

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

11th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

Happy New (academic) Year! It was wonderful to welcome you all back to school last Thursday after what I hope was a fantastic summer holiday. Although we may all feel a little apprehensive about returning to school, it doesn't take too long to get back into the normal routines. It is a joy and delight to see our Primary School building full of children and staff with the sound of excitement and laughter spreading throughout the corridors and classrooms. Once again, the children have demonstrated such confidence and resilience as they return after the summer break.

At the beginning of a new school year and a new term there are always lots of enquiries to the School Office – both in-person and via the telephone/email. The admin staff work exceptionally hard to deal with all your questions, queries and concerns in a timely and professional manner. Sometimes it may take a little longer to get the information you need or find the answer to your question, but please be reassured that all communication through the School Office is important to us. Please bear with us and we thank you in advance for your patience and trust.

Please do take the time to read the rest of this newsletter as it contains important information about the term ahead – thank you!

Welcome to our Reception Children

The Reception Team have had a busy start to the term meeting parents/carers and getting to know the new children joining our school community. Last week we held our 'All About Me' meetings and this week the children have been spending time exploring their new classrooms and beginning to learn the routines and expectations of starting school. I would like to extend a special welcome to all the new Reception children as you prepare to embark on your educational journey with us – we are all looking forward to getting to know you in the coming days, weeks and months ahead! As the Reception children begin their time with us at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School they will be given an olive wood holding cross from the Holy Land and a card with the words of The Lord's Prayer. Just like the children, each one of these crosses is unique and special – they all have a slightly different pattern and grain. These crosses are a reminder that God is always with us.

Midday Assistant Vacancy - We Need You!!

We currently have a vacancy for a Midday Assistant (MDA) role in school to assist in the care and welfare of the children during the lunchtime period. The hours are 11:55a.m. – 1:15p.m. Monday to Friday. No previous experience is necessary and training will be provided. Any successful applicants will be subject to pre-employment checks including a DBS disclosure.

If you are interested in this opportunity and becoming part of our fantastic MDA team or would like to find out more information please give your details to the School Office. We will then arrange for an application pack to be sent to you with further details.

School Uniform

As a school community we take great pride in wearing our school uniform. Thank you for your support with our school uniform policy. Can I remind you that we have a strict school uniform code and children must only wear approved uniform (as set out in your child's Home School Diary or available on the school website). We have had to remind a number of children about appropriate footwear (no trainers are permitted), jewellery and hair accessories. If you are in any doubt about what is permissible please check your child's Home School Diary, or speak to your child's classteacher or the School Office. In the same way we will contact you if we are unhappy with your child's school uniform. All children should be wearing **SUMMER** uniform until the October half term.

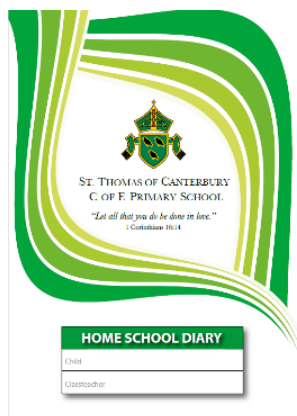


I would also like to remind you that items of clothing with the school logo on (jumper/cardigan, polo shirt and PE t-shirt) can only be purchased from our approved school uniform provider – SmartyPants. We do not allow or authorise any other uniform provider to use our logo as this is in breach of copyright laws. Please do not ask SmartyPants or other uniform providers to logo items of clothing you have purchased elsewhere as this is strictly prohibited. The Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School have unanimously approved this decision and wish to remind you of this situation to avoid upset or disappointment.

I would also like to confirm that our school uniform requirements are fully in line with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms that came in to force on 1st September 2026 (Children's Wellbeing and School Bill). We fully support this statutory guidance to ensure the cost of school uniforms is reasonable and provides the best value for money. Please also remember that the school PTA have a good stock of pre-loved uniform items and provide regular, accessible opportunities to acquire second-hand uniform at very competitive prices!

Home School Diaries

I hope by now you have had a chance to look through your child's new Home School Diary which have, once again, been kindly funded and donated by the PTA. You will notice that this year they continue to be in a more compact A5 size which will hopefully make them more manageable and fit into children's school bags more comfortably. This year we have redesigned the content and layout of the Home School Diaries so that they are relevant to all children in our primary school. We hope you like them!!



