



# 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

April 2020

## Thomas Mills High School: Supporting Learning at Home

As we all continue to navigate our way through the current extraordinary and challenging times, I thought it might be useful to collate and distribute some of the information and advice I have been receiving over the past few weeks concerning how parents can support the testing situation of supporting learning at home. Adjusting to this rapidly developing situation has been difficult and I appreciate that for parents, it is particularly problematic in terms of your child's learning and education, as well as their overall wellbeing and mental health.

In putting together this information, an article written by T. Harris and published by Parentkind on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 seems to be a good place to start. The author explains;

*"The shutdown of schools...leaves us all in uncharted waters. This includes parents who are dealing with the challenge of how best to help children who are at home. The first point to emphasise is that parents are not being asked to home-school children...Parents can instead focus on **supporting** learning..."*

*[Parents do not] underestimate the importance of the role you are playing. See this as an opportunity to spend time together. Be flexible; stop when you need to and adjust accordingly. You know your child better than anyone else, so do not feel like you are failing...Parents of secondary children may feel overwhelmed with the amount of subject specialist content involved...but do not worry too much. We are all working together in challenging circumstances to maintain a new normality and structure for children in our care."*

Some of what is here and to follow may sound like good, old-fashioned common sense, but I hope you find some of the information of use in supporting your child through the next weeks of learning at home.

Our thanks and appreciation go out to all parents at this time and we continue to be hugely grateful for your on-going support and positivity.

### Supporting Learning at Home: Introduction

As well as the work being set by departments via the TMHS web-site, the following information also contains some suggestions and ideas for some supplementary work, or if your child wants a break from, or is finding it difficult to access, some of the school's set work.

The aim of this guide therefore is to assist with;

- encouraging and supporting your child to complete work at home during the forthcoming weeks
- finding resources and activities in addition, or as an alternative to, those on the TMHS Cloud that can help your child to have a positive learning experience whilst at home
- addressing some concerns that have been raised.

It is important to remember that each child will study in different ways and that some children will be more open to, and capable of, independent learning than others. This means that what works for one child might not work for another – and therefore it is important to encourage and help your child to identify what works best for them. Up to this point, they have been used to following a structured routine set by TMHS, so it is likely that it will take a little time for them to find their own pattern of study.



As a parent or carer, you cannot be expected to be an expert in each subject; if you and your child are finding it difficult to understand a piece of set work, it is perfectly ok to set it aside and move onto something else. You and your child have email addresses of staff and can, if you wish, contact a teacher to ask for clarification if necessary. As you are also aware, all pupils also now have their own TMHS email account.

### **Supporting the completion of schoolwork at home**

Hopefully, you have already established, or are in the process of establishing a routine for completing work that has been set. However, the suggestions below are intended to act as guidelines about how to engage and maintain your child's interest or motivation:

#### ***Set up a daily routine***

As with most things, a key to ensuring work gets done is to try to have a set routine in place – especially as your child has been used to working to a formal timetable, attending the same lessons at the same times weekly. Some children may benefit from following their normal school timetable, whilst other's needs might suit a more flexible approach. There is no right or wrong way to manage the completion of school work; it's got to work for your child and you.

#### ***Doing work together***

The need for working with your child is going to be dependent on a range of factors; age, ability, confidence level and interest in particular subject areas, and the relationship you currently have with them. If your child needs some assistance or reassurance about work, try to sit down with them – where possible - and talk about the subjects they are covering. Discussing work and talking through problems will definitely enhance the learning process, even if the intended outcome is still not quite achieved!

Of course, your child may not require – or want – you to sit with them while they work. Just making yourself available if they need to ask a question, to read through their work, or to listen to them read their work to you, will be very helpful in the learning process.

#### ***Having the 'right' space***

If possible, your child needs a quiet space with enough room to spread out their work on a desk or table without being interrupted. Some people work better with some background noise, others find that it interrupts their ability to concentrate. If your child has a mobile telephone or another device with access to social media, agree some conditions of use during working time; for example, you could create a 10 minute 'reward' for every 30 minutes (or more) of work completed.

#### ***Having the 'right' equipment***

**If your child does not have access to a computer or the internet, please contact school and we will do our best to help.** If we are unable to provide you with the technology you need, we should be able to arrange to send hard copies of work home. However, other learning tools can be useful; if you have copies of an encyclopaedia, dictionary, thesaurus etc. – these can be used to assist with learning.

#### ***Providing additional support***

And it's not all about the work *school* has set! Doing additional things to enhance learning, should make overall work more accessible and easier. If your child is more receptive to working with you and your family on other learning related activities then reading together, watching educational programmes, talking and interacting together are all valuable in supporting learning and creating enthusiasm for learning. We understand that the availability of such support will be dependent on a wide range of factors, but the offer of it might be very much welcomed by your child.

