



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

Headteacher: P J Hurst BA MA MBA NPQH
Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form
Saxtead Road, Framlingham, Suffolk, IP13 9HE

T: 01728 723493
E: inmail@thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk
thomasmills.suffolk.sch.uk

Dear Parents,

22nd May 2025

Headteacher's Update Letter 2024/2025 – Letter 11 (out of 11)

As ever, I trust that this letter finds you well. This half term has absolutely flown by. Examinations are very much under way and students at all levels have responded well. I hope that their continued revision and examinations go as smoothly.

Update on School Vision and Mission Statement

Starting with some parental responses to a survey at the beginning of March, ideas for our new vision and mission statement were recently shared with School Council and tutor groups. Our students, your children, are smart and honest. They balked at anything that seemed too corporate. They also wanted something that captured the distinctive features of the school which, as you will know, offers many opportunities beyond the classroom, too. We had originally used the word 'excellence' and the students felt that this came across as pressurising. They recognised the importance of quality but, in their articulate way, acknowledged that things are not always perfect.

The working group has also made some use of AI and the box below contains our recommendation:

VISION:

Together we aim high, discover talents, and build a brighter future.

MISSION:

We offer a rich and balanced curriculum with a broad range of subjects at GCSE and A Level. Our aim is to help every student discover and excel in their talents. We place high-quality teaching at the centre of our approach, strengthened by shared best practice and evidence-based research. Beyond the classroom, students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and enriching trips. At the heart of this are excellent social relationships, underpinned by a strong pastoral and inclusive culture where tutors know their students as individuals. With support and challenge along the way, we prepare young people not just for exams, but to make a difference in the wider world.

Pupil Numbers and Current Year Eight

Although it's pleasing to see good interest in the school, growth at various times can present some challenges. As a rural school, we would expect some fluctuation in pupil numbers to try and plan accordingly. However, we are proposing to, in effect, put a cap on numbers for our current Year Eight to 160 pupils. This would not prevent the school from taking more pupils such as children who are looked after, or if directed to do so by the Local Authority or an Independent Admissions Panel.

Ideally, we would aim to have a stable whole school roll of around 1,050. This supports the educational community we aspire to achieve, with a good range of options, sensible class sizes and where the individual student is known, exercises self-discipline, and enjoys good working relationships.

Walking To and From School

Given the government's focus on sustainability, I should be encouraging students to walk or cycle to school where they can. However, this option only really applies to about a third of our students and this message is really for them.

From a safety point of view, students who walk should stick to footpaths. As some pavements in Framlingham are narrow, it's important that students are aware of this when walking in groups.

It's also important to be mindful of local residents and recently we have heard of incidents where gardens have suffered some damage. Our Behaviour Policy does apply out of school as students in uniform represent the school. In summary, students must keep away from any gardens and be mindful of all their surroundings.

It is important still to be mindful of what used to be called 'stranger danger.' There are, sadly, young people as well as adults, who can pose a risk. Children and young people should never accept anything from a stranger and certainly never accept a lift in a car. Please encourage your children to report anything suspicious to the school. This can also include Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Security

With the last point very much in mind, I am meeting with some senior staff to review some aspects of security especially around the King's Avenue entrance and the East Car Park. Arguably, allowing access for entry and exit creates a weak security point. I hope this message comes across as precautionary rather than alarmist. It has been informed by a reasonable suspicion that we have had about security and confirmed by speaking to the Police. In addition to any measures above, a 'culture of vigilance' is equally important.

Arbor Payment System Switchover

Mr Mugliston, Business Manager, has previously advised you that after half term all payments to the school including those for canteen purchases, can be made via the Arbor App and that School Gateway will no longer function. We do ask for your support in keeping your child's account in credit. I understand this is especially important during the handover period.

Gala Concert

Many of you will be aware that in March we enjoyed a wonderful celebration of Music at Snape Maltings Concert Hall. The ensemble included school orchestras and choirs, chamber ensembles and soloists in addition to 80 former pupils and staff. The following link takes you to a recording of the event.

[Gala Concert now available to view online | Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form](#)

Use of the Field at Lunchtimes

We have lovely grounds and when the weather is dry (and hopefully sunny), students can use the North Field at lunchtime. However, students are expected to start leaving the field by 1.53pm. By the time the warning bell goes at 1.55pm they should be closer to Form Rooms so that afternoon registration starts and finishes on time. Most staff on duty sound a siren or usher students in.

A perennial problem can be litter, and we do ask that litter is placed in bins.

National Educational Developments

There seem to be a lot of things happening in the background nationally. There is a Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill progressing through Parliament. There have also been reviews around curriculum and inspection frameworks. We wait for some certainty as to what will be proposed. I will keep you updated but feel it best to wait for some specific changes rather than speculate about what may or may not happen. There is some new careers guidance, also.

Support for Examinations

Given the significance of examinations, parents may find some of the following links helpful in supporting well-being:

[Exam Stress | How To Deal with Exam Stress | YoungMinds](#)

[Exam stress - How can parents help? - BBC Bitesize](#)

[Revision and Self-Care | Anna Freud](#)

We hope that examinations continue to go well and do not hesitate to contact us if your son or daughter needs additional pastoral support.

Framlingham Gala Fest

This weekend sees the Framlingham Gala Fest with fun for all the family. I understand that the theme is VE Day. I know that there are a lot of visitors to Framlingham. The Police have written a letter to parents which is essentially about young people making the right choices. They are, of course, taught this in Personal Development but it can be too easy to get caught up with the pressure of peer groups, especially when the atmosphere is so party-like. I trust that the event is enjoyable and safe.

The letter can be accessed [HERE](#).

Summary

It has been a busy half term and, although short, I sense that students and staff are ready for a break. School life is never like a 9-to-5 job with homework, assessment, trips and expeditions making the days longer but hopefully very fulfilling. I understand that the D of E expedition to the Chilterns was very successful last weekend. Whatever you do, I hope that you enjoy the week, and the weather is fine. Students and staff return on Monday 2nd June.

Yours sincerely,



P J Hurst
Headteacher