



NEWSLETTER

23rd January 2026

I cannot quite believe that we are nearing the end of January. The first half of this shorter spring term is racing by and in just a few weeks we will be nearing the half way mark of the academic year!!

Although named the 'spring term' it feels anything but spring-like, as we continue through the long, dark months of winter. January can always feel like a bit of an anti-climax after the joy and celebration of Christmas, and the dark mornings make it very difficult to find energy and enthusiasm as we start each day. However, there is gradual change on the way – the afternoons/evenings are slowly becoming lighter – a sure sign we are moving to the real spring season. If you are looking for light and something to uplift you at the end of January, then look no further than this Sunday.....

This Sunday, 25th January, we will be coming together as a school community at St Thomas of Canterbury Church to celebrate **Education Sunday**. This is a very special service of thanksgiving and a chance to offer thanks and prayers for the life and work of our primary school. It is also an opportunity to outwardly demonstrate and strengthen our partnership with our parish church, the clergy and wider church family, as well as share some of our work with the gathered congregation. During the service, which starts at 10:00a.m. there will be presentations of work from EYFS, Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 (Year 3 & 4) and Upper Key Stage 2 (Year 5 & 6). This year our presentations will reflect some of the exciting curriculum work around 'Dreams & Goals' that the children are doing this term...it is sure to be amazing!

We hope as many children and families as possible will be able to attend. Please remember, we are asking all children attending to wear their school uniform and will expect them to sit with their classteacher and other class members at the front of the church. Parents, carers and other family members are of course very welcome to stay and sit in the other areas of the church for the service. We look forward to seeing you!

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)

You will be aware that last week (Friday 16th January) we welcomed a SIAMS Inspector (Kaye Healy) from the National Society for Education, to undertake our SIAMS inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). The inspector spent the entire day in school looking at how St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church School and enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to all parents/carers for your support and kind messages and words of encouragement. I would also like to thank all those parents/carers who met with our inspector as part of the various focus groups across the course of the inspection process. At this stage, I am not at liberty to share the outcome of the inspection process but we are very pleased with the judgements made! The inspection report is currently being written, finalised and quality assured. We anticipate that the final report should be available for publication just before the February half term break. We are very much looking forward to sharing it with you and our wider community.

Confirmation Classes – Upper Key Stage 2

Fr Mark will be sharing details later this term about the opportunity for children in Year 5 and Year 6 to explore the sacrament of confirmation. This is a wonderful occasion for any Upper KS2 children who feel ready to "confirm" the promises made for them by their godparents and parents at their baptism. After confirmation, all members of the Church may receive the Holy Communion.

Our confirmation classes, held after school, will begin after the Easter holiday (summer term) and details will follow in a separate letter towards the end of this term.

SAVE THE DATE: The Confirmation Service and First Communion with Bishop Luke, The Bishop of Richborough, has been agreed for Sunday 14th June 2026. Make sure you save this date in your diaries!!

School Uniform

We appear to have an increasing number of children arriving to school with the incorrect school uniform. This is particularly a problem with children in Key Stage 2 having no tie and children across the primary school with incorrect footwear. We take great pride in our appearance and have high expectations of children's presentation. Please can I ask both parents/carers and children to help support this by ensuring they are correctly dressed for school. School ties for children in Key Stage 2 can be purchased via your child's ParentPay account at the price of **£4.00** – once it has been paid for online we will issue the school tie to your child via the School Office. Please remember to put your child's name on it!

REMINDER: Year 3 Swimming



Lessons for the children in Year 3 (3CA & 3P) will begin on Friday 6th February 2026. I would like to remind parents that we very much rely on your payments to cover the cost of swimming lessons of **£54 per child**. In recent years we have seen the cost of pool hire rise at St. Helen's as well as the cost of swimming teachers increase substantially. I hope you will agree that this remains excellent value for money. If there are reasons why your child cannot take part in swimming lessons this must be discussed with your child's classteacher or the School Office. Please ensure your child has the correct swimming kit in school on Friday's. Please could we encourage you to make a prompt payment via our online payment system www.parentpay.com. If you feel you may have difficulty in paying this amount and would like to discuss this confidentially then please arrange to speak with a member of the School Office staff. Thank you for your support and understanding in this matter.

