



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

April 2020

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Public Health – Coronavirus – LETTER 4 (OF 4)

I very much hope that this letter finds you and your families safe and well. I appreciate that this may have been a very unsettling time for you all with a number of additional pressures to try and factor into your daily lives. At school we have very much appreciated the support we have received.

I know a number of you are having to maintain work and to those of you very much working on the front line may I add to the growing applause and appreciation that we have seen across the UK.

I hope that you have seen the recent letter from Miss Armes about supporting learning at home as well as the correspondence from Mr Ward about online learning. If you are aware of any families who are not connected to the internet, please ask them to telephone the Main Office.

The purpose of this letter is to stay in touch and to give you some of the 'headlines' that relate to our continued reaction to this National Emergency.

Additional Senior Staff Responsibilities

In addition to their usual responsibilities, the senior colleagues below are co-ordinating our response to the following:

- Free School Meals and vouchers – Mr Wheeler, Deputy Headteacher
- Pupil Support – Miss Armes, Assistant Headteacher
- Online learning – Mr Ward, Assistant Headteacher
- Awarding of Examination Grades – Mr Cann Assistant Headteacher (Head of Sixth Form) and Mr Ward Assistant Headteacher
- School Trip Refunds – Mr Mugliston, Business Manager and the Finance Office
- Eventual School Re-Opening – Mr Hurst

Current School Opening Hours

The school is partially open from 8.30am to 3.45pm. We have been able to provide child care for a small number of children and this is staffed by a small team working on a three weekly rota. There is at least one senior member of staff on site during this time.

The School Office is open from 8.30am until 1.00pm. It is possible to leave a telephone message. General enquiries can be directed using the usual inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk

Online Learning

In addition to our own response of providing work via the Cloud, there are now two further initiatives to support learning at home:

- (1) The 'Oak National Academy' is an online classroom and resource hub with 180 video lessons from Reception up to Year 10. This can be accessed by <https://thenationalacademy/>
- (2) BBC Bitesize has created resources using celebrities and teachers and this can be accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

I expect our own teachers will also refer to these resources as they become more familiar with them. This would help ensure that there is an attempt to ensure some progression in the learning.



Additional Help with Technology and Remote Education

A national announcement was made about laptops and tablets to support what the Government has termed the 'most disadvantaged young people.' When we receive more information about this, we will do our best to implement this helpful initiative.

Guidance for Parents and Carers on supporting their children's education

The overall Government guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Suffolk County Council Support

The Suffolk Parent Carer Network (SPCN) are also supporting parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-25 with additional needs and/or disabilities in Suffolk. I understand that they have online resources, peer to peer support and family support boxes. They can be emailed at admin@spcn.org.uk

Additional sources of advice and support

A number of useful organisations are included in a document entitled 'mental health resources' which we have included in the Parents' Section of the website.

School Trip Refunds

Our Finance Office are working very hard on this extraordinary task. Each transaction will need careful checking and we have been in contact with our auditors on how we best manage this. In terms of the school account we have received some funds back and for some trips it looks possible that we may not get the money back at all. Irrespective of this we are working on refunds for all cancelled trips except those (such as Duke of Edinburgh) where the deposit can be held over to the next trip. So, this matter is very much in hand and I hope that a further update can be issued in due course.

Awarding of GCSE and A Level Grades

Again, this very important task is in hand. Fortunately, we have a consistent track record in external examinations and know the progress that pupils make between March and June of each academic year. It is important that we all approach this task with as much fairness and integrity as possible and therefore I politely request that parents do not canvass teachers about this task.

Future School Re-Opening

I'm afraid this item is me being optimistic. I am hopeful that we will get more than one evening's notice for this task! Although the Government has announced their national considerations, I will also have a number of local considerations. This would include transport, the availability of staff and our implementation of the social distancing measures current at the time. The best guide is the experience of other countries and I speculate as to whether there will be some form of partial opening or combination of school and home learning. We will also need to work with the teachers to re-organise the curriculum provision. As for the timing of any of this, this will be down to future Government announcements.

I hope this update is useful and is as much about keeping in touch with you. As with all aspects of the management of this National Emergency there are often more questions than answers. However, the most important thing we can all do is to stay safe. These messages have been very clearly reinforced with a focus on staying at home and washing hands more often.

So, on that note, stay safe and please accept my best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher