

# ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

## September Newsletter

### Dear Parents and Carers,

A very warm welcome to the new academic year. It has been a wonderful start to the term, and I have been delighted by how quickly the children have settled into their new classes and routines. During my visits to classrooms over the past few weeks, I have been incredibly impressed by the children's focus, enthusiasm for learning, and positive attitudes. They have made an excellent start to the year.

As part of our PSHE curriculum this term, we have launched our new Behaviour Curriculum. This focuses on explicitly teaching the behaviours, attitudes, and social skills that children need to thrive both in school and beyond. Rooted in our school values, the curriculum aims to develop a culture of exceptionally positive behaviour, encourage children to take responsibility for their choices, and ensure that every member of our school community is treated with kindness, dignity, and respect.

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Parent Phonics and Spelling Workshops. We hope you found these sessions informative and helpful in supporting your child's learning at home. For those who were unable to attend, the presentation materials are available on our website.

I would also like to thank all parents and carers who completed our annual Parent Survey. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and plays an important role in shaping the future direction of our school. The results will directly inform our School Improvement Plan, ensuring that we continue to develop and improve in the areas that matter most to our community. A summary of the survey findings can be found later in this newsletter.

I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you throughout the year. I am on site Monday to Thursday, either in the morning or afternoon, and welcome opportunities to meet with families. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me through the School Office or by email.

Thank you for your continued support, and I wish all our families a happy and successful year ahead.

God Bless,

Mrs Worton-Geer  
Executive Head





# MRS CROOK'S CORNER

Welcome to the very first edition of 'Mrs Crook's Corner' in our monthly newsletter!

It is an absolute privilege to write to you as your new Head of School, and I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our entire school community for making my first month so incredibly special.

It has been a wonderful, whirlwind four weeks! More than anything, I have treasured the opportunity to get to know your brilliant children and begin building the foundations of what I know will be wonderful and lasting relationships with our pupils, families and dedicated staff team.

From the quiet reflection of leading our chaplaincy retreats to the vibrant and joyful energy of our singing assemblies, I am already incredibly proud of the wonderful spirit of our school.

Some of my favourite moments so far, however, have taken place outside the classroom. I have truly loved joining the children at lunchtime and breaktime, chatting about their days, hearing their stories and even testing my skills by joining in with their playground games!

Getting to know the unique personalities of our children has been one of the absolute highlights of my first month. We have a fantastic journey ahead of us, and I am filled with excitement and optimism for the future as we work together to help every child thrive.

Thank you for your warm welcomes, your smiles at the gates and your continued partnership. Please always remember that my door is open, and if you ever have any questions, concerns or simply wish to get in touch, I would be very happy to hear from you. Building strong, positive relationships with our families is incredibly important to me.

I already feel incredibly lucky to be part of such a special school community. Here's to a fantastic term ahead!

Warmest wishes,

Mrs Crook  
Head of School



# ATTENDANCE

We are sure that, like us, you as parents and carers recognise the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality in supporting your child's education, wellbeing and progress. At St Thomas of Canterbury, we are proud of our excellent attendance levels and continue to work hard to maintain these high standards and reduce lateness. Every minute of learning counts, and arriving on time helps children to start their day positively and be ready to learn. Please remember that the school day starts promptly at 08:45am, when the register is taken. We ask parents and carers to allow plenty of time for the morning journey so that children arrive calmly and ready for the start of lessons.

## A reminder about attendance:

- All schools are required to monitor and report their attendance figures to the local authority each term.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a full-time education and attends school regularly.
- Parents and carers may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice if they fail to ensure their child attends school regularly. This can include taking a child out of school during term time for a holiday without authorisation.
- The local authority has the power to prosecute parents or carers in the Magistrates' Court where there is a failure to ensure that a child attends school regularly.

We appreciate your continued support in helping us maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality. Working together, we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to make the most of every school day.

# SAFEGUARDING

At St Thomas of Canterbury, the safety and wellbeing of our children is our highest priority. Our Safeguarding Team oversees and co-ordinates all aspects of the school's safeguarding work, ensuring that children are supported, protected from harm and able to learn in a safe and caring environment.

The team regularly attends safeguarding training to ensure that their knowledge and skills remain up to date and that we continue to follow the latest guidance and best practice. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we encourage parents, carers and members of our school community to speak to us if they have any concerns about a child's welfare.

