



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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

Saxtead Road, Framlingham,
Suffolk, IP13 9HE

Telephone : 01728 723493

Email: inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk

Website: www.thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk

Dear Parents

20th March 2020

IMPORTANT INFORMATION; PUBLIC HEALTH CORONAVIRUS – LETTER 3 (OF 3)

As you will know from the media, this is a rapidly changing situation for schools as well as the country.

Before going any further, I want to state how incredibly proud I am of the pupils and staff who have displayed so much resilience and optimism and support, in what are clearly unprecedented times.

Although we have managed to stay open, it was only a matter of time before the self-isolation would impact on staffing levels here. The Government messages around social distancing have also had a number of unintended consequences for normal school activities. However, on Wednesday 18th March, the Government announced a number of new measures intended to slow down the spread of the virus.

School Closure

The Government has announced that all schools will be shut from Friday 20th March 2020.

The exception to this is the children of key workers (including NHS staff, care workers, police, emergency services, delivery drivers and those in critical infrastructure roles) who need to be able to go to work. The other group of children include those who have a social worker and those with Education, Health and Care Plans.

We were asked yesterday by Passenger Transport to let them know the names of children, their departure location and destination who may require transport. If you think this applies to you please email inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk with the heading 'transport.' I am given to understand that it may be okay to go to your nearest school.

We will have some staff in on Monday and will react to the situation as best we can. Any children who do arrive will be directed to the Main Hall.

Home Working

This announcement means that the vast majority of staff and pupils will be expected to work from home. Separate information will be given but work will be set via the Cloud. It is planned that work will be set each week and teachers will aim to provide guidance through the drop box. There are a number of online platforms and this should support children's learning. Parents need to be aware that when staff are in school supervising for the new child care arrangements they will have to give the online work less attention. We will aim to balance this.

Public Examinations

The Government announced that they "will not go ahead with assessments or exams." They also said that "children will get the qualifications they need." The Government should clarify this today. However, we had already started the process of collecting predicted grades and will happily share these with the Awarding Authorities.

Should we need to, we could, at a much later date, share this information with pupils with an explanatory note for future employers.

Some pupils are concerned that results from Prep Exams will be used. I think this is unlikely. Historically in this school, the latest Progress Reports as well as coursework/ classwork marks are normally the best indicator for school



results in the Summer. Progress usually accelerates after the Prep Exams and before this latest development, I had been given some very positive feedback from the teachers.

School Re-opening

The Government said that the duration of school closure will be kept to a minimum. We will endeavour to communicate with you via the website, email, as well as a letter. Staff will obviously look at this in the weeks and months ahead.

Cancellation of Further Events

In view of the uncertainty above, I hope that you will understand why the following events are cancelled:

- Year 10 Work Experience in July
- German Exchange in September
- Battlefields Trip in October

When pupils return to school, the focus will be on lessons and ensuring that we quickly bridge the gap. Clubs, trips and visits will be re-introduced gradually and only in a period of more certainty.

Year 13 and Year 11 Leavers

It is likely that this School Closure will bring their education to an abrupt end. However, I wanted to place on record my thanks to them for all that they have achieved as well as their contribution to the wider life of the school. They have been tremendous. It has given us all so much pleasure seeing them develop into well rounded individuals. We all wish you well.

Although many Year 11s will continue their education with us, some will depart for different courses with other providers. Again, we wish you well.

Good News

I thought this might be appreciated. The first is that in April we have a new Business Manager and a new Estates Manager and so we are very much looking forward to welcoming Mark Mugliston and Lee Staff to the team. The School Closure probably offers an opportunity to make further improvements to the site.

Secondly, I recently had a meeting with an official from the Department for Education. They are pleased with our consistently high performance. I had been due to have further meetings about the implications of this. Clearly, this will be delayed until the foreseeable future.

Summary

In many ways it is with a very heavy heart that I have to write this letter. However, once again, I want to place on record my thanks to the manner in which staff and pupils have responded. I have seen Thomas Mills at its best. I am also incredibly grateful for the support of governors and parents in this challenging time.

When we meet again, and we will, our focus will continue to be about providing the best educational opportunities for all. I trust that I can count on your support in continuing to move this school forwards. We will be stronger. We will focus on what matters. We'll be even better.

In the meantime, stay safe, look after each other and stay calm and measured.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher

