



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

12th February 2021

Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 18 (of 18)

I trust that this letter finds you and your families, well, safe and warm. Although we had entered a period of stability with regards to our approach to lockdown, the recent inclement weather led to the decision to unfortunately close the school on Monday and Tuesday this week. However, I am pleased that the school is open again and the in-school provision is being provided.

The main purpose of this letter is to update you on the unfolding situation with regards to the pandemic and consideration for the way ahead.

Roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions and re-opening of schools

At the point of school closure, over a month ago, the wider context included:

- New variants of the virus and transmission rates
- Hospitals under pressure

The initial plan was to re-open schools after the February half-term, but you will be aware that the Government has pushed this back to the 8th March at the earliest. From looking at recent correspondence from the Department for Education or announcements from the Prime Minister, I can identify some key dates which should give us some indication about the way ahead in March:

- Week beginning 15th February – the Government “can begin to chart a way ahead” and “if data allows with the re-opening of schools on March 8th.”
- Monday 22nd February – the Prime Minister has stated that “I will be setting out as much as we can about the roadmap forward.”

At this point, I do not have any additional information about what the “roadmap” looks like. In line with everyone else I can look at the published data which shows that total cases and people in hospital has been declining whilst 1st dose vaccinations have been widely rolled out. I expect to be in touch after half term following any significant ministerial announcements and if additional information is received from the Department for Education.

Key considerations for re-opening schools may be around:

- Phased returns (or not) for year groups
- The balance between a full school return and impact on partial opening for other pupils not just academically but also socially
- The wider roll out of Lateral Flow Testing
- The identification of catch-up needs
- Consideration of vaccinations for the teaching workforce
- Consideration of any new control measures to limit the spread of the virus.



At this stage I do not see the value in consulting on any particular proposal until we know what the Government's thinking is and what scope we have as a school. We will endeavour to implement a safe and effective return to face to face education provision.

School Survey

We thought it would be useful to gather further feedback principally on remote learning and Mr Ward has created a survey which we would be grateful if you could spare a few moments to complete:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=bAZ96jw-P0uqQxizW8eYR5dHkxHfgDpNusuSHIbexjtUQ0VNVEUxNUZPWjBKTzdEWkJIQUMxMjQ0Wi4u>

Cat Action Trust - CAT77

One of our teachers has connections with a local pet charity. CAT77 are able to offer some assistance to families where there are some financial difficulties and so looking after pets can be challenging. This help includes free cat and dog food, free cat neutering, microchipping, worm, and flea treatment for all cats. For further information you are welcome to contact Georgina on 07907 122888.

Mills Mag and Sixth Form Developments

I want to bring to your attention an outstanding publication devised and produced by some of our Sixth Form Students – Mills Mag. You can find this, by clicking on the **Sixth Form** tab on the School Website. Although this magazine is written by students for students, I think the articles are of much wider interest and recommend this as a very good and engaging read. I would like to congratulate Madeleine Langdon-Morris, Bella Brinton, and the Mills Mag Team for not only a great magazine but the positive inspiration they have demonstrated by putting this together.

Our senior students are currently setting up a wellbeing forum for students in order to provide peer support especially during these challenging times. More details will be shared next half-term.

TMHS: BookSmart

Our Librarian Beth Vale has been regularly producing a Library Newsletter – TMHS:BookSmart. If you have not seen this, you can find current and past editions by clicking on the **Pupils** tab on the School Website and selecting *Thomas Mills Library, Wakelet Page*. The latest issue focusses on LGBT+ History Month. This month marks the abolition of Clause 28 of The Local Government Act of 1988 which banned schools from talking about LGBT+ issues and supporting pupils from that community. There are also many other resources in this section and again, I recommend this to you.

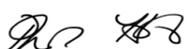
Summary

In line with my last letter, many 'unknowns' remain, although I very much hope that we are close to a new phase with regards to the pandemic so that Spring really is on the horizon. We do know that we are approaching the half-term. This week provides an opportunity to switch off and certainly a chance to go off-line. Pupils should not be completing homework during this week.

I would like to place on record my thanks to all the school community for their hard work and support this half-term. I know for parents there has been a lot to juggle including work whether at home or elsewhere, managing remote education as well as all the usual household demands.

Remote learning and the in-house provision for key workers and other groups commences on Monday 22nd February and I expect to be in touch that week. Until then, stay safe, warm, and well.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher