



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

Headteacher: P J Hurst BA MA MBA MSc NPQH

Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form
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Dear Parents and Carers,

16th July 2026

Headteacher's Update Letter 2025/2026 (Letter 11)

I hope this letter finds you well. Since I last wrote to you on the 26th June, we have continued to have a warm spell of weather. However, we have also enjoyed a wonderful Activities Week, Music Concert, and many other events, including Sports Day, as well as Comicon. I very much envisage that this letter closes the school year with some items of whole school interest.

Curriculum Survey

Thank you for the responses we received following my letter on the 5th June. As some of the questions were the same as a previous survey, I have been able to provide some comparisons below.

	January 2023 Curriculum Survey	May 2026 Curriculum Survey
Number of responses	117	73
Support for current three-year Key Stage 4 and choosing options in Year 8	84%	88%
Support for the wide range of subject choices at GCSE	99%	100%
Support for the wide range of subject choices in the Sixth Form	98%	99%
Agree that following subject choices from Year 9 leads to better engagement	90%	90%
Agree that GCSE blocks and A Level be created by student preferences	85%	92%
Preference for a one-week timetable	91%	74%
Preference for 50 min lessons	45 respondents	39 respondents
Preference for 60-minute lessons	35 respondents	22 respondents
Disagree or strongly disagree that the school should focus on the core subjects at GCSE and have a narrower range of options	93%	88%
Agree with the school's approach of being deliberately below the national average for class sizes and pupil/teacher ratios	98%	100%

I think it is interesting that there is a change in views around the one-week timetable. Next year we will need to undertake a curriculum review so that we are fully prepared to teach the new National Curriculum from September 2028.

Finance and Premises Update

I am pleased to say that we will have a balanced budget for next year. We are also delighted that we will receive over £1 million of extra government funding to replace the water and heating systems in the older areas of the school. In addition, we continue to benefit from the Framlingham Foundation's support, and a new covered area will be built between the Sports Centre entrance and the Canteen.

Staffing

We are fully staffed for September, and trustees and I were impressed with the calibre of candidates that we met this year. In terms of posts of responsibility, we are very sad to say goodbye to our Head of English, Mrs Peers, and our Head of Learning Support, Mr Day. We have appointed experienced and qualified leaders and will be welcoming Mrs Peirson as our new Head of English and Mrs Chikhaoui as Head of Learning Support.

Warm Weather

As mentioned earlier we have continued to experience a further spell of warm weather. Everyone is adapting and mitigations around uniform, hydration, shade, hats, and even sunscreen are all helping.

The default situation must be to keep schools open and ensure a good focus on education. We would certainly close if there was a red alert as this is "dangerous."

There are other mitigations to consider, and breathable fabrics such as linen or cotton are good materials. In summary, thank you for your support.

Branded Uniform

You may be aware that all schools are now limited to the number of branded items which can be required. We are compliant with this. Over the holidays it would be helpful if you could check uniform compliance. It would be great to start September smart, prepared and ready to learn.

Attendance and the New Schools Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) System

Attendance continues to be a key theme for everyone associated with education. There is absolutely no doubt that there is a strong link between attendance, achievement and life chances.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by the County Council. The school's role is to report so the Local Authority can undertake their responsibilities.

However, we prefer the focus to be on good relationships and the work with form tutors has had a great impact this year.

In terms of school targets, 95% or above correlates with excellent achievement. As you look at school reports, it is worth noting this.

I should though congratulate the many students who have achieved 100% attendance.

East Suffolk Council and the Local Plan

The Council is preparing a new Local Plan which will guide how the area grows. They are inviting feedback from all stakeholders, and this includes young people too. The following link includes a QR code which can be used.

Link: [Help Shape the New Local Plan](#)

Mobile Phones

The law has now changed, and it is a statutory requirement for all schools to be mobile phone free environments by default. Our mobile phone free policy is now embedded but we will review this next year.

Allergies and Anaphylaxis

New regulations come into force at the start of next term. This will include new policies and whole staff training which is already underway. We will all need to reduce the risk of allergen exposure in children with a food allergy. For parents of children with allergies, lunch boxes should be clearly labelled with the name of the child for whom they are intended.

There are adaptations that can be put in place for Food Technology for example to prevent cross-contamination.

Summary

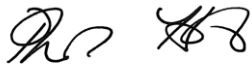
Thank you to all our school community for their support this year. Our termly magazine *Outlook* includes many highlights and the wide array of activities on offer here.

I recently enjoyed being the Guest of Honour at the Year 10 Achievement Assemblies. Their work experience week was very successful. It was also great joining many Year 7 families as they received their Copper Award as part of the Mills Award.

I very much hope that you all have a good summer and that you all stay safe.

We look forward to seeing all students returning on Thursday 3rd September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P J Hurst'.

Mr P J Hurst
Headteacher