



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Public Health – Coronavirus – LETTER 6 (OF 6)

This letter focuses on our planning for a possible partial re-opening next month as well as changes to our current provision. As ever, much of this is dependent on Government announcements as well as any local assessments. The issues around the risk management as well as the curriculum (including staffing) whilst considerable, are workable, with time and thought. We are currently consulting with the staff about the way forward.

Having quickly had to establish new ways of working from the 23rd March, many families and staff have settled into new routines and so another change, especially in the context of so much national uncertainty, is unsettling.

Parental Responses

Thank you so much for the feedback following my last letter to you. The majority of respondents were in favour of some form of return providing a number of safe measures could be introduced. The reasons were not just educational but also linked to mental health and wellbeing. Nevertheless, there were some helpful observations about our current provision as well as concerns about Government announcements and the control of the virus.

The quotes from responses below give you a flavour of some of the views received:

“My daughter is in year 12, she enjoys school and works hard. During lockdown she has really missed the structure of going into school, lessons, friends and teachers.”

“I think attending school can be made safe, as pupils in these years are responsible enough to co-operate with restrictions, and Year 12 classes are naturally smaller.”

“Having interaction from the teacher explaining the text and points the author is trying to make would be most welcome. My daughter is mature enough to understand the social distancing and that school will not quite be the same.”

“Face to Face Support - I hope that this will not be compulsory. I feel that the teaching staff have done a brilliant job in both setting work and supporting. I personally feel that I would not want my children to come into school just for a quick chat with each of their teachers.”

“I am worried about how much learning he has missed and would be grateful for any catching up opportunities available.”

“It will also benefit people’s mental health to see other people even if it’s just a few students and teachers.”

“Social distancing will not be viable within the school environment.”

“Can I take this opportunity to thank the school for providing home learning. I appreciate what a huge task this must be and applaud the efforts of the staff in adapting so quickly in these unprecedented times.”

“I am aware of other high schools who are providing lessons virtually and it seems to work well. This is also wide-spread on the continent.”



The Way Forward – School Opening – Years 10 and Years 12

We do not think it is possible to open the school on the 1st June. As I mentioned earlier, we need time to undertake the Risk Management process to ensure a safe school environment, the logistics around staffing and timetable, as well as to arrange the curriculum (both in school and at home).

We are currently exploring the following plan:

- From Monday 8th June – A partial timetable (Periods 1 to 4) for Year 12 – with each day focussed on two option blocks.
- From Monday 15th June – A partial timetable (Periods 1 to 4) for Year 10. The curriculum could include pastoral support, English, Mathematics, option subjects, Science, Languages and an opportunity for exercise.

As you will see this model would allow students (and staff) to leave at lunchtime with the possibility of supervised study for those that might need it in the afternoon. We would supervise pupils who are using school transport.

We will, of course, need to share with you the strategies for minimising risks and these are building on the summary I provided for you in my last letter. As I understand it, this provision will be voluntary so each family can make their own assessment. School will also need to undertake an assessment – probably through a form – to ascertain that it is safe for each individual to be in school.

The Way Forward – Remote Learning

Online work would continue to be set for each year group. However, we are keen to explore some face to face opportunities through Microsoft Teams for both pastoral support as well as lessons. Given that safeguarding must be the priority at all times, any filming could take place in school with staff socially distancing. We envisage creating a new timetable.

Outline Timescales

- 28th May – Government decision about re-opening of schools from 1st June
- WB 1st June – Update on our plans
- WB 8th June – Possible partial return for Year 12
- WB 15th June – Possible partial return for Year 10

Risk Management

This clearly underpins all plans. Rather than drip feed all the emerging thoughts and actions, I will prefer to share a comprehensive plan. This will clearly include actions around smaller class sizes, spacing, cleaning, hand sanitisers, uniform (or probably not!) and many other aspects. There will also probably be other published guidance too. We will also try and assess local information such as from the Office for National Statistics and Public Health England. We will probably provide some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Summary

In terms of the school calendar, next week is half-term. The school will continue to be open for the key workers and other priority groups and we will also be working on all aspects of school opening. If there are any unfolding developments that week I will write to you but otherwise I expect to be in touch from the 1st June.

Otherwise, as always, I very much trust that you are all safe and well.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher