



# THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

21<sup>st</sup> July 2023

## **Headteacher's Update 2022/23 – Letter 33 (of 33)**

As always, I trust that this letter finds you well. When I last wrote to you, we were anticipating a number of school events. These have taken place successfully. Year Thirteen enjoyed a magnificent Ball at Thorpeness Country Club and a few days earlier, Year Eleven had their Prom at Trinity Park. We have also experienced a great Activities Week as well as a magnificent Sports Day.

The aim of this letter is to 'finish' the school year. You should also have received a copy of our termly magazine Outlook. End of year reports have also been issued.

## **Strike Action and Teachers' Pay**

A few weeks ago, I noted that most teacher unions including the ASCL were balloting for further strike action in the Autumn Term. Co-ordinated action in the Autumn would have an impact. In the meantime, the Government have said that they have agreed to a 6.5% increase for teachers' salaries. At the time of writing, we have only been advised of some extra funding but this amounts to under 3% of the actual salaries. This is based on a general formula. We had already budgeted for some increase so hopefully this will all balance. However, these announcements do not refer to our Support Staff who are on different pay scales.

## **School Office Changes**

At the end of Activities Week, we said goodbye to Linda Mears who, after many years of great service, left to start a new role within Framlingham. From September, we will be pleased to welcome Emily Cook who will cover the 'student services' side of Reception.

## **Attendance and Start of Term**

High attendance in school remains vitally important and the impact on attainment is very strong. As you will know, all government agencies have made this a priority following the effects of the pandemic. To this end, Suffolk County Council have produced a letter supporting regular attendance and in particular they are hoping for 100% attendance on the first day of school in September. We very much support this promotion. Their letter can be found [here](#).

The new term starts for teachers on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September and for the new Year Seven and new Year Twelve the school year will start on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September.

All other year groups will start the term on **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September**.

## **Creativity and the Curriculum**

This topic has been briefly discussed in the media. In terms of the curriculum, I welcome a broad focus. Creativity is more than the Creative Arts although we enjoy unprecedented success here with some children opting to study Art, Drama and Music. We also have a high number who study both Art and Photography at A Level. In terms of facilities, these are being further enhanced with the building of a new Recording Studio. Creativity can also include problem-solving and critical thinking across the curriculum. It also relates to leadership and development through coaching.



## **Activities Week and School Trips**

My thanks to all our students, staff and parents for your support with this year's Activities Week. It was great having a wider selection of activities both within school, as well as beyond our boundaries, including Europe. There were some long journeys but I'm sure the experiences were valuable. We've received many positive comments including for Year Ten and Year Twelve Work Experience.

## **School Games Gold 2022/23**

We have been informed that the school has achieved the Gold School Games Mark which is awarded for commitment and engagement in school games for this school year. My congratulations to Mr Harding and his team of staff, as well as all the students who get involved. On Tuesday we enjoyed a lovely Sports Day and it's always great seeing the wide participation as well as competitive House rivalry.

## **Duke of Edinburgh**

We have also received a nice certificate from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award who have congratulated our school participants who have given 1690 voluntary hours this school year. As they state, "we are immensely proud of the dedication, effort and achievement of young people making an impact in their community." My thanks to the staff who lead the award with equal skill and commitment, as well as to the parents for your support.

## **Education Committee**

Sometime ago I was asked to contribute a submission to the Education Committee about Inspections. I had hesitated because our chapter had closed although there have been many stories, some very sad, in the media. In the meantime, many other high-achieving schools have found themselves in the spotlight with either court action or a rapid re-inspection following. In short, I have drafted a submission for the committee. I thought you would be interested in at least two of my recommendations:

- Annual or bi-annual Ofsted Inspections focussing on education and in particular teaching and learning.
- Annual Safeguarding Audit from a different professional body, ideally a new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).

## **Safeguarding and Safety over the Summer**

This leads onto thinking about safeguarding and safety over the summer holidays. My advice is to think about the dangers in communities, online or places where you may visit. If you visit the coast or the beach, His Majesty's Coastguard provide some helpful safety advice at [Home | HM Coastguard UK](#) .

As with any venture some careful thought and planning makes things go more successfully. The following is not a complete list but may prove helpful:

- Know your location
- Ensure someone else knows your whereabouts
- Carry a charged mobile phone
- Follow any local warning signs
- Check the weather and tides and be prepared to change plans
- Ring 999 if there is an emergency or imminent danger

As ever, we want our students to be able to keep themselves safe whilst experiencing many exciting opportunities.

In summary, think about spaces, places and faces!

## **End of Term Reflections**

They say that time moves more quickly as you get older. This is true. I think it is because you learn to fit more things into your day. It helps working in an energetic and busy school. I think without exception all students have made some great progress. This observation not only includes academic progress but also with social development too. During the year we welcomed two Ofsted Inspections with good progress on the key areas. We were also able to celebrate our students' achievements at our first big Awards Evening for some time with Ed Sheeran as our Guest.

This was closely followed by the honour of the BEM for Richard Hanley in January. Throughout all the school endeavours, whether in the classroom or beyond, our students have responded with their usual good grace, our staff with enthusiasm, and parents with their support.

Wider society has also been quite eventful. This school year has seen two monarchs with the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and then the Coronation of King Charles III. In politics we have technically seen three Prime Ministers.

### **Summary**

Such changes remind us that life and all its endeavours has its ups and its downs. That should though, never stop aspirations being high and a quality well rounded education is essential. As students get older, we talk about reading around the subject. It remains the case that reading is the vital key that unlocks everything. I would urge all our students to maintain reading over the holidays.

I will do the same, but I am also planning to spend more time outside. I particularly enjoyed visiting the Year Nine Trip to the Lake District and climbing with a group of students to the top of Scafell Pike. At 978 metres, it is England's highest mountain. However, I'm not ready for the 8,843 metres of Mount Everest! Small steps maybe. However, the analogies around mountains provide much inspiration for our next steps whether in education or a wider opportunity or challenge:

*Every mountain top is within reach if you just keep climbing,*

*The best view comes after the hardest climb.*

However, the trick with mountain climbing is to keep looking ahead and in sight are the summer holidays. I very much hope that you and your families can enjoy the break. I thank you once again for your support.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst  
Headteacher

Link to Summer Video - [TMHS Summer Video 2023 - YouTube](#)

Link to Outlook magazine - [Summer 2023 \(canva.com\)](#)