



# THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## **Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 7 (of 7)**

Firstly, I hope that all students and families were able to enjoy a well-deserved rest over the half term. From our point of view, it was great that we all managed to reach this point. I remain immensely proud with the way in which students and staff have responded and this gives me optimism for the months ahead.

As you will know from the Government's recent announcements, a further national lockdown is upon us. This time the intention is for schools to remain open. It is my view that we must continue to balance the quality of education alongside making schools even safer. In the light of all this, as well as our ongoing review, we have made a number of changes from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November.

### **One-Way System**

A new one-way system will be implemented, and this ensures that we avoid congestion during lesson changeovers. Mr Wheeler has explained this to all year groups. Our buildings enable clear entrances and exits, whilst the four staircases will either be an 'up' or a 'down'. At the end of the day, or during a fire alarm, students should leave via the nearest exit. All students and staff must follow the one-way systems. Heads of Department and Heads of Year will be enforcing this within their areas. There will be different entrances for year groups using the Canteen and we will continue to use outside doors for the Science Laboratories.

### **Curriculum and Timetable**

Mr Ward has re-roomed the timetable to enable students and staff to return to Specialist rooms. New timetables will be issued. We believe this move will significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as allowing Heads of Department better oversight of their areas. With regards to pastoral bubbles, Year 9 will use Science Laboratories for registration and Year 10 will move to the E Corridor. There will need to be recorded seating plans for all classes and students must keep to this.

### **Afternoon Registration**

From Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November, afternoon registration will take place at the start of Period 5. Therefore at 2.00pm students should go straight to Period 5. Mr Cann will issue separate instructions to the Sixth Form who may have private study instead.

### **Staffing**

It is likely that the new Government measures will impact on staffing levels. Our priority will be supervision. Mrs Gordon alongside Mr Wheeler manages this aspect of the school's operation and as you would expect, we are keeping a close eye on this.

### **Cleaning Protocols**

The new cleaning regime is working well and there is greater emphasis on surface cleaning. As mentioned in previous correspondence, all desks are to be cleaned at the start of registration and lessons. The teacher will spray desks with surface cleaner before students enter the classrooms. Students will use a tissue to wipe it dry afterwards. Mr Mugliston is keeping a close eye on stock.

### **Face Coverings**

Everybody has really complied with the wearing of face coverings in corridors.

Given the heightened alert following the Government's announcement of a lockdown, it is only appropriate that our measures continue to be as rigorous as possible. We have considered the wearing of face coverings carefully, including the experiences in other countries, most recently Scotland. The latest Government guidance also makes the expectations around communal areas clear and I think our current use of form rooms at break and lunch fall into this category. **Therefore, from Monday 9<sup>th</sup>**



**November, face coverings are to be worn by pupils indoors during breaktime and lunchtime, whether in classrooms or corridors.** The exception to this would be where small groups of pupils are working with staff and social distancing is maintained.

We have seriously considered the introduction of this measure in lessons although this is not currently recommended by the Government. However, there is a growing tension emerging between ventilation and keeping warm as winter approaches as well as the understandable concerns of clinically vulnerable people working in classrooms with approximately 30 people.

Face coverings should be worn on all school transport.

### **Breaktime and Lunchtime**

The congregation of students inside buildings at breaktime and lunchtime has emerged as a key concern. Social distancing is compromised and there is probably a greater risk of COVID transmission. This is also apparent in the FAYAP Centre too. I am anticipating that the wearing of face coverings may mitigate this risk. (The FAYAP Centre will now be available for Year 9 only who can also use the Hall during inclement weather.)

However, it remains my preference that students in Years 7 to 11 should be outside at these times. It is recommended that all students have a suitable coat. There is to be no eating inside classrooms. Clearly in inclement weather (heavy rain or very cold), students would use their form rooms. We are monitoring this situation carefully and should local data increase, we would make it mandatory to be outside at these times.

Mr Cann will ensure that no Sixth Form area is overcrowded and could re-direct the Sixth Form to a number of areas where they have sole use.

### **Departure at the End of the Day**

We are maintaining the staggered departure times at present although, in line with all measures, this is under review.

### **Uniform and Mobile Phone Protocols**

I would appreciate your support with our uniform requirements. In particular, I do not want to see excess jewellery or facial piercings. I will be discussing this further with Heads of Year and will be supportive of confiscation and return at the end of term. There is no need for coats to be worn in classrooms.

Equally, I would appreciate your support with our mobile phone policy. In short, they should not be used or seen during the school day. Again, our policy does allow for confiscation.

### **Citizens Advice**

I understand that during the new lockdown measures, Leiston and Saxmundham District Citizens Advice will continue to remain open to take calls (10-2 Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri on 01728 832193) and emails on [supervisor@leisoncab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:supervisor@leisoncab.cabnet.org.uk)

We are also informed that Citizens Advice have funds available to help families affected by COVID who need support with energy bills or school uniforms.

### **Summary**

As the national situation appears to worsen again, it is my intention that we do all we can to ensure a safer environment alongside an effective education. We review our procedures on a weekly basis and in the light of national and local trends, as well as guidance.

The winter period with its dark nights and adverse weather can be challenging in a normal year. This year we must all look out for each other. We're always stronger when we're together.

As always, thank you for your support and I hope that you and your families stay safe and well in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst  
Headteacher