

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

10th November 2023



The school fell silent this morning as we came together for collective worship as a school community at 11 o'clock to observe 2 minutes silence in memory of all those lost in war and conflict. We also remembered all those families who have been affected by war; men, women and children. It is so important that we mark Armistice Day or Remembrance Day (11th November) in this way. During World War I alone approximately nine million people were killed, millions more were injured and families were destroyed. The children marked this period of silence impeccably, reflecting upon the ultimate sacrifice made by the many so that we may live in peace today. Sadly, as witnessed on our television screens and social media feeds, war and conflict continues to go on around our world today and we particularly pray for an end to the suffering which is currently being witnessed in the Middle East. During our act of worship we shared the words of hope and commitment:

***'When you go home
tell them of us and say,
for your tomorrow
we gave our today'.***

Today we were also in attendance at the Brentwood branch of The Royal British Legion Schools' Service when our Year 6 House Captains and Year 2 CATS Reps laid a wreath and class crosses on behalf of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School. It was a fitting tribute and allowed us to pay our respects to our local heroes.

Last Monday, it was wonderful to welcome back our children after what I hope was a relaxing half term break. It is always a joy after the October half term to see the return of winter uniform with pristine white shirts and school ties on display in Key Stage 2. I know that as a school we take great pride in our appearance and presentation both in school and when out in the local and wider community. Thank you for continuing to support our high expectations and school uniform policy. A few children in Key Stage 2 do not have school ties on or are wearing school ties with polo shirts or shirts with the incorrect collar. If you need a school tie they can be ordered and paid for through ParentPay and we will give the tie directly to your child. All children must be wearing collared white shirts with their top buttons done up so you can clip on your tie. Let's see if next week we can have 100% correct school uniform...and don't forget to tuck your shirts in!

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in a shoebox for the Operation Christmas Child appeal. I have witnessed a growing number being carried into school and carefully stored in the classrooms and corridors over the course of this week. Our collection date has not yet been confirmed but please do keep sending in your donations to ensure they get to vulnerable children ready for Christmas. Thank you for your support of this very worthwhile cause.

As always there are a number of important reminders in this newsletter regarding up and coming events and I hope you will respond to them accordingly. Please remember that the vast majority of the correspondence we send out to you is always freely accessible via Parent Hub or from the school website, so if you think you may have missed a letter, please visit www.stthomaspri.org or check your Parent Hub channels.

Parents' Evening – Thank You!

We were thrilled to have 92% of our parent community sign up for parents' evening last week through our online virtual platform, SchoolCloud. Over the course of the two evenings we enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the successes of your children and their achievements since the beginning of this academic year. I know the teaching staff really enjoy these opportunities and developing stronger links between home and school. I do hope you were able to share some of the feedback with your child/ren and demonstrate how proud you are of their enthusiasm and efforts. Many thanks for your continued support.

Staffing Update

I am delighted to share with you the wonderful news that **Miss Elizabeth Berner** has informed us that she is pregnant and expecting her first child in early May 2024. This is wonderful and exciting news and I am sure you will join me in congratulating Miss Berner and her partner (Richard) on this announcement. We are currently ensuring that we have all the relevant risk assessments in place to keep Miss Berner safe in and around school and starting the process of preparing for her maternity leave later in the academic year. In the spring term the Governing Body and senior leadership team will start the process of finding maternity cover for Miss Berner's classteacher role in school ready for May 2024.

Those of you with a longer association to the St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England School family will probably remember one of our previous caretakers, **Mr Trevor Alexander**. Mr Alexander was the School Caretaker for 32 years and had a long history with our school both as an employee and a parent. Mr Alexander was a dedicated employee of the school and took great pride in the work he did in and around our school estate. He was particularly proud of his hall floors!! Sadly, Mr Alexander passed away on 4th October 2023 surrounded by his family. I attended his funeral last Friday on behalf of the school. During the funeral service it was heart-warming to hear what a large part our school played in his life. I am sure you will join me in praying for his family at this difficult time as they come to terms with their loss.

Open Classrooms – A Special Invitation



We are very excited to be inviting you to our 'Open Classrooms' opportunity! 'Open Classrooms' for parents/carers will be held on **Thursday 16th November 2023** from 3:30p.m. until 4:15p.m. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to view your child's working environment, see where they sit and marvel at the displays within the classroom. The classteacher's will also be present to answer any questions you might have about the work on display. You will also get a chance to look at some of your child's exercise books (English and Maths) to see the work they have completed to date. It is not an opportunity to discuss academic progress and attainment as this was covered during parents' evening.

This is an open invitation with no designated appointment times and I'm sure your child will relish the opportunity to proudly show you around their classroom. Please remember to wait on the playground until 3:30p.m. Unfortunately we are not able to admit any pushchairs due to health and safety/fire regulations. We look forward to seeing you!

Children in Need 2023

On Wednesday you will have received a Parent Hub message from Mrs McKechnie and Class 6M who are busy and excitedly organising events for Children in Need next **THURSDAY**. **Please note:** This is not taking part on the official day of Friday (17th) as the school is closed for our non-pupil professional development and training day for staff.

This is an annual charitable event that we have supported for many years raising thousands of pounds for children and young people in need and less fortunate than ourselves. On Wednesday next week Mrs McKechnie and Class 6M will be leading collective worship for the whole school and giving further details about the events and opportunities on offer next Thursday 16th November and how they can get involved – including a non-uniform day! I do hope that every child will be able to take a full and active part and bring in some money to support our fundraising efforts. Thank you in advance for your support.



Non-Pupil Professional Development and Training Day

Please remember that Friday 17th November 2023 is a designated non-pupil professional development and training day. **The school is closed to the children.**

Reception Admissions for September 2024

As you may be aware, the primary school (Reception) admission round opened on **Monday 6th November 2023** for parents/carers of children to apply for a Reception school place for the academic year that starts in September 2024. Even if you have a sibling at our school already, you still need to apply if your child is due to start in Reception in September 2024.

The statutory national closing date for applications is **15th January 2024**.

From **6th November 2023**, applications can be made online via www.essex.gov.uk/admissions. 99% of parents/carers in Essex applied online last year. All of the application information is available from this website.

The website www.essex.gov.uk/admissions also has a copy of the Primary Education in Essex 2024-2025 booklet and the Schools Admissions Policies Directories contain details of all admission policies.

School Closures

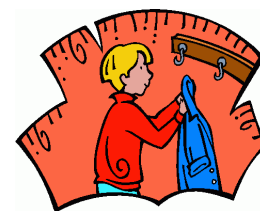


I never like to use the 's' word but as we move further through the autumn and closer to winter we need to talk about snow!! At this time of year we must be realistic and be prepared for the onset of winter and the colder weather it will inevitably bring and our response to snow which may enforce a school closure. A few years ago we were informed that the local radio stations will **no longer** be announcing or publicising via their websites the school closures lists. Instead Essex County Council will be continuing to use their notification system to schools. Schools are now able to complete a short notification either on the day or the day before the closure via the secure access area on ESI. Once the notification is submitted a live feed will appear on the

Essex.gov website (www.essex.gov.uk) so parents can stay informed. Closure lists on the Essex website will constantly update as and when notifications are received. Closure lists for the next day will go live the night before so parents can plan ahead. Once again we are being requested to direct parents to check the Essex County Council website for closure information. In addition, we will continue to use other means such as our Parent Hub service or our school website to inform parents of closures.

Coats!

With the colder weather on its way I would like to give a general reminder about coats. Rather worryingly we still have a growing number of children who seem to come to school without a coat. Many of you may arrive by car in the morning but the children still need a coat in school to wear at morning break and lunchtime. Please ensure your child has a coat in school every day and that it is clearly named. The staff are constantly reminding children to put their coats on during the day and we hope by wrapping up we can prevent coughs and colds developing. Thank you.



Leaving the School Site at the End of the Day

Over the past few weeks we have been increasingly aware of the number of children and parents/carers who remain on the school site after the school day has ended. School finishes at 3:25p.m. and parents/carers and children are expected to leave the school site as soon as possible. Children should not be remaining on site to use the school play equipment, playground/astro or other spaces.

We have many after school clubs that operate in and around the school site and for the safety of these children and to meet our safeguarding responsibilities we need to secure the school premises as soon as possible to prevent unauthorised personnel entering the school grounds. Please can I ask that at the end of the day you make a swift exit to allow us to secure the site and prevent anyone from being locked in. Please use both exit gates (Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) to exit on to Sawyers Hall Lane. Thank you for your co-operation and understanding in this matter.

Parent Governor Election Outcome

You will have received a letter via Parent Hub yesterday informing you of the results of our recent Parent Governor election process.

I am delighted that **Mrs Farah Halabi** and **Mr Richard Laws** have been duly elected as your two new Parent Governor representatives on the Governing Body. I have written to both Mrs Halabi and Mr Laws to congratulate them on their new post and welcome them to the Governing Body. I am sure you will join me in congratulating them both and showing your appreciation for the time, dedication and commitment that comes with this position of responsibility. I am confident that they will both make a positive and valuable addition to our Governing Body!

Both new Parent Governors will now be invited to attend the next Full Governing Body meeting in December to take up their post and be allocated to our committee structure as well as other roles and responsibilities. I would also like to thank Mr Dingley and Mr Trump for standing as candidates in this election.

Christmas Productions 2023

Next week we are aiming to send out information about our various Christmas productions and performances at the end of this term. This will include details about dates, times and ticket allocations. Please look out for this letter at the end of next week!

Finally....

The Brentwood Foodbank have issued us with a letter of thanks for all the donations received as part of our Harvest collection before half term. The Primary School donated a total weight of **257.50kg** – which is amazing!

The School Office spend an increasing amount of time each week chasing parents who are in arrears with their school dinner payments. Please can I remind you, once again, that the school does not offer credit and all school dinners must be paid for in advance (Key Stage 2 only). Please ensure your Parent Pay accounts are kept up to date and in credit. If you feel you may be eligible for free school meals then please see the information on our school website or speak to Mrs Lawrence in the School Office.

Thank you for your continued support and have a good 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.