



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents

16th September 2025

Headteacher's Update Letter 2025/2026 – Letter 2 (out of 2)

Following on from last week's letter, I write with some updates on a wider variety of topics.

New Ofsted Framework

You may have seen on the news that a new inspection framework is being rolled out from November 2025. The areas under scrutiny are:

- Safeguarding
- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Personal development and well-being
- Post 16 provision
- Leadership and governance

The results will be presented on a new report card. Further information as well as some introductory videos can be found on the Ofsted website:

[Ofsted confirms changes to education inspection and unveils new-look report cards - GOV.UK](#)

Parents' Survey

It is always recommended that schools arrange for feedback, and it seems very sensible that we use the Ofsted Parents' View Survey. Could I please ask that you complete the survey using the following link:

[Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form | Ofsted Parent View](#)

It would be brilliant if we could get 100% of parents responding. Thank you in advance.

Mobile Phone Policy

You will be very aware of the school's policy on mobile phones. Last year there was a significant decrease in confiscations, and we want this trend to continue. For Years 7 to 11 mobile phones should be switched off and out of sight in lockers. If a phone is confiscated a detention is issued and parents should collect the mobile phone. I would consider a suspension for a more serious situation.

Behaviour Policy

It is an annual requirement that I alert parents to our Behaviour Policy and expectations. I thought a speedy update would be helpful:

- We expect all students to follow reasonable instructions
- The focus should be on teaching and learning
- The Charter of Values underpins our ethos
- Self-discipline and good working relationships is the norm here
- The school can permanently exclude, and our policy outlines the circumstances
- Government supports headteachers to discipline for misbehaviour in school, when representing school, travelling to and from school, and some situations in the community (for example, inappropriate online behaviour)

- Visitors typically remark on the calm and purposeful atmosphere, and we want this to continue. In my experience, most students naturally adhere to our expectations. Where this is not the case, teachers follow a protocol which is:
 - Remind
 - Reset
 - Remove
 - Restore

Government guidance supports the important role that parents have in maintaining good behaviour. There is a Department for Education Guide:

[A guide for parents on school behaviour and exclusion - GOV.UK](#)

Uniform Expectations

It's fair to say we have enjoyed a very good start to the term, and students have looked (and acted) very smart. I would draw your attention to one aspect for Years 7 to 11 which relates to jewellery: "Ear loops, hoops, large earrings, and nose rings are not suitable for school. Movement around the school at times becomes congested and such articles become a safety hazard." Our policy also supports that other forms of jewellery (exception of a wristwatch) are not acceptable.

Attendance Matters

You will know that this remains a national issue, but I think that some very good progress is being made. We are following a Department for Education initiative this year which involves tutors following up with welfare calls. This building of relationships and sense of belonging is very much in line with the school ethos. Last year the national focus seemed to be on fines – and whilst I agree they have their place, and we support the county council's line, it is not the ideal strategy.

More significant is that every school day does count and this can be seen in achievement at GCSE. Students with an annual absence rate of 5% or more will start to under-achieve with significant under-achievement at 7% or more.

Dealing with Worries – Speak Up, Speak Out

It's never been easy growing up, and arguably there are many more challenges in our 'modern' world. Teachers and Heads of Year will share many avenues in which students can share concerns but one is our online reporting tool called 'speak up, speak out.' This can be found at the top of the very first page of our website.

Open Week and Open Evening

Our Open Week is from Monday 29th September and from 9.30am there will be presentations, followed by a tour. Our traditional Open Evening is on Thursday 2nd October. If you know of any prospective parents interested, please signpost them to contact the school. Our Sixth Form Open Evening will follow on Thursday 20th November.

Letter from the Prime Minister

Recently, the Department for Education asked us to send to you a copy of a letter from the Prime Minister. This is under the title 'the best start in life' and be accessed using the following link:

[Prime Minister's letter to parents and carers on Best Start in Life – The Education Hub](#)

Friends of Thomas Mills (Lottery)

The Friends of Thomas Mills are an established group of parents and staff who fundraise for the school. Over the years many extras have been provided, for example, new minibuses. Their AGM is on Wednesday 17th September, 6pm in the library. All parents are most welcome to join as well as support the events.

The Friends have asked if I can support one of their ventures which is a lottery. More information can be found through the following link:

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/thomas-mills-high-school-and-sixth-form>

From experience I know that such items can raise the odd question about the suitability of lotteries. It has long been the case that parent teacher associations have organised similar ventures and when I was at primary school myself (and that's a very long time ago) the parents had a 100 club. It is, of course, voluntary and there would be limits to the number of entries.

Summary

I appreciate there is a lot of information and there are still further items we would like to share! I am planning on writing a letter focussed on teaching and learning and many years ago a fantastic Sixth Form student provided some great artwork which I shall seek to use again.

We have a termly magazine called 'Outlook' and we use this to celebrate lots of wonderful news about students and the great activities that take place. From time to time, individual students do great things in their communities, please do share these with us.

I think the students have settled in very well to school life and we very much hope for a very successful year.

Now for those of you good enough to reach the end you may expect to find a quote or a little story! Earlier I briefly mentioned my own primary school. The school itself had been a secondary school and in 1958 they entered a competition which demonstrated technical and creative skills in a fifty-minute film. If you appreciate some nostalgia the video can be accessed on you tube:

[Walton on the Naze Secondary School \(Walton-le-Soken\) Film Trouble For Jenny 1958](#)

Yours sincerely,



P J Hurst
Headteacher