



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents,

5th June 2026

Headteacher's update Letter 2025/2026 (Letter 9)

Focus on Curriculum

As I mentioned in my last letter, I write with a focus on the future curriculum. Although any likely changes will have an impact on families with younger children, we are keen to gauge the views of all parents and would very much appreciate your completion of the survey which can be found [HERE](#).

What are the drivers for change?

Towards the end of last year, the Government received a report called *Building a world-class curriculum for all*. The Government's response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review will have implications for all schools. A further driver is recent legislation, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which will require academies to teach the revised national curriculum from September 2028. Finally, the relatively new inspection framework may be a lever for change.

What are the implications from the Government's response?

The following are very broad points from the 61 pages of response:

- Importance of strong foundations – “subjects unlock all others”
- Mastery of listening, speaking and writing; love of reading; excellence in maths
- Digital, financial and media literacy
- Revitalised arts offer
- Access to sports, culture and nature
- Civic engagement

To achieve this, the Government will:

- Refresh programmes of study for each curriculum subject in 2027 for first teaching in 2028
- Explore qualifications which recognise achievements in languages, earlier than GCSE
- Revitalise arts education
- Improve Key Stage 3 curriculum with a stronger focus on assessment
- New secondary framework for oracy, reading and writing
- Assessment of pupil progress in writing and maths in Year 8

What is the school's response?

In many respects, we should feel quite pleased with the developments. The review supports a broad and balanced curriculum which we already have. The arts, languages or even separate sciences, are already integral to the curriculum and ethos of the school. We already work with specialist staff which will be a barrier for many other schools.

However, the Government states that pupils in key stage 3 should have the “full three years of the key stage...” This is not just about curriculum subjects and includes wider enrichment. There would be consequences for our current GCSE options which are chosen in Year Eight.

Within the review are details about the specific changes to subjects but our Heads of Department will look at this, alongside their usual curriculum planning.

With regards to examinations, the Government wants to reduce the time spent in GCSE assessment.

Are there any implications for post-16 education?

There have been separate documents for post-16 but a key development is the creation of a pathway called 'V' Levels which would be the only vocational qualifications. We will look to introduce some of the new qualifications when they are available which would complement our existing curriculum offer.

Are there any implications for Primary Schools?

Yes. In addition to the national curriculum, the Government expects all primary schools to use a systematic synthetic phonics programme. Citizenship will be compulsory in key stages 1 and 2. There will also be a library for all primary schools.

What is the Government's timeline?

Spring 2027	Revised national curriculum published
September 2028	Schools to teach the new national curriculum
September 2029	Some new GCSEs introduced

How does this link to Ofsted Inspections?

The new framework has a section called curriculum and teaching. This includes the following points:

- Curriculum is well planned and sequenced
- "Generally taught well"
- Teacher expertise
- Systematic synthetic phonics (This is implied for secondary schools too which is different to the review)
- Assessment used well
- Targeted academic support

Ofsted is very clear that it does not have preferences, where there is a degree of school choice. Ofsted rightly asserts there should be 'ambition for all'.

What are our next steps?

Although many of the changes are for the future, I think it would be very helpful to gather a wide community response to aspects of our curriculum. This would support our current evidence base, as well as provide a steer to consider proposed changes. There are 10 questions which include options as well as timetables. I very much appreciate your time in completing the survey. We will close the survey on Monday 22nd June 2026.

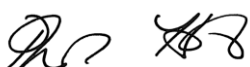
Summary

Approximately every ten years there is a government led focus on the curriculum, and I always welcome these debates. My concern this time is that some of the proposals don't necessarily connect to other important areas such as attendance, engagement, behaviour and SEND for example. However, nothing is set in stone.

It was nearly forty years since the then Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, introduced the principle of the national curriculum. At the same time, they gave some autonomy to very good schools who could 'opt out' of local authority control.

The cycle of education continues, and I look forward to sharing results and any unfolding proposals with you.

Yours sincerely,



Mr P J Hurst
Headteacher