

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

24th January 2025

I cannot quite believe that we are coming to the end of January. The first half of this shorter spring term is racing by and in just a few weeks we will be nearing the half way mark of the academic year!!



This week has had a distinctly 'rock 'n' roll' theme, as we started the week in Key Stage 2 with a number of musical workshops from Rocksteady Music School and have ended with our PTA 'Dress as a Rockstar' non-uniform day for the entire school. We have seen a great response to the Rocksteady workshops and a number of parents/carers have signed up their children for this musical opportunity at our school starting later this term...I am sure we have some budding rockstars in

the making! I am also aware that many of our children and parents have been engaging with our Times Table Rock Star Battle Week which finishes today. As well as improving your times table knowledge you have also been raising much needed additional funding for the school – a win win situation!! Thank you to everyone who has taken part and engaged with this event.

This Sunday, 26th January, we will be coming together as a school community at St Thomas of Canterbury Church to celebrate **Education Sunday**. 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. It is also an opportunity to outwardly demonstrate and strengthen our partnership with our parish church, the clergy and wider church family, as well as share some of our work with the gathered congregation. During the service there will be presentations of work from EYFS, Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 (Year 3 & 4) and Upper Key Stage 2 (Year 5 & 6). This year our presentations will reflect some of the exciting curriculum foundation subject work that the children are doing this term...it is sure to be amazing!

We hope as many children and families as possible will be able to attend. Please remember, we are asking all children attending to wear their school uniform and will expect them to sit with their classteacher and other class members at the front of the church. Parents, carers and other family members are of course very welcome to stay and sit in the other areas of the church for the service. We look forward to seeing you!

Staffing Update

After 20 years of loyal and dedicated service to St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School **Mrs Anita Lawrence** has decided it is now time to step down from her position in the school office and has announced her retirement for the end of this academic year. This decision has come with many mixed emotions.

Mrs Lawrence's association with the school stretches back much further than her 20 years of employment, as she was first a parent at the school 35 years ago! She has certainly had a long and very successful association with our school. Mrs Lawrence will be very well known by many, often being the reassuring voice on the end of the telephone or the friendly face at the reception hatch window! Mrs Lawrence is part of a wonderful team alongside the other office staff and I know many parents/carers, both past and present, will have benefited greatly from her wisdom, advice, sympathy and listening ear. She has not just been a fantastic administrative staff member but has also taken on numerous other roles – the list is endless! I am certain you will all join me in wishing Mrs Lawrence continued good health and happiness as she prepares for this exciting new stage in her life. We all hope she enjoys a well-deserved retirement and an opportunity to spend time with her family and friends.

I know she will be greatly missed by everyone and I am sure you will join me in praying for Mrs Lawrence and her family at this time.

Respect

One of our core Character Education values at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School is: **RESPECT**.

In light of some recent incidents, I feel it has become necessary to remind parents/carers and visitors about their conduct whilst on the school premises and when speaking to members of staff and each other. The notice below which is displayed in our school office/admin areas, is supported and endorsed by the Governing Body. I hope that it acts as a polite reminder. Thank you for your support and understanding.



Multi Schools Council – Bronze Award!

I am delighted to inform you that St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School has been awarded our Bronze Award for our engagement and involvement in the Multi Schools Council. Our confirmation letter from Kierran Pearce (Multi Schools Council Lead) states:

I am delighted that you have achieved our BRONZE award! We were particularly impressed with the way you clearly celebrate children with SEND across the school and how you clearly use a lot of SEND aware language across the school. The next step is to arrange a suitable time for us to come and present your certificate!



The Multi Schools Council prompts regular meetings for young people with SEND to come together to discuss what they see as the most important topics for them, and to translate those discussions into projects that improve experiences of other children with SEND. I am very grateful to Mrs Pritchard (MSC Lead) and all the children who have represented our school so well and worked so hard in gaining our Bronze Award. I am sure you will join me in congratulating them on this wonderful achievement. I know that they are already planning on how to achieve our Silver Award!!

School Uniform

We appear to have an increasing number of children arriving to school with the incorrect school uniform. This is particularly a problem with children in Key Stage 2 having no tie and children across the primary school with incorrect footwear. We take great pride in our appearance and have high expectations of children's presentation. Please can I ask both parents/carers and children to help support this by ensuring they are correctly dressed for school. School ties for children in Key Stage 2 can be purchased via your child's ParentPay account at the price of £4.00 – once it has been paid for online we will issue the school tie to your child via the School Office. **Please remember to put your child's name on it!**

REMINDER: Year 3 Swimming



Lessons for the children in Year 3 (3CA & 3B) will begin on Friday 7th February 2025. 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 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 **£4.00**. 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.

Attendance Matters

We are rapidly heading towards the half-way mark of the school academic year. This is a good time to share with you some of our school attendance data.

Currently our whole school attendance data for the year to date stands at **94.4%** This is below the national average of **95.1%** It is also below our school agreed target of **96%**.

Do not be misled by the figures being in the 90% range. Although 94.4% sounds good....it is not and it needs to improve!

Figures also show that 75 of our children are identified as persistent absentees which is where their attendance falls below 90% - this equates to doing an average of a 4½ day week!!

When we break it down by Year Group it shows some interesting trends:

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|-----------------------|--------------|
| EYFS/Reception | 92.8% |
| Year 1 | 93.1% |
| Year 2 | 93.5% |
| Year 3 | 95.8% |
| Year 4 | 95.2% |
| Year 5 | 94.8% |
| Year 6 | 93.3% |

We all appreciate that there are times when children are unwell and need to be absent from school – however this should be the exception not the rule. The winter months have seen lots of children (and adults) suffering with seasonal illnesses but we hope once we head into the spring months this will improve.

Essex Attendance Specialist Team now have a dedicated Parent/Carer Contact Line. This line is solely for parents/carers to make contact for advice and guidance around school attendance. The phoneline enables parents/carers to leave their name and contact number for a call back from one of the AST Specialists. The phoneline is strictly for parents/carers and is accessed by the team twice weekly.

The number to call is: **03330322968**

Please continue to support us in promoting regular attendance and arriving for school on time each day. We want to be able to close the gap between our attendance data and that achieved nationally, and ultimately hit our target of 96% Thank you for your continued support!

Have You Tried a School Dinner?



Earlier this week we sent out details via Parent Hub about how to apply for free school meals (FSM). We are trying to encourage as many children as possible to take up our fantastic school meals which rotate through a 3-week rolling menu. These menus have been updated to reflect meals which our children enjoy whilst at the same time being healthy and nutritionally balanced.

The current menus are displayed on the school website (www.stthomaspri.org) and can be found via the home page and then selecting the 'Information for Parents' tab. Here you can look at the menu choices and see what is on offer.

Please do take a look at these menus with your child/ren and see if you can find a few favourites to enjoy. All children in Reception and Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2) are entitled to a free hot school dinner everyday. In Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6) the cost of a school meal is **£2.53** a day (unless you have applied for and been awarded benefits related free school meals). This reflects excellent value for money and I know that Mrs Turner (Catering Manager) and her catering team put a great deal of love and effort into producing our fantastic school meals!

Finally....

We appreciate that the past week has been challenging for our school community in terms of your journey to and from school. With road works popping up all over Brentwood and the temporary traffic lights on Shenfield Road many of us have been caught out and had our journey times unexpectedly lengthened. Thank you for your patience.

I look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday at St Thomas of Canterbury Church for our Education Sunday celebrations.



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.