



The Priory School

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Dear Parents and Carers

I know you will be keen to hear about the initial return to school but I would like to start with thanking you all. I realise, given the media attention in the weeks preceding the start of term, that there will have been much discussion amongst families about the return to school and we appreciate the anxiety and trepidation that you and your child (or children) may have been feeling. Given that our attendance was close to 100% in all year groups, we could not have asked for more. Thank you for trusting and supporting us; it is greatly appreciated by all who work at The Priory.

It has been an absolute pleasure to see our students return. Whilst I cannot say that our corridors, classrooms and outside spaces are back to normal (given the manner in which we have reopened) it has given us all a sense of calm and normality to welcome our pupils back. As I visited classrooms and spoke to our young people, they were overwhelmingly positive about their return. Some said they had felt a little more nervous than usual but, by the time they were into their first lesson this was quickly forgotten. They have returned to us with a lot to digest given the detail of our new routine but they have embraced it with the realization of how important it is that we all follow it. Their willingness to get it right is a credit to them all.

Within our new routine it is far easier for our students to find their lessons, given there is minimal movement within their zones but this does mean that our staff are moving frequently. Teaching staff are now the ones finding their way from one side of school to the next. They have embraced this change without question, even though it adds much to their workload and organization. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and our support staff for showing such energy, drive and determination to make our return a successful one.

Extracurricular

As a school we pride ourselves on providing extra-curricular opportunities, visits and House events. We have placed a temporary halt on these. These events by their very nature often created an overlap of year groups or meant visiting places away from school. Whilst we navigate our 'new normal' we need to take time to settle into a regular routine, without disruption to lesson time. Clubs and activities are allowed under the government's guidance, where the year group bubble can be maintained. Once we are a little way into term we will start to launch year group events please encourage your child to attend, as it will help to build a sense of school not just being about lessons.

Uniform

Given our students have spent some time away from formal education it is perhaps unsurprising that we saw some infringement of certain aspects of the school's uniform policy on the first day.

However, we unapologetically place a high value on it being worn correctly at all times. I would like to remind girls that skirts are to be worn to the knee, and that boys should not wear hoodies at any time. Staff will continue to log and enforce this within school, as I am sure you will, at home. Priory School PE kit is to be worn on a day when your child has PE to avoid the need to use the changing rooms. However, again it must meet the school kit recommendations with no hooded tops allowed. Boys can wear plain black jogging bottoms to supplement the school shorts and the school jumper or the optional school kit fleece can be worn if the weather is colder. Full details of the school's uniform can be found on the school's website at <https://priory.tpstrust.co.uk/parents/uniform-information/>

Covid Reminders

A reminder that if your child is presenting any one of the main Covid Symptoms- high temperature, persistent cough or loss of taste or smell, that they should follow all advice from the NHS Test and Trace programme and not attend school until they are well - a minimum of 10 days – or have received a negative test result. We understand that children may have to self-isolate due to members of the household being under the same guidance. If they are well enough to complete school work it will be placed on Show My Homework so they do not fall behind. Please report their absence in the usual way to the school's absence phone line on 01743 284000.

If students wish to bring a face mask to be worn in the corridors and communal areas they are at liberty to do so. They need to ensure they make full use of the hand sanitizers in every classroom and communal areas and adhere to social distancing wherever possible, understanding that a face mask does not replace these measures. We would encourage them to bring in their own hand sanitizer where possible.

Parental presence on site

Whilst we are looking forward to the day that we can welcome you back on site, in the interests of health and safety, especially of our staff working in reception, I would like to remind you that parents/carers are not allowed on school site during the school day. If your child has forgotten something they should not be messaging you to ask them to bring something into school. Please ask them to communicate any concerns they may have to a member of staff and we will ensure they are supported, especially if it is in relation to accessing food at lunchtime.

There should be no drop off or pick up within the designated deliveries area inside the main entrance. We have been unable to receive deliveries to the kitchen on a couple of occasions because parents' cars have been parked here.

Money for lunch

Currently we are asking that students' lunch money be topped up via ParentPay. The revaluation machine in school has been suspended due to the fact we cannot have students queuing to use it and it involves the handling of cash by kitchen staff. If you have any issues with regard to accessing ParentPay, please contact us and we will resolve them for you.

Year 11 Interim Assessments

We will communicate with parents of Year 11 in more detail, in a separate letter but a reminder that during the summer we explained that there would be a set of more formal assessments on their return. These will take place at the end of September, in exam conditions but largely in classrooms. Teaching staff will ensure their classes are aware of the content and nature of the paper they will sit. These assessments will be an important means by which teaching staff can gauge understanding and any gaps in knowledge or skills. It is clear that the government's intention, at this stage is for there

to be a series of summer GCSE examinations and we need to ensure they are prepared. Additionally, if for any reason this could not take place or was revised to favour centre (teacher) assessed grades, we need to ensure we have enough evidence to support an accurate prediction, given our Year 10 exams were cancelled. We hope to hold more traditional mock examinations in January, next year.

Arrival times

Lastly whilst I'm always pleased to see students arriving promptly to school and being keen to attend, could I ask that students arrive as close to their allotted time as possible? Once on site students should make their way to their allocated zones. We have had some reports of large groups of students congregating in the streets close to school, on their way into school. We will remind them how unnerving this can be, especially at present, for local residents and the need to distance wherever possible. Please support us with reinforcing this at home too. I have included the staggered start times, below, as a reminder:

Year 7 and 11 8.25 am

Year 8 and 10 8.30 am

Year 9 8.35 am

I will continue to write to you on a regular basis to keep you up to date with important events and developments and I look forward to a time when I can welcome you all back into school and meet you in person.

Yours sincerely



Mrs A Pope
Headteacher