

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

28th June 2024



May I take this opportunity to thank all those parents, carers and other visitors who came to watch and participate in our Sports Day last Friday. Thankfully the weather was great and the children all seemed to thoroughly enjoy taking part in the various challenges, events and races on offer. 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 wonderful to see the children not only competing for themselves but demonstrating good teamwork as they also competed for their Houses too.

Congratulations to all the children in **St George's House** (Red) who were crowned as winners of the EYFS and Key Stage 1 Sports Day in the morning. The afternoon saw **St David's House** (Yellow) as Key Stage 2 Sports Day champions. The new Primary School Sports Day trophies are now all set to be engraved!

I would also like to say a huge thank you to Mr Beales (PE Subject Leader) and all the other 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 attending the St Thomas' PTA 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 for consumption! It was a lovely way to come together as a school family and there was plenty on offer to keep everyone busy. 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

After a long and distinguished career spanning 25 years at our school, **Mrs Sharon Harries** has decided that it is time to hang up her lanyard and enjoy a well-deserved retirement. This decision means that sadly Mrs Harries has resigned from her Learning Support Assistant (LSA) position at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School at the end of this academic year. I know this has been a very emotional decision to say goodbye to our school family and we are very grateful to Mrs Harries for her care, commitment and love of the school. We wish her every success as she enjoys more time with her family and experiencing new adventures that will undoubtedly lie ahead. I am sure you will join me in wishing her every happiness for the future – she will be greatly missed!!!

PTA Donation



Throughout the year the PTA Committee and other willing volunteers work tirelessly to provide opportunities for fundraising events. These are wide and varied and hopefully all of you have had the opportunity to attend and engage in one or two! Your support ensures that we can continue to develop a sense of community as well as raise much needed additional funding for our school.

Recently we have been extremely grateful to the PTA Committee for donating **£14,000** to allow us to carry out a major internal furniture refurbishment project to our three EYFS/Reception classrooms. The new furniture has now been ordered and will arrive over the summer holiday school closure period. This amazingly generous donation will allow us to update the Reception classrooms and provide our children starting school in September 2024 with the very best resources and learning environments. Being able to refurbish the classrooms all in one go is a huge advantage and without your support and attendance at PTA events it would not be possible.

On behalf of the staff and children I would like to say a massive THANK YOU for making this possible!

School Dinners – September 2024

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 been made to increase the daily cost of school meals from September 2024.

As you will be fully aware, the cost of food, fuel, transportation and catering staff pay has increased in recent years. After reviewing our catering trading accounts and factoring in these increased costs it has been decided that school meals will increase to **£2.53** per day (£12.65 a week) from September 2024.

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.

Please be rest assured that this decision has not been taken lightly but we cannot operate our catering trading accounts at a loss. Please remember that once your child moves to Key Stage 2 you may be eligible for benefits related free school meals. For further information please contact the School Office for further details or visit the Essex County Council website.

Thank you for your support and understanding.



Tips for Helping Children Stay Safe Online

As we start to approach the end of this academic year and look forward to the summer holiday break from school, many of you will be looking for activities to do. Hopefully, much of this will be done outside taking advantage of the outdoor environment, green spaces, local parks and fine weather (fingers crossed!) However, inevitably your child may be spending more time online.

The Policing Institute for the Eastern Region (PIER) have just finished on behalf of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) a piece of research and blog post for parents/carers about how they can better understand their children's online world and its risks. The blog can be found here and is well worth a read:

<https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/blogs/tips-for-helping-children-stay-safe-online/>

Similarly, the Childnet Education Team have updated two of their popular resources on screen time and livestreaming. Every year, the team work directly with over 20,000 children and young people, giving them the opportunity to share current risks, opinions and issues with Childnet researchers. This means that all the work they do is informed by youth voice and what children and young people say.

The Screen Time and Healthy Balance resource contains a collection of quick activities for use with 7-11 year olds to help explore the concept of screen time. It includes ideas for activities on the signs someone has had too much screen time and around finding a healthy balance between online and offline activities. This resource has been updated to keep the activities relevant and up to date in line with what we hear from young people in our school sessions.

The 'To Stream Or Not To Stream' resource contains activities to generate discussions about livestreaming with 11+ year olds. This contains information about livestreaming, two activities with scenarios to encourage discussion and some livestreaming advice from Childnet's Digital Champions and Youth Advisory Board. This resource has been updated to reflect the changes that have happened in live streaming and how this is currently used by young people.

You can find the resources here: <https://www.childnet.com/blog/new-updates-to-teaching-resources-on-screen-time-and-livestreaming/>

Classes 2024-2025

At this time of year we turn our attention and energies to finalising the classes for the new academic year starting in September 2024. 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 Monday 15th July 2024 when they bring home their end of year annual report. Please note: this has changed from Friday 12th July 2024 as previously notified on the 'Dates for the Diary' sheet.

Summer Reading Challenge 2024

Marvellous Makers is coming to a library near you this summer!

Essex Library Service and The Reading Agency are teaming up with Create for a very special 2024 Summer Reading Challenge which will be a celebration of the creative arts. They will be inspiring children to express themselves in creative ways, tap into a world of imagination and storytelling, and – of course – to read!

Children will join their wonderful characters, brought to life by the brilliant children's illustrator Natelle Quek, as they prepare for a big festival to show off the work they have created, inspired by their favourite reads. However, the day before the festival, some objects mysteriously go missing from their creative toolbox. The children of Essex will help the characters find these missing objects and save the festival!

The challenge runs from **Saturday 20 July to Saturday 7 September** in all Essex libraries and mobile libraries. There will also be a special early joiners' day on Saturday 13 July!

Children are being asked to read 6 books, they will collect stickers for their folder for each book they read. After reading 6 books they earn their certificate and medal.

Children can read any library book of their choice; fiction, non-fiction, picture books, books they share with parents and carers, e-books or e-audio – they all count. The under fours are not forgotten with a special version of Marvellous Makers 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.



Prayerfully Learning Together

Year 4 recently got to experience Prayer Space activities in the beautiful and calm setting of the school Spiritual Garden. This is part of the Prayerfully Learning Together research project which is exploring how children interact with, and respond to, different prayer and reflective activities as well as learning how the combination of school, home and place of worship can support a child in their spiritual development. The project is an initiative of the Church of England Chelmsford Diocese and Prayer Spaces in Schools run in partnership with Brentwood Schools Christian Workers Trust and St Thomas' Church as well as volunteers from other local churches many of whom are part of our school family past and present.

Children got to explore questions such as:

- ✝ What helps us feel connected to God?
- ✝ How do we feel about the idea that God knows our name?
- ✝ What helps us grow spiritually?
- ✝ What does a tree provide for birds and how is that similar to what being part of God's community provides for us?

Children got to use and interact with magnets, birds, trees and go on a reflective walk and the activities used some themes from current and previous parts of the Year 4 curriculum.

Comments:

"The session was very engaging and calm."

"I liked the walk that we did through the Sacred Prayer Space."

"It made us wonder how trees are linked to God."

"It made us wonder how God knows our names."

"The bird activity made me think about praying for people who aren't in my family and not just pray for myself."

"The magnets made me think about how much God loves us and wants to have an infinite connection with us."

Thank you to all those who volunteered to help make this happen!



Finally....

This week, many of our Year 6 children have been taking part in transition visits to their new Secondary Schools for September 2024. 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.

This morning it was wonderful to welcome the parents/carers of the children who will be starting Reception in September 2024 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 2024 at our new entrants meeting on Friday 5th July 2024.

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