

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

29th November 2024



It has been wonderful today to see all our children in St Andrew's House proudly wearing their blue items of clothing to mark and celebrate their patron Saint, whose feast day is actually recognised tomorrow (30th November).

Did you know.... **Saint Andrew** was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. His brother was Saint Peter. Saint Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. Andrew and his brother were fishermen. They were called from their fishing by Jesus, who promised to make them 'fishers of men'. Andrew is always among the first Apostles listed in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the Gospel of John, Andrew is the first apostle named and was also a disciple of Saint John the Baptist before Jesus' call. Andrew may have preached in Greece after the death of Jesus. According to one account, Saint Andrew died in what is now Pátrai, Greece, sometime before 70 CE. He was reportedly killed by crucifixion, or by being hung on a wooden cross. The cross was later described as X-shaped. The X-shaped cross is depicted on the Scottish flag.

This Sunday (1st December) we begin the liturgical season of Advent and I'm sure you will all be eagerly anticipating the daily ritual of opening the door on your Advent calendars which nowadays come in all shapes and sizes and can contain any number of daily treats for adults and children! The count down now begins not only to the end of a busy autumn term but to Christmas itself. At this time of year it is important to be reminded of the gift of giving rather than receiving. As we are reminded in Acts 20:35 **"Remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"** Very often at this busy time of year it is hard to remain focused on the true meaning of Christmas; God giving us the ultimate gift of His son Jesus Christ. As much as we enjoy receiving Christmas presents let us also experience great joy in the gift of giving.

This gift of giving has certainly been in evidence in school over the past few weeks. Once again we had a fantastic response to the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal. We collected and safely sent off **105** shoeboxes last week which I am sure will be very gratefully received and bring much joy to the children receiving them at Christmas. This coincided with our recent fundraising activities for the annual Children in Need appeal a couple of weeks ago. Thanks to your generosity we managed to raise an amazing **£1528.51!** Thank you to Class 6M, Mrs McKechnie and all those who helped organise and support this event. Finally, earlier in the month we had a wonderful response to our poppy appeal collection in support of the Royal British Legion. We sold out of all RBL merchandise and had very few poppies left too. We await to hear how much we raised and a final total!

Updated Policies

At our recent Governing Body meeting of the Finance and Premises Committee, two existing school policies were reviewed and updated in light of statutory changes.

The first policy which was agreed was our Lockdown & Bomb Threat Policy and Procedures. Although this is a policy we hope never to have the need to implement, it is very important to be prepared for the unthinkable in order to keep our school community safe. A great deal of thought and consideration has gone in to devising this policy and its introduction will be completed thoughtfully and sensitively, for both adults and children. The second policy agreed was the Charging & Remissions Policy. The main change to this policy is in relation to contributions to residential trips (Upper KS2) for those children in receipt of Pupil Premium Grant funding. That being:

The Governing Body agreed in November 2024 that moving forward the subsidised cost for families in receipt of the Pupil Premium Grant will be amended to take effect for residential visits in the 2025/2026 academic year. The changes will be:

- **Rock UK** (Year 6) – A 50% contribution will be required (payable in instalments)
- **Letton Hall** (Year 5) – A 50% contribution will be required (payable in instalments)

The cost for educational visits (non-residential) will remain subsidised at 100% of the total cost.

The full copy of both of the above mentioned policies are available from the school website.

School Performances 2024

The children and staff continue to work incredibly hard in preparation for the EYFS/Key Stage 1, Lower and Upper School Christmas performances which are fast approaching. Rehearsals are going well and all year groups are busy putting the finishing touches to their performance, before their performances go 'live' to an audience. The air of anticipation is really exciting! Can I please remind you that for health and safety reasons and in line with our fire regulations ticket allocation is strictly limited for each audience.

The morning performances generally have a few more spaces, but babies and toddlers can still be a distraction so please try to avoid bringing them if at all possible. I'm sure that there will be standing room only by the start times and, if you arrive late, you will need to come in by the rear hall entrance. **You must bring your ticket with you to the performance to gain entry.** We're very excited and I'm sure that you will enjoy the shows. After each performance we will be taking a retiring collection in aid of the children's chosen charity – **St Francis Hospice**. I hope you will be able to give generously in your donations and support this very worthy charity.

Operation Encompass

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School is now part of Operation Encompass which is a national scheme that operates jointly between schools and police forces. Operation Encompass is the reporting to schools, prior to the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has experienced domestic abuse.

As a school we have ensured that a member of our staff, (Designated Safeguarding Lead) known as a Key Adult, has been trained in the Operation Encompass procedures allowing us to then use the information that has been shared, in confidence, to support the child/ren in our care. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 identifies children who experience domestic abuse as victims of domestic abuse in their own right.

On 24 May 2024 Royal Assent was granted to The Victims and Prisoners Act. The Act placed Operation Encompass into Law. This places a statutory obligation on police forces to share Operation Encompass notifications with schools/educational settings.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our pupils and through Operation Encompass we will be able to provide this to our children.

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

Operation Encompass is a national scheme that operates jointly between schools and all police forces.

Children who live in homes where there is domestic abuse, or who experience domestic abuse in their own teenage relationships, can be negatively impacted by this experience.

Children who experience domestic abuse are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right!

We have ensured that a member of our staff, (Designated Safeguarding Lead) known as a Key Adult, has been trained about Operation Encompass procedures. This allows us to use the information that has been confidentially shared with us by the police, to understand how a child may be impacted by domestic abuse and to then offer support to the child/ren in our care.

Operation Encompass means that our school will be told, prior to the start of the next school day, when police have attended an incident of domestic abuse where there is a child or young person who attends our school who is related to any of those involved in the incident.

This information means that we can understand a child's behaviour and support that child in whatever way they may need or want.

We are keen to offer the very best support possible to all our pupils and we believe that being part of Operation Encompass helps us to do this.

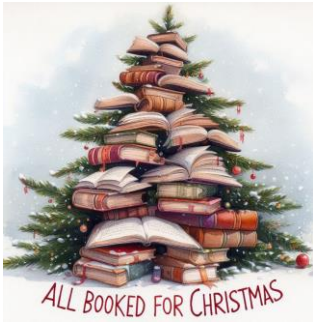
1 Domestic Abuse Act 2021

www.operationencompass.org

PTA Christmas Shopping Events

Thank you to everyone who supported our PTA Christmas Shopping morning/afternoon yesterday. It was wonderful to see all our children from across the primary school being able to do some Christmas shopping for family and loved ones and all the children thoroughly enjoyed spending their money and picking out a suitable festive gift. The range and quality of gifts and presents was amazing and I would like to express our thanks to the PTA Committee and other willing volunteers who gave of their time, enthusiasm and energies. I hope the purchases are now safely hidden away until Christmas Day! By supporting this event and any PTA activity you are directly supporting the school and raising additional funds to allow us to provide your children with the very best resources, equipment and curriculum experience – thank you!

Gift a Book at Christmas Scheme



Earlier today you should have received a separate letter via Parent Hub about the launch of our annual 'Gift a Book at Christmas' scheme. Now in its second year, this fantastic initiative is to seek parental support in enhancing both our EYFS/KS1 and KS2 school libraries so that all our children have access to the very best books and continue to develop a love of reading. We do hope that either as individuals or as a family you may be able to donate a sum of money (via Parent Pay) to help us purchase new books.

I do hope you will see this as an opportunity to buy the school a Christmas present! Thank you for your support in this exciting scheme.

Christmas Dinner & Jumper Day

The primary school Christmas dinner will be served on **Wednesday 18th December 2024**. I am sure this will be a wonderful festive treat and we are all looking forward to a traditional Christmas meal - staff and children alike! To make the day even more festive we are asking all the children and staff to wear their Christmas jumpers – normal school uniform should be worn on the bottom half!



Main Course

- Roast Chicken & stuffing (Vegetarian option – Sage and onion topped Quorn fillet)
- Gluten free pigs in blankets
- Roast potatoes
- Carrots/peas
- Yorkshire pudding
- Gravy (gluten free and suitable for vegetarians)



Dessert

- Chocolate Christmas biscuits
- Christmas jelly (suitable for vegetarians)
- Mince pies and cream

If your child has opted for a school dinner on this day they will receive the Christmas meal. The usual menu for this day will NOT apply. If your child normally has a packed lunch but would like the Christmas dinner on this date you will need to arrange for payment via ParentPay and inform the School Office by **Friday 6th December**.

NOTE: When we return after Christmas on Monday 6th January 2025 the menu will be **Week 1** choices.

Christmas Postboxes



I am sure many of your children will already be busy writing Christmas cards for their friends, teachers and other staff at school. The Christmas postboxes will be appearing in school on **Monday 2nd December 2024**. The postbox will be sorted on a daily basis and cards delivered and distributed to your children in their classes. Can I remind you that it is very important to ensure you address the envelopes properly to ensure they reach the right person. Please remember to write the persons full name if known, (Christian & surname) as well as their class, e.g. Bob Smith 2B. Please remember this is an internal delivery postbox only.

