



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents and Carers,

9th September 2026

Headteacher's Update Letter 2026/2027 (Letter 1)

I hope this letter finds you well and that you had an enjoyable summer. It's great to be back and students have settled in very well.

Firstly, a special welcome to new families who have joined us. We have once again seen strong numbers in Year Seven, and a continued increase in the Sixth Form. Our current school roll is about 1,090 including the Sixth Form of about 250 students. These numbers support our aspirations as well as our curriculum and pastoral care (*"large enough to offer a range of subjects with specialist staff but small enough to know students as individuals"*).

I write these update letters from time to time on matters of whole school interest. We also have a termly magazine called *Outlook* and we use these to celebrate all the wonderful events and activities which take place.

This letter relate to wider themes of safety and safeguarding as well as government priorities.

Emergency Situations

In assemblies I have included 3 emergencies which could be described as follows:

- **EVACUATION** – where the threat is inside and we move outside away from danger
- **INVACUATION** – where the threat is outdoors and we move inside to safety
- **LOCKDOWN** – where the threat is outside and we move to a secure and safe area

There is new guidance around Protective Security which mostly applies to other settings (for example stadiums or theatres), it is expected that schools already have procedures in place.

We will practice some scenarios so that we reinforce the necessary procedures. For lockdown we utilise the lesson change over bell with 9 short bursts, three times. The fire alarm is a separate alarm. We can also utilise the technology to share messages.

The aim is to reduce alarm and anxiety but to ensure that, through practice, we reinforce the importance of staying calm and following instructions.

In the case of an invacuation during social times, we can utilise tannoy loudspeakers to issue instructions.

Safety Travelling to and from School

A proportion of students travel by bus, and I would appreciate your help re-iterating the following points:

- In the morning, wait for buses sensibly for up to thirty minutes in case of delay
- Remain seated safely on the bus, allowing the driver to focus on the road ahead
- Behave respectfully towards each other

For cyclists:

- Ensure cycles are roadworthy

- Use a cycle helmet
- Have reflective clothing

For drivers:

- Please be mindful of our residents
- Please note that the Car Park opposite the school has been decommissioned following the return to the landowner

For pedestrians:

- Keep to pavements
- Walk sensibly and be mindful of others passing

Meningitis

Last week I contacted the Health Security Agency following media reports about meningitis. I understand that a situation emerged during the summer holiday and seems to have been managed, and hopefully everyone involved is recovering well.

Although there is no known risk to our school community, I thought the [Meningitis and Septicaemia factsheet is useful and can be read HERE](#).

Viral meningitis is rarely serious. It's bacterial meningitis that is serious and requires urgent treatment with antibiotics. The symptoms that emerge can include:

- Headache
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Neck stiffness/ joint pains
- Drowsiness (confusion – coma)
- Dislike of bright lights
- Rash of red-purple spots or bruises

The bacteria (meningococcus) is picked up through very close prolonged contact (e.g. living in the same house) with someone carrying it.

Mobile Phones and Behaviour

As advised last term, all schools are mobile phone free by default. This strengthens our stance and is very welcome.

It is an annual requirement that I draw your attention to our Behaviour Policy. This is on the website, and policies can be accessed from the 'information tab'. Self-discipline is a key value here and for most young people this works well. We all want the focus to be on teaching and learning. The highest sanction is permanent exclusion. There is government guidance around this, and it is a last resort. It was used last year.

Improvements to the Site (Estate)

With the generous support of the Framlingham Foundation, a new canopy has been built connecting the Canteen with the Sports Centre entrance. There are some further groundworks to be completed but it is already a welcome addition.

Plans are well underway for the significant government grant (Just under £1million) to improve heating and water in the older areas of the school. Some of the work will be undertaken during term time and we will issue safety notices as appropriate.

It remains the case that care is always needed around the site. Pavements are affected by the weather (too much rain or not enough) affecting tree roots. It is always important that everyone walks sensibly around the site.

Open Morning and Open Evening

Our Open Mornings are from Monday 21st to Friday 25th September. Our Open Evening takes place on Thursday 24th September. More information is contained on our website which can be accessed here [Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form | Framlingham, Suffolk](#).

New Government and Governance

I mentioned in assembly about the change in Prime Minister and the link to leadership of the largest party in the House of Commons. This may signal some changes to education policy although the announcements around technical education and destinations for young people are ongoing. We have already contributed to the Government's consultation on post-16 pathways.

Earlier in the year there was a Government White Paper which included many areas especially around the curriculum and qualifications. This did include the intention for all schools to be in strong trusts although no timescale was set.

In the meantime, our trust remains a single academy trust and our Board oversee important aspects of the school's work. They are more than the traditional community governors and the focus is very much on skills. We are very fortunate that we have a range of skills including finance, HR, audit and risk, safeguarding, legal, health and safety as well as education itself.

As a single academy trust we are very much focussed on our school community although we keep a close eye on national developments.

Our Board includes two parent trustees, and our Vice Chair Kate Archer's term of office comes to an end next month; however, Kate is willing to stand again. We have fully utilised Kate's diligent skills around HR and recruitment, safeguarding, as well as education. If any parent is interested, please contact us as soon as possible and no later than Tuesday 15th September. We can then discuss a way forward with our Governance Professional (clerk).

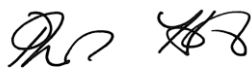
Summary

As I said at the beginning, we have had a good start to the term and students have settled in very well. There were some excellent results last summer with just under 50% of A Level grades being A*-B and at GCSE over 75% of grades were above Grade 4.

I very much want teaching and learning to be the focus this year and we keep looking to improve outcomes further. There is no doubt that a good education opens up many wonderful opportunities.

I very much wish you and your family a very successful year and look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Mr P J Hurst
Headteacher