May I remind you that all children have to wear a suitable costume for swimming (no beach wear!) and a swimming hat. Swimming hats are available via ParentPay at a cost of **£4.00**. It is a really good idea to write your child's name on their hat in large letters in a thick permanent marker as this helps the swimming teachers to call their names and also reduces the risk of it becoming lost.

Attendance Matters!

We are rapidly heading towards the half-way mark of the school academic year. This is a good time to share with you some of our school attendance data.

Currently our whole school attendance data for the year to date stands at **94.4%** This is below the national average of **94.8%** It is also below our school agreed target of **96%**.

Do not be misled by the figures being in the 90% range. Although 94.4% sounds good....it is not and it needs to improve!

Figures also show that **82 of our children are identified as persistent absentees** which is where their attendance falls below 90% - this equates to doing an average of a 4½ day week!!

When we break it down by Year Group it shows some interesting trends:

EYFS/Reception	89.5%
Year 1	92.3%
Year 2	94.1%
Year 3	94.9%
Year 4	94.8%
Year 5	95.8%
Year 6	94.5%

We all appreciate that there are times when children are unwell and need to be absent from school – however this should be the exception not the rule. The winter months have seen lots of children (and adults) suffering with seasonal illnesses but we hope once we head into the spring months this will improve.

Please continue to support us in promoting regular attendance and arriving for school on time each day. We want to be able to close the gap between our attendance data and that achieved nationally, and ultimately hit our target of 96% Thank you for your continued support!

Have You Tried a School Dinner?



We are trying to encourage as many children as possible to take up our fantastic school meals which rotate through a 3-week rolling menu. These menus have been updated to reflect meals which our children enjoy whilst at the same time being healthy and nutritionally balanced.

The current menus are displayed on the school website (www.stthomaspri.org) and can be found via the home page and then selecting the 'Information for Parents' tab. Here you can look at the menu choices and see what is on offer.

Please do take a look at these menus with your child/ren and see if you can find a few favourites to enjoy. All children in Reception and Key

Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2) are entitled to a free hot school dinner everyday. In Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6) the cost of a school meal is £2.69 a day (unless you have applied for and been awarded benefits related free school meals). This reflects excellent value for money and I know that Mrs Turner (Catering Manager) and her catering team put a great deal of love and effort into producing our fantastic school meals!

Finally....

We have been delighted to welcome **Mrs Hemalatha Tumu** to our Midday Assistant (MDA) team this week, as she takes on this role within our school. Ably assisted and supported by Mrs Dansey (Senior MDA), Mrs Tumu is settling in to her new roles and responsibilities and adds further support for our children across the busy lunchtime period. Lunchtime in school is a very busy time of the school day, as we ensure all children have something to eat and are then well looked after on the playground as they enjoy time with their friends. At this time of year we have the added challenge of wet lunchtimes when the weather prevents us from going outside for some fresh air! I am extremely grateful to all of our Midday Assistant team who go above and beyond the call of duty every day – I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their dedication and commitment....come rain or shine!

We have ended the week with our PTA 'Dress as a Rockstar' non-uniform day - I am aware that many of our children and parents/carers have been engaging with our Times Table Rock Star Battle Week which finishes today! As well as improving your times table knowledge you have also been raising much needed additional funding for the school – a win, win situation!! Thank you to everyone who has taken part and engaged with this event.

I look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday morning at St Thomas of Canterbury Church for our Education Sunday celebrations.



Please continue to hold the life and work of our primary school in your thoughts and prayers.

Have a wonderful 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.