



# THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

9<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## **Headteacher's Update 2020/2021 – Letter 2 (of 2)**

Firstly, a warm welcome to all new pupils and families joining us this year. It's also great seeing all other students return too. Everyone has responded well to the current situation around COVID-19. We continue to navigate our way round this and local 'events' as well as the national news is keeping the pandemic at the forefront of our thoughts and actions.

We have now been operational for a week and have reviewed our arrangements. This letter updates you about changes as well as related items of interest.

### **Changes to Re-Opening Arrangements**

The Government changes around social gatherings as well as our own identification of challenges to social distancing have led us to amend our 'mitigation' which we have introduced with immediate effect:

#### (i) Face Coverings

- All pupils and staff must have face coverings with them
- All pupils and staff must wear face coverings when moving to and from classrooms (lesson changeover)
- All pupils and staff must wear face coverings when in corridors including breaktimes and lunchtimes
- All pupils and staff must wear face coverings when queuing for the canteen
- Face coverings are not needed for prolonged periods outside including breaktime and lunchtime.
- Staff will be required to wear a mask (or a visor) in the Main Staff Room
- Sixth Form students and staff should wear a face covering in the Library
- All visitors will need to use a face covering

#### (ii) Waiting for Lessons

- With the exception of specialist rooms, students should go straight in to their timetabled rooms at the beginning of a lesson
- Students should continue to wait outside Science Laboratories

#### (iii) Review of Arrangements

We will review our arrangements on a weekly basis and in response to Government Guidance or Local Authority intervention.

### **School Trips**

The current Government Guidance generally refers to this term and yet some of our trips are planned over a year in advance and therefore prior to the first lockdown. Either myself or the trip leader will be in contact with participants and parents about specific arrangements for a number of trips still in the planning stage for 2021 and beyond. We are looking at each trip on a case by case basis.



## **Travelling To and From School**

Suffolk County Council has produced five videos with the latest advice on travelling to school with particular emphasis on COVID-19 precautions. The videos are three minutes long and can be accessed via the following links:

Walking - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3nNHir0hmc>

Cycling - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVQHTBVHWG4>

Passenger - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBjlg64evS4>

School bus - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL4lfNopUV0>

Public bus - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-9b\\_vPhvqk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-9b_vPhvqk)

## **Response to Infection**

The Government Guidance provides advice to schools and is arranged under three headings:

- Engage with NHS Test and Trace Process
- Manage Confirmed Cases of Coronavirus amongst the school community
- Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

In summary, we must all engage with the health authorities. Although there are currently no confirmed cases amongst the school community, we have already worked with the processes outlined above. There are, of course, many different scenarios and we are currently providing key training for relevant staff. You may have seen on the news that there has been an outbreak in a secondary school towards the west of the county and this led to closure as well as intervention from the Health Authorities.

Further guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing>

It will generally be the case that schools and parents will be in agreement that a child with symptoms should not attend school, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent insists on a child attending school, we can take the decision to refuse the child if it is in our reasonable judgement it is necessary to protect pupils and staff from possible infection with coronavirus. Any decision of this nature would be carefully considered.

## **Open Day and Open Evening**

It is almost certainly the case that our traditional Open Day and Evening scheduled for Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September will be very different this year. We are currently exploring online as well as possible on site events. We will commence these on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and then repeat throughout October. More details will follow but interested prospective parents can register their interest with the school.

## **Staff Responsibilities**

In addition to their usual roles, a number of staff have additional responsibilities. This includes remote learning, assessment, catch up provision as well as teaching and learning (in the context of the new arrangements).

## **Summary**

My thanks to everyone in the school community for the good will and grace which has been shown over the past week. Although we are operating in a different environment, it's great to be back. The school has been calm and purposeful. Our students and staff are fantastic! (I would also like to thank parents for your support and where you have raised concerns working through them with us.)

As I mentioned earlier, we are regularly reviewing our arrangements. It is likely that there will continue to be adjustments as we respond to national changes or introduce better practice.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) provides health advice and I particularly like the straight forward message of:

- BE SUPPORTIVE
- BE CAREFUL
- BE SAFE
- BE KIND

Closer to home, Miss Armes has a poster with a useful message – *Keep Calm and Carry On*.

That we will do! It really has been great seeing students engage with their learning and interacting sensibly.

I very much wish all of our school community a safe and successful year.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst  
Headteacher