



# Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents

13<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## **Headteacher's Update Letter 2024/2025 – Letter 8 (out of 8)**

I hope this letter finds you well. A speedy round up as the end of this half-term approaches. A reminder that tomorrow is a Professional Development (PD) day for staff, so students are not in school.

### **Term Dates 2025-2026**

As you will be aware from this year's calendar, we have shared provisional dates. In terms of Professional Development (PD) days (non-pupil days), we have now agreed:

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026

In addition, I propose to utilise our current freedoms as an 'academy' to make Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 a transition day for the new Year 7 and new Year 12 cohorts. This would mean that Years 8-11 and Year 13 would return on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September.

We have identified many areas for training that we want to carry out next year. Some of this will be around compliance but we also want time to ensure that teaching and learning is top of the agenda.

### **National Apprenticeship Week**

This week we have welcomed many employers into school to talk about apprenticeship opportunities. There has also been some coverage about the apprenticeship route in the media. Locally, EDF Sizewell, Ensors Accountants and NHS ESNEFT all offer apprenticeship routes. If you require further information do contact the Careers Department within school. This year, for example, we have a few Year 13 students who have applied for degree apprenticeships with EDF Sizewell.

### **Canteen and Canteen Payment Procedures**

Mr Mugliston, our Business Manager, has asked me to thank you for keeping accounts in credit. There have been very few instances of students being unable to buy lunch as a result. He does though remind me that the half term is a good time to check your Gateway account and bring it into credit.

The team are currently working to link the cashless system to the new school administration system called Arbor. More details to follow over the coming weeks. On a related theme, the catering contract tender process is very much under way ready for 1<sup>st</sup> September.

### **Critical Incident and 'Lockdown'**

As you may know from the media, a very tragic event recently occurred in a school in Sheffield. I have written to the school to express that our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time.

This does raise the issue of how schools manage critical incidents. Much depends on the actual scenario. We have a warning bell which is 9 short rings of the bell, 3 times (so 9,9,9). This would advise everyone to go to their nearest safe and secure place. This is broadly in line with the Government's counterterrorism advice which talks of **run, hide, tell**. I also like the mantra of **see it, say it, sort it**.

We will be re-iterating these points to staff again tomorrow with the aim of a 'lockdown walk through' with students after half-term.

As with everything there is a balance here between adequate planning and keeping it in perspective.

### **Summary**

It has been a busy half-term. Year 11 and Year 13 have been busy with preparatory examinations. Although I know that many have revision plans, some rest is also deserved. The ski-trip departs tomorrow, and I am assured that there will be enough snow on the slopes.

Whatever your plans, I wish you a pleasant half-term. Students return on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February.

Yours sincerely,



P J Hurst  
Headteacher