



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

September 2020

Headteacher's introduction to Year 6 Parents interested in Year 7 places (September 2021)

Choosing a secondary school is probably one of the most important decisions you will make.

In other years, we normally have the opportunity to showcase a number of events *in school* and this supports the information you will find online and in the prospectus. Interest in our school has continued to be strong.

As I move into my ninth year at Thomas Mills, it continues to be a privilege to lead this great school which has a distinctive and supportive ethos and is high achieving.

The atmosphere at Thomas Mills is calm and purposeful with relationships built on respect. Working relationships between pupils and staff are a huge strength of the school. As a stand-alone academy, we are able to manage ourselves and allocate most of our budget to teaching and learning. Quality teachers and smaller than average class sizes make a big difference.

Towards the end of last year, the school was delighted to be awarded World Class Schools status. This accreditation captured our strong achievement culture as well as the wide range of personal development opportunities.

The Department for Education is pleased with our work and is keen to explore how the school can contribute to the wider improvement of the educational system. A visit a couple of years ago confirmed that we were outstanding and in the correspondence a pupil was quoted as saying "our teachers are pushy, and they want us to succeed."

Great teachers and staff

We are fully staffed with qualified and specialist teachers able to ensure progression from Year 7 to GCSE and Sixth Form. When I appoint teachers, I want to see enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge as well as an interest in the wider life of the school. In recent years we have recruited strong teachers who have forged positive working relationships with pupils and have blended well with the existing experienced team. Staff turnover is low.

The school continues to evolve, and we have very much focussed on progress for all. We are one of a handful of schools across the country that have sustained high attainment.

Broad and balanced curriculum

As a result of the good progress, pupils can start their GCSE options in Year Nine. This ensures more engagement in their learning, as well as a longer time for consolidating learning ahead of Year 11 exams.

Although there are the all-important core of subjects there is an impressive range of options. It is possible to study three sciences or a number of humanities, arts and technologies. We have had pupils study three languages and even three arts subjects. This allows pupils with a particular talent to thrive!

Our support, as well as challenge for pupils, is strong as they become more independent and confident learners. Social interaction in learning develops new connections and deeper understanding.

All this leads to excellent results. We are rightfully proud that we are considered to be one of the region's top performing schools. On a range of measures – whether it is progress, attainment in English and Mathematics or the English baccalaureate – we do very well.



An exceptional Sixth Form

We are very proud of our Sixth Form. We are big enough to offer a range of options but small enough to enable the individual to thrive and develop. There are a range of opportunities to lead and get involved.

With over 25 subjects on offer, we can really personalise learning. The individual matters. Our students progress to a range of exciting destinations including university and our numbers into Oxbridge are one of the highest in the region. Equally, they are also prepared for the world of work, further training or apprenticeships. Whatever they go onto do they generally leave us assured and ready to make their mark on the world.

Effective pastoral support and extra-curricular opportunities

Our ethos is enhanced through effective pastoral support. The Head of Year gets to know pupils and families, and relationships are strong. Where possible, the tutor remains until Year 11, and the Head of Year follows pupils through years 7-11.

There is an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities and the Good Schools Guide describes our clubs and trips as “absolutely amazing.” Pupils belong to one of six Houses and these are led by Sixth Form House Captains. They energise both pupils and staff in important events throughout the year such as our annual Charity Day in March or Sports Day for example.

I am keen that pupils are able to develop leadership skills. We have a thriving Duke of Edinburgh’s Award group (who are looking forward to expeditions in the future again!). We have a great track record of school productions which showcase the incredible talents of our students and staff across a range of areas but most notably music and drama.

Facilities

Our school buildings blend the old and the new within a nicely landscaped campus. We have had many new additions including a purpose built canteen and multi-use games area (MUGA). In recent years we have been able to refurbish areas and now have a state of the art music technology room and photography studio. We have also recently been able to refurbish one of our science labs as well as completely renew the oldest toilet facilities. We will continue to maintain our specialist facilities on an attractive site – the pupils soon find their way around as they explore the opportunities.

Next steps

To secure a place for September 2021 you will need to apply through the Local Authority (Suffolk County Council) by 31st October 2020.

If you have specific questions, don’t hesitate to contact the school. I am happy to speak to prospective parents on the telephone. However, we are hoping that you will get a very good flavour of the school through the additional information and resources we have created.

Our future priority is to ensure a first class quality all round education both inside and outside of the classroom. I can assure you that Thomas Mills is a very special and distinct school, proud of its past but also poised for a bright future.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher