

St Thomas' CofE Academy



Dear Parents,

As we come to the end of our second week back after Christmas, it has been wonderful to see the school back into its usual routines.

Despite a disrupted start to the term due to the snowy weather, the children have settled quickly and approached their learning with enthusiasm and resilience. Thank you to our families for your continued support and flexibility – it has made a real difference.

We are now looking forward to the weeks ahead with confidence and excitement.

Have a lovely weekend,

Mrs Pierpoint

Friday 16th January 2026

‘Learning for life with Jesus’

Dates for your diary:

Mon 5 th Jan	School opens for Staff and Children - Spring term
Fri 9 th Jan	Sip and support drop in 9:30am
Fri 9 th Jan	Year 5 MHST workshop
Mon 12 th Jan	Year 6 Tween safety workshops begin
Wed 14 th Jan	My Bnk workshops - KS2
Wed 14 th Jan	Young voices - Choir
Wed 14 th Jan	STEM enrichment day at The Kings - Year 5
Thurs 15 th Jan	Year 5 Author visit
Fri 16 th Jan	Year 2 topic launch day
Wed 21 st Jan	My Bnk workshops - KS2
Monday 26th Jan	Year 3 Stanley Head parents information evening 6pm
Tues 27 th Jan	Year 5/6 Netball at Keele
Tues 27 th Jan	Year 4 Viking workshop
Wed 28 th Jan	My Bnk workshops - KS2
Fri 30th Jan	Year 1 topic launch day
Wed 4 th Feb	Children's mental health workshops
Thurs 5 th Feb	Yr 5 Safe and sound workshop (Newcastle Fire Station)
Fri 6 th Feb	Eco Council outside project begins with Harper Adams
Mon 9 th Feb	Year 6 Bikeability all week
Tues 10 th Feb	Library to visit EYFS and KS1 in school
Wednesday 11 th Feb	Year 3 and 4 visit to the Library
Thurs 12 th Feb	Year 5 and 6 visit to the library
Fri 13 th Feb	School closes for half term
Half term 16th Feb - 20th Feb	
Mon 23 rd Feb	School closed for INSET day
Thurs 26 th Feb	Careers Fair at the King's Y6 to attend
Thurs 26 th Feb	EYFS Celebrating Chinese New Year
Tues 3 rd March	Netball at Keele Y5/6
Fri 13 th March	Year 4 Bikeability
Mon 16 th March - Tuesday 17 th March	Year 3 residential to Stanley Head
Wed 18 th March	School council visit to Parliament
Fri 20 th March	School closed for INSET day
Tues 24 th March	Dance show at The Victoria Hall

SHINE workshops

We would warmly like to invite parents and carers into school to learn alongside your child. Following the success of our SHINES we would like to launch our Spring term SHINE workshops - all of our Spring terms events will have a Geography/Sustainability Focus

Please come into school for a fun filled and creative afternoon, where you can work alongside your child and learn new skills. This is also an opportunity to look at the work of our Eco Council.

All of these sessions will start at 2:00pm and finish at 3:15pm. All sessions will be held in school.

Dates:

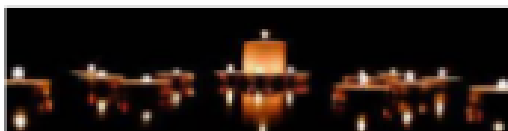
Monday 19 th January	Year 5
Monday 26 th January	Year 2
Monday 2 nd February	Year 1
Monday 9 th February	Year 4
Tuesday 24 th February	Nursery
Monday 2 nd March	Reception
Monday 9 th March	Year 3
Monday 16 th March	Year 6

Inspire sessions at St Thomas' Church.

2:00pm - 3:00pm at St Thomas' Church

Dates:

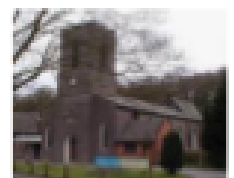
Tuesday 4 th November	Year 3
Tuesday 25 th November	Year 5
Tuesday 27 th January	Year 6
Tuesday 3 rd March	Year 4
Tuesday 28 th April	Year 2
Tuesday 23 rd June	Year 1
Tuesday 7 th July	Nursery & Reception together in school



We are really delighted to be continuing to work alongside Reverend Baker from St Thomas' church. We want to support children in their spiritual development and continue *'Learning for Life with Jesus.'*

Following the great success of our Inspire workshops last year, each class will be spending an afternoon at St Thomas' to deepen their spiritual understanding and engage in fun craft-based activities around scripture lead by Reverend Baker and their class teacher.

We would love parents/ carers/ grandparents to join us for our Inspire workshop. Please come and work alongside us as we follow Jesus' path.



'Learning for life with Jesus'

Friday worship & coffee



morning



Every Friday morning at 9am we have a worship in school led by Reverend Iain or Tom from St Thomas' Church. We warmly invite all parents/grandparents/ carers/ parish members to join us every week.

Each week a different class or school group will also be joining the coffee morning to show you some of their learning and share things they are proud of.

Everyone is welcome to every worship and coffee morning - we hope to see everyone soon.

Dates: Spring 1

Friday 9 th Jan	Year 4
Friday 16 th Jan	Year 3
Friday 23 rd Jan	Nursery
Friday 30 th Jan	Reception
Friday 6 th Feb	Year 5
Friday 13 th Feb	SEND/MHST

Dates: Spring 2

Friday 27 th Feb	Year 6
Friday 6 th Mar	Year 2
Friday 13 th Mar	Year 1
<u>Friday 20th Mar</u>	<u>INSET DAY - SCHOOL CLOSED</u>
Friday 27 th Mar	No coffee morning today

Term dates 2025/2026

Autumn Term 2025

INSET DAYS	Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd September 2025
Autumn Term One	Wednesday 3 rd September – Friday 24 th October 2025
Half Term	Monday 27th October 2025– Friday 31st October 2025
Autumn Term Two	Monday 4 th November 2025 – Friday 19 th December 2025
INSET DAY	Friday 14th November 2025
Holiday	Monday 22 nd December 2025 – Friday 2 nd January 2026

Spring Term 2026

Spring Term One	Monday 5 th January 2026 – Friday 13 th February 2026
Half Term	Monday 16th February – Friday 20th February 2026
INSET	Monday 23rd February 2026
Spring Term Two	Monday 23 rd February 2026 – Friday 27 th March 2026
INSET	Friday 20th March 2026
Holiday	Monday 30 th March 2026 – Friday 10 th April 2026

Term dates 2025/2026

Summer Term 2026

Summer term one Monday 13th April 2026 – Friday 22nd May 2026

May Day **Monday 4th May 2026**

Half Term **Monday 25th May 2026 – Friday 29th May 2026**

Summer term two Monday 1st June 2026 – Friday 17th July 2026

INSET DAY ***Monday 20th July 2026 (Twilights)***

Summer Holiday **Tuesday 21st July 2026 – Monday 31st August 2026**

(2026/2027 academic year commences on Tuesday 1st September 2026)

Sip and Support drop ins

St Thomas' offer drop in sessions in school where parents and carers can speak to our Education Mental Health Practitioner about any concerns or questions they have. This may include questions around diet, sleep, routines, mental health and support services available.

When:

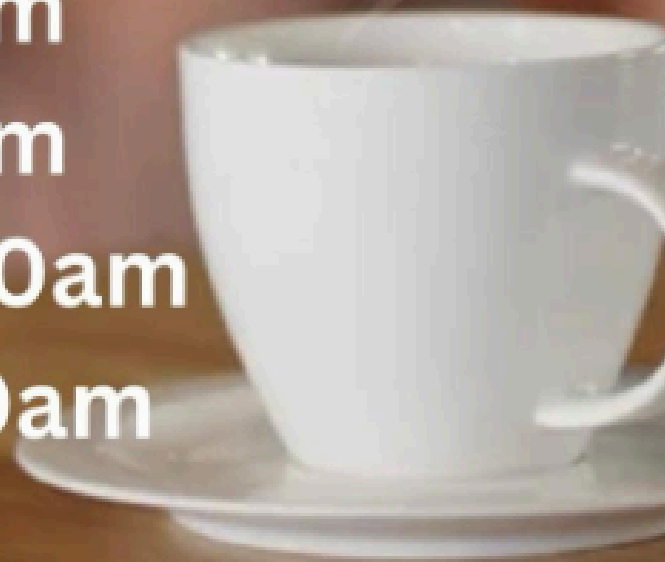
Fri 9th Jan 09:30am

Fri 6th Feb 09:30am

Fri 6th March 09:30am

Fri 17th April 09:30am

Staff from MHST will be available in the Haven for a chat during the coffee morning on the above dates. Everyone welcome!





A HUGE well done to our 5/6 football team you were absolutely amazing representing St Thomas' on Monday. Nothing but brilliant teamwork! We're so proud of you all.
A fantastic result

ABOUT ME

I am a father, husband, author, football fan and a reader. In fact, it was reading about football that changed my life.



I wasn't keen on reading when I was young. My mum was worried about me because I was struggling at school. She encouraged me to read about football in newspapers, magazines and books. Gradually I came to love books.

And, from that point, my life changed. I wanted to know *everything* about books. I went to night school to do A levels when I was 21. Then I did a degree in European Literature when I was 24. It was brilliant!

After I had graduated, I went to work in a bookshop, then a library, then I managed book festivals. All that time I was writing: stories, poems, diaries



Inspiring young minds!

