



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

15th September 2020

Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 3 (of 3)

As always, I trust this letter finds you all safe and well. The first two weeks of term have gone well. The national response to COVID-19 is still very much in the news with a rise in cases and concerns about the availability of testing. In school, staff and pupils have responded positively to new measures in place.

I thought it would be useful in this letter to re-iterate some of the key public health messages. My sources of information are the updates from the Department for Education, National Health Service and Suffolk County Council.

The School Office have asked if you could email attendance@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk about all absences before 8.55am. The same email address can also be used for NHS test notification information.

(1) If you or your child has coronavirus symptoms

The NHS currently says: “If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), get a test as soon as possible. Stay at home until you get the result.

Main symptoms

- **A high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back;
- **A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual);
- **A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

What to do if you have symptoms

1. Get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.
2. Stay at home and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must stay at home until you get your result.

You can use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if you are worried about your symptoms or you're not sure what to do.

The NHS 111 online coronavirus service link is <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

Call 111 if you cannot get help online.



(2) If you are self-isolating but do not have symptoms

Those sent home to self-isolate, having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, should only get tested if they develop symptoms themselves.

The Department for Education tell me that testing capacity is the highest it has ever been, but there is a significant demand for tests. Booking is essential for drive in and walk in test sites.

(3) What the school will do if a pupil is displaying symptoms of coronavirus

The Department for Education have provided every school with an action list which we should follow. We would advise the pupil and family that they will need collection and advise that you should:

- Self-isolate for at least 10 days
- Arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus

(4) What to do if a pupil (or staff) tests positive for coronavirus

In this situation the school must notify the local health protection team (HPT) immediately. The HPT will work with us to carry out a rapid risk assessment and identify appropriate next steps. We would work with the HPT to identify close contacts of the symptomatic individual. Contact tracers will inform contacts that they need to self-isolate for 14 days.

Summary

In response to a case of transmission of COVID-19 within another school setting in Suffolk, the County Council have written to us. In addition to the measures above being implemented, this particular school was then deep cleaned. However, the letter also reminds us that there are things we can all do to reduce the risk of anyone getting ill with COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

As you would expect, our 'what if' planning continues. Given potential staff shortages, other Heads are now talking about rotas whereby not all pupils are in school at the same time. Given the impact of lockdown I know that we are all keen to prevent any further disruption to children's education. I thank you for your support and look forward to the day when more usual topics are the top of our agenda!

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher