

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

9th January 2026

Happy New Year!



In this first newsletter for 2026, may I take this opportunity on behalf of everyone at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School to wish you a Happy New Year! I do hope you all had a wonderful Christmas period and that 2026 has got off to a positive start? I know I have been able to speak to many of you at the EYFS/KS1 and KS2 school gates since our return to school on 6th January and it is wonderful to see this new spring term getting off to a great start. Although it is referred to as the spring term it feels decidedly wintry at present and the very dark mornings make it a struggle to get up! There has been the ongoing threat of snow in the forecast this week but thankfully this has not resulted in anything too significant, unlike other areas in the country!

After the marathon of the autumn term, we have a fairly short sprint through the spring term as we try and cram in as much as possible. This includes various opportunities for you to be involved in school life such as our school Eucharists and Parents' Evening at the end of the term.

As well as this newsletter, you will receive early next week via Parent Hub, the 'Dates for the Diary' list for this spring term. Please do keep them handy as it will allow you to take a full and active part in school life and ensure you don't miss some of those key dates and events. Please remember you can always access the dates via our school website as well – www.stthomaspri.org

The staff and I look forward to your continued support, trust and confidence over the coming term and hope once again we can continue to work in collaboration and partnership with you and your children.

Staffing Update

Sadly, we will be saying goodbye and good luck to **Mrs Yvonne Charleston**, who is leaving our Midday Assistant (MDA) team at the end of next week. Mrs Charleston has been a longstanding and hardworking member of our MDA team, who work so hard to support and care for the children over the busy lunchtime period. Mrs Charleston is moving on to a similar role at Brentwood School. I am sure you will join me in thanking her for her dedication and commitment during her time at St Thomas'.

We have also appointed **Mrs Anto Femil** as an additional midday assistant (MDA) and she is now working every lunchtime to help supervise and safeguard our children during this very busy period of the school day. I am sure you will welcome Mrs Femil as she embarks on her new role ably supported by Mrs Dansey our Senior Midday Assistant.

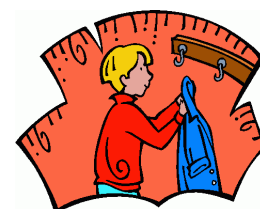
IMPORTANT REMINDER: Primary School Admissions – September 2026

For those of you with younger children due to start school in EYFS/Reception in September 2026 now is the time to make your application. This applies to all parents of children born during the period 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022. You **MUST** now apply for primary school places as the closing date is **Thursday 15th January 2026**. Please apply online by visiting www.essex.gov.uk/admissions

REMINDER: Coats!

With the cold, wintry weather arriving recently and the odd flurry of snow, it is yet another chance 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.

I would also point out that the Year 6 Leavers' hoodie is not a substitute for a coat.



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.

Children's Commissioner Report



The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, has recently published a new guide, *'What I wish my parents or carers knew: A guide for parents on managing children's digital lives'*.

Supporting children's safety is a shared responsibility between families, schools and wider society. For parents and carers, this responsibility has become increasingly complex as children's lives are now deeply intertwined with the digital world. Many parents face difficult decisions about how to balance protecting children from

online harm with enabling access to spaces that are now central to learning, socialising and play. This guide focuses on the challenge of managing children's everyday online habits.

This guide was written with the direct involvement of children in England.

I hope this guide (link below) will be a useful resource for our school community, and I encourage you as parents/carers to take some time to read and explore this information.

https://issuu.com/childrenscommissioner/docs/what_i_wish_my_parents_or_carers_knew...a_guide_on

Essex & Thames SCITT

We are delighted to be continuing our partnership with the Essex & Thames SCITT. This partnership involves the school working with Essex & Thames Primary SCITT to help train and produce high quality teachers. The continuing improvement of pupil progress and the well-being of children are at the heart of this collaboration and inform all aspects of the training. There is also a close relationship between the SCITT, Anglia Ruskin University and the school which provides an ideal environment for the exchange of ideas that informs practice across the partnership. As part of this work we have welcomed two SCITT students this term, **Mrs Megan Harnett & Miss Ellie Beard**. They will both be on placement with us for the spring and summer terms. Mrs Harnett will be based in Key Stage 1 and work closely alongside Mrs Antrobus in 1A; Miss Beard will be based in Key Stage 2 and work closely alongside Mrs Sprake in 6S. I am sure you will join me in welcoming them both to St Thomas' Primary School and wish them every success on their placement with us.

Curriculum Information Leaflets for Parents – Spring Term 2026

Hopefully by now you will have received, via Parent Hub, a copy of the new Spring Term 2026 curriculum information guide for parents and carers. These are produced by teaching staff as a guide and indication of the themes and topics being covered this term. Please take the time to read this through and discuss it with your child. We hope it will give you some ideas about how you can support your child's learning and homework. We would highlight and promote the opportunities to research curriculum themes at the local library, via the internet or by visiting a museum. The most important thing is to talk to your child and find out what they have been doing and learning. Copies of this guide are now available via the school website by clicking on the appropriate Early Years, Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 boxes at the bottom of the home page. If there are any aspects of the work your child is covering which you feel you may be able to offer help or advice with then please approach your child's classteacher – we would love to hear from you! Thank you for your support!

School Crossing Patrol Vacancy - It Could Be You!

Do you know someone who would like a rewarding opportunity within the community?

We are currently advertising for a School Crossing Patrol Officer for the Sawyers Hall Lane crossing. The current rate of pay is **£13.00 per hour**. The role is part time (8 hours 20 mins per week) and term time only. No experience is required, and full training and uniform is provided. The role is assisting pupils and other pedestrians to safely cross the road on their journeys to and from school.

If you are interested or know someone who may be interested and want to find out more - please visit : <https://www.workingforessex.com> or call the School Crossing Patrol Service on 03330 139788 or email your details to schoolcrossingpatrol@essex.gov.uk
Thank you.

Year 3 Swimming Lessons



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 Junior School 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. I would like to remind you that swimming forms part of the National Curriculum for PE at Key Stage 2 and is not optional.

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.

Spring Term School Eucharists

The Eucharists for this term will be communicated via the 'Dates for the Diary' sheet and are also detailed below.

The **EYFS/Reception, Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3 Lent Eucharist** will take place on Friday 27th February 2026 at 9:15a.m. in the KS1 Hall.

The **Year 4, Year 5 & Year 6 Lent Eucharist** will take place on Friday 27th February 2026 at 10:45a.m. in the KS2 Hall.

The **Preparing for Easter Eucharists** will take place on:

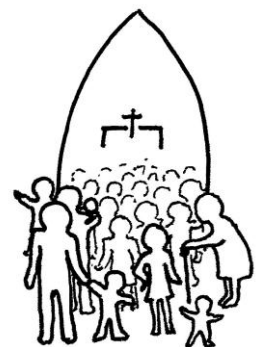
- Thursday 26th March 2026 – Reception/EYFS & Key Stage 1 at 9:15a.m. in the KS1 Hall.
- Friday 27th March 2026 – Key Stage 2 at 9:30a.m. at St Thomas of Canterbury Church.

I do hope you will be able to join us for these services.

Education Sunday 2026

Fr. Mark and I have met this week to discuss the arrangements for Education Sunday.

Our annual church service to celebrate Education Sunday will take place at St. Thomas' Church on **Sunday 25th January 2026** starting at **10:00a.m.** 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 and all the people associated with them. We hope as many children and families as possible will be able to attend this very special occasion and come together as a school and church community. All children attending must wear their school uniform and will be expected to sit with their classteacher and other class members at the front of the church. Parents/carers are more than welcome to stay and sit in other areas of the church for the service.



In order for us to get a clear indication as to how many children to expect and how many seats to reserve in the church, we would be very grateful if you could indicate with a note confirming your attendance in your child's home school diary. Thank you.

Finally....

We continue to see an increasing number of children arriving late for school which causes significant disruption, not only to the operational needs of the School Office but also to the child's classroom as they enter late after all the other children are settled. We are all acutely aware that Sawyers Hall Lane and the surrounding area are very busy in the morning and I would strongly encourage you to make sure you leave plenty of time to travel to school making sure you are on the school site before the gates are locked promptly at 8:55a.m. Punctuality is an important life skill and it is very important that we set a good example to our children about the importance of being on time for school every day. I look forward to seeing a rapid improvement in this area.



I would like to remind all parents/carers about the importance of upholding and meeting our school uniform expectations and requirements. We still have a number of children in the incorrect footwear and not wearing appropriate school shoes. Also we have an increasing number of children in school who are seen to be wearing make-up, particularly amongst our girls in Upper Key Stage 2. Make-up (including nail varnish) is not permitted and any child found to be wearing it will be asked to remove it when in school. Any make-up items found in school will also be confiscated and parents/carers asked to collect it from the School Office. Please help us maintain our high standards of age appropriate presentation in school and wear our school uniform with pride. Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

As you can see there is a lot going on already as we embark on this new term in school. Please do keep up to date with all communications sent out via the school - Parent Hub and the school website being your best sources of information.

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.