



# THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

a DfE-designated Academy

Saxtead Road, Framlingham, Suffolk, IP13 9HE  
Telephone : 01728 723493 Fax : 01728 621098

Headteacher : P J Hurst, BA, MA, MBA, NPQH



Dear Parents

January 2018

## Home to School Transport Consultation

Following our two recent letters on the consultation launched by Suffolk County Council we write further about the options available and the school's thoughts on the options.

While the school is submitting a formal response, it is crucial that as many people have their say as possible. From our understanding of the current policies we would highlight the following points:

- The policy has such an urban bias that the change affects the whole principle of a rural comprehensive education. The council's own report highlights that rural communities will be "adversely affected".
- There seems to be no joined up thinking with regard to the effect on school provision and admissions.
- The policy will also unfairly impact on those who have no option other than to use the county council bus.
- In the case of Wickham Market where Farlingaye maybe the closest school, there could also be the effect of splitting communities and families. In years when Farlingaye is full, the Council would have to provide buses to Thomas Mills High School. Given that both schools are outstanding and often oversubscribed this would likely result in two buses going in opposite directions at considerable extra expense to local taxpayers. It is unclear what would happen if both schools were full.

The consultation will run until Wednesday 28 February 2018. Two changes which may directly affect your family if the proposals go ahead are:

1. **Free travel for 11-16 year olds would no longer be provided, where a student is not attending their nearest school.** (you can check this on [www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel) )
2. **Subsidised travel for 16-18 year olds would no longer be provided.**

Suffolk County Council is hoping to save money by making these changes from September 2019. The aim of the consultation is to seek views from the public on the three options listed below:

**Option 1:** Change the policy so that children only get free transport to their nearest school, rather than to their catchment school, which is the current policy. This would mean that children who are currently receiving free transport to a school that is not their nearest would no longer qualify for free transport. Parents would be faced with the choice of organising their own transport or moving their child to a different school, mid-way through their education.

**Option 2:** Change the policy in exactly the same way as Option 1, but on a year by year basis. This would mean that children currently receiving free transport to a school which is not their nearest would continue to qualify for free transport until they leave that school. However, children joining a new school would only receive free transport if that school was their nearest. Siblings would not qualify for free transport to a school which was not their nearest. Suffolk County Council has estimated that this option would cost an additional £8.8 million.

**Option 3:** Make no changes to the school travel policy but make savings from other services provided by Suffolk County Council.

One of these options will happen; there is no fourth option.

Please also note that there are no options for the post 16 consultation where the only option is to withdraw subsidised transport.

If Option 1 or 2 were to be implemented, it will affect all students attending Thomas Mills High School in September 2019. From the council's projections around 100 students could be affected by the main school changes (12% of the main school roll). The council has not commissioned research into the number of Sixth Form students affected. A reduction in pupil numbers would affect our budget and therefore significantly influence many aspects that make a Thomas Mills High School education so effective for so many young people.

**The only way to ensure that all children in our catchment area continue to receive free transport to Thomas Mills High School and to sustain the school going forward is to strongly oppose Options 1 and 2 and to strongly support Option 3.**

I therefore urge you to please complete Suffolk County Council's Questionnaire, via:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5to16HtoS>

There is also a similar questionnaire seeking views on removing all subsidies for sixth form bus transport. This form is available via: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/post16HtoS>

More information on the consultation can be found on Suffolk County Council's website:  
[www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel).

**Even if you have already contacted the school, Suffolk County Council or written to your Councillor, please complete Suffolk County Council's Questionnaire to make sure your views are included in the official consultation report.**

Many thanks for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



P Hurst  
Headteacher



G Christie  
Chair of Governors