



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Public Health – Coronavirus – LETTER 5 (OF 5)

As always, I hope that this letter finds you and your families safe and well. Following Government announcements on Sunday and Monday, I thought you would appreciate some further information which focuses on the possible opening of schools.

Although many general restrictions appear to have been lifted, there is no doubt that this remains a challenging period for us all. At this stage, we are considering all the implications about the possible re-opening of schools and no firm decisions have been made.

Guidance from the Department for Education

I thought it might be helpful to outline some of the key points from the latest guidance on Opening Schools from 1st June:

- The transmission rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased. The Government anticipates that more children can be welcomed back to schools.
- Secondary Schools are asked to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of Year 10 and Year 12 students who are due to take key exams next year, alongside the full-time provision they are offering to priority groups.
- Settings can initially reduce the number of young people in classrooms and put protective measures in place to reduce risks.
- There will not be a return to full timetables.
- Children and staff who have been classified as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. They are not expected to be in school.
- Children and staff who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable including those who are pregnant can attend their education setting.
- Staff and children should not attend if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household.
- Schools should work through the hierarchy of measures: avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms; frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices; regular cleaning of settings and minimising contact and mixing.
- A key protective measure is to have smaller class sizes. The basic principle is that they should be halved.
- Where settings can keep children in small groups 2 metres away from each other they should do so. Brief, transitory contact such as passing in the corridor is low risk.

Additional guidance about protective measures in education makes the following points:

- Through adherence to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased.
- Schools should ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it'.
- Schools should clean frequently touched surfaces using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools is not recommended.
- Planning considerations include: organising smaller class groups; refreshing the timetable; staggering assembly groups and break times.
- Secondary settings include subject specialist rotation of staff.
- Practical lessons can go ahead if equipment can be cleaned thoroughly.
- Contact tracing is being developed.



There is also guidance for parents which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

The School Response

I think we would all very much like a return to face to face provision but only where it is safe to do so and the risks are clearly minimised. Both the documents above mention that more detailed guidance is expected. At this stage there are probably more questions than answers.

It is clear that we are entering a new phase in the country's response to the National Emergency and I envisage that our education provision will develop as a result. This could include:

- (1) A full or partial return to the workplace for eligible teachers and support staff;
- (2) Possible expansion of our provision for priority groups with a different team of supervisors;
- (3) The creation of face to face provision for Year 10 and Year 12 mindful of the protective measures, together with some online learning;
- (4) Continued on-line learning for Years 7, 8 and 9 with some video-conferencing opportunities with teachers in school.

Particularly for point (3) there are many considerations. One is transport and the Government is preparing more detailed guidance. I understand that the County Council will re-organise transport with protective measures in mind and subject to demand.

We are particularly interested in the views of parents in Years 10 and 12 and the demand for school opening. We probably will not be able to provide an individual response but the views will contribute to our overall thinking and strategy. Please send any views to inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk

Coronavirus Testing

We should now be able to refer eligible staff and their families for testing should they display the symptoms of Coronavirus. I understand that families can self-refer for a test through the government portal. www.nhs.uk is a helpful website.

Additional Sources of Support Following the Letter from Miss Armes

We understand that the longer school closure continues, it is likely that greater and on-going support will be needed in terms of maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing. In addition to those resources already sign-posted in an earlier letter, and available to download from the school website, the NSPCC have recently published some excellent materials for parents and pupils, as well as The Anna Freud Society. Resources and advice can be found on their respective websites. In addition, please do not hesitate to make contact with us directly if you are in need of advice and support. Heads of Year and form tutors are in the process of sending messages to year groups and tutor groups via pupils' school email addresses and we would appreciate parental support in assisting your child to access this correspondence.

I anticipate that my next correspondence with you will provide more detail about the measures that we propose to follow. In the meantime, we will look carefully at all the evolving guidance as well as the emerging public debate so that we make an informed response to the new announcements.

I very much send my best wishes to you all at this time and finish with some words from Tyrese Gibson, "You will always grow through – what you go through."

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher