



St Thomas More School Newsletter

6th January 2023

Dates for your diary

13th January 2023

Bring your parents to writing

13-17th February 2023

February half term

3rd March 2023

Bring your parents to Geography

3rd—14th April 2023

Easter Holiday

28th April 2023

Bring your parents to History

1st May 2023

May bank holiday—school closed

8th May 2023

King Charles III Coronation bank holiday—school closed

29th May—2nd June 2023

May Half Term

SDD

School closed to children

Friday 23rd June 2023

Monday 26th June 2023

'Love one another as I have loved you'

Dear Parents,

It was lovely to see the children return to school following the Christmas holidays and we all hope that you had a fantastic break with your families.

We have a busy term ahead starting with our 'Bring Your Parent to Write' next Friday, workshops for the children delivered by Cafod to help them learn more about Catholic Social Teaching and much more.

Our new library is almost complete and we look forward to opening it for the children to be able to use.

Children will be able to check books out of the library to take home and will also be able to use it during lunch and break times if they wish to. I would like to say a huge thank you to Sarah and Nic from the Fundraising Team for the huge amount of time they have put into sorting all the books from our old library and getting the new library up and running. I would also like to say thank you to all of our parents for supporting the fundraising activities that have been run as this has raised enough money for us to be able to buy new furniture, beanbags, cushions and other items to make the library an interesting and inviting space for our children.

Parking permits

To all parents who have been issued a parking permit which allows them to park within the school grounds, can I please remind everyone to thoroughly read through the terms and conditions on the back of the permit. It is **essential** that these conditions are strictly followed as it allows us to offer access to the site for those who need it whilst still keeping our children safe. If the conditions are not followed we will have to withdraw parking permits. Please adhere to the timings specified on the permit which state when you are able to access and leave the site as movement of cars between these times could put our children at risk.

Attendance and Punctuality

The school day finishes at 3:15, all children should be collected from their classes at this time unless they are booked into after school club or an extra-curricular club run by staff. We regularly have children that are not collected on multiple occasions between 3:30 and 4:00.

We understand that, on occasions, there are extenuating circumstances which mean a parent may be slightly late collecting their children such as traffic issues or other unforeseen events, however, these instances should not be a regular occurrence.

If you are not able to collect your child at 3:15 please either book your child into after school club or make alternate childcare arrangements. If a parent is late collecting their child more than one day per week the child will be placed in after school club and will be charged for the childcare. If you are having any difficulties booking your child into after school club using the MCAS app, please speak to Mrs McNaughton who will be able to help you with this.

Children are expected to have a 96% attendance rate at school to ensure that they have a high quality education that enables them to have the best chances of future success. Schools work with the Local Authority Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP) to support families in helping their child reach this level of attendance.

The Department for Education (DfE) states that children can only miss school if they are ill, or if have advance permission from the headteacher. Non-illness absences can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Examples of such circumstances are absences following the death of a close member of the family, attendance at an interview or examination, participation in a regional or national sporting event. Family holidays in term time do not count as exceptional circumstances and will therefore be recorded as unauthorised absences.

Children with poor attendance at primary school tend to develop a pattern of non-attendance which can result in underachievement in primary and secondary school. **A child who misses school twice per month will lose out on 18 days' education across the school year** which equates to nearly four weeks. As well as the impact on the children's education, children who have low attendance can also struggle with friendships and social interactions with their peers.

To encourage good attendance, all children who achieve 100% attendance in a full term receive a certificate in the end of term assembly and children who achieve 100% attendance for the year receive a special certificate in the end of year assembly. We will shortly be introducing 'mascots' for attendance and punctuality and the class that achieves the highest attendance and the class that achieve the lowest lateness each week will get to have the mascot in their class for the following week.



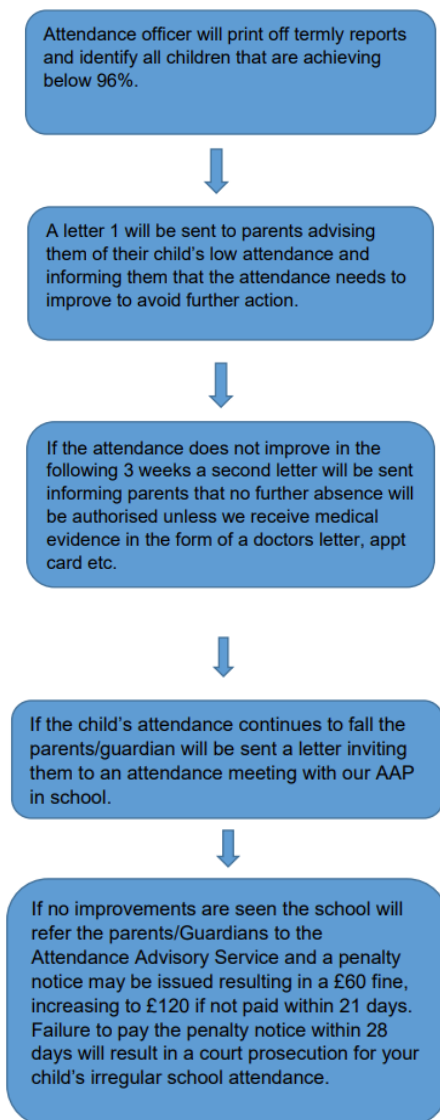
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Please see the flow chart below for how we monitor and support children's attendance. For more information, please read our Attendance Policy which is on the school website

<https://st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk/media/h5cbzqpw/attendance.pdf>

STM stages of Attendance monitoring



The AAP will issue a penalty notice to each adult in the house for a child who has 10 sessions or more (5 days) unauthorised attendance within a 6 week period, this could incur costs of up to £240. Failure to pay the penalty notice will result in a summons to the magistrate's court. Continued absence after this point could also result in prosecution.

If you have any questions regarding your child's attendance please contact the school office.

Remember to keep an eye on the school newsletter to see which classes manage to win the attendance and punctuality mascots each week!



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A big Happy Birthday to..

Selvyn A

Chizram I

Kacey B

Nancy-Lou B

Zahra K

Nancy B

David S

Ophelia H

Udoka O

Office staffing

You may have noticed a new face on Reception this week. We have welcomed Miss Jones to our team. Miss Jones will be able to help you with your queries and take and record medications etc.



To remind you of the rest of the admin team Mrs Fillingham is our Business Manager and Mrs McNaughton is our Administrator and looks after attendance and admissions and our MIS (Management Information System, also known as Bromcom)

The office is open from 8am until 4pm. We have limited staff between 12-2pm so please do utilise the parent email address we shared with you previously. **Parents@st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk** this is only open to our parents and does not have the level of emails coming through that the office email does.

Please remember to leave details of your child's absence on our absence line or you may email/MCAS message leaving their name, class and reason for absence.

You will have completed a child collection sheet with the names of people who are able to collect your child. You do not need to call us if someone on your sheet will be collecting your child at the end of the day. If the person collecting is not on the sheet then please do call us to let us know. Alternatively if you write in their contact books you do not need to follow this up with a phone call to the office.

We are all happy to help when we can.

School fund

If you have not yet paid your school fund it is available to pay via MCAS. If you need help with finding it or setting up an MCAS account please pop into the office or email us at **Parents@st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk**.

Thank you





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'Love one another as I have loved you'

Thanks to funding from The Medway Parenting Support Fund, The Kent Community Foundation we are now able to offer our Autism Advice Clinics and Virtual Carers Groups to families living in Medway.

All staff have lived experience and can help with most processes, offer strategies and understanding.

The most popular topics are:

- Anxiety
- Diagnosis – both post and pre diagnosis
- Behaviour
- Communication
- Education
- Emotional support for parents
- Food/diet difficulties
- Sensory processing
- Sleep

Appointments last approximately 30-45 minutes and are carried out by Zoom (free download) where Zoom is not available, we can carry out the appointment by phone.

If you wish to access the the service please contact Mrs Austin on SEN@st-thomasmore.meway.sch.uk who can aid you to complete a referral form.

Please feel free to visit our social media and website for testimonials and further information. We operate a waiting list at times of high demand.



**Advice Clinic Appointments
& Virtual Carer Groups**

now available for families in

MEDWAY

please email: admin@autismapprentice.co.uk
or call 03000110300 to book



Healthy packed lunches

Below is a reminder what we **do not** allow in lunch boxes

No nuts or nut products i.e peanut butter or Nutella chocolate spread

No fizzy or sugary drinks

No glass bottles or cans

No sweets or chocolates

Also as a guide

Oranges are a nice fruit but they are difficult for little hands to open, if you do put one in your child's lunchbox please peel before hand.

Avoid salty, fatty and sugary foods eg crisps, cakes etc

Avoid processed foods such as Dairylea lunchables—these can be made much more cheaply at home from fresh ingredients

Save sweets and chocolates as treats for home

Please label lunchboxes and drinks bottles with your child's name and class





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Tuck shop dates

Support our PTFA and pick yourself up a sweet treat.

More dates for the new year coming soon.

Thank you very much for your support in 2022

Safeguarding

We have had some enquiries recently about opening the back gate of the school which opens onto the alleyway at the start and the end of the day. School staff need to know who is on the school site at any point in time and members of the public should not be able to gain access to the school site. By having one point of entry and exit to the school it allows us to know who is on the premises and prevents people unrelated to school business being able to gain entry. We recently commissioned an external safeguarding review to ensure we were meeting the highest possible standards in safeguarding and the reviewer agreed that creating an additional access point to the school would fall short of these standards. We also liaised with PCSO Rowan about the issue who has given us the following statement to share with parents:

'I have been liaising with the school about the gate to the rear of the school grounds, where parents/guardians would like this open at the beginning/end of the school day. They have had an outside independent agency involved to conduct a safeguarding review. The result from the report was not to open the gate, as the school has appropriate safeguarding procedures in place at the beginning and end of the day. Please be mindful it was not the school that made this decision, it was the result of the independent review.' PCSO Rowan Cornwall Medway Community Safety Unit

Reception Places

You can apply for your child to start school in year R (reception) if they were born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019.

Please contact the office if you could like to book a tour of St Thomas More in preparation for securing your child's place.

Here is a link for further information:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200137/schools_and_learning/1059/applying_for_a_primary_school_place

