

# ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



## NEWSLETTER

13<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Happy New (academic) Year!** It was wonderful to welcome you all back to school last week after what I hope was a fantastic summer holiday (although I am sure it may now seem a dim and distant memory!) Although we may all feel a little apprehensive about returning to school and getting up early once again it doesn't take too long to get back into the normal routines. It is a joy and delight to see our Primary School building full of children and staff with the sound of excitement and laughter permeating throughout the building. Once again, the children have demonstrated such confidence and resilience as they return after the summer holiday.



Today we were delighted to welcome back Fr. Mark after our summer break who leads collective worship every Friday morning. We are very appreciative that Fr. Mark continues to support our collective worship together. In addition to leading collective worship every Friday, Fr. Mark will also continue leading class-based Eucharists this academic year. This involves a short Eucharist service in the classrooms with each class on a rolling weekly rota. It is a wonderful opportunity to see the Eucharist up close and a very intimate act of worship and thanksgiving.

Please do take the time to read the rest of this newsletter as it contains important information about the term ahead – thank you!

### Welcome to our Reception Children



Mr Beales (Early Years Lead) and the Reception Team have had a busy start to the term meeting parents/carers and getting to know the new children joining our school. Last week we held our 'All About Me' meetings and this week the children have been spending time exploring their new classrooms and beginning to learn the routines and expectations of starting school. I would like to extend a special welcome to all the new Reception children as you prepare to embark on your educational journey with us – we are all looking forward to getting to know you in the coming days, weeks and months ahead! As the Reception children begin their time with us at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School they will be given an olive wood holding cross from the Holy Land and a card with the words of The Lord's Prayer. Just like the children, each one of these crosses is unique and special – they all have a slightly different pattern and grain. These crosses are a reminder that God is always with us, especially during new experiences and challenges.

### Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) – Bronze Award

I am delighted to be able to share with you that St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School has been awarded the Primary Geography Quality Mark Bronze Award. This award from the Geography Association recognises and celebrates the lively and effective geographical learning taking place across the school. It has involved a thorough review of our geography curriculum, update to our schemes of work as well as purchase of new resources to develop geography teaching and learning. This work has been lead and co-ordinated by Mrs Sprake (Geography Subject Leader). I am sure you will join me in congratulating her and all the staff and children for the hard work that has gone in to achieving this award. The Bronze Award is valid until 2027 and we will be looking at how we can build upon this to achieve the Silver Award in the future.



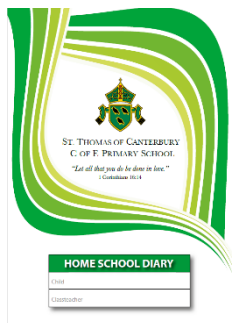
## School Uniform

As a school community we take great pride in wearing our school uniform. Thank you for your support with our school uniform policy. Can I remind you that we have a strict school uniform code and children must only wear approved uniform. We have had to remind a number of children about appropriate footwear (no trainers are permitted), jewellery and hair accessories. If you are in any doubt about what is permissible please check your child's Home School Diary, visit the school website or speak to your child's classteacher or the School Office. In the same way we will contact you if we are unhappy with your child's school uniform. All children should be wearing **SUMMER** uniform until the October half term.



I would also like to remind you that items of clothing with the school logo on can only be purchased from our approved school uniform provider – SmartyPants. We do not allow or authorise any other uniform provider to use our logo as this is in breach of copyright laws. Please do not ask SmartyPants or other uniform providers to logo items of clothing you have purchased elsewhere as this is strictly prohibited. The Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School have unanimously approved this decision and wish to remind you of this situation to avoid upset or disappointment.

## Home School Diaries



I hope by now you have had a chance to look through your child's new Home School Diary which have, once again, been kindly funded and donated by the PTA. You will notice that this year they continue to be in a more compact A5 size which will hopefully make them more manageable and fit into children's school bags more comfortably. This year we have redesigned the content and layout of the Home School Diaries so that they are relevant to all children in our primary school. This means that children in EYFS/Reception and Key Stage 1 are receiving these for the first time – I hope you like them!!

One of the many aims of the Home School Diary is to communicate with you our vision for education whilst your child is at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School.

Our vision offers a framework for education based around Character Education and promoting wisdom, hope, community and dignity – it also offers rigour and academic excellence whilst providing an environment where young people know that they are not just valued for the results they get but for the people they become.

The Home School Diaries are invaluable in promoting and sharing information about your child's progress and conduct in school and also a good way for you to be able to quickly and easily communicate with the classteacher. It also acts as a reading record and we would encourage you and your child to record when you hear them read at home in the relevant section in the diary. If you do write a message in the Home School Diary for your child's classteacher please make sure your child brings it to their attention so we can respond accordingly. Please take care of them and ensure your child has it with them in school everyday. At this time of year we ask you to ensure you have been through the first few pages with your child and signed the Home School Agreement as well as all the permission slips which will allow your child to play a full and active part in the curriculum. Please try and have all these signed as soon as possible. Next week myself and Mrs Coughtrey will be visiting each classroom to add our signature to demonstrate our partnership for the coming academic year.

One area I would ask you to pay particular attention to is the page headed 'E-safety and Acceptable Use Policy'. We have updated our media parental consent form to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You will now need to give permission for the following by circling the yes/no option:

- Photographs/Videos – for use within school premises
- Photographs/Videos – for use in school publications
- Photographs/Videos – for use on school website
- Photographs/Videos – for use on MarvellousMe

In some diaries we have situations where parents/carers have signed the consent form but not circled their options. Please can you check you have completed it correctly so we are aware of your permissions related to each area. You can change your mind at any point to the consent given and we would ask you to indicate this in writing so we can update our records.

## EYFS Parents' Information Evening



### PARENT MEETING



This term we are delighted to be hosting a Parents' Information Evening for our parents/carers of children starting in EYFS/Reception. This year the meeting will be hosted via Zoom so you will be able to join from the comfort of your own home! We hope it will also allow more parents and carers to attend and participate without the worry of arranging childcare. At this meeting the Early Years Team will be able to share with you some of the exciting things your children will be doing and learning as well as communicate our expectations and how you can help with your child's learning. It is a good opportunity to develop a strong partnership between home and school and all work for the benefit of your child.

The date for this meeting is detailed below and we do hope that as many parents/carers as possible will be able to attend.

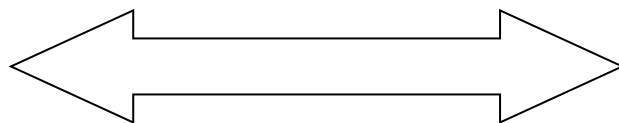
**Reception/EYFS Parents' Information Evening** – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October – 6:00p.m.

The Zoom link will be distributed via Parent Hub nearer to the above date. We look forward to seeing you!

## Hair Accessories

We continue to notice and have some concerns around the size, style and colour of some hair accessories worn by girls to school. Our school policy sets out that *"when hair is long enough, we request it is tied back all the time, using plain green, black or white hair bands and clips."* Whilst many people adhere to the colours stipulated we have concerns about the size of bows and ribbons worn in the hair. Very often these bows become an unnecessary distraction and cause problems in the classroom.

Can I please ask that approved hair accessories are no bigger than 8cm (3 inches). Next week we will be giving children a 'gentle' reminder of what is acceptable.



**8cm (3 inches)**

## Extra-Curricular Activities/Clubs



We are delighted that extra-curricular clubs will be continuing this term after the summer break. The staff have already met to finalise the extra curricular activities and clubs which will be on offer this term across the primary school. It would be a good opportunity to remind you that we do expect the children to show dedication and commitment to the clubs they attend through regular attendance and participation. We appreciate that in the first two weeks they may be trying them out but after this we expect them to make a firm and decisive decision about their attendance.

This week (Wednesday) you should have received via Parent Hub a special 'Clubs Edition' of this newsletter with more detail and information. Extra-curricular clubs and activities will begin next week – week commencing **16<sup>th</sup> September 2024**.

## Lower Key Stage 2 School Swimming



Swimming lessons for 4TW, 4B & 4M began this Friday (13<sup>th</sup> September) and I would like to remind parents that we very much rely on your payments to cover the cost of swimming lessons of **£54 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 increase substantially. I hope you will agree that this represents 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. I would like to remind you that swimming forms part of the National Curriculum for PE at Key Stage 2 and is not optional. Please ensure your child has the correct swimming kit in school on Fridays. Please could we encourage you to make a prompt payment via our online payment system, [www.parentpay.com](http://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. Children in 3B and 3CA will be swimming later in the academic year but if you wish to pay for your lessons now this is also available via ParentPay. 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 from the school office for £4.00 – these must be paid for in advance on ParentPay. 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.

## Parent Prayer Group Meeting – All Welcome!

Another way in which we celebrate our Church School Christian distinctiveness and look to offer fellowship as a school community is through our weekly Prayer Group meeting. This group meets every Wednesday morning at 9:00a.m. in the Key Stage 2 library to pray for the life and work of the school, the wider community and also to spend some time in personal prayer and quiet reflection. In previous years we have had a modest but very dedicated group that meet to offer our weekly thoughts and prayers. If you would like to join us each week or just drop in when you are free we would be very pleased to welcome you to this group. It is a relaxed, friendly, informal group and no one is asked to pray or read aloud unless they wish to. For those that attend they find it an uplifting and refreshing part of the week and solid friendships have been formed over the years. I do hope you will be able to join us next week.

## Absence When Recovering From Diarrhoea or Vomiting

We are very mindful that at all times of the year and especially as we move in to the autumn and winter months children will experience periods of illness and sickness. At the beginning of a new academic year I would like to remind you of the advice that we follow from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) regarding their guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings. The guidance is in place to protect the school's pupils and staff and reduce the risk of acquiring an infection at school. The guidance from the UKHSA in such situations is to request that the pupil does not attend school until completely symptom free for **48 hours**.

## Studybugs

As we begin this new academic year we continue to promote the use of Studybugs, a more efficient and secure system for reporting your child's absence due to illness. Many parents have already downloaded the app and I would encourage all parents (especially those in EYFS) to do so as soon as possible even if you don't think you will use it! You can also report absence via your laptop or PC from <https://studybugs.com>

All absence due to illness must now be reported via Studybugs and School Office staff will remind you of this if you ring up to leave a message. This new system helps us track sickness related illness more closely and also provides you with reassurance, advice and guidance from the UKHSA. Thank you for your support.

## Attendance & Punctuality



As we get off to a new academic year we want to develop good habits and routines – this includes being in school every day and on time! From being present at the gates this week I have noticed a number of families running late and I must stress to you the importance of being on time in the morning. When children arrive late to school it is often embarrassing for them as well as an unnecessary distraction for the other children and adults who have already settled and started their learning. At primary school age the children very much rely on their parents/carers to take responsibility for embedding these good habits!



We will be monitoring both attendance and punctuality closely this term and contacting parents where we have concerns. The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority continue to place a big emphasis on both of these areas and encouraging schools to use statutory enforcement powers where necessary. This can lead to a penalty notice for irregular school attendance.

## Keeping Your Children Safe!



It is vitally important that we know who is collecting your child/ren at the end of the school day. If it is going to be someone different to normal who may be unfamiliar to us, please can you record a written note in the Home School Diary or contact the School Office. We will use this information to ensure your child goes home safely and would ask you to inform us as soon as possible if there are any changes to the normal routine or change of designated adult.

For everyone's safety we ask that scooters are **NOT** ridden on the Primary School site under any circumstances. It is wonderful to witness the growing number of children scooting to school and parking them in the scooter parks. Please remember that at the beginning and end of each day there are a lot of pedestrians on the school premises and we need to ensure everyone is safe.

A polite reminder that dogs are not permitted on the school site. This includes smaller dogs being carried. I would also ask you to be careful of where you leave your dog outside of the school gate. They should not be left unattended and please be mindful that not everyone is a dog lover – for some adults and children it can cause them distress and anxiety.

Jewellery is not permitted to be worn in school with the exception of small stud earrings. This is to keep your child safe and prevent unnecessary accidental injury to other children. Children are naturally very tactile. If your child wears earrings to school then they must be removed for PE lessons – your child will be expected to take them out and put them back in themselves. Adults cannot assist with this and we no longer cover earrings over in line with national and Local Authority guidance.

## Key Stage 2 Healthy Snacks – NO NUTS!

We are proud to be a healthy school and promote healthy lifestyles and diet. We encourage you to send in a healthy snack for your child to eat at morning break. The vast majority of children do bring in a piece of fruit or healthy cereal bar. However we have observed a few children who are not eating a healthy snack! Please can we ask you to support us in this matter and remember that under **no circumstances** should children be bringing in crisps, chocolate, chocolate covered snack bars or sweets. It is also worth pointing out that a number of fruit based snack products marketed in the main supermarkets contain a very high sugar content and are probably not as healthy as you might think! The classteachers will be reminding the children about what constitutes a healthy snack.

Can I also remind you that we have a number of children across our school with severe allergies to nuts so please **do not** send in any snack or packed lunch items that obviously contain nuts. Thank you for your co-operation.



