

# ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



## NEWSLETTER

28<sup>th</sup> November 2025



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 over the weekend (30<sup>th</sup> 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'!

This Sunday (1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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 **88** 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 **£1409.99!** Thank you to Class 6Mc, 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!

### Staffing Update

I am delighted to be able to share with you the maternity leave staffing arrangements for Mrs Knight's class (2K) once she starts her maternity leave in January 2026. We are very pleased to be welcoming **Mrs Suzanne Brind** to our staffing team, who will take over the teaching responsibilities for Mrs Knight's class in the spring term. Mrs Brind has become a familiar face in our school community over this half term as she has covered a number of different classes when supply cover was required. Mrs Brind is an experienced teacher who has worked in many different settings, including church schools, and has extensive experience of teaching in Key Stage 1. I am sure you will make Mrs Brind feel very welcome as she takes on her new role at our school.

We have also recruited for two other vacancies in school which I am very pleased to be able to share with you too. Our new School Librarian is **Mrs Claire Ware**, who takes over from Mrs Emery. I am sure both our libraries will continue to go from strength to strength under her guidance and leadership.

We have also recruited a new Clerk to the Governing Body – **Mrs Rebecca Southgate** will be taking on this crucial role from January 2026 and continue to support the statutory work of the Governing Body as they meet their statutory roles and responsibilities.

Sadly, we have said a fond farewell to **Mrs Natasha Ragheb** who has left her post as Catering Assistant in the school kitchen. I am sure you will join me in thanking her for her hard work in ensuring our children receive tasty and nutritious food each day. We are currently advertising the Catering Assistant vacancy.

## Updated Policy

At our recent Governing Body meeting of the Finance and Premises Committee, one of our existing school policies was reviewed and updated in light of statutory changes: The Charging & Remissions Policy.

This year, there are no material changes.

The Governing Body have agreed in November 2025 that moving forward the subsidised cost for families in receipt of the Pupil Premium Grant will remain unchanged for residential visits in the 2026/2027 academic year. They will remain as:

- **Rock UK** (Year 6) – A 50% contribution will be required (payable in instalments)
- **Aylmerton Outdoor Education Centre** (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 the above mentioned policy is available from the school website.

The Governing Body have also agreed to change the venue for the Year 5 residential trip in the 2026/2027 academic year. We are delighted to announce that we will now be taking the children to the Aylmerton Outdoor Education Centre in North Norfolk. Details about this exciting change will follow later in the academic year!

## School Performances 2025

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 charities – **Kids Inspire** and **Rock UK**. I hope you will be able to give generously in your donations and support these very worthy charities. If you forget to bring your purse or wallet.... don't panic! We will have event specific QR codes displayed around the hall which you can scan and continue to give generously!!!

## PTA Christmas Shopping Events

Thank you to everyone who supported our PTA Christmas Shopping morning/afternoon and Christmas Fayre after school 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 fantastic 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 third 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 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025**. 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 – Herby topped Quorn fillet)
- Gluten free pigs in blankets
- Roast potatoes
- Carrots/peas
- Yorkshire pudding
- Gravy (gluten free and suitable for vegetarians)



## Dessert

- Chocolate Christmas Tree cake
- Chocolate Christmas cookie
- 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 5<sup>th</sup> December**.

**NOTE:** When we return after Christmas on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026 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 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025**. 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 2NT. Please remember this is an internal delivery postbox only.

## Christmas Party Day – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December

As in previous years the children will be holding their class parties which will take place on the afternoon of Friday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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!

## Finally.....

St Thomas of Canterbury Church are holding their **Very Merry Christmas Concert** on **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025**. Doors open at 6:15p.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 this busy term to a successful conclusion.

Have a lovely weekend!

Mr D. Moran  
Headteacher


**ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY, BRENTWOOD**

# SERVICES & EVENTS


## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2025

<b>Sat 22nd Nov</b> Christmas Bazaar 11am - 4pm	<b>Sunday 14th Dec</b> 8am - Mass 10am - All Age Sung Mass 6pm - Celebratory Sung Mass for Fr Ossie
<b>Advent Sunday: 30th Nov</b> 8am - Mass 10am - Sung Mass 6pm - Advent Procession & Carols	<b>Sunday 21st Dec</b> 8am - Mass 10am - Sung Mass 6pm - Nine Lessons & Carols
<b>Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec</b> 6:30pm - Civic Carol Service	<b>Christmas Eve: Tues 24th Dec</b> 4pm - Christingle for young children 6pm - Christingle for older children 11:30pm - Midnight Mass
<b>Sat 6th Dec</b> 7pm - A Very Merry Christmas Concert	<b>Christmas Day: Wed 25th Dec</b> 8am - Mass 10am - Sung Mass
<b>Sunday 7th Dec</b> 8am - Mass 10am - Sung Mass 6pm - Blue Christmas Evensong	<b>Sunday 28th Dec</b> 8am - Mass 10am - Mass (no choir)
<b>Friday 12th Dec</b> 5:00pm - Carols & Chilli	

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And...please remember if you have any questions or queries or comments feel free to contact us: [admin@stthomaspri.essex.sch.uk](mailto: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.*