The Home School Diaries are invaluable in promoting and sharing information about your child's progress and conduct in school and also a good way for you to be able to quickly and easily communicate with the classteacher. It also acts as a reading record and we would encourage you and your child to record when you hear them read at home in the relevant section in the diary. If you do write a message in the Home School Diary for your child's classteacher please make sure your child brings it to their attention so we can respond accordingly. Please take care of them and ensure your child has it with them in school everyday. At this time of year we ask you to ensure you have been through the first few pages with your child and signed the Home School Agreement as well as all the permission acknowledgements for Arbor which will allow your child to play a full and active part in the curriculum. Please try and have all these signed as soon as possible.

EYFS Parents' Information Evening



This term we are delighted to be hosting a Parents' Information Evening for our parents/carers of children starting in EYFS/Reception. The meeting will be hosted via Zoom so you will be able to join from the comfort of your own home! We hope it will also allow more parents and carers to attend and participate without the worry of arranging childcare. At this meeting the Early Years Team will be able to share with you some of the exciting things your children will be doing and learning as well as communicate our expectations and how you can help with your child's learning. It is a good opportunity to develop a strong partnership between home and school and all work together for the benefit of your child.

The date for this meeting is detailed below and we do hope that as many parents/carers as possible will be able to attend.

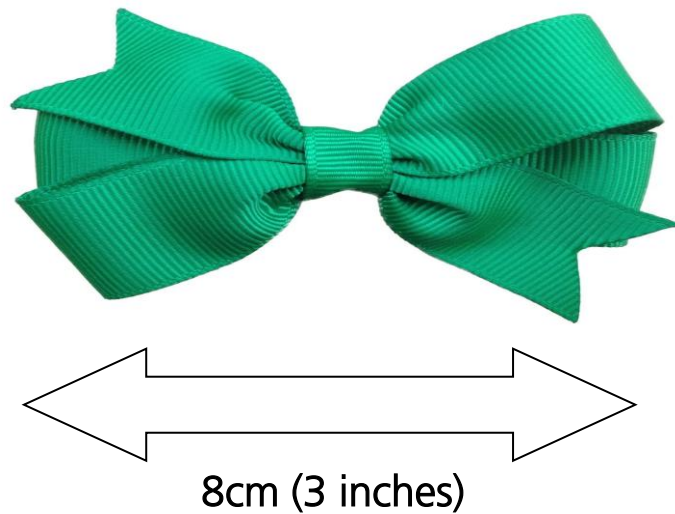
Reception/EYFS Parents' Information Evening – Wednesday 30th September 2026 – 6:00p.m.

The Zoom link will be distributed via Parent Hub nearer to the above date. We look forward to seeing you!

Hair Accessories

We continue to notice and have some concerns around the size, style and colour of some hair accessories worn by girls to school. Our school policy sets out that *"when hair is long enough, we request it is tied back all the time, using plain green, black or white hair bands and clips."* Whilst many people adhere to the colours stipulated we have concerns about the size of bows and ribbons worn in the hair. Very often these bows become an unnecessary distraction and cause problems in the classroom.

Can I please ask that approved hair accessories are no bigger than 8cm (3 inches). Next week we will be giving children a 'gentle' reminder of what is acceptable.



Extra-Curricular Activities/Clubs



We are delighted that extra-curricular clubs will be continuing this term after the summer break. The staff have already met to finalise the extra curricular activities and clubs which will be on offer this term across the primary school. It would be a good opportunity to remind you that we do expect the children to show dedication and commitment to the clubs they attend through regular attendance and participation. We appreciate that in the first two weeks they may be trying them out but after this we expect them to make a firm and decisive decision about their attendance.

This week (Thursday) you should have received via Parent Hub a special 'Clubs Edition' of this newsletter with more detail and information. Extra-curricular clubs and activities will begin next week – week commencing **14th September 2026**.

Lower Key Stage 2 School Swimming



Swimming lessons for 4Ba, 4Bu & 4S began this Friday (11th September) and I would like to remind parents/carers that we very much rely on your payments to cover the cost of swimming lessons of **£60 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 represents 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 Fridays. 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 staff in the School Office. Children in 3P and 3CA will be swimming later in the academic year (January 2027) but if you wish to pay for your lessons now this is also available via ParentPay. 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 from the school office for £4.00 – these must be paid for in advance on ParentPay. 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.

Parent Prayer Group Meeting – All Welcome!

Another way in which we celebrate our Church School Christian distinctiveness and look to offer fellowship as a school community is through our weekly Prayer Group meeting. This group meets every Wednesday morning at 9:00a.m. in the Key Stage 2 library to pray for the life and work of the school, the wider community and also to spend some time in personal prayer and quiet reflection. In previous years we have had a modest but very

dedicated group that meet to offer our weekly thoughts and prayers. If you would like to join us each week or just drop in when you are free we would be very pleased to welcome you to this group. It is a relaxed, friendly, informal group and no one is asked to pray or read aloud unless they wish to. For those that attend they find it an uplifting and refreshing part of the week and solid friendships have been formed over the years. I do hope you will be able to join us next week.

Absence When Recovering from Diarrhoea or Vomiting

We are very mindful that at all times of the year and especially as we move in to the autumn and winter months children will experience periods of illness and sickness. At the beginning of a new academic year I would like to remind you of the advice that we follow from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) regarding their guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings. The guidance is in place to protect the school's pupils and staff and reduce the risk of acquiring an infection at school. The guidance from the UKHSA in such situations is to request that the pupil does not attend school until completely symptom free for **48 hours**.

The information below is also a good reference guide for when your child can and can't attend school when feeling unwell:

What to do Advice on childhood illnesses		 Go to school; if needed, get treatment as required	 Some restrictions for school attendance	 Don't go to school and see the GP
What it's called?	What it's like	Going to school	Getting treatment	More advice
Asthma flare up	Worsening of usual symptoms		Follow your care plan	Stay off school if feeling too unwell
Chicken pox	Rash begins as small, red, flat spots that develop into itchy fluid-filled blisters		Pharmacy	Back to school five days after on-set of the rash, or when all lesions are crusted over
Common cold	Runny nose, sneezing, sore throat		Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
Conjunctivitis	Teary, red, itchy, painful eye(s)		Pharmacy	Try not to touch eye to avoid spreading*
Flu	Fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose, headache body aches and pain, exhaustion, sore throat		Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene*
German measles/ Rubella	Fever, tiredness. Raised, red, rash that starts on the face and spreads downwards		GP	Back to school four days after the rash has started, if feeling well enough. Please let the school know, as pregnant members of staff may be affected.
Glandular fever	High temperature, swollen glands, sore throat; usually more painful than any before		GP	*
Hand, foot & mouth disease	Fever, sore throat, headache, small painful blisters inside the mouth on tongue and gums (may appear on hands and feet)		GP	Attend school while monitoring symptoms
Head lice	Itchy scalp (may be worse at night)		Pharmacy	
Impetigo	Clusters of red bumps or blisters surrounded by area of redness		GP	Back to school when lesions crust or 48 hours after start of antibiotics
Measles	Fever, cough, runny nose, watery inflamed eyes, rash		GP	Back to school four days from on-set of rash, and if feeling well enough
Ringworm	Red ring shaped rash, may be itchy, rash may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty		Pharmacy	
Scabies	Itching rash, commonly between fingers, wrists, elbows, arm		GP	Back to school after first treatment
Scarlet fever	Fever, unwell, red tongue, sandpaper rash		GP	Exclusion period during first 24 hours of antibiotics*
Shingles	Pain, itching, or tingling along the affected nerve pathway. Blister-type rash		GP	Only stay off school if rash is weeping and cannot be covered
Sickness bug/ diarrhoea	Stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea		Pharmacy	Contact GP if symptoms persist after 48 hours
Threadworms	Intense itchiness around anus		Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
Tonsilitis/ Strep throat	Intense sore throat for more than 1 day		Pharmacy	See GP if temperature lasts more than 48 hours or cannot swallow. Only need to stay off school if feeling too unwell
Whooping cough	Violent coughing, with a 'whoop'		GP	Exclusion period during first five days of antibiotics
Covid				Visit www.nhs.uk for latest guidance

*Attend school while monitoring symptoms.

This information is a guide and has been checked by health professionals. If you are unsure about your child's wellbeing, we recommend you contact your pharmacy or GP to check.

Should my child go to school/nursery today?
 Hertfordshire and West Essex Healthier Together for further information
<https://www.hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/parentscarers>

Working in partnership with

Studybugs

As we begin this new academic year we continue to promote the use of Studybugs, a more efficient and secure system for reporting your child's absence due to illness. Many parents have already downloaded the app and I would encourage all parents (especially those in EYFS/Reception) to do so as soon as possible even if you don't think you will use it! You can also report absence via your laptop or PC from <https://studybugs.com>

All absence due to illness must now be reported via Studybugs and School Office staff will remind you of this if you ring up to leave a message. This new system helps us track sickness related illness more closely and also provides you with reassurance, advice and guidance from the UKHSA. Thank you for your support.

Attendance & Punctuality



As we get off to a new academic year we want to develop good habits and routines – this includes being in school every day and on time! From being present at the gates this week I have noticed a number of families running late and I must stress to you the importance of being on time in the morning. When children arrive late to school it is often embarrassing for them as well as an unnecessary distraction for the other children and adults who have already settled and started their learning. At primary school age the children very much rely on their parents/carers to take responsibility for embedding these good habits!

We will be monitoring both attendance and punctuality closely this term, with the assistance of **Aquinas School Attendance Provisions** and contacting parents/carers where we have concerns. The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority continue to place a big emphasis on both of these areas and encouraging schools to use statutory enforcement powers where necessary. This can lead to a penalty notice for irregular school attendance.

Keeping Your Children Safe!



It is vitally important that we know who is collecting your child/ren at the end of the school day. If it is going to be someone different to normal who may be unfamiliar to us, please can you record a written note in the Home School Diary or contact the School Office. We will use this information to ensure your child goes home safely and would ask you to inform us as soon as possible if there are any changes to the normal routine or change of designated adult.

For everyone's safety we ask that scooters are **NOT** ridden on the Primary School site under any circumstances. It is wonderful to witness the growing number of children scooting to school and parking them in the scooter parks. Please remember that at the beginning and end of each day there are a lot of

pedestrians on the school premises and we need to ensure everyone is safe.

A polite reminder that dogs are not permitted on the school site. This includes smaller dogs being carried. I would also ask you to be careful of where you leave your dog outside of the school gate. They should not be left unattended and please be mindful that not everyone is a dog lover – for some adults and children it can cause them distress and anxiety.

Jewellery is not permitted to be worn in school with the exception of small stud earrings. This is to keep your child safe and prevent unnecessary accidental injury to other children. Children are naturally very tactile. If your child wears earrings to school then they must be removed for PE lessons – your child will be expected to take them out and put them back in themselves. Adults cannot assist with this and we no longer cover earrings over in line with national and Local Authority guidance.

Key Stage 2 Healthy Snacks – NO NUTS!

We are proud to be a healthy school and promote healthy lifestyles and diet. We encourage you to send in a healthy snack for your child to eat at morning break. The vast majority of children do bring in a piece of fruit or healthy cereal bar. However we have observed a few children who are not eating a healthy snack! Please can we ask you to support us in this matter and remember that under **no circumstances** should children be bringing in crisps, chocolate, chocolate covered snack bars or sweets. It is also worth pointing out that a number of fruit based snack products marketed in the main supermarkets contain a very high sugar content and



are probably not as healthy as you might think! The classteachers will be reminding the children about what constitutes a healthy snack.

Can I also remind you that we have a number of children across our school with severe allergies to nuts so please **do not** send in any snack or packed lunch items that obviously contain nuts. Thank you for your co-operation.

As part of our non-pupil professional development and training day on 2nd September 2026, all staff have completed training in line with the DfE statutory guidance 'Allergy Safety in Schools'. This included training on allergy and anaphylaxis awareness in schools.

Year 6 Secondary School Applications – OPENS TOMORROW

If your child is in Year 6, you can apply for a secondary school (Year 7) place between **12th September 2026** and **31st October 2026**.

Before you apply you should:

- check you live in the [Essex administrative area](#)
- read the [secondary school admissions booklet](#)

You may also want to check [the priority admission catchment area schools](#).

Online applications can be made from 12th September 2026 up to and including the 31st October 2026. Please ensure that your online application is submitted by 31st October 2026. Remember to re-submit after making any changes before the deadline.

All applications received after 31st October will be treated as late and will only be processed after all on-time applications. You are less likely to get a place at one of your preferred schools if you apply late.

You can get in touch with the School Admissions Team if you have a query about your application or if you are changing address.

Telephone: **0345 603 2200**

Email: admissions@essex.gov.uk

You might also find it useful to watch the following link: <https://youtu.be/Q0a8fi06WKY>

Finally....

Apologies for the length of this first newsletter. If you have read all the way to the end you certainly deserve a cup of tea! There is so much to share and I appreciate that many of you like to receive as much detail and advanced warning as possible. I am very excited at the prospect of the term ahead and the way we can all work together to ensure St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Primary School continues to go from strength to strength.

Last week we received our draft Ofsted report which has now been returned for final checking before going through the quality assurance process. We hope to receive our final report very soon and can't wait to share it with you!!

As well as this newsletter, you will receive early next week via Parent Hub, the 'Dates for the Diary' list for this autumn 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

Have a great weekend.

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.



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stthomascofeprimary>



Instagram: @stthomascofeprimaryschool

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