

# ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CE JUNIOR SCHOOL

*"Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community"*



## NEWSLETTER

10<sup>th</sup> September 2021

### Welcome Back!

A Happy New Year to you – well, a new academic year anyway!!

It was wonderful to welcome you all back to school last week after what I hope was a fantastic summer holiday (although the weather could have been better!) Although we may all feel a little apprehensive about returning to school and getting up early once again it doesn't take too long to get back into the normal routines. Even our new Year 3 children have settled very quickly and already look very much at home in the Junior School! We have now completed our first full week in school and it is a joy and delight to see our school building full of children with the sound of excitement and laughter permeating throughout the building. Once again, the children have demonstrated such confidence and resilience as they return after the summer holiday.



Dare I use the word 'normal' but this term we are beginning to feel that way as we continue to emerge cautiously from the COVID-19 pandemic and life, both in and out of school, starts to slowly get back to what we remember. Although many restrictions in school have been lifted we are still maintaining key protective measures to keep our school community safe. These control measures are:

- Continuing good hand and respiratory hygiene
- Maintaining appropriate, enhanced cleaning regimes
- Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
- Following Public Health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

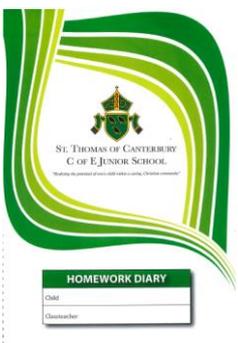
Hopefully by now you will have read the parents' letter from Clare Kershaw (ECC Director of Education) and Mike Gogarty (ECC Director of Public Health & Wellbeing) regarding new guidance around protective measures, testing, self-isolation and vaccinations.

Last Thursday I led our collective worship session in the hall with all children and staff present for the first time since March 2020. It was a very moving occasion and as I shared with the children it gave me goose bumps as I looked out at over 300 smiling faces!

Today we were delighted to welcome Fr. Mark who leads collective worship every Friday morning. We are very appreciative that Fr. Mark continues to support our collective worship together. In addition to leading collective worship every Friday Fr. Mark will also be leading class-based Eucharists this term – we had our first one with 3BW on Wednesday morning. This involves a short Eucharist service in the classroom with each class on a rolling weekly rota. It is a wonderful opportunity to see the Eucharist up close and a very intimate act of worship and thanksgiving.

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

### Homework Diaries



I hope by now you have had a chance to look through your child's Homework Diary which have, once again, been kindly funded and donated by the PTA. One of the many aims of the Homework Diary is to communicate with you our vision for education whilst your child is at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School. Our vision offers a framework for education based around Character Education and promoting wisdom, hope, community and dignity – it also offers rigour and academic excellence whilst providing an environment where young people know that they are not just valued for the results they get but for the people they become.

The Homework 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. If you do write a message in the Homework 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 slips 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. Next week I will be visiting each classroom to add my signature to demonstrate our partnership for the coming academic year.

One area I would ask you to pay particular attention to is the page headed 'E-safety and Acceptable Use Policy'. We have updated our media parental consent form to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You will now need to give permission for the following by circling the yes/no option:

- Photographs/Videos – for use within school premises
- Photographs/Videos – for use in school publications
- Photographs/Videos – for use on school website

In some diaries we have situations where parents/carers have signed the consent form but not circled their options. Please can you check you have completed it correctly so we are aware of your permissions related to each area. You can change your mind at any point to the consent given and we would ask you to indicate this in writing so we can update our records.

## Staffing Update

I am delighted to be starting the new academic year with a full contingent of staff in all roles across the school. Our staff continue to demonstrate complete commitment and dedication to providing the best educational experience and outcomes that we can by getting to know you and your children, not just on an academic level but socially and emotionally as well. The pandemic has really brought to the fore the need to be identifying and addressing mental health needs and our aim is to "**Realise the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community.**"

Over the summer break we said goodbye and good luck to **Mrs Kelly Martin** who has left her position as Midday Assistant. I am sure you will join me in thanking Mrs Martin for her service to our school and wish her every success for the future.

An updated staff list for September 2021 is available on the school website highlighting various roles and responsibilities for your information.

## 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. We have had to remind a number of children about appropriate footwear, jewellery and hair accessories. If you are in any doubt about what is permissible please check your child's homework diary, the school website 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.

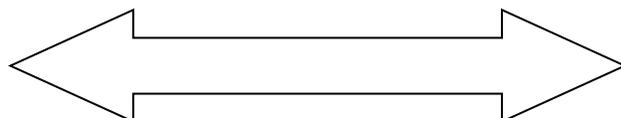


I would also like to remind you that items of clothing with the school logo on can only be purchased from our approved school uniform provider – Smartypants. We do not allow or authorise any other uniform provider to use our logo as this is in breach of copyright laws. Please do not ask Smartypants or 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 Junior School have unanimously approved this decision and wish to remind you of this situation to avoid upset or disappointment.

## 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. The Homework Diary 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.



**8cm (3 inches)**

We do have a small supply of school approved hair bows (in school colours) available from the School Office. They are **£3 each** and can be purchased directly from the School Office at the end of the school day.

## Extra-Curricular Activities/Clubs



We are delighted that extra-curricular clubs will be able to resume this term after a lengthy absence. The staff have met this week to finalise the extra curricular activities and clubs which will be on offer this term. 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.

Next week we will issue a special 'Clubs Edition' of this newsletter with more detail and information. We are hoping to start extra-curricular clubs and activities in the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## Parent Prayer Group Meeting

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 Headteacher's office 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.

## PTA AGM



At this time of year the PTA constitution states we are obliged to hold their AGM to elect committee members for the academic year as well as encourage new members to join. It really doesn't matter how much or how little you can help – all are welcome!

The **PTA AGM** will be held on **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 2:30p.m.** in the school hall. Hopefully many of you will be able to pop along just before school pick up time to find out a bit more about the work of the PTA and perhaps get involved. I do hope more people will try and get involved this year and help assist with the popular events which are run across the course of the academic year. Sadly, the pandemic has greatly impacted on our ability to hold and host events but we are excited to be getting back to normal. Events include the Christmas Bazaar, Mothering Sunday Sale, quiz nights and the Summer Fair to name a few.

Please don't be shy in coming forward and speaking to a member of the PTA! By attending the AGM you are not committing to anything so please don't not come through fear of being volunteered or roped in. Your attendance at the AGM could be support in itself!

In addition, the PTA are looking to re-schedule the postponed **Inflatables Afternoon** which was unable to go ahead in the summer term. The event looks likely to take place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 (3:30-5:30p.m.) Look out for further details via the PTA.

## Amendment to School Term Dates Calendar

You may have picked up via the news and other forums that the Government has legislated for an 'extra' bank holiday on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022, to supplement the already 'moved' usual late May bank holiday to Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. This is in recognition of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

As both of these dates fall in the normal, already scheduled summer half term break, legislation has also been amended for the 2021-22 academic year to require that there are only 189 'teaching days' (378 sessions), as opposed to the standard 190 teaching days. This is so schools, teaching staff etc. can derive the benefit of the extra bank holiday.

As a result, Essex County Council, which sets the term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools has amended the term dates calendar for 2021-22. Voluntary aided schools, of course, set their own calendars. Having spoken with Mrs L'Estrange (Headteacher – Infant School) we feel that it would be far more appropriate for the extra non-teaching day to be taken in close proximity to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations rather than in late July. Therefore, with the support of the Governing Body we have agreed to take the additional non-teaching day on **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022**. This date is the Monday immediately after the May half term so will allow families an opportunity to extend the half term break by one day. We will therefore return to school on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022.



June 2022						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Monday 6th Jun 2022

I have attached an amended revised calendar to include the extra non-teaching day.

