

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

September Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of our first half-term, it is wonderful to reflect on all that we have achieved and celebrated together as a school community. The children have made a fantastic start to the academic year, approaching their learning with enthusiasm, determination and a willingness to embrace new challenges. I am incredibly proud of their efforts and the many ways they have grown, both in and out of the classroom. It was great to see so many parents this week at our parents evening. The children should all feel proud of what they have accomplished and enjoy a well-deserved half-term break!

We began the month with a special week of celebration across our Trust to mark the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. This is a particularly significant year as we commemorate the 800th anniversary of his death. Throughout the week, the children explored our whole-school theme: "Living simply, caring for creation, loving others and bringing peace." The children learnt about the life and example of St Francis

and how we can follow in his footsteps by living as Jesus taught us. Each day provided an opportunity to reflect on a different aspect of his life and message. On Monday, the children discovered more about St Francis and made class pledges; on Tuesday, they celebrated and cared for God's creation through outdoor prayer; on Wednesday, they recognised the preciousness of every person through a whole-school kindness challenge; and on Thursday, they explored how we can all be peacemakers through a special assembly and prayer. The week concluded with a joyful celebration, giving the children time to reflect on how they can continue to live out the example of St Francis in their everyday lives: caring for creation, showing kindness and compassion to others, and bringing peace to our school and wider community.

Our new Chaplaincy Team has also had a wonderful start to the year. Alongside Chaplaincy Teams from across the Trust, they attended a special liturgy at St Joseph's Church in Bishop's Stortford, where they were formally presented with their chaplaincy badges. Throughout October, the team has continued to nurture our school's prayer life by visiting classes to share the Rosary with the children. They have also hosted our weekly Rosary Parent Breakfast, providing a lovely opportunity for families to come together in prayer and fellowship.

At the beginning of October, it was a pleasure to welcome you to our Harvest Celebration, led by our Nursery and Reception children. Many of our youngest pupils had only been with us for a few short weeks, so it was particularly heart-warming to see their confidence, enthusiasm and joy shine through. Thank you to all our families for your generous food donations, which have been gratefully received by the Bishop's Stortford Food Bank. Your kindness and generosity are a wonderful example of our school community putting faith into action and caring for others.

It was also lovely to see so many parents joining us for the Key Stage 1 Assembly which was based on the theme of letting our light shine. The children shared their learning about the ways light can brighten our lives and bring happiness to those around us. Their wonderful singing, thoughtful contributions and infectious enthusiasm certainly brought plenty of smiles to everyone in the room!

As we reach the end of this first half-term, I would like to thank our children, staff and families for all that you have contributed to our school community. It has been a busy and rewarding few weeks, filled with opportunities to learn, grow in faith, show kindness and celebrate one another. I am incredibly proud of the way our children continue to live out our school values in their daily lives.

I wish all our families a safe, happy and restful half-term break. We look forward to welcoming the children back on Wednesday 4th November, in winter uniform, refreshed and ready for another exciting half-term of learning and discovery.



God bless,
Mrs Worton-Geer
Executive Head



MRS CROOK'S CORNER

Dear Parents and Carers,

What a wonderful month it has been at St Thomas! It has been a real pleasure to see so many lovely things happening across our school community, with the children continuing to learn, grow and make the most of the many opportunities available to them.

One of the highlights of the month was our special Reading Afternoon, when we were delighted to welcome so many parents into school to share books and stories with the children, inspired by the theme of nature in honour of St Francis. It was such a joy to see

the children so engaged, sharing their favourite stories and developing their imaginations through the magic of reading. As English Lead, it was particularly wonderful for me to see such a love of reading being nurtured and celebrated across our school. Thank you to all the parents who took the time to join us and make the afternoon so special. These shared experiences really do help to foster a lifelong love of books and reading.

It has also been a pleasure to welcome prospective new families into St Thomas as they begin to explore schools for their children joining Reception next September. It is always lovely to have the opportunity to show visitors our wonderful school, share what makes our community so special and give them a glimpse of the happy, caring and engaging environment in which our children thrive.

A little reminder that we have another school tour on Tuesday 17th November at 9:30am. Please do spread the word and invite any friends, family members or neighbours you know who may be looking for a Reception place for next year. We would love to welcome them and show them all that St Thomas has to offer!

Finally, I want to share how much I am enjoying my role as Head of School. Every day brings new opportunities to get to know the children better, celebrate their achievements and see their personalities shine. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of such a warm and welcoming community, and I look forward to continuing to build relationships with the children and families as the year progresses.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and for playing such an important part in making St Thomas the wonderful school it is. I look forward to all the exciting things still to come!

Warmest wishes,

Mrs Crook
Head of School





HARVEST APPEAL



A Huge Thank You for Your Harvest Donations!

A heartfelt thank you to all our wonderful families for your generous donations towards our Harvest Appeal. Your kindness and support are truly appreciated, and we are delighted that your contributions will be going to Buntingford Food Support to help local people and families in need. Your generosity will make a real difference to those in our community who may be facing difficult times. Thank you for helping us spread a little kindness and reminding our children of the importance of caring for others.

INTRODUCING OUR PUPIL VOICE TEAMS...

SCHOOL COUNCIL



Our School Council and Sports Committee are our pupil voice teams for the year, representing their classmates and helping to make a positive difference across our school. They will work together to share ideas, listen to the views of others and help shape school life, ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to be heard and make a difference!

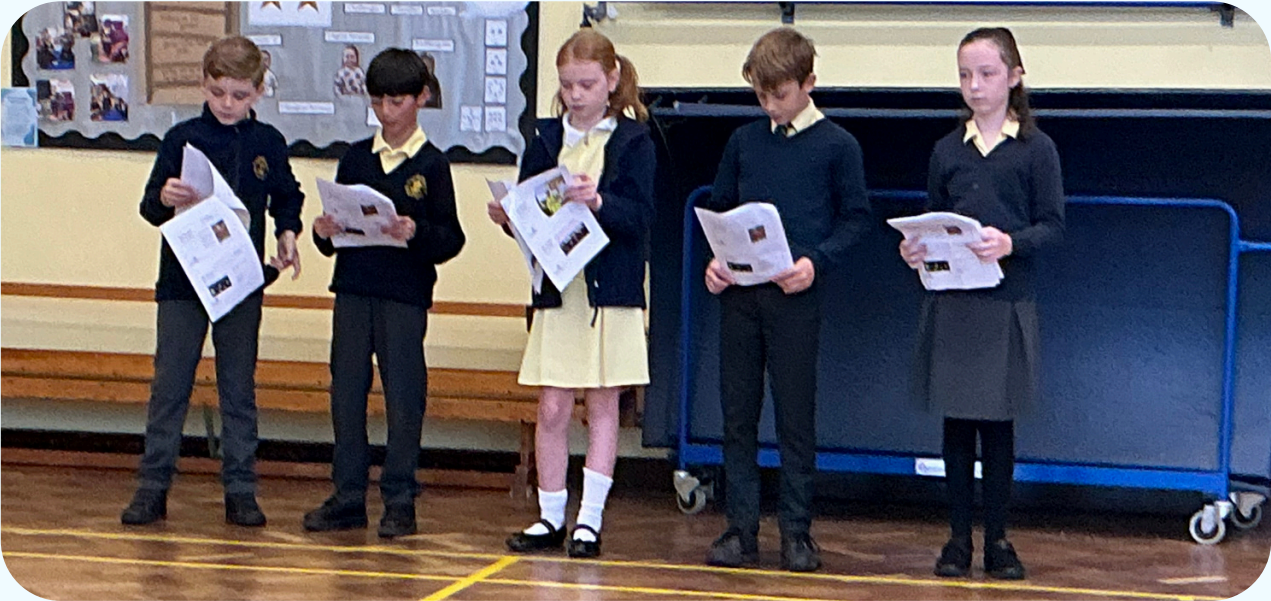
SPORTS COMMITTEE



Throughout the year, our School Council will focus on ways to improve our school community, while our Sports Committee will help promote physical activity, teamwork and opportunities for everyone to get involved in sport. Both teams will take on important responsibilities, work collaboratively and develop their leadership skills along the way. We look forward to seeing the fantastic ideas they bring forward and the positive impact they will have on our school!



PUPIL VOICE



Our Student Council delivered a fantastic assembly on 'Be Bright, Be Seen', sharing important road safety messages and reminding everyone how to stay safe when travelling to and from school. They highlighted the importance of being visible to drivers, especially during the darker months, and encouraged everyone to make safe choices on the roads!



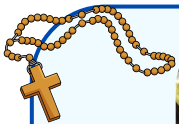
Our Student Council recently delivered an assembly sharing the key findings from the pupil survey carried out before the summer holidays. They discussed the feedback pupils shared and outlined the next steps they will be taking to help make our school an even better place for everyone!





OUR CATHOLIC LIFE IN SCHOOL...

Our Chaplaincy Team took part in a very special Trust-wide liturgy on Thursday 1st October. It was a wonderful opportunity to come together in faith, share their hopes and aims for the year ahead, and begin planning our much-loved annual Trust Charity Week. A particularly proud moment was receiving their official St Francis of Assisi Chaplaincy Team badges, recognising their important role in living out our Catholic values and putting faith into action through prayer, service and care for others. We look forward to seeing all the wonderful things they will achieve this year!



During the Month of the Rosary in October, our Catholic primary school comes together to honour Our Lady and reflect on the importance of prayer. Through praying the Rosary, sharing prayers and learning about Mary's special role in our faith, the children are encouraged to grow closer to Jesus and follow Mary's example of love, kindness and trust in God. It is a special time for our school community to come together in faith and celebrate the power of prayer.

As part of our celebrations for the Month of the Rosary, our wonderful Chaplaincy Team led mini-workshops in each classroom throughout the week, helping children to explore the meaning and significance of the different beads of the Rosary. Through these engaging sessions, the children deepened their understanding of this special Catholic prayer and discovered how each bead guides us as we pray and reflect on the life of Jesus and Mary. A beautiful way for our Chaplaincy Team to share their faith and bring our school community closer to prayer!





YEAR 5/6 TRIP TO ST ALBANS

A Visit to St Albans Cathedral

Our Year 5/6 children enjoyed a wonderful visit to St Albans Cathedral, where they had the opportunity to explore one of the most important places of Christian worship in our local area. The visit provided a fantastic opportunity to bring their learning about Catholic faith and traditions to life, as they discovered more about the history of the Cathedral and its significance to Christians today.

The children were able to appreciate the beauty of the building, learn about its religious importance and reflect on the many generations of people who have visited the Cathedral to pray and worship. It was a valuable experience that helped deepen their understanding of our Christian heritage and the importance of faith within our wider community.



Discovering Our Faith Beyond the Classroom

Our trip to St Albans Cathedral gave our Year 5/6 pupils the chance to experience the richness of our Christian tradition in a meaningful and memorable way. Exploring such a significant place of worship encouraged the children to ask questions, make connections with their learning in school and reflect on how faith has shaped the lives of people throughout history.

Experiences like these are an important part of our Catholic Life in School, helping our children to develop a deeper appreciation of their faith and the role that churches and cathedrals continue to play in bringing communities together. We hope the children returned to school feeling inspired by their visit and with a greater understanding of the history, beauty and significance of St Albans Cathedral.





SPORTS UPDATE

YEAR 5/6 SPORT DEVELOPMENT DAY



Our Year 5 and 6 children had a brilliant time at their Sports Development Day! They enjoyed participating in a variety of sporting activities, building their confidence and developing important skills such as teamwork, communication, coordination and resilience. It was fantastic to see them supporting their teammates, embracing new challenges and giving everything a go with such enthusiasm. The children were wonderful ambassadors for our school and made the most of this exciting opportunity to learn, grow and have fun through sport!

THOMAS TIGERS



The Thomas Tigers Football team got their season off to a fantastic start with a brilliant 2-1 victory in their first game! The team showed great determination, teamwork and sportsmanship throughout the match. Congratulations to all the players on a wonderful result – a fantastic achievement to kick off the season! Go Tigers!





FOREST SCHOOL UPDATE



Year 1/2 have been learning all about the fire triangle! They collected tinder and kindling, then had a go at creating sparks using flint and steel. A fantastic hands-on learning experience, developing teamwork, practical knowledge and outdoor skills!



During Forest School, the children developed a new practical skill by using palm drills to make holes in conkers. They focused on building perseverance, resilience and confidence, learning the importance of keeping going and trying again when faced with a challenge.

Forest School took a magical turn as Year 1/2 embraced the rainy weather and let their imaginations run wild!

They created enchanting dragon dens and fairy homes using forest litter and natural treasures, developing their creativity and connection with nature.

A little rain was no match for their imagination!



Year 1/2 built on their previous learning by successfully lighting a fire, toasting a marshmallow and learning how to extinguish it safely.

A great combination of retrieval practice, hands-on learning and developing important outdoor skills!



GOVERNANCE AT ST THOMAS'

OUR GOVERNORS

Following our first Governors' meeting of the new academic year, we are delighted to share an update on our Governing Body leadership!

We are pleased to announce that Mr Tim Mills will continue in his role as Chair of Governors, providing continued leadership and support to our school.

We are also delighted to announce that Mrs Lesley Bills will be taking on the role of Vice-Chair of Governors.

We would like to congratulate both Tim and Lesley on their appointments and thank them for their commitment, dedication and valuable contributions to our school community. We look forward to another successful academic year working together to support our pupils, staff and school.

EVERY DAY COUNTS; THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance is a high priority for our Staff and Governors, and for good reason. Every day in school provides valuable opportunities for children to learn, develop new skills, build friendships and make progress. However, the impact of term-time absences can be much greater than you might realise. Even what may seem like a small reduction in attendance can quickly add up to a significant amount of missed learning over the course of a school year.

To put this into perspective, take a look at how different attendance percentages can affect the amount of learning a child misses:

- **95%** attendance = **50 missed lessons**. This equates to approximately **two weeks**, of missed lessons across the school year.
- **90%** attendance = **100 missed lessons**. This means a child misses around **four weeks** of lessons during the school year.
- **85%** attendance = **150 missed lessons**. At this level, a child misses almost **six weeks** of valuable learning time.
- **80%** attendance = **200 missed lessons**. This adds up to **more than seven weeks** of missed lessons throughout the school year.
- **75%** attendance = **250 missed lessons**. This means a child misses approximately **nine weeks** of lessons over the course of the school year.

These figures highlight just how quickly missed days can accumulate and how much valuable learning time can be lost. When children are absent, they may miss important explanations, class discussions, practical activities and opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning. Catching up on missed work can also be challenging, particularly when new learning builds on what has been taught previously.

Every day in school really does make a difference. By working together to promote good attendance and avoid unnecessary term-time absences, we can help ensure that every child has the best possible opportunity to learn, thrive and reach their full potential.



COMING UP IN NOVEMBER...

Calander Dates

Inset Day (s)

02-03/11/26

Antibullying Week Launches
EYFS Forest School
Year 3 / 4 Forrest School

w/c
09/11/26

Year 5 / 6 Remeberance
Service at 10:45
Year 6 SATS Parent Meeting
and Workshop

11/11/26

Road Safety Week

w/c
16.11.26

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

w/c
16.11.26

Advent Mass at 14:00

30/11/26





COMING UP IN NOVEMBER...

Catholic Life in School

Remembrance

This month we will be focussed on Remembrance, taking time as a school community to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many and to remember all those affected by war and conflict. Through our Catholic faith, we will explore the importance of peace, love and compassion, encouraging our children to become peacemakers who show kindness, understanding and respect to others in their everyday lives.

Please note, poppies will be available after half term.

We Remember, We Honour and We Pray

As we mark Remembrance, we take time as a school community to pause, reflect and remember all those who have given their lives in times of conflict, as well as those who continue to serve and protect others today.

Through our Catholic faith, we are reminded of the importance of love, sacrifice, compassion and hope. We remember those who have suffered because of war and hold them, their families and all those affected by conflict in our prayers.

We pray that the world may become a place where peace, kindness and understanding flourish, and where every person is treated with dignity and respect.

The Importance of Peace

Remembrance is not only about looking back at the past; it is also an opportunity to think about the future we want to create. As children of God, we are called to be peacemakers, showing love, forgiveness and respect in our everyday lives.

Jesus teaches us to love one another, even when this is difficult. We can put this teaching into action through the small things we do each day: including others, resolving disagreements peacefully, showing compassion and standing up for those who need our help.

This Remembrance, we encourage our children to think about how they can be peacemakers in school, at home and in the wider world.

A Moment of Reflection

Remembrance invites us to pause amid our busy lives and make space for prayer and reflection. During this special time, we remember all those who have died in conflict, those who continue to live with the effects of war, and those who work tirelessly to bring peace to our world.

As a Catholic school, we are reminded that prayer connects us with others, helping us to show solidarity with those who are suffering and to place our hopes for a peaceful future in God's hands.

We encourage our children to carry the message of Remembrance into their everyday lives, remembering that even the smallest acts of kindness, forgiveness and understanding can help to build a world where peace can grow.

A Prayer for Remembrance

Loving Father,

Today, we remember all those who have lost their lives in war and conflict. We pray for their families and for everyone who continues to suffer because of war.

We thank you for those who have shown courage, kindness and love in difficult times.

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, help us to be peacemakers in our homes, our school and our world. Teach us to forgive, to care for others and to treat everyone with dignity and respect. May your love bring comfort to those who are hurting, hope to those who are afraid and peace to our troubled world.

Help us to remember, not only with our words, but through the kindness and love we show every day.

Amen.



REMINDERS

- The deadline for Secondary applications is 31 October, see website for details:
 - <https://live.cloud.servelec.com/Hertfordshire/Synergy/secondary/>
- Our Reception Admissions (Sept 27) applications open on 2nd November and will close on 15th January:
 - <https://www.stcanterbury.herts.sch.uk/page/?title=Admissions&pid=51>
 - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/school-admissions/primary-junior-and-middle-schools/primary-junior-and-middle-school-places.aspx>
- 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'

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ESSENTIAL ONLINE SAFETY

Children and young people use the internet every day to learn, play, and connect, but the online world is not always safe. For adults, it can be hard to keep up with the risks, including harmful content, cyberbullying and scams. These 10 tips provide clear and practical advice to support safer and healthier digital habits, helping young people to make informed, secure choices when using technology.

- 1 START EARLY CONVERSATIONS**
Begin talking about online behaviour from the moment children start using devices. Use age-appropriate language and revisit topics regularly, making it clear they can speak to you about anything that upsets or confuses them. Keeping these chats open helps build trust, so children are more likely to come to you when needed.
- 2 PROMOTE SAFER SHARING**
Children can overshare without understanding the risks. Remind them that photos, locations, or messages can be copied or shared beyond their intended audience. Explain how even private messages or group chats can be saved and/or misused. Talk about what is appropriate to post, message, and who it's safe to share with.
- 3 ENCOURAGE DIGITAL BALANCE**
Many apps and games are designed to keep users engaged through rewards, likes, or constant updates. These features can make it hard for children to switch off. Talk openly about how these systems work and help children recognise when it's time to take a break. Building in tech-free routines supports a healthier balance and awareness of their screen time.
- 4 CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR CONCERNS**
When children come to you with a concern, respond with interest and care, rather than with alarm. Keeping your reaction measured helps them feel safe and supported. This doesn't mean ignoring serious issues; it means showing that you're there to help. When children trust that they can speak openly, they're more likely to feel supported through unpleasant online experiences, and to ask for help in future.
- 5 STAY INFORMED AND CURRENT**
With emerging technologies like AI moving and changing so quickly, it's important to stay updated on how children are using new platforms, apps and games. Ask them to show you what they use and let them take the lead as you explore together. This opens up valuable conversations and helps you stay ahead of emerging risks and trends.
- 6 TEACH CRITICAL THINKING**
Talk to children about how to recognise unreliable information or scams online. With AI-generated videos, photos, and stories becoming harder to spot, help children question what they see and encourage them to look for evidence, check sources, and ask questions. These skills will help them avoid risks, make smart choices, and develop healthy habits for the future.
- 7 SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES**
Involve children in conversations about device usage so they feel included. Agree on digital rules such as screen-time limits, age-appropriate apps, and no devices in bedrooms overnight. Use parental controls to block or filter harmful content and explain that rules are there to protect and support them, not to spoil their fun.
- 8 LEAD BY EXAMPLE**
Children often copy the behaviour of adults around them. Show them what balanced, respectful, and mindful use of technology looks like, such as avoiding scrolling during family time and speaking kindly in messages. If you expect certain behaviour from them online, make sure your own habits reflect the same standards.
- 9 EXPLORE PRIVACY SETTINGS TOGETHER**
Show children how to use privacy tools on apps, games, and websites. Teach them to use strong passwords, block or report others in response to problems, and avoid sharing personal details. Explore settings together so they feel confident and in control, and explain that these features are there to help them stay safe online.
- 10 KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP**
Familiarise yourself with tools and organisations that support online safety. The National College offers online safety guides and webinars which provide tips on staying safe. Websites like Report Harmful Content and C10P can be used to report when something goes wrong. Show children how to report or block users, and where to go if they feel unsafe. Make sure they know that asking for help is always the right thing to do, and be prepared to support them.

Meet Our Expert
Home to the world's largest CPD library for educators, The National College has transformed the way education establishments go about developing their workforces and managing compliance. Our three memberships help all phases and types of setting raise standards, save time, reduce risk, and build a culture of improvement.
[See full reference list on our website](#)

#WakeUpWednesday
The National College

