



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

24th November 2023

Headteacher's Update Letter 2023/2024 – Letter 7 (of 7)

I hope this letter finds you well. It has been lovely seeing many of our parents and community at recent events including the magical performance of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* as well as our very busy Sixth Form Open Evening. This letter is a relatively speedy update on many items of whole school interest.

Suffolk County Council – School Bus Pass Checks

Passenger Transport have asked us to remind you about the importance of travelling with a valid pass on the correct route. From the 27th November all drivers have been asked to check bus passes on both journeys. It's important therefore that students have their pass and that they travel on their permitted route. Any questions can be directed to transport.service@suffolk.gov.uk

And More on Buses and Travelling Safety!

It is clearly that time of year when it gets darker earlier. I must emphasise the importance of coats and where appropriate, reflective and other protective clothing. Safety must come first. Students must behave sensibly on buses so as to enable drivers to focus on safe travel. I would also ask parents picking up students by car to be mindful of parking too.

Returning to coaches, each route does have an allocated departure time at the end of the school day, with the TMO1/ TMO2 and FR547 scheduled for 15.50 and finishing with Belle 1 and 2 at 16.00. On a usual day, students have left by 16.00. We just all need to be mindful that this is a busy period both in the front of the school as well as the surrounding roads. Care and Caution should be at the forefront.

Summer 2024 Examinations

You may have seen some information in the press about projected grades for 2024. Essentially, I am being advised by the agencies such as Ofqual that grade distribution is unlikely to increase and, depending on the national cohort, may decrease. I think this is a reminder that the government are continuing with this grade deflation and therefore students will need more marks to secure high grades. It also remains the case that at least one mock examination is undertaken in examination conditions and kept by the school in case 'resilience arrangements' are needed.

I very much appreciate all the work that goes into examinations; from the students' hard work and revision, teacher expertise as well as the administration behind the scenes by Mrs Lomax and her team. The key procedures are determined by JCQ – Joint Council for Qualifications.

Government Consultation on Smoke Free Generation.

Some time ago a parent reminded us that there is a consultation from the Government about a smoke free generation. For your information, I provide the link here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping-your-views>



As you know, I support a stronger stance on these areas and I know there is growing pressure to regulate the suppliers of vapes for example. Our stance has changed in that suspension could be considered in school. As always, thank you for your support in this matter.

Framlingham Library Flood Stories

Framlingham Library are creating a written record of the floods that came as a result of Storm Babet. Submissions should be on a single side of A4 with a wide margin. These can be emailed to the Library framlibevents@suffolk.libraries.co.uk or dropped off at the library.

I imagine that for some members of our community, the consequences are still very much felt.

School Office, Attendance and Using Gateway

It very much remains the case that high attendance is linked to high attainment. Although school data often focusses on percentages, it is more prudent to think of days and lessons lost. One day results in 6 lessons missed. Five days results in 30 lessons missed.

The School Office have some staffing challenges at the present time. We ask parents to report any student absence, illness, medical or other, via the Gateway app or email address attendance@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk. Please only use the attendance line if you are unable to use the app or email.

Please ensure that you include the pupil name, form and reason for absence. Attendance must be advised daily before 9.25am.

The attendance line is available for all other attendance enquiries.

From 1st January we will no longer hold paracetamol in school to issue to students. Parents will be given the opportunity to send in paracetamol to the School Office for them to issue to your child when necessary. More information and the authority for us to hold paracetamol on your behalf will be sent out separately.

NSFT Parent Workshops

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust have arranged a number of workshops to support parents. The following links should provide you with more information.

[30th November: Parenting the anxious adolescent \(part 1\)](#)

[7th December: Parenting the anxious adolescent \(part 2\)](#)

[7th December: Childhood neurodiversity: understanding and supporting eating difficulties](#)

[12th December: Supporting our young people with challenging behaviours](#)

[12th December: Supporting our young people to manage big feelings](#)

Give Ukrainian Children Another Christmas This Year

This year the school are hosting the wrapping of 6,500 gifts at a 'Wrapathon' at the school on December 2nd from 8am to 4pm. I know the organisers would welcome additional support. All materials will be supplied although volunteers are asked to bring their own scissors. Further information can be found at: <https://aid-alliance.com/events/wrapathon-saturday-02nd-december-8am-4pm/>.

Summary

I don't always envisage my letters as having a connecting theme but it's maybe the local world as well as the wider world this week.

I have recently had good reason to visit other schools nationally and been pleased to see some good practice as well as share some of ours. It remains the case that our curriculum and choice is a distinctive feature and I am pleased that recent government data reflected this well. Some schools now have only one option at GCSE! In many cases only one Modern Foreign Language is available or only Double Science.

I have had some discussions as to whether this narrowing of the curriculum is likely to be a national debate. I'm not sure. I think there are many national priorities at the moment and I'm reliably told that potholes are more important than education!

Anyway, wherever we are with our educational journey, C.S.Lewis's wise words provide much guidance: *"You can't go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending."*

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P J Hurst', with a stylized flourish at the end.

P J Hurst
Headteacher