

Thursday 6th September 2018

Dear Parent/Carers

Welcome back to school from all the staff at St Thomas'. I hope you had a wonderful holiday and are ready for a busy and exciting year ahead. A special welcome to new pupils, parents and staff to our school; I hope you will be very happy here.

It's been an eventful summer break for myself and unfortunately, I'm writing to you to let you know I will be absent for most likely the first two weeks of the term, due to an unfortunate accident resulting in surgery. In my absence, Mr Hall will oversee the day to day running of the school until my return. As you aware, I should be teaching Year 4 on a Friday morning but Mrs Fry has kindly stepped in and has agreed to cover my teaching commitments until I return.

So, as we embark on this new year, just a few pleas and reminders.....

Home learning

We would strongly recommend that at the start of term you put a routine in place whereby children know when they should do their home learning – homework, reading etc. Reading from real books (not electronic) is important for children to develop a love of books. Having a range of books at home and regular visits to the library also encourages this. It's good practice at home learning time to turn the television/computer off. Try using the television/computer as incentives for work done – they will value it more.

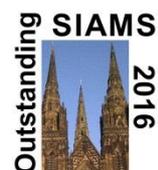
Your children are your most important gift from God, treasure them, help them, guide them and support them – the first few years of education are crucial, so why not start this new term with this commitment. We will be monitoring the homework books/reading records etc., closely.

In school we will do everything we can to help and encourage your child to do their best and reach their full potential. Do let us know if we can support you in any way.

Remember we operate an open door policy – feel free to book an appointment with your child's class teacher, teaching assistant or myself if you have any concerns or need support, help or advice.

School Uniform

We really appreciate your support in upholding standards in school by ensuring your child wears the correct school uniform, with sensible black school shoes (no markings/colours/branding etc.), not just at the start of the school year, but all year through. Please do write your child's name on all items of uniform and PE kit – children aren't always the best at looking after their belongings and a name really helps when dealing with lost property!



The correct PE kit must also be worn and should be available in school at all times. Full details of the school uniform requirements can be found on the school website and clothing items with the school logo are available to purchase directly from our supplier - www.myschoolstyle.com.

Data Protection / Collection

In line with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the school has published an updated privacy notice which explains how we use and manage personal data. This can be found in the policy section on the school website and also at the back of the data collection document 'School Admission Information', which was sent home with your child yesterday (Years 1 to 6 only – Reception parents have recently completed this at the end of last term).

In order to ensure we hold correct personal data and consent information on our management information system, we would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete and sign this document, returning it to school promptly, and by Wednesday 11th September at the latest. The consents that you will have previously signed annually in your child's planner are all now contained within this document and will remain active on file until such time as either, you elect to change your consent or your child leaves St Thomas'. Data change forms are available under the 'Latest News/Office Forms' tab on the school website should you wish to amend any personal information or consent in the future.

Car Park

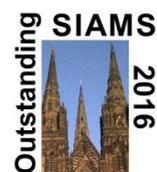
Can I remind you that the school car park is for use by staff and visitors only. It is not a large car park and at peak times when full, manoeuvring can be tricky and dangerous. To restrict entry therefore, the security barrier will be in operation from 8am until 4.30pm and there will be no access at the start or end of the school day for dropping off and collecting pupils (with the exception of parents dropping off children at the Breakfast Club before 8am and approved disabled users only).

Sadly, these car park restrictions will be implemented more strictly from this term due to a number of incidents which occurred over recent months - the last of these being on the final day of the summer term, when an impact to the side of a teacher's car caused considerable damage. If anyone witnessed this accident or can provide any information, we would be very grateful if you could advise a member of the office staff.

Parking is also an issue in the vicinity of the school and we do recommend that those of you who are not able to walk all the way to school, park a little further away and walk the last 5 minutes of your journey. If you do however choose to park closer to the school, please, please consider the residents and park courteously and safely, observing the road restriction markings, and avoiding double parking, blocking driveways and parking around the bends. Thank you.

School Meals

A daily school meal is provided free of charge under the Universal Infant Free School Meal scheme for all pupils in Reception through to Year 2 and we encourage all pupils to take up this offer. The catering team are always happy to accommodate all dietary requirements (and fussy eaters!) but if for any reason your child wishes to transfer to bringing a packed lunch, please do come and speak to us first.



For children in Key Stage 2, who are not eligible for Free School Meals (see criteria below), the cost of a daily meal remains at £2.10. Pupils are able to pick which days they take a school meal and don't need to book school lunches for the whole week in advance. The school does however operate a 'no debt' policy and therefore expects sufficient funds to be available on the ParentPay dinner money account before lunches (and breaktime snacks) are ordered. Whilst we will never refuse to feed a child at lunch time due to a lack of funds, please be aware that –

- A breaktime snack may be refused if we have previously issued a debt reminder.
- Where a lunch debt exceeds £20, the full lunch menu may not be offered.
- It is a parent's responsibility to ensure they have made provision for their child's lunch - frequent or excessive debt levels may be seen as a safeguarding issue and investigated as such.

Thank you for your co-operation in supporting our 'no debt' policy.

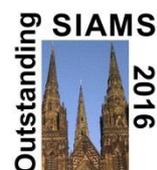
Free School Meals

Your child might be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- eligible for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and the household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) is not more than £16,190. Please note: anyone eligible for Working Tax Credit, or if you have a partner and they receive it, regardless of Income, you will not qualify
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the 4 week run on of working tax credit (this is where someone becomes unemployed or reduces their hours and so is no longer entitled to working tax credit but will continue to receive it for a further 4 weeks and is entitled to free meals during that time)
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned household income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods). Your net earned income is your household income after taxes and deductions and does not include income from Universal Credit or any other benefits you may receive.

Following government changes to the free school meal criteria in April this year, any pupil who has a live free school meal claim as at 1 April 2018 under the old criteria, or makes a successful new claim after 1 April 2018 under the new criteria, will keep their free school meals until the government have completed their roll out of free school meals (expected to be March 2022), even if you no longer meet the entitlement criteria. At March 2022 if the pupil is still at school they will then keep their free school meals until they move to the next phase of education.

We would encourage all parents who meet the criteria to make an application, regardless of whether your child wants to take up school dinners or already receives the infant free meals, as for every pupil registered with the council as eligible under the entitlement criteria, the school will receive additional funding called Pupil Premium which is used to help raise achievement levels.



Applications for free school meals can be made online by following the 'education and learning' link on the Staffordshire County Council website – <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk>. Please ask at the school office if you need any further information or assistance making a claim.

Breakfast and After School Club

There will be no changes this forthcoming year to either how the Breakfast and After School Clubs run, or the daily charges.

Breakfast club remains exceptional value at £1 per day. It is available from 7.45am each morning – before this time, whilst the staff may be on site, they will be preparing for the session and will not be insured to accept children into the club. Booking is not necessary.

Can I also take the opportunity to remind you that until the 8.45am start of day school bell, children arriving at school should either be in Breakfast Club where they will be supervised or on the playground, where they remain the responsibility of parents.

After School Club sessions cost £4.40 until 4.30pm and £6.60 until 5.30pm. Places at the club are limited and therefore it is advisable to book ahead – booking forms are available from the office and on the website. Please remember that if you have booked a session which is subsequently not required, to advise the care club staff accordingly so that they know not to expect your child and the place can be made available to others. Thank you.

The end of the school day is 3.20pm for KS1 and 3.25pm for KS2. Any children who have not been collected after 5 minutes of these times and who are not either attending an extra-curricular activity, or already booked into the After School Club, will be taken by staff to the After School Club and the relevant charge will be applied.

Similarly to dinner money, we would be grateful if users of both clubs respect the 'no debt' policy and ensure that funds are available on ParentPay before your child attends (or in the case of the After School Club that fees are settled promptly at the end of each week). Excessive arrears levels will result in places being denied and may prompt further debt recovery or safeguarding action.

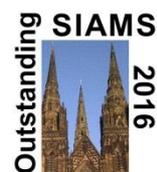
Medicine in School

Just a reminder that the school is not obliged to administer medicines to pupils during the school day. However, if your child has been prescribed a course of medication which urgently requires a dose during the day (eg. a 4 dose per day antibiotic), then provided an authorisation form (available on the website and from the office) has been completed, office staff are willing to administer. All medicines should be left at the office for safekeeping and parents should remember to collect them at the end of the school day.

There are currently a number of bottles of medicine (Piriton, Calpol etc) in the school office which have been left from last term - we'd be grateful if these could be collected by the end of the week, otherwise they will be disposed of.

Dates for the Diary

The dates for whole school events throughout this coming year have been set and are detailed on the 2018/19 Year Planner which your child has been given a copy of today.



These dates can also be found on the school website calendar (scroll down on the homepage for the calendar link). Closer to event dates the website will be updated with further details and a copy of any correspondence issued regarding the event – this information can be accessed by clicking on the event in the calendar. Please note that all dates set by the school may be subject to change, although this will be avoided wherever possible. Should it be necessary to alter dates, you will be advised accordingly with as much notice as possible.

Clubs

Here at St Thomas', we endeavour to provide a variety of extra curricular clubs to cater for all of our children in Years 1 to 6. Details of the after school clubs that will be on offer for your child(ren) to attend throughout this Autumn term, along with days and times they are held, will be sent out via Parentmail before the end of this week. Unless otherwise stated, clubs will be starting week commencing Monday 17th September.

And finally...

...a reminder that all further newsletters will only be issued electronically, either by email through Parentmail, or via the website (www.st-thomas-kidsgrove.staffs.sch). Paper copies will however be available from the school office if required.

Thank you all in anticipation of your support for the forthcoming year.

Yours sincerely,

L Toach

Mrs L Toach
Associate Headteacher

