



# Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents

18<sup>th</sup> July 2025

## **Headteacher's Update Letter 2024/2025 – Letter 13 (out of 13)**

I hope this letter finds you well. We have reached the end of the academic year, and the summer holiday is upon us. It's been a very busy few weeks with Activities Week and Sports Day just some of the highlights. I write with some matters of whole school interest with an eye on both a safe summer but also for a strong start back in September.

### **Reports**

Reports have been issued this week and provide an opportunity to reflect on the year but also to establish some new goals from September.

I enjoyed commenting on the Year Ten reports. Collectively, there were many achievements across the curriculum and a very good engagement with extra-curricular activities. Along with their successful work experience, the year group is on track for GCSE success next summer.

### **Attendance**

Quite rightly, the government wants schools to champion attendance which has been very much affected by the pandemic. A few points which make you think:

- Research shows that students who are absent at the start of a term, even for just one day, are more likely to develop persistent absence. This suggests that schools should take a stronger line much earlier on.
- Instead of thinking about attendance figures we should think of absence figures. In this context, 5% absence, approximately ten days in a school year, would generally be high.
- In summary, attendance below 95% and 5% absence generally requires some intervention. In this school, attendance over 96% (4% absence) leads to successful outcomes in line with academic expectations.

In summary, attendance matters, and a general target should be 96% attendance or above and no more than 4% absence.

### **Summer Safety Including Water Safety**

With the summer holidays approaching and hot weather, Suffolk Police have issued some resources to promote water safety:

- Dangers in water
- Why Summer can be a dangerous time
- Beach safety advice
- What to do if you, or someone you are with, falls into open water

Unfortunately, the resources are password protected. However, HM Coastguard continue to share excellent advice, and this can be accessed via the following link:

[Safety advice | HM Coastguard UK](#)

As a summary, some top tips are below:

- Choose a lifeguarded beach
- Check local signs and flags for risk

- Know your location
- Remember float to live
- Look after each other
- In an emergency, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard

On a related theme, I have had correspondence from a Community Interest Company who manage Holton Pits near Halesworth. The area has a large lake but from what I understand it is not suitable for swimming. There are many underwater hazards and sharp metal.

We also must be mindful that as it has been dry weather, disposable barbeques can be dangerous and can risk fire, especially to the countryside and the biodiversity.

You will understand that we all want the summer to be as fun and safe as possible.

### **Uniform**

The Summer Holidays are a good opportunity to purchase uniform and ensure good standards. Our website contains the uniform requirements and can be found by following this [LINK](#). We appreciate your support with this.

### **Suffolk Army Cadet Force (SACF)**

Recently I had a letter from SACF, and the following link gives you an indication of a wide range of activities undertaken.

[Suffolk Army Cadets | Army Cadets UK](#)

SACF, in line with many youth organisations, can develop many attributes in young people including communication, leadership, resilience, team working, social skills and confidence, for example. I think the sense of belonging is quite strong. A number of students are members of uniformed groups and were proud to wear their uniform at school on Remembrance Day and, more recently, VE Day.

### **Autumn Term Return**

Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> September	Professional Development Day for Staff
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Professional Development Day for Staff
Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September	New Year 7 and new Year 12 start
Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> September	All other year groups return

### **Online Safety and Online Safety Act**

Although I will do all I can to encourage young people to stay away from screens and enjoy the fresh air, it would be naïve of me not to consider online safety. I would urge parents to keep a close eye on your child's use of any online technology. The NSPCC have some good advice about 'talking to your child about online safety' and this can be accessed [HERE](#). The Internet Watch Foundation also provides many helpful resources and also includes a reporting function. Their website can be accessed [HERE](#).

You may have seen from the news that the Online Safety Act is coming into force next week. In summary, tech firms have to do more to protect young people from harmful content on social media, search and gaming apps and websites.

Mr Wheeler, Head of Personal Development, recently ran a very helpful session for parents based on the tv drama 'Adolescence.' We are happy to arrange some further sessions on safeguarding topics for parents.

We also need to be mindful of cybersecurity, and I offer a few helpful tips:

- Use strong passwords
- Be cautious of phishing scams
- Keep software updated
- Utilise multi-factor authentication

## **Summary**

It has been an extraordinarily busy year with many highlights, and I thank the community for its support. A good education is very much a partnership. As I have mentioned in the *Outlook* magazine, we are very sorry to say goodbye to some long-serving staff. However, I am pleased to mention that the calibre of the new staff joining us is very good indeed.

You may enjoy seeing some of the staff and former students paying tribute to Mr Hanley BEM via the following [LINK](#)

I am also pleased to report that we do, technically, have a balanced budget but it is very tight indeed. The focus from the Department for Education has very much been on efficiencies and I keep hearing of stories about schools, trusts and cuts.

As always, I hope that education returns as a priority. I would argue there is no better investment!

However, the summer break is certainly welcome, and I hope for you all that it is filled with fun, sunshine, as well as safety. We look forward to seeing everyone return in September ready for a year focussed on strong teaching and learning.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



P J Hurst  
Headteacher