This week Y5 and 6 took part in a live session with Tom Palmer, an author of over sixty children's books. 16 books for Barrington Stoke including 6 award-winning historical fiction titles and three Puffin football series including Football Academy and Foul Play. He is inspiring us all to enjoy books and maybe one day become a bestselling author too!

THANK YOU



A huge thank you to Matthew, community champion from Tesco in Kidsgrove for supplying apples to school today for all children!

LITTLE EXPLORERS



Year 2 have had a brilliant day today for their Explorers launch day! We have learned all about Ibn Battuta today and followed in his footsteps on an adventure around the world, from Morocco to Egypt, Mecca, India and finally, China. They enjoyed it so much and learned a lot too!

Stronger Starts

Our recent application to the Tesco Stronger Starts programme has been successful and our project has been selected to go forward for the customer vote in local Tesco stores.

Voting will take place in store from the first week of October 2025 until mid-January 2026. If our project receives the most votes in the region, we could be awarded up to £1,500 in funding! Second place could receive up to £1,000 and third place £500 – all of which would make a huge difference to our school and pupils.

How you can help:

We would love your support in spreading the word and encouraging friends and family to vote for our project when shopping at any of the following Tesco stores:

- Sandyford Express – ST6 5EL
- Kidsgrove Superstore – ST7 1DX
- Audley Express – ST7 8EE
- Fegg Hayes Express – ST6 6SH

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about DIGITAL DEVICES & WELLBEING

Children aged 7 to 14 now spend roughly 3 to 5 hours a day on phones, tablets, consoles, and computers. That much screen time has parents and educators worried – not just about the hours logged, but about online safety and the knock-on effects on mental health. This guide brings together practical, expert-backed strategies so adults can nurture healthier digital habits and help young people thrive both on and offline.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SLEEP DISRUPTION

Excessive screen time, especially before bed, can interfere with melatonin production and delay sleep onset. Children may struggle to concentrate or regulate emotions due to poor sleep hygiene linked to later-night device use.

ONLINE PEER PRESSURE

Social media platforms expose children to unrealistic standards and peer validation loops. Likes, comments, and follower counts can influence self-worth and lead to anxiety or risky behavior to gain approval.

CYBERBULLYING EXPOSURE

Children may encounter bullying through messaging apps, games, or social media. This can be persistent and anonymous, making it harder to detect. Victims often feel isolated and reluctant to report incidents.

REDUCED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Time spent on screens often replaces outdoor play and physical activity. This sedentary lifestyle can contribute to obesity, poor posture, and reduced cardiovascular health.

EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

Fast-paced digital content can overstimulate young brains. Children may become irritable, impatient, or struggle with boredom and emotional control when not engaged with screens.

PRIVACY AND SAFETY RISKS

Children may unknowingly share personal information or interact with strangers online. Without guidance, they may not understand the long-term consequences of digital footprints or unsafe online behavior.

Advice for Parents & Educators

SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Establish screen-time limits and device-free zones, e.g. classrooms and dinner tables. Use parental controls and co-create a digital use agreement with children to encourage accountability. Try a visual schedule or timer app can help children understand and stick to limits.



ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE

Create a safe space for children to talk about their online experiences. Ask open-ended questions like, "What did you enjoy online today?" to build trust and openness. Try setting aside 10 minutes each day for a digital check-in where children can share what they've seen or done online.



MODEL HEALTHY HABITS

Children mirror adult behavior. Demonstrate balanced device use, take regular screen breaks, and prioritize face-to-face interactions to reinforce positive behaviors. Making a habit of putting your phone away during meals and conversations can show that real-life interactions come first.



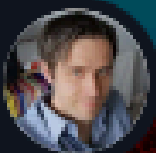
PROMOTE DIGITAL LITERACY

Teach children how to evaluate online content, recognize misinformation, and understand privacy settings. Empower them to think critically and act responsibly in digital spaces. You could use real-life examples from the news or social media to help children practice spotting fake information.



Meet Our Expert

Adam Gilbert is Associate Vice Principal for Personal Development of Parkstone Grammar School and works as a secondment, one day a week for Minds Ahead, which works with schools on improving their mental health provision.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College



On 27th January we mark Holocaust Memorial Day. Each year across the UK, thousands of people come together to learn more about the past and take action to create a safer future. We know they learn more, empathise more and do more



Article 2 - The Convention applies to every child without discrimination

Article 19 - Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
Article 37- No child should be tortured, sentenced to death, imprisoned unfairly or treated in a cruel or inhuman way

Article 38- No child under 15 should join the army and children should be protected in war





Loving God,
Thank you for a new year and a fresh start.
As we begin this new term, help us to learn
with curiosity,
to treat one another with kindness,
and to grow in confidence and hope each
day.
Bless our school, our families, and all we
do.
Amen.

