very successful recruitment drive for new Midday Assistants and I am very excited to be able to introduce them to you once all the relevant checks have been completed. I am sure they will be an asset to our team.

SCHOOL CLOSED - Non-Pupil Professional Development and Training Day

Please remember that Friday 16th February 2024 is a designated non-pupil professional development and training day. **The school is closed to the children.**

This will mean that the children break up for the half term holiday at the end of the day on Thursday 15th February 2024. We return for the second half of the spring term on Monday 26th February 2024 – don't be late!!

News from St Thomas' Church contributed by Fr Mark

It was lovely to see so many of you in St Thomas' for Education Sunday which proved to be a very special occasion and one where I think we all learnt something about numbers and the Bible! I hope you felt welcome and able to access the worship and look forward to seeing you again soon.

This Sunday, we are on the threshold of Lent as this is the Sunday next before Lent and so we are starting to think about how we shall be marking this special season of preparation. It is customary to give something up for Lent but we are also encouraged to take something on, maybe some charitable work, to attend an extra act of worship or to read a chapter of the bible. Whatever we all choose to do it is worth doing the thinking ahead of time so that we are not rushed into a last-minute choice which we then find hard to sustain!

This Sunday also sees our monthly Family Mass which is a more informal act of worship designed to allow families to worship together, our young people to get involved in the service and for it to be more interactive. I do hope you will come along especially those who are confirmed and those thinking about being confirmed later this year.

08.00 Said Mass

10.00 Sung Mass

followed by refreshments in the Church Hall

12.00 Family Mass

18.00 Choral Evensong

During the week Wednesday sees our cake and cuppa mornings from 10.00 to 12.00 and on Thursdays at 10.30 we hold our Toddler service which leads into the toddler group that meets in the Hall. On Thursday evening at 19.00, we continue to offer Alpha, next week the question we are exploring is 'Why and how do I pray?' Curious? Anyone is welcome to drop in for a session to find out more, please come to the door to the Church Centre around the back of the Church, just before 19.00.

Wednesday is also Ash Wednesday when Lent actually begins and at Mass, those attending are marked with an ash cross to remind us of our humanity, and of our ability to make mistakes and to reject God. All are welcome as we

gather in St Thomas' at 12.15 and 19.00. On the evening before we look forward to a Pancake party in the Church Hall details of which have already been shared.

Saturday morning allows us to walk the Stations of the Cross at 10.15, an excellent Lenten discipline that challenges us as we walk with Jesus during those last moments of his earthly life as he goes from standing before Pilate to the place of execution.

Sunday 18th February will be the First Sunday of Lent.

08.00 Said Mass

10.00 Sung Mass

The Clubhouse meets during this service

followed by refreshments in the Church Hall

18.00 Choral Evensong.

Advance Notice: St David's Day – 1st March 2024



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 second of their feast days. On Friday 1st March we will be celebrating St David's Feast Day!

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

Finally....

On Wednesday you should have received a Parent Hub message with details of the 2nd Brentwood Scouts & Friends of St Thomas' Church Shrove Tuesday Pancake Café! See further details below:



I wish you all a wonderful weekend – see you on Monday!

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.