

St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

NEWSLETTER

Friday, 16th October 2026



This week's Gospel Value

Invitation

In this week's Celebration of the Word, we thought about the word 'invitation' and how some invites are more important than others. Then we understood how the most important invite is God's invitation to spend time with Him. We show this in the kind things we do and say to each other every day.

Upcoming Events

Parents evening.

Parents evening for the autumn term will be held on – Wednesday, 21st October from 1.30 – 6.00pm
The purpose of these meetings is to discuss how your child has settled into their new class and any specific targets they have.

Please do book a timeslot to meet with your child's teacher.

A message from Mrs. Rawlinson

On Tuesday, I had the privilege to welcome prospective parents to school, explain what life is like at St. Thomas of Canterbury and give a guided tour of our setting.

Thanks to Orlaith, Austin, Emily and Arthur for helping on the day.

Choosing the right primary school is such a big decision to make and we are here to help you make that decision for your little ones.

Our forthcoming new intake meetings will be on:

Tuesday, 3rd November at 9.30am.

Tuesday, 17th November at 4.00pm

Wednesday, 18th November at 4.30pm

We look forward to seeing you there.

Languages -French

Our Foundation Subject focus this week has been MFL – French, with children developing their language skills, learning new vocabulary and practising speaking and listening. Ask your child about the French words and phrases they have been learning. Next week, our focus will move to Music.



School disco

A great time was had by the children during our school disco this week.

The children enjoyed dancing in the hall and having treats and drinks with their friends.

Many thanks to the PTFA who organised the event to raise much needed funds for our children.

Beckets' Out of Hours Club

To help us manage staffing, we kindly ask parents to book out-of-hours clubs as far in advance as possible. On the day bookings are for emergencies only. Money should be on the account to cover the session cost along with the £2.50 late booking charge.

Advance bookings help us plan numbers effectively and provide the best experience for everyone.

Thank you.

Harvest Festival Celebration

We will be collecting donations of food and toiletries for our local foodbank in St Helens.

These items will help families within our own local community.

Children are invited to bring in their foodbank donations during the week beginning 19th October.

Donated items can include:

- tinned goods
- packet goods
- shower gel
- period products
- shampoo
- soap
- coffee
- tea
- pasta

We are so grateful for your continued kindness and generosity, it truly makes a difference to those around us.

Together, we can make a real difference and help brighten up the lives of others this Harvest.

Year 4 Sacramental Booklets and preparation

Our Year 4 children will soon begin their Sacramental journey as they prepare to receive the Sacrament of Forgiveness (First Confession) and the Sacrament of the Eucharist (First Holy Communion).

This year the preparations will run as they did last year.

Last year proved to be very successful as it involved parents and school working together in preparing the children for this important stage in their faith journey.

To explain and to give further information, there will be a short meeting for parents and carers of Year 4 children on

Monday, 2nd November at 3pm in the school hall.

EYFS Appeal for Resources

We would be really grateful for any of the following items you may have finished with at home:

- Whisks
- Wooden spoons
- Wicker baskets
- Wooden bowls
- Metal bowls
- Metal/ Plastic cups and plates
- Weighing scales
- Old fabric/material
- Old hats, scarves, ties, handbags, purses, wallets, etc
- Old costume jewellery such as bracelets, beads, watches, rings
- Old technology such as cameras, clocks, torches, remote controls, mobile telephones, etc
- Children's umbrellas
- Dress up costumes
- Old suitcases
- Tape measures
- Tarpaulin
- Tin cans (please make sure there are no sharp edges)
- Log slices
- Battery operated fairy lights, torches, battery operated candles
- Plastic storage boxes with lids
- Cable reels
- Garden stones or gravel
- Carpet tubes
- Rolls of wallpaper
- Toy garage

Many thanks for all your help!
Mrs Horrocks and Mrs Woodward

New Intake 2027

If you have a child due to start school or Nursery in September 2027 and are considering St. Thomas of Canterbury as one of your choices, then please come along to our new admission meetings. These will give you all the information you need to help you make your choices and give you a flavour of what school life is like here at St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Prospective parents are warmly welcome to visit school on:

· Tuesday, 3rd November at 9.30am

Tuesday, 17th November at 4pm

Wednesday, 18th November at 4.30pm

If you know of anyone with a child due to start school please pass these dates on to them.

Attendance

Good attendance and punctuality at school is not just valuable — it is essential.

For week ending Friday, 16th October 2026 the whole school attendance is 98.7%

Reception = 98.8%

Year 1 = 99.5%

Year 2 = 100%

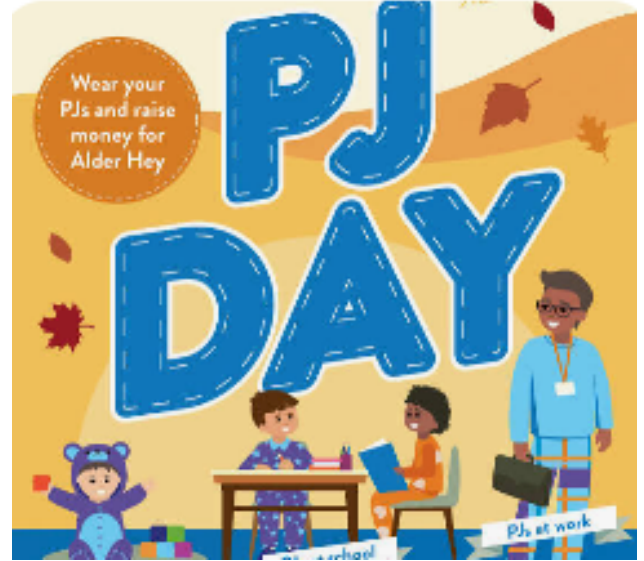
Year 3 = 98.9%

Year 4 = 98.5%

Year 5 = 96.5%

Year 6 = 98.9%

PJ Day for Alder Hey!



Two children from Year 5 have shown Catholic Social Teaching in action by showing kindness and compassion for others. They want to help Alder Hey even further (after last year's assembly from the Alder Hey team). They want to organise a PJ day for Alder Hey.

For £1 each, the children will be allowed to wear PJ's/loungewear/jogging bottoms and Tee shirts for school on Tuesday, 20th October.

All money raised will go towards Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

Important dates for Your Diary

October

- 20th October – PJ Day for Alder Hey
- 21st – Parents afternoon (from 1.30pm)
- 22nd – Harvest Mass at church (11.00am)
- 22nd – End of Autumn term 1 (3.20pm finish)

November

- 2nd – Return to school start of Autumn term 2
- 3rd – Reception/Nursery Intake 2027 parents open day (9.30am)
- 11th – Information session for January 2027 Nursery intake (3.30pm)
- 13th – Own clothes day for donations to Christmas Fayre
- 16th – Odd Socks Day – Anti Bullying Campaign
- 17th – Y1-Y3 Cinema Trip
- 17th – Reception/Intake 2027 parents open day (4pm)
- 18th – Y4-Y6 Cinema Trip
- 19th – Y4 Liverpool World Museum Trip
- 20th – Own clothes day for donations to Christmas Fayre
- 25th – Y2 World of Glass Trip
- 27th – PTFA Christmas Fayre (3.30pm)

December

- 1st – Rock Steady Concert (2.30pm)
- 2nd – Advent Mass (11am in Church)
- 4th – Choir to visit Dementia Cafe for Carols (9.30am)
- 7th – KS1 Nativity (time TBC)
- 8th – EYFS Nativity (Reception & Nursery) 9.15am
- 9th – KS1 Nativity (time TBC)
- 9th – EYFS Nativity (Reception & Nursery) 2pm
- 14th – Altru Drama – Alice in Wonderland Performance
- 15th – KS2 Christmas Service (time TBC)
- 18th – End of Autumn term 2 (1.30pm finish)

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI COMPANIONS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Powered by generative AI models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, AI companion apps and virtual chatbots such as Character.ai, Snapchat My AI, Replika and Talkie, allow users to create, customise, and chat to synthetic avatars around the clock. While many young people use them for harmless entertainment, creative writing or homework help, these tools are designed to simulate genuine human empathy, emotional bonding and deep friendship.

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

AI companions are programmed to be endlessly agreeable, attentive, and available 24/7. Unlike human friendships, an AI companion never disagrees, sets personal boundaries, or gets tired. Young people (especially those experiencing loneliness, social anxiety, or low self-esteem) can quickly develop an unhealthy emotional attachment, viewing synthetic software as their 'best friend' or a surrogate romantic partner.

DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

AI chatbots possess no genuine empathy, professional clinical knowledge, or moral reasoning. While developers state these tools are not therapists, vulnerable teenagers often turn to them in crisis. Chatbots have previously hallucinated unsafe medical guidance, validated depressive spirals, and failed to safely escalate disclosures of self-harm or suicidal ideation to real-world protective services.

DATA HARVESTING & OVERSHARING

Because conversational bots simulate warmth and understanding, children often lower their guard and treat the chatbot as a trusted friend. They may disclose sensitive personal information, including full names, school details, private family problems, or secrets, unaware that their conversations are being logged, may be analysed by third parties (including advertisers), or used to train future AI models.

DISTORTED SOCIAL SKILLS

Navigating real-world friendships can be messy, involving dealing with conflict, compromise, boredom, and awkwardness. If a teenager spends hours interacting with an AI that is tailored specifically to validate and flatter them, they may become impatient with real-world relationships. Over time, this can lead to social withdrawal, heightened anxiety in peer groups, and isolation: a vicious circle of growing online dependency coupled with a heightened sense that relationships in the 'real world' are too challenging to maintain.

INAPPROPRIATE OR EXPLICIT CONTENT

While most mainstream platforms feature safety filters and guardrails, young people frequently discover 'jailbreak' prompts to bypass them. Some companion platforms subtly nudge users towards mature themes, romantic roleplay, or sexually suggestive conversations. In worse cases, third-party apps with weak safety checks have been found to generate sexually explicit text or intimate images.

"FREEMIUM" UPSells & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many companion platforms operate on a freemium model. While basic chat is free, features like voice calls, uncensored responses, custom avatars, or 'deeper bonding' tiers are locked behind expensive monthly recurring subscriptions or in-app token purchases. This can lead to significant hidden costs and pressure on young people to spend money to maintain the 'friendship'.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TALK OPENLY ABOUT FAKE RELATIONSHIPS

Demystify how these tools work. Explain to young people that an AI companion has no feelings, memories, or consciousness; it is simply calculating the next most mathematically probable word based on its training data. It is helpful to explain to them the mechanics of large language models so that they understand how they are trained and how they are designed to always flatter and be helpful.

AUDIT PRIVACY SETTINGS & AGE LIMITS

Check which companion apps are installed on your child's phone or tablet. Many dedicated companion apps carry an App Store rating of 17+, while platforms like Character.ai set a minimum age of 13+ (or 16+ in the UK/EU). Review the privacy settings together: turn off data-sharing toggles, disable model training where possible, and ensure location permissions are blocked.

ENCOURAGE REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Ensure technology habits do not replace face-to-face peer socialisation, sports, hobbies, and family time. Create healthy boundaries at home (such as keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight) to prevent late-night, unmonitored attachment loops with conversational chatbots when young people are at their most vulnerable.

REINFORCE WHERE TO GET REAL HELP

Make sure young people know that a machine can never replace professional pastoral or mental health care. Remind them of the trusted adults they can turn to at school – such as their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – as well as dedicated youth support services like Childline (0800 1111) or Shout (text 85258).

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is the Founder and Executive Director of Compass Education, a consultancy specialising in supporting educators, students and parents in making wise choices with AI. His book *Ethical AI and Education*, co-authored with Clara Hawking, will be released later in 2025 by Taylor and Francis.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College