St. Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School

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9 October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to inform you of an important health, safety, and safeguarding restriction regarding popular 'squishy' sensory toys (such as Squishy Dumplings and NeeDoh) across our schools, which will take effect for the upcoming term.

Due to significant risk factors and recent official safety warnings, these items pose clear health hazards to our pupils:

Hazardous Contents: Damaged toys have been observed leaking liquid contents, with pupils rubbing the substance onto their faces and desks or tasting it.

Counterfeit Products & Chemical Risks: Trading Standards and the BBC have issued warnings regarding widespread counterfeit versions that fail UK safety standards. Tests on illicit stock have identified high levels of **benzene**, a known **carcinogen**, as well as severe irritants to the skin, eyes, and airways.

Substance	Hazard	Comment
Benzene (benzol); **Methylbenzene** (toluene)		DANGER: (Highly) flammable liquid & vapour; may be fatal if swallowed and enters airways; causes skin irritation. **Benzene**: causes serious eye irritation; may cause genetic defects and cancer; causes damage to organs through prolonged/repeated exposure. **NOT RECOMMENDED** for school use. For a 15-minute exposure, concentration of benzene in the atmosphere should not exceed 9.75 mg m^{-3}. **Methylbenzene:** may cause drowsiness or dizziness; suspected of damaging the unborn child; may cause damage to organs through prolonged or repeated exposure.

Lack of Verification: Because these items are brought into school loose without original packaging, our staff cannot verify whether a pupil's toy is a legitimate, safe brand or a toxic counterfeit (which often carries a strong chemical odour).

Reference links:

- BBC News Report: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cg533nljr31o
- https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/news/trading-standards-warning-over-squishy-toys

To safeguard our pupils' health and fulfil our duty of care, these items are not permitted on school grounds. Please ensure these toys remain at home.

SEN/EHCP Support:

Should your child require sensory resources as part of an agreed support plan or EHCP, appropriate, verified, and safe alternatives must be arranged directly through our SEN/Inclusion team.

Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining a safe environment for our pupils.

Kind regards,

L Chabvuka

Mrs Chabvuka
Headteacher

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