

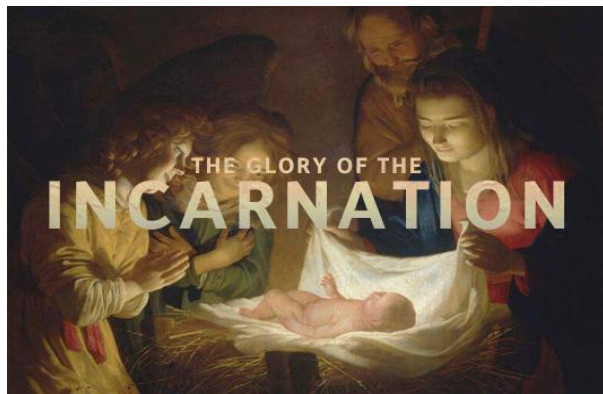
ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

13th December 2024



It is certainly continuing to feel a lot like Christmas as we continue through this season of Advent, a time for preparation and anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ celebrated on Christmas Day. Our Advent wreath now has two purple candles alight, with the third pink/rose candle being lit this Sunday to remind us of John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for Christ - *"St. John the Baptist was the herald for the imminent Messiah..."* Next week we enter the last week of this very long autumn term...not long to go!

Don't forget that on Friday 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 *'Everyone Loves A Baby!'* 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 **£556.42** for our school charity, St Francis Hospice.

This week it was the turn of our Lower Key Stage 2 children to put on a wonderful Christmas performance of *'Stable Manners'*. It was a joy to watch and to witness the amazing individual gifts and talents on display. The children certainly entertained us with three accomplished performances. My thanks also go 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. Thanks to your generous donations at the end of the Lower Key Stage 2 performances we raised a further **£571.37** for St Francis Hospice.

Next week we look forward to our Upper Key Stage 2 Christmas Carol Concert taking place in the Key Stage 2 Hall. The performances are:

- Tuesday 17th December @ 2:00p.m.
- Tuesday 17th 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 150 per performance.

On Wednesday 18th December during the afternoon, 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 and red noses 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 reminders about services taking place at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church this Christmas, including **Carols & Chilli** taking place TODAY.

Inclusion Review Report

Back in October (8th) you may remember I shared with you that the primary school had taken part in an Inclusion Review which was carried out by Local Authority School Effectiveness Partners. Across the course of the day two reviewers spent time in school looking in detail at our inclusive practices. This involved a number of activities including: interviews with Governors, meetings with strategic members of staff with roles and responsibilities for inclusion, discussions with children, parents/carers and wider staff members. Throughout these activities they were collecting evidence against the three pillars for inclusion – *Pillar 1*: Positive, mutually respectful relationships, and wellbeing; *Pillar 2*: Attending and participating; *Pillar 3*: Achieving and moving on.

I am delighted that we are now in a position to share this report with our wider school community. The report is a real celebration of our school culture and ethos and the drive to embed a strong commitment to inclusion that is shared by everyone. It clearly highlights how we go about implementing a wide-range of strategies to support and foster this commitment, and how the school clearly set-out roles and responsibilities so that everyone knows 'who does what'.

The final report can be accessed via the school website by following: 'Key Information' → 'SEND Information' → 'Inclusion Review' (scroll to the bottom of the page)



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. This is fully supported by the Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School, as set out in 'Working Together To Improve School Attendance'.

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. 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% - currently there are 71 children who fall in to this category. 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 2025 Return

January 2025						
M	T	W	T	F	S	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 2025 on **Monday 6th January 2025**.

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

Monday 6th Jan 2025

REMINDER: Christmas Party Day – Friday 20th December

The children will be holding their class parties which will take place on the afternoon of Friday 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!

Winter Reading Challenge 2025

The Winter Reading Challenge is back at Essex Libraries for Early Years and Primary Schools.

This year, your mission is to find the dragons who are lost around the dragon kingdom, and get them home to the castle before they get too cold! Complete six fun challenges from a choice of twelve. They include a range of cool things to read, make, and do!

Collect all six dragon stickers to 'find' them and complete the challenge! Plus, get a certificate and prize when you finish, and enter the big prize draw, where you can win amazing prizes like tablets, arts and crafts packs, book tokens, and toy dragons!

To sign up, visit your [local library](#) and collect your challenge booklet.

The challenge starts on 2nd January 2025 and runs through to the end of the February half term on 22nd February 2025. The challenge is aimed at children aged 0 to 12 years.



Essex Police – Sort Your Settings!

Essex Police have launched their [Sort Your Settings](#) campaign. It provides parents and carers with essential safeguarding tips and advice on making online devices safer for children. The refreshed webpage now includes up-to-date information about new and popular online games and social media platforms. There is a step-by-step guide and advice on all aspects of online safety, including how to access parental controls, social media age restrictions, game age ratings, chat settings, and more.

Link to web page: [Sort your settings | Essex Police](#)

Link to main video: [Sort your settings video](#)

News from St Thomas' Church

Fr. Mark writes:

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible this evening for Chilli and Carols around the Christmas Tree outside St Thomas' from 5pm onwards. Over the last few weeks, we have been busy selling raffle tickets and the excitement is mounting as we prepare to draw the winning tickets during this event. There is also a gorgeous teddy bear looking for a new home if you can guess his name, just a £1 a guess!

This Sunday is the Third Sunday of Advent as we continue our spiritual preparations for the great celebration of Christmas. In the church, we have been continuing to light the candles on our Advent wreath as we consider the great themes and people of this season. In the evening we have a very special new addition to our programme of services as we hold what is called a 'Blue Christmas' service which will provide an opportunity to remember and to give thanks for those family members who will not be with us this Christmas as they are either far away or now worship on another shore having recently died. During this service, there will be prayers and a chance to light a candle as we remember and give thanks. All our very welcome as we gather to worship as follows;

08.00 Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)

10.00 Sung Mass (lasting about 70 minutes)

The Clubhouse meets during this service which is followed by refreshments

12.00 Holy Baptism

18.00 Blue Christmas Evensong (lasting around 60 minutes)

Followed by seasonal refreshments

In the week that follows,

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 home-made cake. This runs from 10.00 to 12.00 and some will stay on for the 12.15 Mass.

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

Sunday the 22nd of December is the Fourth Sunday of Advent and the day concludes with the traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols

- 08.00** Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)
- 10.00** Sung Mass (lasting about 75 minutes)
- 11.30** Advent Conversation
- 18.00** Nine Lessons and Carols (lasting around 60 minutes)
Followed by seasonal refreshments.

Christmas will then soon be upon us and is worth noting that our usual round of daily worship continues as usual during the school holidays apart from Christmas Eve and Christmas Day which are detailed below.

Christmas Eve

- 09.30** Said Mass of the Day (lasts about 30 minutes)
- 16.00** Christingle for younger children
- 18.00** Christingle for older children supported by the Orchestra of St Thomas.
- 11.30** Midnight Mass (lasts about 75 minutes)

Christmas Day

- 08.00** Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)
- 10.00** Sung Mass (lasting about 75 minutes)

Boxing Day

- 09.30** Said Mass (lasts about 30 minutes)

Sunday 29th is Holy Family Sunday

- 08.00** Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)
- 10.00** Family Mass (lasting about 60 minutes)
Followed by Children's Christmas Party
- 18.00** Said Evening Prayer (lasting around 20 minutes)



Sunday 5th January 2025 is the Feast of the Epiphany when we celebrate the arrival of the wise men.

- 08.00** Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)
- 10.00** Sung Mass (lasting about 75 minutes)
Followed by refreshments
- 18.00** Evensong and Benediction (lasting around 60 minutes)

We are very much looking forward to all our special Christmas services and events and hope that you will be able to join in as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and remind the world of the true meaning of this celebration.

May I close by wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and blessed New Year.

Fr Mark

Finally....

On Monday (16th) next week, the children from across our primary school will be visited by Hurricane Productions who will be performing a pantomime of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' in the school halls. EYFS & Key Stage 1 will watch a performance in the morning with Key Stage 2 having the opportunity in the afternoon. I am sure this will help us all get in the festive mood for the start of our final week in school!

Don't forget...Christmas Jumpers - On Wednesday 18th 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 all the children and staff to wear their Christmas jumpers! Children must still wear school uniform on their bottom half, including school shoes.

Last Friday we were delighted to welcome back Aaron from Little Havens Children's Hospice to collect our fundraising total from last academic year. During both KS1 and KS2 collective worship our CATS Reps (School Council) were able to hand over a cheque (this took some explaining to the children!) for **£4938.67!!**



Last week we also received confirmation from the Royal British Legion that St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School raised **£756.46** towards the annual Poppy Appeal – well done!

Remember.....When we return after Christmas on Monday 6th January 2025 the menu will continue with **Week 1** choices.

On behalf of all the staff at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School may I take this opportunity to thank you for all your Christmas cards, festive messages and generous gifts – they are very much appreciated!

I wish you and your families a safe, happy and Christ-filled Christmas and a wonderful start to 2025!

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.