



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

23rd February 2021

Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 19 (of 19)

As always, I trust that this letter finds you and your families well. As expected, several announcements have been made regarding the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions as well as the future re-opening of schools for all pupils. In addition to the information gleaned from the media, I received two updates from the Department for Education. I thought you would appreciate an early update with some of the key information from the Department for Education as well as our early thoughts. I will of course write to you again later this week with more detailed information.

It's very nearly a whole year since the pandemic began and the subsequent actions have had a huge impact on every aspect of our lives. I am sure that like me, you are all pleased that the national and local picture has improved, enabling the Government to publish a roadmap allowing the easing of lockdown via 4 steps. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that 'we're now travelling on a one-way road to freedom.' The aim is for the last social restrictions to be lifted on 21st June 2021. However, I noted that there is a hint of caution and that the Government will be led by 'data and not dates.'

This is the third time I have had to plan for the re-opening of schools since the pandemic began. There will be some additional control measures, and these will be included in the next section.

I totally agree with the Government that there are huge advantages for children by being in school and we are looking forward to welcoming students back in an orderly way as we return to our more established face to face provision

Key Points from the Department for Education about the re-opening of schools

The points I have selected below relate to secondary schools (so parents should be aware that there are differences for primary schools):

- Full opening of secondary schools and the return of face-to-face education *starts from* the 8th March
- All secondary school students will take coronavirus tests as they return to the classroom
- Schools have discretion on how to phase the return to allow students to be tested on return
- After an initial programme of 3 tests in school, students will be provided with 2 rapid tests to use each week at home
- Secondary school staff will also be provided with two tests to use each week at home
- Staff and students in secondary schools are advised to wear face coverings in all areas, including classrooms, where social distancing cannot be maintained as a temporary extra measure

In a further email from the Secretary of State for Education, I note the following points:

- The decision to ease restrictions is made on the balance of risk to public health and educational considerations
- The usual rules and duties around school attendance are in place from the 8th March



- The Government have worked with Public Health England to develop and refresh the system of controls. Students and staff must adhere to all the measures. This includes the importance of good ventilation
- Further information about 'education recovery and qualifications' will be published shortly

Our next steps

I hope that the summary above is useful. As always, such expectations raise more questions and, in the days ahead, I am hopeful that we will find the answers:

- *What will be the arrangements for Covid-19 testing for children?*
- *How will the school phase the return of pupils?*
- *If the phased return is through year groups, on what day will individual year groups return?*
- *How can the school maintain key worker provision and return to the usual classroom timetable?*
- *Will we have to wear masks in classrooms? What changes will need to be made to teaching and learning?*
- *What impact will there be on the published school calendar?*

To be fair, we have already thought of some of the answers but over the next few days we will need to develop and then share these further, including with the staff. We will also need to update our various 'Coronavirus Management Documents.' There is a lot to do and we are determined to see staff and students return in a safe and measured way. I will keep you informed through these update letters over the next few weeks.

Summary

It's good to know the Government's intentions so we can plan accordingly. I know that some readers have appreciated my summaries where I have placed matters in a wider context with some wit and maybe wisdom. The wider context here is the extent to which the roadmap does chart the actual journey ahead and whether it is too fast or even too slow. All Governments find themselves reacting to events. We all know that the agenda could change but I think we all equally accept we cannot as a society continue in this way. None of this though should stop us trying to shape a better collective future.

It amused me to be reminded of an article in *The Independent* in 2004 where a relatively new MP, Boris Johnson, gave this quote: "*There's as much chance of my becoming Prime Minister as there is of finding Elvis on Mars, or my being decapitated by a frisbee or reincarnated as an olive.*" Over the past few days NASA, the American Space Agency has released a video of its Perseverance Rover landing on Mars. What will they find?

Whilst there maybe some uncertainty on Mars as well as Earth, you can be certain that I will be in touch as we develop the detail behind our plans. In the meantime, thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher