



St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Head Teacher: Mrs H Thorpe BA Hons QTS

Rossall Grove, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 1NN

Email: admin@smota.co.uk Tel: 0151 329 3524

Tuesday 5th September 2023

Dear parents and families,

Welcome back to a new school year here at St Mary of the Angels! I hope you have all enjoyed a lovely summer break and have been able to spend some precious time with your family and friends. It has been wonderful to see the children arriving today so smart and so excited, with a few nerves too. All very normal and to be expected. A few updates and reminders for everyone, as we start the year together...

Staffing:

We warmly welcome Mrs Zosia Turley to our staff team this year. Mrs Turley will be joining us part-time as a teaching assistant, working in the Key Stage Two team. Mrs Turley brings a plethora of valuable skills, experiences and qualities and we are all delighted to be able to welcome her to our school teaching team. We are also very pleased to welcome Ms Sarah Jones to our staff team. Ms Jones is a very experienced Teaching Assistant and will be supporting Miss Thwaite in the EYFS Team this term.

Reminder of the School Day Times:

As we start the new year, a quick reminder that our school hours will be **8.45am-3.15pm** for all classes. Classroom doors will be open from 8.40am. A prompt arrival at school helps all our children to settle and be prepared for the learning of the day. Any child arriving after 8.55am will be registered as late for school. The Education Welfare Office will monitor our registers and our late arrivals.

Holidays:

Last year we had a small number of families taking multiple and lengthy unauthorised holidays during school time. Whilst I understand and sympathise entirely with the dreadfully unfair price hikes that parents and staff face during school holidays, the disruption to children's learning and stability in school can be significant. The Local Authority have instructed all school leaders to remind parents that holidays taken during term time will be unauthorised and strongly discouraged, and subject to fixed penalty notices. More information about this can be found below. A list of holiday dates for 23/24 is attached to this email. I will also soon be writing to all parents to consult for your preference for holiday in the 24/25 academic year. More information to follow.

Dinner money and snack money:

In our endeavours to work as cashless as possible, please remember that all dinner money (£2.40 per day) and snack money **must be paid in advance** and online via scopay. (An app is available from Apple and google play). Please keep a close eye on your child's accounts so that you are aware of your payments.



Mass times at St Mary of the Angels Church – Sunday @ 9.00am



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Meet the Teacher Meetings:

On Thursday 21st September, our teachers will be hosting virtual "Welcome to the Class" meetings via Google Classroom. For Key Stage One classes and EYFS, these will be at 4pm, and for KS2 classes these will be at 4.30pm. These will be 20 minute virtual meetings to provide families with relevant information about the year ahead and to give parents opportunities to 'meet' the new teacher and ask any questions. PowerPoints of information will also be available on google classroom following the meetings for parents' use. More details will follow.

Advance Warning:

Parents, please put a note in your diaries that we will be finishing school at 1.15pm on Friday 22nd December 23, your child will need to be collected from school at that time.

The date our Parents Evening this half term will be Wednesday 18th October 23.

The date of our Christmas Food & Craft Fair will be Thursday 7th December 23

Attendance:

Our attendance policy for 2023-2024 is now live on our website and advises families of our procedures of reporting and responding to school absences. Our policy is entirely in line with Cheshire West Authority's advice and guidance. Please follow this [link to read the policy](#)

Finally:

As you'll know by now, I am usually on the playground most mornings (with my bagel basket!) as well as after school most days. Please do feel that you can come and chat to me about anything that might be worrying or concerning you. We are all here for your children and working together is the best way for us to help each other.

With kindest regards,

Helen Thorpe

Mrs H. Thorpe

Headteacher

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EDUCATION FIXED PENALTY NOTICES: ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

The law empowers designated Cheshire West and Cheshire Officers, Headteachers – including their nominated Deputies – and the Police to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents of children who have unauthorised absence



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from school, with fines up to £60 per child per parent. (For example, family with 2 children, with 2 parents pay £240 from autumn 2018.) Fines rise if not paid on time. For example, in 2018, 3 parents were fined a total of £400 for non-payment by the courts. Regular and punctual attendance in school is a legal requirement. Non-payment will result in prosecution.

The background to this is that Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure their child's attendance at the school where they are registered, where that absence is not authorised by the school.

If unauthorised absence occurs (such as taking holidays in term time or keeping a child off school without authorisation from the Headteacher), a fixed penalty notice will be issued to the parents/carers of the child(ren).

St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School agrees that there is a correlation between situations where parents take pupils out of school without authorisation and underperformance of pupils.

All requests for authorisation of absences will require parents to make a personal appointment with the school Headteacher, Mrs Thorpe (or her Deputy, Mr Campbell in her absence), in order to ascertain the reason for the request; and to see if it will be approved. Please call in, ring or email the office for an appointment.

There are very few circumstances where Headteachers have the discretion to approve a holiday request. Pupils already have 14 weeks' holidays per year. Two weeks of missing National Curriculum taught sessions, for example, can be very damaging to a child's progress – and also their self-esteem, if they see other pupils having made rapid progress, whilst they were not in school.

Where children have had unauthorised absences, causing a gap in learning – for example, missing a week of taught Mathematics – the situation will be assessed by teachers and senior leaders. In such a case, the child will be required to make up for all missed work during free time, in order to ensure that there are no gaps to their learning, hindering their attainment and progress.

This strategy has been approved by our full Governing Body.



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