

11 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back

I would like to extend a very warm welcome back to all our pupils and families as we begin another academic year at St Thomas More.

I hope that you all enjoyed a safe, healthy and happy summer holiday and, importantly, that you were able to enjoy some good quality time together as a family.

It has been wonderful to welcome our pupils back to school and I am delighted with the start they have made. Our Year 7 pupils in particular have settled exceptionally well into life at St Thomas More, and I hope they are already beginning to feel very much part of our school family.

More widely, our pupils have been exemplary. Standards of uniform have been extremely good and pupils have responded very positively to the changes regarding mobile phones and other personal communication and smart technology in schools.

As you will know from the information sent to parents and carers at the start of this academic year, pupils' mobile phones and other similar devices must be switched off before they enter the school premises, kept securely inside their school bag throughout the school day, and only switched back on once they have left the school premises at the end of the day.

I have been extremely pleased with the mature and responsible way in which pupils have responded to these changes and how quickly they have adapted. Thank you to parents and carers for your support with this too. Long may this excellent start continue.

If parents, carers or pupils require any further clarification regarding the school's expectations around mobile phones and other personal technology, full information can be found on the school website.

Checking your child's information on Arbor

Before the summer, we wrote to families about our annual data-checking process, which is now completed through the **Arbor Parent App**.

Please could I ask all parents and carers to log in and carefully check that the information we hold for you and your child or children is complete and accurate.

In particular, please check:

- your child's date of birth;
- home address;
- telephone numbers and email addresses;
- additional emergency contact details;
- medical information;

- allergies;
- religion; and
- ethnicity

It is particularly important that we hold accurate and up-to-date medical and allergy information so that we can keep pupils safe and provide the appropriate support where required.

You can notify us of any required changes through the Arbor Parent App. Guidance on viewing and updating your child's information can be found here:

[Viewing and Updating Information on the Arbor Parent App/Portal](#)

Free School Meals – important changes from September 2026

I also wrote to parents before the summer regarding the national changes to Free School Meals from September 2026.

As the new system has been introduced nationally, we have become aware of some instances where families who previously received Free School Meals may not have had their entitlement carried forward into this academic year as expected. I would therefore strongly encourage families who believe their child is entitled to Free School Meals to **check their current entitlement with Derbyshire County Council**.

The new arrangements mean that families receiving Universal Credit fall into two categories:

Targeted Free School Meals – families receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less may qualify. Eligible pupils receive a free school meal and their school may also receive additional Pupil Premium funding to provide further educational support and opportunities.

Expanded Free School Meals – children in other households receiving Universal Credit may now be entitled to a free school meal regardless of household earnings. This entitlement does not, however, generate additional Pupil Premium funding for the school.

If you receive Universal Credit, I would strongly encourage you to apply even if you are unsure whether your child qualifies, or if your child previously received Free School Meals and you believe that entitlement should have continued.

Applications and further information are available directly from Derbyshire County Council:

[Apply for Free School Meals – Derbyshire County Council](#)

Ensuring that eligible families apply is important not only because it provides pupils with a free school meal, but, where a pupil qualifies for Targeted Free School Meals, it can also provide additional funding to the school which we can use to support their education.

Confirmation Programme at St Anne's Parish

Finally, I am pleased to share information from St Anne's Parish in Buxton, who are planning to run a Confirmation programme during this academic year.

Preparation will begin with an eight-session Alpha Youth course and is open to Catholics in Year 8 and above.

All young people who may be interested, together with their parents and carers, are warmly invited to a 'Come and See' information meeting:

Thursday 1 October 2026 at 7.00pm

St Anne's Community Centre, Hardwick Square, Buxton

For further information, please contact:

stanneschildren@outlook.com

Thank you

Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the school and of your children. We have had an extremely positive start to the new academic year and I am very grateful for the part that our parents and carers play in supporting the high standards and expectations we have for all our pupils.

I look forward to another successful year for our school community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Redfern', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr D Redfern
Headteacher