

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CE JUNIOR SCHOOL

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



NEWSLETTER

27th January 2023

I cannot believe that we have almost come to the end of January! This first half of the spring term has raced by and in only two weeks we will be preparing to break up for the half term holiday. With such a short term ahead we are packing in lots of learning!



**GREAT
ORMOND
STREET
HOSPITAL
CHARITY**

On Wednesday it was wonderful to see so many children and staff supporting our Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) 'Peter Pan Pyjama Day'. We were also delighted to welcome Mr Ed Shorter in to school who spoke to the children during collective worship about the history and work of GOSH and the impact it has had on his family, especially caring for his son Milo, who is a former pupil of our school. Thank you to everyone who supported this event – thanks to your generosity we raised **£507!**

Please do take the time to read this newsletter as it has lots of important information.

Industrial Action

As you may have seen in the news, on Monday 16th January 2023 the National Education Union (NEU) announced that following a ballot of its members, it had reached the threshold to hold industrial action. Further information about the action taken by the NEU can be found on its website: <https://neu.org.uk>

It has subsequently announced 4 days of industrial action for its teaching members. These dates are:

- Wednesday 1st February 2023
- Wednesday 1st March 2023
- Wednesday 15th March 2023
- Thursday 16th March 2023

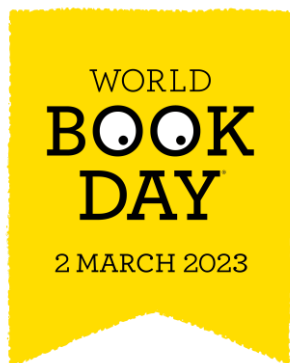
Each school in Essex will be affected differently by the strike action depending on the number of staff who are members of the NEU, the number that decide to strike on the dates above and other issues of absence the school may be experiencing such as staff illness. Each school will undertake a risk assessment to determine what education provision it may be able to make for children on the days the strike will be held.

It is also important to understand that as Executive Headteacher I am able to ask staff in advance who will be taking strike action; however, NEU members do not have to provide this information until the actual day of the strike action, and there are legal limitations on who can be asked to cover for striking colleagues. I am doing everything possible to minimise any disruption to your child's education at this time but if there is high level of staff taking industrial action on any given day, this may not be possible.

At this moment in time having undertaken an initial risk assessment for Wednesday 1st February 2023 I am expecting both St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant and Junior Schools to be **OPEN** as normal.

For each of the future dates we will assess the potential impact and communicate our arrangements nearer the time to manage your child's education whilst the industrial action is underway. Many thanks for your support and understanding.

World Book Day 2023



World Book Day is on **Thursday 2nd March 2023** and the children are encouraged to dress up for school as a character from a book – no school uniform on this day!

This is just a timely reminder so you can start thinking about your costume choice to get in the spirit of the event and celebrate wonderful books and fantastic authors. Often the simpler the costume the better. Please do not go to any great expense purchasing a ready-made costume – perhaps see if a friend has one they have worn before you can borrow or swap for this year? Many of the homemade costumes prove to be the best and we have certainly had some imaginative outfits in the past. The half term holiday is a good time to think about what you might wear and perhaps make some accessories to go with it. Please speak to your child's classteacher if you need any further ideas.

Consultation on a Proposal to Amalgamate – September 2023

The Governing Bodies of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School and St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School are consulting on a proposal to build on the strengths and good progress in place at the schools by the creation of a single primary school, under the unified leadership of one Headteacher and one Governing Body. The Governing Bodies, with the support of Essex County Council, are therefore proposing that the two schools amalgamate to form a primary school for children aged 4 to 11 with effect from 1 September 2023.

The consultation document which was published yesterday has been circulated to all members of our parent/carer community via Parent Hub. The information is also available from the home page of the Infant and Junior School websites.

We would strongly encourage all parents/carers to read this document and share your comments/views by following the link to the electronic survey form.

The consultation closes on **Thursday 23rd February 2023** at **5:00p.m.**

Many thanks for your participation in this very important process.



Absence Reporting via Studybugs

We are delighted that 454 parents/carers are registered with Studybugs and frequently using this facility to report absence and sickness related absence. The Studybugs system aims to support you and help us as a school keep a close eye on absence trends and monitor children who have irregular school attendance and are in danger of being identified as 'persistent absentees'. Please remember that all absence should be reported via Studybugs and below are just a few reasons why:

Why use Studybugs?

- **Helps safeguard your child** by automating schools' processing of sick reports, so if any children are unaccounted for, they'll know right away. Also verifies that reports of your child's absence have really come from you.
- **Saves you time** – it takes seconds to give the school all they need, and know they've got the message even if you're reporting at 6am or 11pm the night before.
- **Guides you** with official guidance from Public Health England on the need to stay off school, based on the symptoms or illnesses you enter. Note: Studybugs does not provide medical advice or diagnosis – please consult your GP for this.
- **Shows you what illnesses are going around** – so you can get advance warning and clues as to what your child's illness is.
- **Contributes to public health** by collecting anonymised data on illnesses going around – to help schools, parents and public health organisations take preventative action as early as possible.
- **Confidential and secure.** Your personal data is kept strictly confidential between you and your child's school. We never share your personal data with third parties. Studybugs is hosted from purpose-built secure facilities and all communications with our apps and website are encrypted.

We ask that all parents get the free Studybugs app, or register on the Studybugs website, and use it to tell us whenever your child's ill and unable to attend school. Get the app or register now (<https://studybugs.com/about/parents>)

PLEASE NOTE: When recording absences via Studybugs please ensure you are using the JUNIOR SCHOOL app and not the Infant School one. Often we have children reported to the wrong school which can become confusing!

Holocaust Memorial Day 2023

Holocaust Memorial Day is commemorated on 27th January each year. For many years, St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School has been proud to support and commemorate this event along with other local schools through our connection with CFI (Christian Friends of Israel). In previous years this has involved visiting an exhibition, listening to guest speakers and welcoming volunteers from the Jewish community who, in 2020, set up and delivered a very informative and moving session on the Holocaust in our school hall.

This year the Holocaust Memorial Day 2023 event will be held on Saturday 28th January 2023 from 6:30p.m. – 8:30p.m. at Shenfield & Hutton Union Church, Roundwood Avenue, Hutton, Brentwood CM13 2NA. The theme for this evening is 'From Yellow Star to Pop Star' – How one young girl (Dorit Oliver-Wolff) survived the Holocaust and became a singing sensation. The evening will also include an opportunity to remember the six million victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Admission is free with a retiring collection during the evening. Light refreshments are also available following the meeting.

Education Sunday 2023

Fr. Mark and I have met this week to discuss the arrangements for Education Sunday which sadly has not taken place since January 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives forever.

Our annual church service to celebrate Education Sunday will take place at St. Thomas' Church on **Sunday 5th February 2023** 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 both the Infant and Junior Schools 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 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 complete the invitation at the end of this letter and return the reply slip to your child's classteacher as soon as possible.

Please see further information at the end of this newsletter about the Education Sunday Annual Bake-Off Competition. I am looking forward to seeing the church full of St. Thomas' children and parents (and cakes)!

Finally....

We appear to have an increasing number of children arriving to school with the incorrect school uniform. This is particularly a problem with children having no school tie or 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 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!**

Also, all children with long hair must have it tied up for school so that it is off of their face and does not present a health and safety hazard. The School Office have had to issue many hair ties in recent weeks and all children should have this in place **BEFORE** they arrive at school.

Have a good weekend!

Mr D. Moran
Headteacher

And...please remember if you have any questions or queries or comments feel free to contact us:

admin@stthomasjnr.essex.sch.uk

EDUCATION SUNDAY – ST. THOMAS' CHURCH
SUNDAY 5th FEBRUARY 2023 – 10:00a.m.

I/We can confirm that my/our child will be attending Education Sunday on Sunday 5th February 2023 at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church starting at 10:00a.m.

I/We also understand that my/our child must wear school uniform to the service and sit with their classteacher whilst in the church.

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Date: _____

