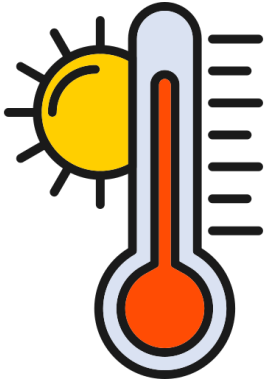




NEWSLETTER

26th June 2026



In our last newsletter I was complaining about the persistent rain we were experiencing as we moved into the start of meteorological summer – what a difference a few weeks make!

Now we find ourselves dealing with excessively high temperatures and trying to go about our normal daily business whilst the sun beats down and the temperatures rise. I know many of us have found this challenging and warm, humid nights also mean that our sleep patterns are disturbed as well. As I said in our Parent Hub message on Tuesday, we are very mindful of the impact that high temperatures can have on the children and have a number of measures in place to help keep them safe and comfortable during this period. As always, we will continue to monitor the conditions this week and next and adapt our approach to ensure the wellbeing of all our children and staff.

Thankfully last Friday was not quite as hot and 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. 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 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 third successive year. A clean sweep for St David's House! Congratulations to all those children, ably led by their House Captains Joshika and Max. The Primary School Sports Day trophies are now on their way to be engraved!

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

I am delighted to be able to announce that we have appointed a new classteacher and member to our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who will join us in September 2026. **Mrs Kate Smith** will take up her post in the new academic year and join the SLT in her capacity as the new Lower Key Stage 2 Team Leader. Mrs Smith is a very experienced classteacher and has worked extensively in primary schools, including church schools, over her career. We are very pleased to be welcoming Mrs Smith to St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School and I am sure you will make her feel very welcome as she prepares to join us very soon. Mrs Smith will be spending some time in school before the end of this term to start the process of transition and begin to learn the roles, routines and expectations within our school.

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 air conditioned!) we watched in awe and wonder as our two school choirs (KS1 & KS2) performed, as well as individual performances 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 Newman and Mrs Pugh for organising and arranging this event, and for the time, effort and energy they put in to supporting our popular school choirs. This was very evident from the smiles on the children's faces when they were performing their songs during the concert



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 our two chosen charities – Kids Inspire & Rock UK. 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 **£186.61**. If you have yet to donate, the QR code is still valid and we would gladly welcome your donation.

To date our running total for our charities stands at **£2573.61**. Thank you for your support.

School Dinners – September 2026



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 2026.

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 **£2.77** per day (£13.85 a week) from September 2026.

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 2026-2027

At this time of year we turn our attention and energies to finalising the classes for the new academic year starting in September 2026. 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 10th July 2026 when they bring home their end of year annual report.

Parking Concerns in the Community

Sadly, I have received the following message from Cathy Pengilly, SEPP School Engagement Officer:

"I am writing to make you aware of a recent incident reported by residents of Sawyers Grove, alongside ongoing concerns regarding parent parking and driving behaviour during school drop-off and pick-up times linked to St Thomas Primary School.

Residents have described the situation as escalating and now becoming increasingly unsafe, with reports of:

- *Vehicles blocking access to properties*
- *Excessive speed and inconsiderate driving*
- *Increasing tension and confrontation between parents and residents*

Most concerningly, a recent incident involved a parent vehicle striking a resident's cat and failing to stop. The matter has been reported to the police with CCTV footage and vehicle details provided. While thankfully no child was involved, residents are now extremely worried that next time it could be far more serious."

Although these incidents are taking place beyond the school site and are therefore outside the direct control and jurisdiction of the school, I must remind and encourage all our parents/carers to act responsibly and with consideration for our neighbours.

Please can I once again reinforce clear messages with our parent/carer community about expected standards, including:

- Driving with care and consideration in residential areas
- Respecting residents' access and private property
- Understanding the seriousness of failing to stop after an incident

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership in addressing these challenges.

'Read to the Beat' - Summer Reading Challenge 2026

Read to the Beat is coming to a library near you this summer!

This year's Summer Reading Challenge will inspire children to explore the connection between stories and songs, discovering how reading and music both ignite imagination and creativity. This year's Challenge is brought to life with illustrations by award-winning author and illustrator Harry Woodgate.

The challenge runs **from Saturday 18th July to Saturday 5th September** in all Essex libraries and mobile libraries. Check at your local library if they're having a special early joiners' day on **Saturday 4th July**.

There are six stickers for children to collect over the summer. They earn them by telling library staff about the books they have read, or doing related activities. (A list of suggested activities is on the sticker folder given to each child taking part.) After collecting six stickers, they earn their certificate and medal. A ribbon to show off their medal can be bought from the library (while stocks last) for 50p each.

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 Read to the Beat just for them.

The Summer Reading Challenge is delivered by The Reading Agency in partnership with libraries and powered by Universal Music Group UK. It is open to all children, free of charge.

I do hope many of our children will take part in this exciting summer initiative.



Finally...

This morning it was wonderful to welcome the parents/carers of the children who will be starting Reception in September 2026 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.

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.



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