



**St Thomas CE  
(vc) Primary  
School  
Newsletter**



**Spring 1  
Week 1  
12.1.24**

**Diary Dates**

- **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January- Start of Term**
- **Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> February NSPCC Numbers Day**
- **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February- End of term**
- **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February- INSET Day- children not in school**
- **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February – Start of Spring 2**

**Acting Head  
Message**



Good afternoon and a very Happy New Year to you all.

I hope that you are all well and that you all had some time to rest and relax over the Christmas break.

It has been lovely welcoming the children back into school this week and seeing them looking smart in their uniforms. Our new projects this term are all geography based, and many of the classes have started this week with an exciting enrichment event- food tasting, applying to be part of Ernest Shackleton’s team and reception even forgot to get dressed on Monday and turned up in Pjs and dressing gowns! This morning we also hosted a really great coffee morning with Karen from ‘Keeping in Mind’ which supports parents and families with mental health.

Please can I urge safe parking and driving around school again. I have been back in touch with the local policing team to come back and look again, as this week I noticed an increase in lack of care with both at drop of and pick up. Please also, if you allow your children to have access to a phone or a tablet which has apps on, can you talk to them about messaging, safe searching and being kind to one another. Please see the link below which is a great resource for parents and children- it is free to make an account- <https://nationalcollege.com/categories/online-safety>

We would really appreciate your support in these matters.

Have an enjoyable weekend.

Mrs Goddard

#teamthomas

**Collective  
Worship**



We would really appreciate your support in these matters. This week we started our new value- Believe. We looked the story of David and Goliath and how David, due to his believe in God, he defeated the giant Goliath. We reminded ourselves of people who fight for their beliefs- Greta Thunberg and Paul Stephens who was a civil rights campaigner. We also looked at how we could fight for what we believed in and began some democratic voting on how to improve our school.

**‘From Tiny Seeds Grow Mighty Trees’**



**FOST  
requests and  
information**



**Next FOST meeting- Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January- 9am in school. New members always welcome.**

**Reception**

**This week in reception we have launched our new main project for the half term of Starry Night by coming to school in our pjmas and we have listened to stories in the story hut with some hot chocolate and biscuits. We also created various pictures of the night sky using different media and materials.**



<p><b>Year 1</b></p>		<p>This week in maths Year 1 have started to learn about place value using a range of different mathematical equipment.</p>	
<p><b>Year 2</b></p>	<p>Year 2 have started a new unit in PE called Fair, share, dare. The children have been practicing their ball skills by hitting, rolling and kicking the ball with control. It was a fun lesson.</p>		
<p><b>Year 3</b></p>		<p>This week in DT, Year 3 learned to use different mechanisms of movement and made examples using card. Andy in 3S did a fantastic job with his 3 examples.</p>	
<p><b>Year 4</b></p>	<p>Year 4 have been improving their knowledge of the French words for foods by playing the shopping trolley game but with no English allowed! We're getting much better!</p>		
<p><b>Year 5</b></p>	 <p>Seasonal vegetables: Fun Food Tasting!! yummy!!</p>	<p>Year Fives have enjoyed their start to the New Year with a fun food tasting lesson, an Art lesson in the style of Picasso's continuous line sketches plus a Science afternoon exploring forces, which saw Mr Sykes risking milk explosions from a great height! (thankfully there was no mess).</p>	 <p>Continuous Line Drawings</p>
<p><b>Year 6</b></p>		<p>Year 6 had a wonderful visit to the Liverpool Maritime Museum on Wednesday. There we got to see the Titanic and slavery exhibit and also had a workshop looking more closely at the history of slavery. Thank you to those who made it possible.</p>	

**Attendance**

We continue to monitor attendance and we are identifying persistent absentees. (less than 90%) We are keenly aware that there may be genuine and compelling reasons for pupil absence and the monitoring involves working with families to remove barriers and support pupils in their school attendance

Attendance Matters



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# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

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Occurring through messaging apps, on social media and in online games, group chats are among the most popular ways that young people engage with their peers online. Involving, by definition, three or more individuals, these groups allow users to send messages, images and videos to everyone in one place. While they are useful for helping friends, people with shared interests or members of a club to communicate and coordinate activities, they can also leave young people feeling excluded and bullied – as well as providing opportunities for inappropriate content to be shared and viewed.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### BULLYING

Unkind comments or images which are purposely aimed at an individual can be shared freely in a group chat – allowing and often encouraging others to join in the bullying behaviour. If this content is shared in a group of their peers (especially a larger group), it serves to amplify the hurt, embarrassment, anxiety and isolation that the victim feels.

### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

This common issue with group chats can happen in several ways: starting a new group, for instance, but deliberately excluding a certain child. Likewise, the chat may take place on an app which one child doesn't have access to, meaning they can't be involved. A child can also feel isolated when a group chat is used to discuss or share images from an event that everyone else but them attended.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some discussions in group chats may include inappropriate words, swearing and unsuitable images or videos. These could be viewed by your child if they are part of that group, whether they actively engage in it or not. Some chat apps have a disappearing message function, so your child may be unable to report something they've seen because it can only be viewed once or for a short time.

### SHARING GROUP CONTENT

It's important to remember that – while the content of the chat is private between those in the group – individual users can easily share a message, photo or video with others outside of the group or screenshot what's been posted. The risk of something your child intended as private becoming public (and potentially going viral) is higher if there are people they don't know well in the group.

### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Within larger group chats, it's more likely your child will be communicating with people they don't really know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly toward your child. It's wise for young people not to share personal details and stay aware that they have no control over the messages and images they share after they've put them online.

### NOTIFICATIONS AND FOMO

A drawback of large group chats is the sheer number of notifications. Every time someone in the group messages, your child's device will be 'pinged' with an alert; potentially, this could mean hundreds of notifications a day. Not only is this highly distracting, but young people's fear of missing out on the latest conversation results in increased screen time as they try to keep up with the chat.

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## Advice for Parents & Carers

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### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats are often an arena for young people to gain social status. This could cause them to do or say things on impulse, which could upset others in the group. Encourage your child to consider how other people might feel if they engaged in this behaviour. If your child does upset a member of their group chat, support them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

In any online communication, it's vital for young people to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Discuss the importance of not revealing identifiable details like their address, their school or photos that they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they lose control of where it may end up and how it might be used.

### GIVE SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Remind your child that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded in a group chat, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their hurt feelings and help to put them back in control by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. On a related note, you could also empower your child to speak up if they're in a chat where others are being picked on.

### AVOID INVITING STRANGERS

Sadly, many individuals online hide their true identity to gain a child's trust – for example, to gather information on them, to exchange inappropriate content or to coax them into doing things they aren't comfortable with. Ensure your child understands why they shouldn't add people they don't know to a group chat – and, especially, to never accept a group chat invitation from a stranger.

### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If your child is in a chat where inappropriate content is being shared, advise them to block the users sending the material, report them to the host app or platform and exit the group. If any of this content could be putting a minor at risk, contact the police. Emphasise to your child that it's OK for them to simply leave any group chat that they don't feel comfortable being a part of.

### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Having a phone or tablet bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be a massive irritation and distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to your child that they can still be part of the group chat, but that it would be healthier for them to turn off or mute the notifications and catch up with the conversation at a time which better suits them.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing Internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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