Christmas Party Day – Friday 20th December

As in previous years the children will be holding their class parties which will take place on the afternoon of Friday 20th December. This is a great opportunity for the children to celebrate the festive season with their classteacher, other adults and friends. It is also a nice way to unwind at the end of a very busy term! Due to a very busy school diary the parties are taking place on the same day as the school Christmas Eucharists. The children will need to come to school in their normal school uniform but will be allowed to change at lunchtime into their party clothes (non-uniform). Please send your child's change of clothes in a named carrier bag.

The children must wear 'sensible' casual clothes that will allow them to take part in the normal school day routines as well as enjoy the special activities in their classes. There is no charge for this event. **It goes without saying but normal school rules still apply! We do not allow the children to dye their hair, wear make up or jewellery. Please make sure all clothes are named!** The PTA have very kindly given each classteacher across the primary school £1.50 per child towards these parties and games – THANK YOU!

Christmas Eucharists – Friday 20th December

We very much hope you will be able to take the time to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas with us this year. We have two Christmas Eucharists in school on the last day of term (Friday 20th December). There will be a Reception, Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3 School Eucharist at 9:15a.m. in the Key Stage 1 Hall and one for Year 4, Year 5 & Year 6 at 10:45a.m. in the Key Stage 2 Hall. The Eucharists, led by Fr Mark, will include a number of Christmas readings, Christmas Carols and performances by the school choir. Please come and join us!

News from St Thomas' Church

Fr Mark writes;

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Church's liturgical year as we enter into the season of Advent, the time of preparation before the great celebration of Christmas. In the church we will move to wearing purple vestments and begin lighting the candles on our Advent wreath as we consider the great themes and people of this season. In the evening we have our very beautiful Advent carol service and procession where in music and readings we move from darkness to light. All our welcome as we gather for worship as follows:

08.00 Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)

10.00 Sung Mass (lasting about 70 minutes)

The Clubhouse meets during this service which is followed by refreshments

11.30 Conversation about Advent.

18.00 Advent Procession (lasting around 60 minutes)

In the week that follows,

Wednesday mornings are always 'Cake and a Cuppa' when friends old and new gather to catch up on the news and enjoy a slice of delicious home-made cake. This runs from 10.00 to 12.00 and some will stay on for the 12.15 Mass.

On Friday we have a 'Crafty Fridays' group when there is an opportunity to undertake various craft activities with the chance for a natter. This runs from 10.00 to 12.00.

Saturday sees our Youth Concert, further details are given below.

Sunday the 8th of December is the Second Sunday of Advent and also the day we hold our monthly Family Mass which is a more informal act of worship where the children and young people are encouraged to take part in the service as they contribute to the sermon slot and lead the singing.

08.00 Said Mass (lasting about 45 minutes)

10.00 Sung Mass (lasting about 75 minutes)

12.00 Family Mass (lasting about 60 minutes)

18.00 Choral Evensong (lasting around 50 minutes)

We are looking forward to all our special Christmas services and events, details of which can be found in the little poster pasted below. New this year is our Blue Christmas service, a gentle service of remembrance and thanksgiving for those who are no longer with us and able to share our earthly Christmas celebrations and open to all holding treasured memories of a loved one.

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY, BRENTWOOD

SERVICES & EVENTS

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2024

Sat 23rd Nov

Christmas Fair
11am - 3pm

Sunday 15th Dec

10am - Mass
6pm - 'Blue Christmas' service

Advent Sunday: 1st Dec

10am - Mass
6pm - Advent Procession
& Carols

Sunday 22nd Dec

10am - Mass
6pm - Nine Lessons & Carols

Sat 7th Dec

Christmas Youth Concert
7pm - 8:45pm

Christmas Eve: Tues 24th Dec

4pm - Christingle for young
children
6pm - Christingle for older
children
11:30pm - Midnight Mass

Sunday 8th Dec

10am - Mass
12pm - Family Mass
6pm - Evensong

Christmas Day: Wed 25th Dec

10am - Mass

Friday 13th Dec

Carols & Chilli
5:00pm

Sunday 29th Dec

10am - Mass (no choir)



Finally.....

St Thomas of Canterbury Church are holding their Christmas Youth Concert on **Saturday 7th December 2024**. Doors open at 6:30p.m. with the concert starting at 7:00p.m. There are a range of performers and performances including our very own KS1 and KS2 School Choirs. The concert will end at around 9:00p.m. I do hope many of you will be able to go along and support this event.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope we can bring the end of term to a successful conclusion.

Have a lovely 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.