## Meet our Safeguarding Team:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Mrs Samantha Laird

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:** Mrs Katie Worton-Gear, Mrs Lisa Crook and Mrs Emma Overett

**Safeguarding Governor:** Mr Timothy Mills

If you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Safeguarding Team straight away. If a child is in immediate danger, please call the Police on 999.

For further information, including a copy of our Child Protection Policy, please visit the Safeguarding page on our school website. Thank you for your continued support in helping us create a safe and nurturing environment where every child can thrive.



# PARENT SURVEY

## Parent Trust Survey 2025–26: At a Glance;

Thank you to all parents and carers who took the time to complete our survey. Your feedback helps us celebrate what we do well and identify areas where we can continue to improve. Overall, the results show very high levels of confidence in the school which we are committed to continuing to build upon, with many areas scoring above the national average.

### ☀ **Children are happy and feel safe**

- 94% of parents say their child is happy at school.
- 94% say their child feels safe at school.

Both results are above the national average, reflecting our caring and nurturing environment.

### ☀ **Strong teaching and high expectations**

- 94% of parents believe their child does well at school.
- 87% feel the school has high expectations for their child.
- 94% agree there is a good range of subjects available.

### ☀ **Positive relationships and support**

- 90% feel staff are positive role models.
- 90% say their child can take part in clubs and activities.
- 81% believe the school supports their child's wider personal development.

### ☀ **A strong Catholic ethos**

- 97% agree the school provides a strong Catholic education and ethos.
- 94% feel the school supports their child's spiritual and moral development.
- 97% understand and support the school's Catholic mission and values.

## Where we perform above the national average;

Parents rated St Thomas' higher than the national average in many areas including:

- Children being happy at school (94% vs 89%)
- Children feeling safe at school (94% vs 90%)
- Children doing well at school (94% vs 87%)
- The school having high expectations for pupils (87% vs 84%)
- A broad and balanced curriculum (94% vs 91%)
- Responding to parents' concerns effectively (81% vs 57%)
- Support for pupils with SEND (78% vs 67%)

These results show that parents recognise St Thomas' as a school where children are happy, safe and well supported, with high expectations, a strong curriculum and positive relationships between home and school. They reflect the confidence families have in the care, education and values we provide every day.

## Areas where we will continue to improve;

While the overall picture is very positive, your feedback highlights areas where we will continue to strengthen our work:

- Responding to concerns: 81% of parents felt concerns are dealt with properly (compared with 57% nationally), and we will continue to ensure parents feel listened to and supported
- Parent partnership and engagement: we are committed to continuing to build upon our parent partnership through parent forum, open events and our open dialogue alongside senior leadership presence and support

## Overall message;

This year's survey paints a very positive picture of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School. Parents recognise the school as a place where children are **happy, safe, well supported and successful**. Families particularly value the school's strong **Catholic ethos, caring staff and high aspirations for every child**. We are grateful for your continued support and will use your feedback to help us keep improving for all our children.





# HARVEST APPEAL

As we celebrate the season of Harvest, we are delighted to be holding our Harvest Liturgy Service with EYFS on 2nd October. This is a wonderful opportunity for our school community to come together and give thanks for the food and resources we have, while remembering those who may be in need. As part of our Harvest Appeal, we will be collecting donations for Buntingford Food Support, which provides valuable support to families and individuals in Buntingford and the surrounding towns. We would be very grateful for any donations of non-perishable food items and essential household products to help support local people in our community. Thank you for your generosity and for helping us to make a difference this Harvest.

Please refer to their Facebook Page for details of what they are currently short of;  
[www.facebook.com/people/Buntingford-Food-Support/100093953034620/](https://www.facebook.com/people/Buntingford-Food-Support/100093953034620/)

## **General Suggestions for Donations;**

### 1. Non-Perishable Proteins

Canned meats such as tuna and salmon are highly valued because they provide essential protein, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids. Beans, lentils, and peanut butter are also excellent protein sources that are shelf-stable and versatile for meals

### 2. Whole-Grain Staples

Items like brown rice, whole-grain pasta, oats, and quinoa help stretch meals and provide fiber and nutrients. Whole grains are preferred over refined grains for their health benefits

### 3. Shelf-Stable Fruits and Vegetables

Canned or dried fruits and vegetables, especially those with no added salt or sugar, supply essential vitamins and minerals year-round. These are particularly important when fresh produce is unavailable

