

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

27th June 2025



Well, it was a scorcher...but at least the temperature had dropped by a couple of degrees and at times there was a gentle breeze! May I take this opportunity to thank all those parents, carers and other visitors who kindly came to support and participate in our Sports Day last Friday. After weeks of meticulous planning and preparation, the children, staff and spectators all seemed to thoroughly enjoy taking part in the various challenges, events and races on offer. Once again, the carousel activities proved particularly popular and it was very impressive to see the children showcasing their sporting techniques and talents as they completed the circuit. There was a real variety of skills put to the test from speed, balance and agility, throwing and aiming....as well as bouncing! It was also wonderful to see the children demonstrating good teamwork as they competed for their Houses too.

Congratulations to all the children in **St David's House** (Yellow) who were crowned as winners of the EYFS and Key Stage 1 Sports Day earlier this week once all the results had been counted up. The afternoon saw **St David's House** (Yellow) as Key Stage 2 Sports Day champions for the second successive year. A clean sweep for St David's House! Congratulations to all those children, ably led by their House Captains Ellie and Arsene. The Primary School Sports Day trophies are now on their way to be engraved!

I would also like to say a huge thank you to all the school staff that put so much effort, energy and organisation into co-ordinating the event – well done everyone. Like me, I know many of you spent most of the day on the school field. Your support is very much appreciated.

Following on from Sports Day it was also great to see so many children and families/friends attending the St Thomas' PTA Big Summer Picnic after school. Many of you very wisely took advantage of the shady spots to set up your picnic and I have never seen so many pizzas arriving at the school! It was a lovely way to come together as a school family. Once again, a huge 'thank you' to the Primary School PTA Committee members and other volunteers who made this event possible – we could not do it without you!

Staffing Update

Many of you will be aware that at the end of this academic year we will be saying a sad goodbye to Mrs Anita Lawrence, who is retiring from her position as Administrative Assistant at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. Since announcing her retirement earlier in the year, we have been busy undertaking a recruitment process to appoint a new Administrative Assistant for September 2025.

I am pleased to report that we had a very good response to our job advert and interviews took place on Tuesday this week to appoint a new member of the school office staff. I am delighted to announce that following a rigorous interview process we have successfully appointed **Mrs Hayley Pallett** as our new Administrative Assistant from 1st September 2025.

Many of you and your children will be very familiar with Mrs Pallett, as she is currently employed as a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) and Midday Assistant (MDA) at our school. From September Mrs Pallett will be changing roles and responsibilities to take up her new position alongside the other school office staff, under the direction of our School Business Manager (Mrs Forder). I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Mrs Pallett on her new role where we are looking forward to taking advantage of her many skills and talents. It will also provide another familiar, friendly face in the school office or voice on the end of the telephone who is familiar with our children and families. Please do give Mrs Pallett your full support once she takes up her new post in the new academic year.



Summer Music Concert

It was a joy and a pleasure to be able to be part of the gathered audience on Tuesday evening as we came together to be thoroughly entertained at the Summer Music Concert. In a packed KS2 Hall (thankfully now air conditioned!) we watched in awe and wonder as our two school choirs (KS1 & KS2) performed, as well as individual performances and one duet from various children. I do not underestimate the courage and confidence that is needed to perform to a live audience, nor the hours of practice and rehearsals that led to this event. I am sure there were some very proud parents and other family members in the audience. Thank you to all those children who attended and gave us a real showcase of talent – you were all amazing!



I would also like to give a special mention to Mrs Anna Dunn, who was instrumental (no pun intended!) in organising and arranging this event. Mrs Dunn has an infectious love of music and over her time at our school has inspired children to share this love of singing, music and performance. Children both past and present have thrived within our music curriculum and extra-curricular offer thanks to her passion and dedication for the subject. Sadly, we will be saying goodbye to Mrs Dunn at the end of this term and it was very fitting that our Music Captains Hattie and Destiny were able to present her with some flowers at the end of the concert as a small token of our love and appreciation for everything she has done. Mrs Dunn leaves behind a real music legacy which I know will be continued by Mrs Newman, as she takes on responsibility for music across our primary school.

Finally, I would like to thank our audience members for their generosity at the end of the concert in supporting our retiring collection in aid of St Francis Hospice. There was great excitement that donations could not only be taken in cash but also via our QR code which now facilitates digital online payment! From our cash donations and online collection we raised a total of **£317.45**. If you have yet to donate, the QR code is still valid and we would gladly welcome your donation. Moving forward we will be using this QR facility at all our performances and concerts so there is no excuse for forgetting to bring your purse or wallet!! Thank you for your support.

School Dinners – September 2025

Following a meeting of the Finance and Premises Committee of the Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School, a decision has now been made to increase the daily cost of school meals from September 2025.

This is a decision that has not been taken lightly, but as you will be fully aware, the cost of food, fuel, transportation and catering staff pay continues to increase year on year. I am certain we have all seen this reflected in our own household shopping bills. After carefully reviewing our catering trading accounts and factoring in these increased costs it has been decided that school meals will increase to **£2.69** per day (£13.45 a week) from September 2025.

For parents/carers of children in EYFS and Key Stage 1, this is for information only as your children will still be eligible for universal infant free school meals as set out by the Department for Education (DfE). However, for parents/carers of Year 2 children moving in to Key Stage 2 and for the rest of the Primary School parent/carer community this will impact on you from the beginning of the new academic year. However, if you think you may be eligible for benefits related free school meals then please read the eligibility criteria on the school website or visit the Essex County Council website or contact the school office for further details and support.

Please be rest assured that this was not an easy decision but we cannot operate our catering trading accounts at a loss. Thank you for your support and understanding.

Classes 2025-2026

At this time of year we turn our attention and energies to finalising the classes for the new academic year starting in September 2025. Allocating children and teachers to classes is an extremely complex and time consuming process which takes in to account many contextual and competing factors. Decisions made in order to structure these classes are not done lightly or quickly, but are based on professional judgement and consideration for all children within each cohort.

Moving just one child can have huge repercussions and acts as a domino effect through the year group. Classes are now finalised; the decisions are not open to negotiation in our school.

Change will naturally cause some anxiety and some people will initially worry about the new academic year ahead. However, the staff at our school have years of experience in supporting this process and will make sure that everyone settles in well to their new classes. Thank you for your trust and understanding.

You and your child will be notified of their new class and classteacher on Friday 11th July 2025 when they bring home their end of year annual report.

Story Garden - Summer Reading Challenge 2025

Story Garden – Adventures in Nature and the Great Outdoors - is coming to a library near you this summer!

This year's Summer Reading Challenge will inspire children to tap into the world of imagination and reading, exploring the magical connection between storytelling and nature.

Children will join our wonderful characters, created by the brilliant children's illustrator Dapo Adeola, whose stunning illustrations bring the Story Garden theme to life; creating an enchanted world where children can find magical creatures, plants and flowers to inspire their next reading adventure.

The challenge runs **from Saturday 19th July to Saturday 6th September 2025** in all Essex libraries and mobile libraries. There will also be a special early joiners' day on **Saturday 12th July**.

There are six stickers for children to collect over the summer. They earn them by talking about the books they have read, writing a book review, creating a piece of art inspired by their book or attending a library event. After collecting six stickers, they earn their certificate and medal.

Children can read any library book of their choice; fiction, non-fiction, picture books or books they share with parents and carers – they all count. Children under four are not forgotten, with a special version of Story Garden just for them.

The Summer Reading Challenge is delivered by libraries and produced by The Reading Agency. It is open to all children, free of charge.

Keep up to date with this year's Summer Reading Challenge by following Essex Library Services on Facebook, X and Instagram, @EssexLibraries



Finally...

This week, many of our Year 6 children have been taking part in transition visits to their new Secondary Schools for September 2025. I am sure these opportunities have settled a few nerves and also generated some real excitement and enthusiasm for what will be on offer in the new academic year. I am very confident that our children have represented us well and demonstrated our character values as they met up with pupils from other schools.

On Thursday we had a wonderful Charity Day organised by our CATS reps (School Council) based on the theme of 'Mind, Body & Soul Fundraising Day'. Thank you to everyone who participated in the activities and for your sponsorship towards St Francis Hospice. We hope to have raised a good sum of money and will share with you the grand total once it is all collected in.

This morning it was wonderful to welcome the parents/carers of the children who will be starting Reception in September 2025 as they attended our EYFS new entrants meeting. This is always an exciting time as we look to welcome new families and children to our school community as they begin their educational journey in our school.

Next week, we are looking forward to greeting parents/carers of children joining Year 3 in September 2025 at our meeting on Friday 4th July 2025.

Please do pray for all these families as they prepare for their children to join our EYFS and Key Stage 2 communities.

Have a great weekend everyone!

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