

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this message finds you well. Please find below some important updates and information for the coming months.

## **New School Timings from September 2026**

To ensure we align with the Department for Education's compulsory school hours, we will be adjusting our school day timings **from the start of the new academic year in September 2026**. The new timings will be as follows: Compulsory times for children will be 8.45am – 3.15pm which equates to 6 hours 30 minutes a day, or 32.5 hours per week.

- **Gate opens:** 8:35 a.m.
- **Gate closes and school day begins:** 8:45 a.m.
- **School ends:** 3:15 p.m.

## **Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) Programme Vouchers**

Eligible families will have received vouchers for the Holiday Activity & Food Programme. These vouchers can be used to book fun activities and enjoy free, healthy food during the Easter Holidays.

If you experience any technical difficulties activating your voucher or booking activities, Mrs Taylor is happy to assist. Please visit the school office with your device, and she will support you.

Our nearest camps include Teamtheme at Aylesham and Primary Sports Giants at St Anselm's, with several other options available in the Canterbury area.

## **Absence Requests: What We Approve and What We Don't**

### **Approved Absences (Exceptional Circumstances):**

We approve absence requests only for serious, unavoidable situations, such as:

- Death of a close family member (funeral and short travel time)
- Visiting a seriously ill relative
- Major family trauma or crisis
- Serious illness or recovery needs of the child or parent, including medical or mental health professional recommendations
- Time needed for rehabilitation after trauma or medical issues
- Attending major religious ceremonies or festivals (usually limited to the event day(s) and necessary travel)
- Attending a parent's wedding (only if it must happen during term time; considered case-by-case)

### **Not Approved Absences (Not Exceptional):**

Requests for absences that are based on convenience or preference are not considered exceptional and are declined, including:

- Holidays or travel for leisure, even if claimed as "educational"
- Cheaper flights or better weather
- Visiting family abroad unless there is a serious illness or death involved
- Wanting a different experience for the child
- Attendance at destination weddings
- A child's birthday

- Special or once-in-a-lifetime events that can reasonably occur outside term time

### **Why We Decline These:**

Government guidance defines "exceptional circumstances" as serious, unavoidable events outside normal life. Cost, convenience, or personal choice do not meet this threshold. Each request is judged individually, but if the event can reasonably happen outside school term, it will not be authorised. The system isn't judging whether something is valuable, meaningful or educational. It's only judging whether it is **unavoidable and exceptional**.

## **OPAL Updates**

We are delighted to announce that, thanks to a very generous donation from a parent, we have been able to buy the sand in our sandpit. The children are sure to enjoy this wonderful new addition, and we are deeply grateful for the support. Funds raised during today's event will be dedicated to purchasing more OPAL resources. We are now moving on to the larger loose parts for OPAL so that our children can start building dens and having access to wheeled play. We would love the following donations: **pallets, slides, buggies, scooters, skateboards, pvc pipes, guttering, cable reels, beach spades and buckets, rakes, brooms, tarpaulin, wheelbarrows, tyres and wheels, ropes, nets and plastic crates!**

## **Parent Consultations**

Thank you to all parents and carers who attended the recent consultations with your child's class teacher(s). We hope you found the meetings informative and helpful. *Please allow some time for teachers and Mrs Anderson to follow up on any actions discussed.*

## **Upcoming Parent Events**

You are warmly invited to the Spring Music Concert on Tuesday, 24th March at 6pm, where you can come along and be entertained by our children's musical talent. Following this, our parent celebration assembly will take place on Friday, 27th March, followed by a workshop on 'the importance of play' led by Mrs Anderson and Mrs Duhig.

You are also welcome to visit your child's classroom and view their books during the drop-in session on Wednesday, 1st April. Lastly, parents are invited to join us for the Easter service at the church on Thursday, 2nd April at 2pm. This will be Rev T's final school event with us before he moves on to his new role.

## **PTA News**

A big thank you to Ana Gilbert for her incredible dedication, time, and fundraising efforts as chair of the PTA for the last two years.

We are delighted to welcome our new co-chairs, Mina Brightling and Clare Scott.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

**Jo Duhig**  
**Headteacher**



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