## Absence When Recovering From Diarrhoea or Vomiting

Rightly so, our attention is very much on the dangers and impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19). However, we need to be 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 Public Health England 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 Public Health England in such situations is to request that the pupil does not attend school until completely symptom free for **48 hours**.



Public Health  
England

**PLEASE NOTE:** You must follow the most current advice and guidance related to COVID-19 if you or your child are showing symptoms.

## 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 new in Year 3) 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 Public Health England. Thank you for your support.

## Harvest Collection and Eucharist

Our Harvest Eucharist will take place on **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021** at **9:30a.m.** I hope many of you will be able to join us. The Harvest Eucharist will take place at St Thomas of Canterbury Church. We will be walking ALL the children, accompanied by staff, to St Thomas' Church. It is also very helpful if some parents are available and willing to help escort the classes to/from the church. If you are able to help, then please contact your child's classteacher either through the homework diary or by calling the School Office.

Once again our Harvest collection of gifts will be to support the **Brentwood Foodbank**. 13 million people live below the poverty line in the UK. Every day people in the UK go hungry for reasons ranging from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. Trussell Trust foodbanks provide a minimum of three days emergency food and support to people experiencing crisis in the UK.

We will send out details of the items we will be collecting for the Brentwood Foodbank next week.

## Year 6 Secondary School Applications – NOW OPEN

If your child is in Year 6, you can apply for a secondary school (Year 7) place between 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

Before you apply you should:

- check you live in the [Essex administrative area](#)
- read the secondary school admissions booklet available from 10 September 2020

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

Online applications can be made from 10 September 2021 up to and including the 31 October 2021. Please ensure that your online application is submitted by 31 October 2021. Remember to re-submit after making any changes before the deadline.

All applications received after 31 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.

Email: [admissions@essex.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@essex.gov.uk)

## Parent Hub – Year 3

Many of you will be used to receiving important messages, information and newsletters via Parent Hub from your time in the Infant School. At St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School we use the same system. However, you will need to add the Junior School to your app settings by selecting our handle which is – **@stthomasjnr**. Detailed guidance notes were contained in your welcome packs which you received back in July. If you require another copy or need assistance in setting this up on your mobile phone then please contact the School Office staff who will be happy to help. It is advisable to agree to notifications in your settings as this allows you to open attachments and will notify you when a message is delivered.

## School Streets

**Please give your feedback on School Streets!**

In the recent Essex County Council Active Travel Survey consultation, Brentwood residents told us that they supported the principle of introducing "School Streets" on Middleton Hall Lane and Sawyers Hall Lane. Over three quarters (77%) responded positively with particular support for park and stride arrangements, improved walking and cycling infrastructure and controlled parking zones.

We now want to get more feedback from you including what you'd like to see introduced to make Middleton Hall Lane and Sawyers Hall Lane safer, greener and healthier for everybody. We'll be launching a survey from 20th September - 3rd October here: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/sustainable-travel-planning-team/brentwood-school-streets-survey> If you could spare five minutes to answer the questions, we would be very grateful.

We will also be running a pop-up event on **Wednesday 22nd September** in St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School playground at **3:00p.m.** and would love to hear from as many of you as possible what you think about introducing school streets to the area.

If you have any questions, please do get in touch with us by emailing [sgh.Routes@essex.gov.uk](mailto:sgh.Routes@essex.gov.uk)

Best wishes from the Safer Greener Healthier team at Essex County Council

## Finally....

Apologies for the length of this first newsletter! 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 our school continues to go from strength to strength.

Next week we will confirm some of the events/dates taking place across the course of this autumn term. Our usual 'Dates for the Diary' schedule having been somewhat decimated over the past few years is slowly making a recovery. I hope this will prove useful in helping you prepare and play a full and active part in school life!

Have a great weekend.

**Mr D. Moran**  
**Headteacher**

# SIGN UP NOW @stthomasjnr



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