<b><i>In Summary; try to...</i></b>
-------------------------------------

- Organise, if possible, a dedicated study space and routine for your child, (helping to distinguish between the space for learning and areas for relaxation).
- Take regular breaks, stay hydrated and get some fresh air! Discourage your child from sitting working for long periods of time. Depending on your child's individual needs, divide up study time, taking regular breaks and providing small rewards; for example, work for between 15-50 minutes (depending on your child's engagement and concentration levels), then take a break by having a walk, having a drink and a snack, listen to some music, play on the games console for 10 minutes...
- If it's not working, change it! Understand, that if a set task is taking longer than expected and it's causing your child to become frustrated or upset, it's perfectly ok to come back to it at another time, or simply put it to one side and move on to something more accessible and productive.
- If you experience any difficulties with work and have questions, please contact your child's teacher or someone at school who can guide you to the best person to speak with.
- In these uncertain times, if your child is not in a positive frame of mind or mood to learn on a particular day, it doesn't matter. Try to talk through their feelings with them and try gently introducing working again at another, more productive, time.

### ***Suggested Additional Resources to support learning at home***

The following is not an exhaustive list and, as you are no doubt already aware, organisations (such as the BBC) are offering and launching additional tools almost daily. The list is aimed at a range of age groups and abilities and is in addition to information about other resources already shared with parents since the start of school closure.

#### **Year 7-9 Resources (with some Primary elements)**

- Twinkl is offering free access to its resources for a month, providing a parental guide for usage.
- SirLinkalot: uses animations to teach children tricks to improve spelling – currently available free to parents and schools.
- Brainpop: offers animated films covering topics in English, maths and science.
- Tynker: offers coding lessons.
- Creative Bug: craft lessons, from knitting to jewellery-making, drawing and origami...
- World Book Online: a collection of 3,000 ebooks and audiobooks currently free and available.
- Free streaming available of audiobooks, including titles across six different languages  
[stories.audible.com/start-listen](https://www.audible.com/start-listen)
- YouTube's Free School offers a range of videos covering subjects as diverse as the US constitution, coral reefs and the solar system

#### **Useful Resources for GCSE**

- BBC Bitesize: contains syllabus-specific material covering a wide range of subjects and includes interactive quizzes and tests.
- Evernote: an app which allows pupils to access their notes online and share them with friends.
- GoCongr: a website that enables pupils to make flashcards, mind maps, notes and slide sets.
- Hodder Education magazines: subject specific publications aimed at GCSE (and A-level).
- Quizlet: a website that enables pupils to make flashcards and test themselves on them through memory games and exercises.
- Revision World: contains a variety of revision information for GCSE (and A-level) subjects.
- Study Blue: a crowdsourced library of flashcards.
- YouTube's Free School – see previous section.
- The organisation behind the Ted talks has a division called TED-Ed containing "lessons worth sharing" from teachers from around the globe.
- Education otherwise: resources list: <https://www.educationotherwise.org/index.php/special-resources-for-coronavirus-school-closures>
- Home education resources: <http://www.home-education.org.uk/resources-educational.htm>

## English / Maths / Science Websites

- No Fear Shakespeare: a 'translation' facility for Shakespeare that puts plays into modern English.
- National Theatre Live: broadcasting live performances for free, as are the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).
- Study Maths: a website with revision notes, games and exercises.
- Exam Solutions: contains online tutorials.
- Maths Made Easy: online tests, past papers and examination advice.
- Maths Genie: revision notes and exercises.
- Beaker Mix Chemicals: lets you see the reactions from the mixing of different chemicals.
- Biology Dictionary: definitions for difficult biology terms.
- Periodic Table 2017: interactive and up-to-date version of the periodic table.

## Post 16

- 190 universities have launched 600 free online courses – [www.classcentral.com](http://www.classcentral.com)

The above represents only a small amount of what exists!

## Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) friendly resources

- [nutreandthriveblog.com](http://nutreandthriveblog.com): board games to boost functioning.
- [www.educatorstechnology.com](http://www.educatorstechnology.com): a chart featuring over 30 iPad Apps for pupils with SEND.
- [www.theinspiredtreehouse.com](http://www.theinspiredtreehouse.com): heavy work activity ideas for small spaces.
- Lego – Brickologists Young Engineers.

## Resources to support Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

- <https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/COVIDHub>
- Kooth.com
- Suffolk Wellbeing Hub
- Chathealth
- 4YP

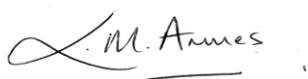
## To conclude...

Current advice is urging that pupils should not be expected to work for more than two to three hours per day – and for some, with varying needs, this will be considerably less. This hopefully will enable minds to be kept active but also enthusiastic. Getting your child to help with household activities such as washing, cooking and gardening are educational, as is watching some 'good' television or online streams, such as documentaries and drama.

As would usually be the case, if you are experiencing difficulties please contact school and we will endeavour to help in whatever ways we are able to in the current restricted circumstances. In the first instance the points of contact are likely to be your child's Head of Year, Head of Department or individual subject teacher.

If you wish to discuss a safeguarding concern, please contact Mr Wheeler (Deputy Headteacher) who is our Designated Safe-guarding Lead, or Mr Chittock, or me.

As stated earlier, many, many thanks for your on-going efforts and support.



Louise Armes  
Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral)