

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

24th October 2025



Well done everyone - we made it! Eight weeks ago, back when the sun was shining and we were enjoying the warmth of late summer, the 2025-2026 academic year got underway. Now at the end of October, surrounded by the beautiful colours of autumn we prepare to break up for a thoroughly well-deserved half term holiday.

Today we are looking forward to welcoming back our Year 5 children, staff and volunteers who are returning from their residential trip to Norfolk. I am sure they will have lots to tell and share following their experiences at Letton Hall, including time spent at Norwich Cathedral, Norwich Puppet Theatre, Thetford Forest and Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse. I am very aware how tiring these residential trips are for both adults and children and I am sure everyone will sleep well tonight!

The last few weeks of this half term have certainly been very busy and I am sure we 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 also seems hard to believe that our children in Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) are now coming to the end of their first half term in our primary school – how this time has flown by! Over the past 8 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.

Please look out for the reminder later in this newsletter regarding the move to winter uniform when the children return on **Monday 3rd November 2025**.

Attendance Targeted Support Meeting

This week we have engaged with our termly Attendance Targeted Support Meeting, welcoming Mr James Moir (Senior Attendance Specialist) from the Local Authority in to school.

This was an opportunity to take an early look at our attendance patterns and discuss any concerns around absence and punctuality. As a school we are committed to ensuring all children are in school every day – ready to learn and thrive! Already there are some concerns about irregular school attendance, high levels of sickness absence, poor punctuality and requests for leave of absence during term time. Alongside our work with Aquinas School Attendance Provision, we have started to contact parents/carers where there are early signs of poor attendance and offering early support to improve engagement with school which ultimately improves children's life chances.

Already this academic year we are seeing a growing number of children absent from school due to illness. We appreciate that there are times when children are genuinely too ill or unwell to attend school. However, there are many examples where children could attend school even when feeling a little under the weather. The NHS and Essex County Council have produced some useful guidance, *'What to do – Advice on childhood illnesses'* which gives some common-sense advice on when your child can and cannot attend school. We would encourage you to look at this carefully and use it as a guide for decision making when deciding if you need to keep your child off of school. On the advice of the Senior Attendance Specialist, if your child is absent due to illness which is indicated by the green category below (*Go to school; if needed, get treatment as required*) then

this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. For some other absences we may also ask you to share information that has been provided by a healthcare professional, such as your GP or pharmacist.

Good attendance and punctuality routines improves the educational outcomes for all children and also sets the standards and expectations for adult life and the working world. Please help us to help your children to get the best out of their schooling – they only get one chance – let's not waste it!!

What to do

Advice on childhood illnesses



Go to school; if needed, get treatment as required



Some restrictions for school attendance



Don't go to school and see the GP

What it's called?	What it's like	Going to school	Getting treatment	More advice
Asthma flare up	Worsening of usual symptoms	➡	Follow your care plan	Stay off school if feeling too unwell
Chicken pox	Rash begins as small, red, flat spots that develop into itchy fluid-filled blisters	➡➡	Pharmacy	Back to school five days after on-set of the rash, or when all lesions are crusted over
Common cold	Runny nose, sneezing, sore throat	➡➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
Conjunctivitis	Teary, red, itchy, painful eye(s)	➡➡	Pharmacy	Try not to touch eye to avoid spreading*
Flu	Fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose, headache, body aches and pain, exhaustion, sore throat	➡➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene*
German measles/ Rubella	Fever, tiredness. Raised, red, rash that starts on the face and spreads downwards	●	GP	Back to school four days after the rash has started, if feeling well enough. Please let the school know, as pregnant members of staff may be affected.
Glandular fever	High temperature, swollen glands, sore throat; usually more painful than any before	➡➡	GP	*
Hand, foot & mouth disease	Fever, sore throat, headache, small painful blisters inside the mouth on tongue and gums (may appear on hands and feet)	➡➡	GP	Attend school while monitoring symptoms
Head lice	Itchy scalp (may be worse at night)	➡➡	Pharmacy	
Impetigo	Clusters of red bumps or blisters surrounded by area of redness	●	GP	Back to school when lesions crust or 48 hours after start of antibiotics
Measles	Fever, cough, runny nose, watery inflamed eyes, rash	●	GP	Back to school four days from on-set of rash, and if feeling well enough
Ringworm	Red ring shaped rash, may be itchy, rash may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty	➡➡	Pharmacy	
Scabies	Itching rash, commonly between fingers, wrists, elbows, arm	➡➡	GP	Back to school after first treatment
Scarlet fever	Fever, unwell, red tongue, sandpaper rash	●	GP	Exclusion period during first 24 hours of antibiotics*
Shingles	Pain, itching, or tingling along the affected nerve pathway. Blister-type rash	➡➡	GP	Only stay off school if rash is weeping and cannot be covered
Sickness bug/ diarrhoea	Stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea	➡➡	Pharmacy	Contact GP if symptoms persist after 48 hours
Threadworms	Intense itchiness around anus	➡➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
Tonsillitis/ Strep throat	Intense sore throat for more than 1 day	➡➡	Pharmacy	See GP if temperature lasts more than 48 hours or cannot swallow. Only need to stay off school if feeling too unwell
Whooping cough	Violent coughing, with a 'whoop'	●	GP	Exclusion period during first five days of antibiotics
Covid				Visit www.nhs.uk for latest guidance

*Attend school while monitoring symptoms.

This information is a guide and has been checked by health professionals. If you are unsure about your child's wellbeing, we recommend you contact your pharmacy or GP to check.

Should my child go to school/nursery today?

Hertfordshire and West Essex Healthier Together for further information
<https://www.hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/parentscarers>

Working in partnership with



Parents' Evening

We are thrilled to already have **73%** of our parent/carer community signed up for parents' evening since our booking system opened on Monday this week through our online virtual platform, SchoolCloud.



Our Autumn Term Parents' Evenings 2025 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 2026 as well as our usual 'Open Classrooms' opportunity on 11th November 2025.

On Monday 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 5th November and Thursday 6th November 2025 between 4:00p.m. and 7:00p.m. The appointments will be kept strictly to 10 minutes per child.

REMEMBER: Bookings close at 6:00p.m. on Wednesday 29th October 2025.

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.

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.

WINTER

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

EYFS/KS1

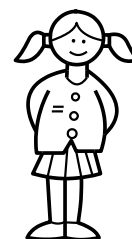
Grey skirt or pinafore dress, ***white polo shirt**, ***bottle green cardigan or jumper**, White/grey/black socks or plain green/grey/black tights.

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

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.

Grey tailored trousers (or tailored 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.

N.B. Items marked * must have the school badge embroidered on the garment.

Shoes need to be sensible black leather (no trainers or boots). We do not like lights or toys in the shoes so please bear this in mind when you are purchasing any new shoes.

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.

School Bags

We are having increasing problems with the quantity and size of school bags which are being brought in to classrooms across the primary school. Our classroom cloakrooms are limited in size and when children bring large bags/rucksacks alongside coats and PE bags we are finding it increasingly difficult to store them in a neat and safe manner.

As a reminder the following applies to school bags:

- In EYFS (Reception) and Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & Year 2) the children **DO NOT** need to bring a school bag to school. The exception to this may be on a day when your child has a before/after school club and needs to bring in a change of clothes, e.g. football kit. Generally, all they need to bring on a daily basis is their bookbag which will contain their reading book/s and their Home School Diary. They do not need any other bags.
- In Key Stage 2 (Year 3 – 6) the children may wish to bring a small bag/rucksack containing their reading book/s, Home School Diary, pencil case and homework items. These do not need to be excessively big as classroom space is limited.

If you are purchasing items of school uniform from the PTA pre-loved sales, please do not purchase a school bag unless your child is in the correct year group to need one. At the moment we have a lot of Key Stage 1 children appearing with bags which are unnecessary. Thank you for your support.

The Royal British Legion - Poppy Appeal 2025

After half term we will return 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 3rd November up to and including Tuesday 11th November. The House Captains, Sport & Music 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 11th 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, Sports & Music 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:

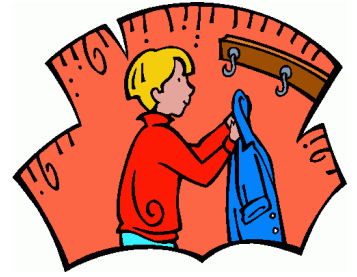
- Poppy wristband/bracelets – **£1.00**
- Poppy snap band – **£1.50**
- Poppy reflector – **50p**



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!

Coats!

With the colder, wet weather starting to appear on a regular basis, 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.



Open Classrooms – 11th November 2025



We are very excited to be inviting you to our 'Open Classrooms' opportunity! 'Open Classrooms' for parents/carers will be held on **Tuesday 11th November 2025** from 3:30p.m. until 4:15p.m. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to view your child's working environment, see where they sit and marvel at the displays within the classroom. The classteacher's will also be present to answer any questions you might have about the work on display. You will also get a chance to look at some of your child's exercise books (English and Maths) to see the work they have completed to date. It is not an opportunity to discuss academic progress and attainment as this will be covered during parents' evening.

This is an open invitation with no designated appointment times and I'm sure your child will relish the opportunity to proudly show you around their classroom. Please remember to wait on the playground until 3:30p.m. Unfortunately we are not able to admit any pushchairs due to health and safety/fire regulations. We look forward to seeing you!

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 2026) is **31st October 2025**. 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 31st October 2025.

Applications can be made via the Essex website www.essex.gov.uk/admissions

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

We look forward to welcoming you back on **Monday 3rd November 2025** – don't be late!!

Mr D. Moran
Headteacher

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

And...please remember if you have any questions or queries or comments feel free to contact us:

admin@stthomaspri.essex.sch.uk