



**The Priory School**

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As promised I am writing to you with further details with regard to the latest Department for Education updates for schools as part of their Covid-19 operational guidance. We have discussed this at leadership level at school and I have also been involved in Shropshire Headteacher discussions as well as Trust level.

As you all know the Prime Minister made the decision this week to not move to Step 4 of the government's road map until 19<sup>th</sup> July, instead of the 21<sup>st</sup> June. I received an email update on Tuesday from the DfE which stated the below:

*It is our priority that all education and childcare settings deliver face-to-face, high quality provision to all children and students. At a time when further easing of restrictions has been paused, the current system of controls should continue to be implemented in education and childcare settings. This means settings should encourage staff, and students, where applicable, to continue to test twice weekly and student bubbles, where they exist, should stay in place.*

This change of date takes us to the end of the academic year and therefore we must continue to work under our current Covid risk assessment, structure of the school day and expectations around pupils working in year group bubbles, wearing facemasks in communal areas, insisting on high standards of hygiene and maintaining regular use of the LFT home testing kits to pick up asymptomatic cases.

The guidance goes on to state we should avoid large group gatherings of any description and we are not allowed events with 30 or more people outdoors. Students should remain in their year group bubbles at all times.

A member of the Shropshire Public Health team joined the Headteachers' meeting and painted a very clear picture of the situation in Shropshire and the West Midlands. The new Delta variant is responsible for a 50% increase in cases in the space of one week and this is largely amongst the young and unvaccinated. A number of primary and secondary schools are now back to seeing a closure of class and year group bubbles as well as large numbers of staff having to self-isolate.

Shropshire Heads have made a collective decision to pause Year 6 transition events as we are not allowed to break the Covid bubble from the primary school; this would have made meaningful transition activities very difficult as well as excluding some students who are the only one from their primary school from attending at all. The DfE guidance states '*This means that traditional transitional and open days are unlikely to be feasible this academic year*'. We will instead move to a

virtual information event for parents and hope to hold some activities for students in early September. A separate letter will be sent in relation to our planned Year 11 Leavers' event.

We will be re-enforcing messages with students in school and I know you will do the same at home. They have missed far too many face to face lessons already this year and I desperately want to avoid any instruction to groups of students to self-isolate but I will have to do this if we have a positive case in school. I also need to ensure staff in school are safe and I have a number who are still waiting for their second or first vaccination. As we get closer to the planned summer break I'm also very conscious that we do not want anything to happen that may affect people's plans to spend much needed time away.

**Please do not send students into school if they have any symptoms. If they do please ensure they have a PCR test, do not use the LFT home testing kits as these are only to be used to pick up cases where there are no symptoms.** Please contact [info@tpstrust.co.uk](mailto:info@tpstrust.co.uk) to report any of these cases.

We will ensure Mrs Wassall, our school matron, keeps regular communication with households where there are either symptoms, cases or you are awaiting results.

Hopefully this is the last hurdle we will encounter as we approach the end of the academic year and we will work incredibly hard at this end to get everyone one there safely and with the least amount of disruption possible. I very much value everything families and parents are doing to support us with this, on a daily basis.

Please keep in touch with us. If this picture changes or evolves I will let you know.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Pope".

Mrs A Pope  
**Headteacher**