## Year 6 Secondary School Applications – NOW OPEN

If your child is in Year 6, you can apply for a secondary school (Year 7) place between **12<sup>th</sup> September 2024** and **31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**.

Before you apply you should:

- check you live in the [Essex administrative area](#)
- read the [secondary school admissions booklet](#)

You may also want to check [the priority admission catchment area schools](#).

Online applications can be made from 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024 up to and including the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024. Please ensure that your online application is submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024. Remember to re-submit after making any changes before the deadline.

All applications received after 31<sup>st</sup> October will be treated as late and will only be processed after all on-time applications. You are less likely to get a place at one of your preferred schools if you apply late.

You can get in touch with the School Admissions Team if you have a query about your application or if you are changing address.

Telephone: **0345 603 2200**

Email: [admissions@essex.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@essex.gov.uk)

You might also find it useful to watch the following link: <https://youtu.be/Qoa8fio6WKY>

## Rosie Infanti Memorial Bench

Many of you will be aware of the very sad death of Mrs Rosie Infanti last academic year. Mrs Infanti was a much loved member of staff in her role as Finance & Administrative Assistant and is sorely missed from our school community.

Next Friday during collective worship in both EYFS/KS1 and KS2, Fr. Mark will be leading a short dedication service to formally dedicate a bench in Mrs Infanti's memory. We are delighted that Mrs Infanti's husband (Richard) and two of their three children will also be able to attend. The bench has been inscribed with the school mission statement 'Let all that you do be done in love' (1 Corinthians 16:14) which was suggested as our school mission statement by Mrs Infanti, amongst others. We are also very grateful to the PTA for funding the purchase of this bench.

Once dedicated the bench will be placed on the KS1 playground for children, staff, parents and carers to sit on and quietly reflect upon such a special person and member of our school community.



## News from the Parish Church of St Thomas of Canterbury

Fr Mark writes;

This will be an exciting first newsletter for those who have joined our school community this September and I extend my welcome to you all and pray that the children will quickly feel settled and part of the community, ready to make friends and enjoy their learning and that parents too will start to feel at home and make new friends at the school gate.

As a Church School, there is a strong bond between church and school and you are a welcome part of the congregation that worships God both in school and in church. I hope you will feel able to explore the various groups and activities that take place at St Thomas as well as join us for worship.

This Sunday we have our monthly Family Mass at 12.00, a special service where children and adults are encouraged to worship together and the activities, songs and readings help the children join in and for some, take a lead in one part of the service. There will also be colour activities and toys to engage younger children at what is always a less formal and more relaxed act of worship.

The full Sunday programme is;

08.00 Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)

10.00 Sung Mass (lasting about 75 minutes)

12.00 Family Mass (lasting around 45 minutes)

18.00 Choral Evensong (lasting around 50 minutes)

Wednesday mornings are always 'Cake and a Cuppa' when friends old and new gather to catch up on the news and enjoy a slice of delicious homecake cake. This runs from 10.00 to 12.00 and some will stay on for the 12.15 Mass.

On Thursday our toddler group meets in the hall following a Toddler Service at 10.30. A small charge covers the costs of running this group and providing drinks and snacks for all.

On Friday we have a 'Crafty Fridays' groups when there is an opportunity to undertake various craft activities with the chance for a natter. This runs from 10.00 to 12.00.

Finally for those with children in Year 6 who are on our Family Roll list, please check your inboxes or SPAM folders for an important communication about the completion of the Secondary School Admissions process and how to get SIF's completed by me. The email is sent from our iknow church system.

## Finally....

Apologies for the length of this first newsletter. If you have read all the way to the end you certainly deserve a cup of tea! There is so much to share and I appreciate that many of you like to receive as much detail and advanced warning as possible. I am very excited at the prospect of the term ahead and the way we can all work together to ensure St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School continues to go from strength to strength empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Next week we will confirm some of the events/dates taking place across the course of this autumn term. We are working very hard to secure dates and times for this term and hope to be in a position to send these early next week, with more details closer to each event. The 'Dates for the Diary' schedule should prove very useful in helping you prepare and play a full and active part in school life!

Have a great weekend.

**Mr D. Moran**  
Headteacher

LET ALL THAT  
*you do*  
BE DONE  
WITH LOVE I  
CORINTHIANS 16:14

*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](mailto:admin@stthomaspri.essex.sch.uk)