



Thomas Mills

High School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents and Carers,

21st September 2026

Headteacher's Update Letter 2026/2027 (Letter 2)

I hope this letter finds you well. I am pleased to report that students have settled well into good routines although they will be ready for a well-deserved rest over half-term. This letter updates you on several items of whole-school interest especially to parents of Years 7 and 8 and potential changes ahead for the curriculum.

Changes to 'Key Stage Three' Curriculum

Earlier this year, legislation made it clear that all schools (and 'academies' – which are schools not under Local Authority control) would have to teach a new National Curriculum which for Key Stage Three covers the first three years of secondary school.

We currently have the third year, Year Nine, as a transition year which has enabled students to start GCSE courses earlier. This has served us well. Students are more engaged with their learning, and we have, historically, made strong progress.

We will have to change our arrangements. The biggest change for us is when students choose their options and we are reviewing this for current Years 7 and 8. The detail of the new National Curriculum is expected in the Spring of 2027.

Changes to GCSE courses

At the same time, GCSE courses are going to change, and the government wants to introduce more vocational options for what they call 'Key Stage Four' or Years Ten and Eleven. These will be designed to be two-year courses.

Our aim, going forward will be to maintain the breadth of options which is a strong, distinctive feature of this school. To do this we need to evaluate the core curriculum carefully. We are, perhaps, generous with our non-examined core which includes PE, PHSE and RE for example.

Possible Changes to Timetable from September 2027

The above changes lead us to consider our timetable structure from September 2027:

- Consideration of a two-week timetable
- Change from a 30-period week (50-minute lessons) to a 25-period week (60-minute lessons)

There are some advantages for a two-week timetable and a 25-period week:

- Time can still be found for the non-examined core
- Allocation can be balanced more effectively for Year 12 and Year 13
- There would be fewer double lessons and one hour is a better learning time (allowing retrieval and recap as well as new content)

In the short-term there would not be a change to the start and finish times of the school day. This requires a longer period of consultation and in our case, Suffolk County Council's Passenger Transport would be a key stakeholder.

We have started to discuss these changes with our Academy Trust Board who are the Responsible Body for this school.

It is possible to make National Curriculum changes without changing the school day.

At this stage, any representations are always welcome. If common themes emerge, we can produce a FAQ – Frequently Answered Questions.

Mr Ward, Assistant Headteacher, is overseeing the implementation of the new curriculum and timetable. Both he and I have worked in different schools and have seen the positive effect of different timetables.

Post-16 Pathways Consultation

Although this is a government consultation, they have started implementation and a key change are vocational qualifications which have the same time and value as traditional A Levels. We will explore some of these new V Levels from September 2028. This will affect Year 10 and below.

Sixth Form Open Evening – Thursday 5th November 2026

We have changed the date of this Open Evening which enables families from other schools to join our own Year Eleven cohort. Details have been shared already.

Open Day and Open Evening

Thank you to everyone who supported these events. There has been good interest in the school. Correspondence has been positive especially about the atmosphere and the range of opportunities. As ever, our student speakers and guides are brilliant – authentic and enthusiastic.

National Year of Reading

This week is our Book Week which the Library and English Department would say it is the best week of the year. We are grateful to the Department for Education who have provided some funding for further books to the library as part of the National Year of Reading.

Legislation and Mobile Phones

Two years ago, we introduced a stronger stance which was that, for Years 7 to 11, mobile phones had to be kept in lockers. An amendment was made which was that phones could be collected at the end of lunch, switched off, and stored in the bottom of bags ensuring students could catch their buses on time.

In the meantime, legislation has now caught up, and students should **“not have access to their mobile phone throughout the school day.”** I think we can still justify the amendment above as an exception, but we need additional lockers. We will explore some specific mobile phone lockers.

In the meantime, your support for our policy and law is appreciated.

Safety – Travelling

The following points will help ensure the safety of all our community in the months ahead:

- Wear reflective clothing
- Be mindful of other pedestrians when using the pavements
- Walk - don't run

We are supportive of additional Pedestrian Crossings and have always spoken to the Town Council and local developers about this

For drivers we ask you to be mindful of:

- Residents' driveways especially any private roads
- Other pedestrians and speeds etc

Safety – Online

We all need to be vigilant with regards to online safety and parents will find the following information from the Southwest Grid for Learning helpful:

<https://swgfl.org.uk/online-safety/e-safety-facts/>

Alternatively, the London Grid for Learning has very clear guidance:

<https://parentsafe.lgfl.net/>

I am particularly concerned about Coms groups, and the following link will be of interest:

[Com Groups: A Parent's Guide to Online Safety](#)

The danger from Com Groups or the networks is the link between online connections and harmful off-line behaviour. The National Crime Agency has identified these groups as being linked to child sexual abuse, exploitation, coercion, self-harm, violence, cybercrime and other serious criminal activity.

Inclusion Strategy

As part of developing our Inclusion Strategy, we are seeking feedback from parents and carers about their experience of inclusion at the school. Inclusion means ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), can access learning, participate fully in school life and feel a sense of belonging, regardless of their background or personal circumstances. Your views will help us identify areas of strength and opportunities for further development as we continue to ensure that all pupils feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

The survey is anonymous and should take no more than two minutes to complete. We would be grateful if parents could complete the form by Friday 6th November.

[Parent Inclusion Survey – Fill out form](#)

Consultation on Development, Land West of Dennington Road, Framlingham

We have been sent details on the following development which is adjacent to our North Field. Further information is below:

<http://www.framlingham.mscott.co.uk/>

Summary

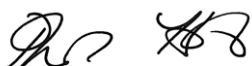
After half-term we will start work on our termly magazine *Outlook* which is usually an excellent round-up of the many wonderful events. Last week our Careers Fayre was well supported. This week we have enjoyed a wonderful Book Week as well as the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

Tonight is the first Musical Concert of the year. Unfortunately, I will miss this as I am visiting Moulsham High School in Chelmsford to look at several areas including curriculum.

Next half-term we have our school production of *Wizard of Oz* to look forward to.

In the meantime, thank you once again for your support. Tomorrow is a Professional Development day for staff and so we wish you a lovely half-term break.

Yours sincerely,



Mr P J Hurst
Headteacher