



# 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](mailto:inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk)  
Website: [www.thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk](http://www.thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk)

Dear Parents

26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 20 (of 20)

As promised, following my letter to you earlier this week, I write with some further details as we move forward with the full re-opening of the school from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March. I will need to correspond with you again as there will be other procedures and controls that we will need to re-iterate.

The Government has made some announcements about 'catch up' and, in the words of the BBC headline, 'A Level and GCSE results to be decided by teachers.' The Government needs to publish more details before we can fully decide our approach and then share our plans. Ensuring that our decisions are fair and supported by evidence will clearly be important.

At this stage, my main focus is the safe re-opening of school to more students from the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

With regards to the pandemic, our aim is to: **minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).**

This letter will focus on:

- The system of controls (established by Public Health England)
- Answers to the questions shared with you on Tuesday
- Additional information about ventilation, as well as our next steps

## System of Controls

Implementing the system of controls creates a safer environment for pupils and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. It is important that everyone in our school community understands and follows these controls.

## **Prevention**

We must:

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend school
- 2) Ensure face coverings are used in **recommended** circumstances
- 3) Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands more thoroughly and more often than usual
- 4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- 5) Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents
- 6) Minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- 7) Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

In specific circumstances:

- 8) Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary
- 9) Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing, where available



## Response to infection

We must always:

- 10) Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- 11) Manage and report cases of COVID-19 amongst the school community
- 12) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

For many of these controls, we already have proportionate measures in place. We are changing our risk management documents and creating a new one provisionally entitled **March Re-opening Document** or MOD. We hope to be able to share a draft of this with the school community early next week.

At this point, the most important thing that I can emphasise is:

**Pupils, staff, and other adults must not come into school if:**

- **They have one or more coronavirus symptoms**
- **A member of their household (including someone in support or childcare bubbles) has coronavirus symptoms**
- **They are required to quarantine**
- **They have had a positive test**

### **Answers to Seven Questions**

Although the school has been open fully during the pandemic (the Autumn Term), the latest guidance has some changes. Our answers to the questions below, indicate our response to this latest guidance

#### ***Q1: What will be the arrangements for Covid-19 testing for children?***

Earlier this week, further information and a consent form was sent to parents and the Office are co-ordinating the responses.

The tests that will be undertaken in school (and at home) are called Lateral Flow Device (LFD) and provide a quick result.

The tests that have been undertaken at NHS centres are called Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and the results are processed by a laboratory and typically shared between 24 to 48 hours after taking the test.

For the weeks beginning March 8<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup> only, the testing for students will take place during registration and period 1 (which will become an extended tutorial). Students should be tested three times during the first two weeks. Students will be tested on their first day back. The tests are self-administered.

The time in tutorial whereby pupils are waiting for the results can be used productively for reading, further study or directed activities such as tutorial work and general support. Lessons will therefore start from Period 2. Mr Wheeler is putting together an explanation PowerPoint for pupils to view in their form groups. Mr Mugliston is looking at the logistics of this exercise.

As mentioned earlier, consent will be needed. Where no consent is obtained, the 'default setting' is that students will be treated as if they had a negative result. No pupil can be excluded from education through lack of consent. It is the system of controls, as established previously from Public Health England, which will still be essential going forward and not the reliance on one new measure such as LFD.

Following some parental enquiries, Mr Wheeler has been in touch with the Department for Education helpline. They inform us that:

- *Individuals who have had a confirmed positive Covid-19 test (either PCR or LFD) are exempt from (should not take) LFD testing within 90 days of the initial positive result*
- *Schools are obliged to inform parents that pupils should isolate at home as per current guidance in the event of any positive LFD result.*
- *If a pupil has not had a positive test result but another member of their household has in the last 90 days, it is possible that they may have a positive LFD test result. In such circumstances the pupils will be asked to isolate at home as per current guidance.*

This means that parents may wish to consider this when consenting (or not) to asymptomatic LFD testing in school within the 90-day period.

Parents will be contacted in the event of a positive LFD result and informed that their child should be taken home to begin the period of isolation. The school will also report to the health authorities and follow their advice in terms of contact tracing. There is a possibility therefore that other close contacts may have to self-isolate. Negative results will not be reported, and pupils will remain in school.

**Q2: How will the school phase the return of students?**

**Q3: If the phased return is through year groups, on what day will individual year groups return?**

We need to phase the return of students to support our arrangements for Covid-19 testing. From Monday 8th March we envisage welcoming year groups back in school on consecutive days (until then, students will continue with remote learning). By Friday 12th March we aim to have the school fully open again for all students.

Staggering the start in this way also enables us to manage the information that will need to be given to all students. This may include reinforcement of previous control measures such as one-way systems, expectations, wearing of face coverings (the bringing in of a spare), as well as the introduction of other changes such as a 3.45pm finish time for all pupils; and reminders about equipment and unavailability of lockers for example.

The following chart outlines the transition from home to school for all year groups from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March:

Date	Year group returning to school	Students in school	Remote learning at home
Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 11	Year 11 & key workers/vulnerable pupils (KWVP) provision	Years 7, 8, 9, 10, Sixth Form
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 10	Years 10, 11 & KWVP	Years 7, 8, 9, Sixth Form
Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Sixth Form	Years 10, 11 Sixth Form & KWVP	Years 7, 8, 9
Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> March	Years 7 & 8	Years 7, 8, 10, 11, Sixth Form & KWVP	Year 9
Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 9	All Year Groups	Any pupils self-isolating

**Q4: How can the school maintain key worker provision and return to the usual classroom timetable?**

We do have to manage the transition back to classroom teaching and away from the in school key worker and vulnerable pupil provision. We cannot operate more than one timetable.