### 4. Cooking Basics and Seasonings

Oils, spices, and condiments enhance the flavour of simple meals, making donated staples like rice and beans more enjoyable and nutritious

### 5. Kid-Friendly Staples

Items such as cereal, fruit cups, and snack bars sized for children help families with young kids and relieve parental stress

### 6. Personal-Care and Household Supplies

Toiletries, hygiene products, and cleaning supplies are often in high demand because programs like SNAP do not cover them





# SPORTS UPDATE

## YEAR 3/4 SPORT DEVELOPMENT DAY



Our Year 3 and 4 children had a fantastic time taking part in a Sports Development Day! They had the opportunity to try a range of different sporting activities, developing their skills in teamwork, coordination, communication and resilience. It was wonderful to see the children encouraging one another, challenging themselves and showing such a positive attitude throughout the day. They represented our school brilliantly and thoroughly enjoyed being active and trying something new!

## THOMAS TIGERS



Our Thomas Tigers team have begun their training in preparation for their upcoming football games. Please note Miss Neary will be in contact with details regarding game dates and details.





# COMING UP IN OCTOBER...

## Calendar Dates

Black History Month  
Launches

01.10.26

Cafod Fast Day and EYFS  
Harvest Liturgy

02.10.26

Cycle to School Week  
Launches

St Francis of Assisi Reading  
Celebration (Parents in  
Classrooms) from 14:45

05.10.26

Parents Rosary Breakfast  
08:45-09:00

07.10.26

EYFS Open Morning (For New  
Parents) at 09:30

13.10.26

KS1 Class Assembly at 09:00

15.10.26

Parent Consultations

19.10.26  
21.10.26

HALF TERM

w/c 26.10.26





# COMING UP IN OCTOBER...

## Catholic Life in School

The month of October traditionally focuses on prayer with the Holy Rosary, offering families a way to spend time together in prayer, and reflect on the life of Jesus with Mary. This update shares some of the content children will experience in school throughout October as part of our prayer and liturgy and suggests ways for you to engage with them about it. We hope it is a useful resource for your family prayer time.

### LOVE AND RESPECT

In the week beginning 5 October, children will reflect on the difference between showing respect and rejecting others. Through Jesus' parable of the tenants in the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-43), they will consider the choices people make and how their words and actions can show love and respect. Children will also hear about St Francis of Assisi, our Trust saint, who listened to God's message of love and showed care for people who were poor, welcomed those who were forgotten and treated Creation with kindness.

With your child/ren, you may also like to...

Talk about what respect can look and sound like at home, at school and in your community.

Find out a little more about St Francis of Assisi, our Trust saint, and choose one way your family could follow his example by caring for other people or for Creation.

### COME TO THE PARTY!

In the week beginning 12 October, children will explore Jesus' parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14). Children will take time to wonder how it might have felt to be invited to the king's party. This will help them think about what it means to receive an invitation that is both generous and unexpected.

Through the story, children will reflect on what it means to be ready to accept God's invitation, and how being part of His Kingdom involves choosing to follow Jesus and growing in love each day.

With your child/ren, you may also like to...

Plan a simple 'family party' and let each person choose one thing that would make everyone feel welcome.

Think of one way your family could say 'yes' to getting more involved in the life of your school or parish.

### SING SING SING!

The daily prayers for the week beginning 19 October are inspired by Psalm 96 - a beautiful prayer of praise. St Augustine reminds us that 'The one who sings, prays twice!'. You may like to share this song together at home;



All the people in the world,  
Sing to the Lord.  
Tell of His wonders, sing His praise -  
Sing a new song!  
Sing, sing, sing a new song,  
Sing to the Lord.  
Sing out loud and sing out strong -  
Sing a new song!



# OPPORTUNITIES



## WCCS

Ordinary boys.  
Extraordinary opportunities.



Parents can explore chorister  
opportunities over **Zoom**  
Wednesday, 7th October at 6.30pm

Every September, a new generation of choristers begins an extraordinary journey at Westminster Cathedral Choir School.

They are ordinary boys who love to sing. Over the years ahead, they will sing in a world-class choir, receive an excellent academic education, make lasting friendships and enjoy opportunities few boys their age could imagine.

If any parents in your school have ever wondered whether choristership might be right for their son, our informal Zoom information session is an ideal place to start.

Families can join the Head, Master of Music and current choristers to discover what life at Westminster Cathedral Choir School is really like. You'll hear about the music, the School, and the admissions process – and there will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions.

## 13+ leavers' destinations

Last seven years

Eton College (45)  
Dulwich College (28)  
Harrow School (20)  
City of London School (19)  
St Paul's School (16)  
Westminster School (13)  
Radley College (12)  
King's College, Wimbledon (9)

At 13+ (the end of Year 8), WCCS boys progress to many of the country's leading senior schools, with a significant number securing prestigious scholarships and awards.

Over the past seven years, destinations have included Eton College, Dulwich College, Harrow School, City of London School, St Paul's School, Westminster School, Radley College, and King's College, Wimbledon.

An exit list of which we are immensely proud. And for a school of our size, quite remarkable. The full list of leavers' destinations can be found [here](#).

Meet the next generation of choristers...



It has been an exciting start to life at WCCS for our six new probationers.

From vesting for the first time to singing alongside the more experienced choristers, there has been an enormous amount to take in — and plenty to be proud of.

There is something rather special about those first few days: the excitement of putting on the distinctive cassock, the reassurance of an older chorister quietly showing you the ropes, singing from the apse of Westminster Cathedral and the realisation that you are taking your first steps as a member of a world-class choir.

And, of course, amid all those important firsts, there has still been plenty of time to settle in, relax, have fun and make new friends.

Six boys at the very beginning of an extraordinary journey — and, judging by the smiles, rather enjoying it already!

Want to find out more?

We would be most grateful if you kindly direct this email to any families who might be interested in finding out more.

Wednesday, 7th October at 6.30pm

[Sign up for the Zoom session here](#)

We welcome individual visits. If you would like to arrange a visit or have any questions, contact Lucy Freeman

Tel 020 7931 6099 Email [lffreeman@choirschool.com](mailto:lffreeman@choirschool.com)



Please see the link below to register  
your interest;

[https://us.list-  
manage.com/t9aRUuMbI8y?  
e=aa583274d4&c2id=b724bb667e81747  
a68dae2fdd7a2798e](https://us.list-manage.com/t9aRUuMbI8y?e=aa583274d4&c2id=b724bb667e81747a68dae2fdd7a2798e)

# REMINDERS

- The deadline for Secondary applications is 31 October, see website for details: <https://live.cloud.servelec-synergy.com/Hertfordshire/Synergy/secondary/>
- Please return your Photograph / Image Consent Forms by Monday 28th September latest.
- A reminder that we have a strict "No Nuts" and "No Coconut" policy at our school. Please ensure all snacks and lunch boxes are completely nut/coconut free; we have several children in the school with epipens who are at high risk of anaphylaxis.
- A reminder that no food or sweets are brought into school to celebrate Birthdays. We have adopted this policy to avoid the risk of allergic reactions, respect cultural and dietary needs, promote healthy choices, and reduce pressure on families during a time of rising living costs. Instead, we encourage other meaningful ways to mark your child's Birthday at school, such as donating a book to the class library; bringing in a sticker for each child; choosing a special classroom job or privilege for the day.
- Please ensure all clubs and trips are settled promptly through Arbor. If you have any difficulties making the payments, please contact the School Office.



# ONLINE SAFETY

Please see the below update Online Safety poster by 'National Online Safety'



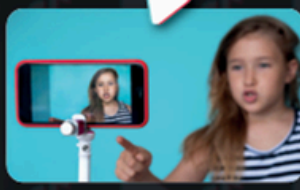
TikTok is a video-sharing social media app available on iOS and Android which lets users create, share, and view user created videos much in a similar manner to Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. It's main draw, however, is that users can record and upload bite-sized looping videos of themselves lip-syncing and dancing to popular music or soundbites, often for comedic effect, which can then be further enhanced with filters, emojis and stickers. TikTok has been designed with the young user in mind and has a very addictive appeal. At the beginning of 2019 it skyrocketed in popularity to become the iOS store's most downloaded app with over 33 million downloads. Estimates suggest that it now has anything between 500 million and over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide.

**AGE RESTRICTION**  
**12+**  
If under 18, supervision of a parent or legal guardian required.



What parents need to know about

# TIKTOK



## MATURE CONTENT

On the iOS store, TikTok is listed as 12+. On the Google Play Store it is rated as 'Parental guidance recommended'. When signing up for the app, it's possible to lie about your age without any form of verification. As children scroll through their feed, most of the videos they're likely to come across are lighthearted or funny takes on dance routines which are designed to make people laugh. However there has been a slew of videos which have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm and sexual content, including young teens dressing overtly sexually and behaving suggestively. Given the deluge of material uploaded to TikTok every day, it's impossible to moderate everything and it can be quite common to come across explicit content on the 'For you' feed when logging into the platform.



## INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC

TikTok revolves around creating music videos through lip-syncing and dancing. Inevitably, some of the music featured by users will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the undeniably young user base, there is a risk that children may look to imitate the explicit language they hear or the suggestive actions they see when viewing others user's videos on the app.



## TIKTOK FAME

TikTok is very image focused and there is a notable preoccupation with appearing cool and attractive. Many teenagers now attempt to go viral and become what's known in-app as 'TikTok famous'. TikTok (and its predecessor musical.ly) has spawned its own celebrities - social media stars Loren Gray and Jacob Sartorius have been catapulted to fame through their initial exposure on the app. Obviously, most budding influencers looking to become the next big thing will be disappointed, but this may have the knock-on effect of making them go to more and more drastic lengths to get noticed.



## ONLINE PREDATORS

As a social network, TikTok makes it easy to connect with other users. This includes the ability to comment on and react to other user's videos, follow their profile and download their content. Be aware that by default, any user can comment on your child's video if their account is set to public. Most interactions are harmless enough but as an app, TikTok is prone to predators because of the abundance of younger users.



## ADDICTIVE NATURE

Social media is designed to be addictive and TikTok is no different. It can be fun and hugely entertaining. However, it is also because of this that it can be hard to put down. In addition to the short, punchy nature of the looping video format, the app's ability to keep you guessing what will come on screen next makes it easy to turn a five-minute visit into 45-minute visit.



## IN-APP PURCHASES

Aside from the content, there's also the option to purchase in-app extras called 'TikTok coins'. Prices range from £0.99 for 100 coins to an eye-watering £93.99 for 10,000 coins. TikTok coins are used to purchase different emojis to reward content creators that a user finds funny or entertaining. In the iOS version of the app you can disable the option to buy TikTok coins but this sadly doesn't seem to be a feature in the Android version.



**NOS** National Online Safety  
#WakeUpWednesday

## Safety Tips For Parents

### TALK ABOUT ONLINE DANGERS

Assuming your child is above the age limit to use the app, make sure you also take the time to talk to them about what they're seeing on the app. Have a dialogue, get them to give you their opinion on what is appropriate and model the correct behaviour for them. Go over why they shouldn't give out private information or identifiable photos and be positive and understanding of them. In the long run, getting them to think critically about what they're seeing goes a long way to keeping them social media savvy.



### USE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Undoubtedly, the easiest way to safeguard your child on TikTok is to make sure their account is set to private. This means only those users your child approves can view, like, and follow their content. Setting the account to private may clash with your child's goal of social media superstardom, but it will keep their account secure from strangers. This setting can be enabled under the privacy and safety menu by pressing the ellipsis in the 'me' tab of the app. To be extra safe, there are additional controls available to toggle such as who can send comments and messages, among other options.



### ENABLE RESTRICTED MODE

In the digital wellbeing section there's the ability to turn on restricted mode using a PIN. Restricted mode filters out content that is not age appropriate although it should be noted that this isn't always 100% fool proof. When enabling restricted mode, parents should still be vigilant to what their child is watching and take note that the algorithm moderating content is not infallible.



### EXPLORE AND LEARN YOURSELF

Understanding and learning the app yourself is a great way to get to grips with TikTok. You could then even use the app with your child and watch some videos with them. If you are the parent of a teen, even if it does not make you popular, keep a close eye on what they're viewing and sharing. That said, it's a brilliant chance to turn it into a bonding opportunity with your child also. You could even unleash your inner performer and make videos with them while (more importantly) keeping them safe online.



### LEARN HOW TO REPORT AND BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

With the proper privacy settings in place, TikTok can be a safe space for your child to express themselves. However, just in case something does manage to slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report content that isn't appropriate and get them to come to you about what they have seen. TikTok allows users to report offenders and comments within the app. You can also block individual users by going on their profile.



### MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child moderate their time on the app by making use of the digital wellbeing section. Under the screen time management option, you can limit the daily allotted time allowed on the app in increments ranging from 40 to 120 minutes. You can also lock this preference behind a PIN number which has to be inputted in order to then exceed the daily time limit. This way your child can get their daily dose of memes without wasting away the day.



# PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen

