



The Priory School

Headteacher: A Pope BA (Hons) PGCE MA
Longden Road, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, SY3 9EE

01743 284000
info@tpstrust.co.uk
www.tpstrust.co.uk

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As the end of term approaches (please note that this will be Friday 16th July), students have been involved in a range of activities, House Sports events and our virtual summer concert. It has been wonderful to note such high participation numbers throughout this term as we were able to provide a wider number of additional activities after the Easter holiday period.

I have written this letter a number of times over the past week, unsure of when the latest government guidance would arrive and when it did, I had to pause again due to a number of logistical issues this presented us with around the return date in September. I have summarised the main changes and implications below. Please take time to read these as it does mean our intended return date in September has now altered and is staggered.

Main changes from September in relation to the new government guidance

Structure of the school day

We will return to an 8.35am start and 3pm finish for all. There will be one whole-school 20-minute break at 10.40-11.00 and a return to a whole school lunch of 40 minutes from 1-1.40. As before, this does mean we will have to have a lunch rota with first and second sitting for Years 8 - 10 as our dining hall has never been big enough to have more than two year groups eating at the same time. This will alternate so that each year group is on first sitting for one week and second sitting the next. Year 11 have the privilege of being able to access the canteen first and will eat separately in the Drama Studio. Year 7 will have an earlier lunch at 12.45 at the start of the year, which will gradually revert to 1pm once they are used to the system.

Attendance

Attendance is compulsory for all groups of students however, a pupil should not be sent into school if they are displaying Covid symptoms. Please keep them at home and book them in for a PCR test. This will remain a regular feature into next year.

Zones and bubbles will disappear

Normal timetabling with access to all specialist classrooms will resume from September. We will be factoring in extra transition for Year 8 alongside Year 7 who will not

be as familiar with the layout of school as other year groups. However, please note the current government guidance does state we need to be ready to return to zones and bubbles if directed to do so should there be an increase in cases/Covid rates.

Facemasks

Facemasks will no longer have to be worn in classrooms and corridors by staff, students, or visitors. The only time they will reappear is if we are directed to do so, as a result of an increase in cases in school or the local area.

Assemblies and events

Gatherings such as these can resume. However, good ventilation should be a feature of all indoor gatherings and we may look to cap numbers on live events and productions.

Self-isolation

There will no longer be a need for large groups of students to self-isolate from 16th August. Test and trace will revert to the NHS. If someone is identified as a close contact, they will be directed to take a PCR test.

Testing

All students will be asked to take two voluntary LFT tests at the start of the academic year. The year groups will not fully return until these have been carried out and we are allowed to stagger their return to accommodate this. Tests should be 3-5 days apart. This will follow a similar set up, in our school Sports Hall, to that of the return to school back in March. Please see below for the revised return date of your child's year group to school.

Regular, twice weekly, asymptomatic testing for staff and students should be retained until the end of September when new guidance will be issued. We will continue to supply kits for students to use at home. If an LFT is positive the student or member of staff should self-isolate and take a PCR test within 2 days. If the PCR returns as negative the student can return to school.

Hygiene standards

We have already budgeted for an increase in cleaning throughout the school day in anticipation of a focus on this. We will continue to have cleaning staff presence during and after the school day to ensure frequently touched surfaces are regularly cleaned. We have a number of hand sanitiser dispensers around school and in corridors; we will retain these and ensure they are regularly refilled and will continue to place an emphasis on the washing of hands.

Uniform and PE kit

Standards of uniform did start to slip this year. Please refer to the school's uniform policy on our website to clarify any question you may have over specific items and expectations. PE changing facilities will reopen and therefore pupils should attend in full school uniform and change into PE kit for PE lessons.

Staggered return in September

In line with government guidance issued on 6th July we have decided to ask students to take 2 voluntary lateral flow tests prior to returning to school. The guidance states these should take place on school site in our testing area. With current Covid cases still being so high this gives the opportunity to ensure there are no students in school who may be asymptomatic. There will have inevitably been greater mixing of friendship groups and households over the holiday period, which could lead to an increase in infection rates. Staff will also be tested prior to their return.

Within the guidance we are permitted to start testing prior to the start of term and we will be using the PD day on Thursday 2nd September to start this process. We will be staggering the start of term to accommodate testing with all students able to return by Wednesday 8th July.

Thursday 2nd September – Years 7 and 8 first test.

Friday 3rd September – Years 9-11 first test.

Monday 6th September – Years 7 and 8 second test

Tuesday 7th September – Years 9, 10 and 11 second test.

Tuesday 7th September - Years 7 return to school at 8.25am for an 8:30 start in the School Hall. This will include transition activities.

Tuesday 7th September - Years 8 return to school at 9.00am for an 9:05 start in the School Hall. This will include transition activities.

Wednesday 8th September – Years 9, 10 and 11 return to school alongside Years 7 and 8.

This is only delaying the original start of term by two days. We have deliberately decided not to take the full week, which we are allowed to do, in order to limit the impact on student progress and transition. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause. **You will need to pre-register your consent, even if you have given consent previously. Please see the appropriate link below which refers to your child's year group for September not their current year group.**

New Year 7 students will be offered appointment slots in their primary school groups so that they can attend on-site testing with friends and familiar faces. Parents will be emailed appointment times. The appointment time is for your child and we understand you may want to drop them at the school gates but please do not accompany them onto site. We will make sure that staff will be on the gates to welcome and reassure pupils.

<https://forms.office.com/r/w0gHdeyDFs> Year 7 consent only

For Years 8 – 11 students will be allocated a time slot according to their house group and this will be emailed to parents.

<https://forms.office.com/r/4imt0f8xi5> Years 8-11

We will ensure staff are on hand to support and give clear instructions around testing, especially if this is new to pupils.

Please complete the links by **Monday 12th July** so we can start to organise appointment cards and staff our testing site.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of school during an ever-changing year and hope that September will bring with it a sense of some kind of normality.

When we begin to host House events and school productions I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible. Until then, I wish you and your families a well-earned and relaxing summer break.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "A. Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Mrs A Pope
Headteacher