**From Monday 1st March, the in school key worker and vulnerable pupil provision, will follow the normal timetable – i.e. the usual teachers and classrooms.** Staff will be returning to school from 1st March. The demand for in school places has increased (currently about 75) and there are other children who would be eligible for a place.

From Monday 1st March, teachers will be planning and delivering some in school provision as well as remote learning. Miss Lambert and Mr Heath will share best practice ideas with staff. Heads of Department will also steer their teams and although remote learning will be through Microsoft Teams, it is likely there will be a variety of teaching and learning activities. Teachers will endeavour to interact with pupils at home via the chat function, the priority will be the supervision of students in the classroom setting. It will be acceptable for meaningful work to be set. This approach will continue the following week but gradually teachers will focus on classroom teaching as more students return.

During the week of Monday 1st March, Miss Armes and Heads of Year will oversee the registration of students. From Monday 8th March, all students should register with their tutors in their form rooms.

***Q5: Will we have to wear masks in classrooms?***

***Q6: What changes will need to be made to teaching and learning?***

The use of face coverings has been mandatory in certain circumstances for some time (for example school transport and in corridors). This continues. The new guidance says that, 'face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained.' This will not apply to PE. From Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, students therefore will be expected to wear face coverings in lessons.

In most settings, teachers should be able to maintain social distancing in their classrooms, so this implies they can remove a face covering in order to teach. This will help with effective communication and teaching -whether in the classroom or remotely. Ideally, teachers will re-arrange their classrooms and seating plans so that students are a little further away than usual. Teachers should also wear a face covering at other times and in the event of a sneeze, it would be caught!

The Government Guidance has stated that there is limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings. The Guidance outlines a context where they may be appropriate and therefore support communication. However, the Guidance specifically says that 'face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings.'

In practice then, face coverings will mean 'masks.' It will be useful to have a spare mask. The use of masks in this way will impact on communication, teaching, and learning. For a start, communication, even from teachers, will need to be much shorter. Teachers will continue to make use of the technology in their teaching. Mr Ward, Miss Lambert and Mr Heath will look at the best practice to share with teachers in this context.

Staff and students will not need to wear face coverings when outside. Students will be expected to be outside during breaks and lunchtimes apart from during inclement weather (Mr Cann decides this and communicates with the staff during Period 4 as appropriate). In consultation with Mr Harding, if we can open the school field, we will do so. All the former arrangements with regards to the canteen and breaks will continue as before. Year groups will need to stay in their designated areas.

The new measure about face coverings in classrooms from the 8<sup>th</sup> March is designed to be a temporary measure and the Government will review it over the Easter Holidays.

Mr Chittock will manage the exemptions. Students who are exempt will need to wear the green/sunflower lanyard that will be issued.

***Q7: What impact will there be on the published school calendar?***

We are delighted to see the return of students to the school. Apart from Year 11, all year groups will be in school for under three weeks. The focus will be on support as well as the return to the classroom setting and the usual school routines.

The arrangements for reporting, parents' evenings and the Year 8 options process will continue as previously advised (i.e. online).

Many scheduled events from the 8th March until the end of term will not take place: Year 11 GCSE Food Preparation and Nutritional Practical Exams; Year 10 Preparatory Exams; and the Easter Concert at Snape Maltings for example.

Year 10 Preparatory Exams will be postponed until the Summer Term.

It is proposed to move our Charity Day to Friday 26th March. Staff and House officials will have some time to consider events in the light of the wider rules around Covid.

I envisage meeting with School Council in year groups as their feedback as well as general interaction can be invaluable.

We will keep the school calendar under review, and it is likely that there will be further changes for the Summer Term.

## Ventilation

We will include some of this detail in our *March Opening Document (MOD)*, however, at this stage, it is useful to re-iterate some points from guidance: “Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risks from airborne transmission.... When your school is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.”

The main strategy we will adopt will be natural ventilation by opening windows. Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air. The Guidance states that external opening doors may also be used as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so.

There may be a need to balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature and so we can consider:

- Opening high level windows in colder weather
- Increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied
- Providing flexibility to allow additional suitable indoor clothing

We have many separate school buildings as the school site has evolved over eighty years and this provides us with space and lots of opportunities for fresh air. As you will know from home, the slight opening of a window can have quite a dramatic effect on fresh air and, depending on the conditions, temperature. New buildings and improvements comply with relevant building regulations and so often the windows do not open as far as they would do at home (where at home they might double up as a fire escape). We do not have any of the latest builds which often have no opening windows and mechanical ventilation systems!

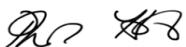
## Summary

As any fine scholar knows, answering questions only generates some more! I do envisage that many more answers will appear in a *March Opening Document*. There will be a number of key messages that will be given in order to ensure a safe and consistent return from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March. However, I am pleased that we can balance the usual safety considerations with a quality of education.

Education is so precious. Online can only replicate so much. There are many more opportunities within school and we are genuinely excited about seeing our school provision return. I envisage a very focussed return so that we maximise all the opportunities.

In order to achieve this, I will need to be in touch again. Until then, I hope that you all have a pleasant and safe weekend.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst  
Headteacher