



The Priory School

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Dear parents and carers,

I realise I had promised you a non-Covid related update this half term and I will endeavour to do this before half term but unfortunately this one is not it! The intention of this update is to keep you informed and not to alarm. There is an incorrect number of absences circulating via word of mouth, please ignore these if you hear them. We are in daily contact with public health who are still telling us we do not have an outbreak and are not close to the threshold for extra intervention. I would rather take early action before things escalate to ensure we are able to maintain high levels of attendance and the teaching of a normal curriculum and timetable for as long as possible.

At the time of writing I have no staff cases. However, I am experiencing the highest number of student cases in the past few weeks than we did at any point last year.

If your child has any symptoms such as sore throat, raised temperature, headache, cough, loss of sense of smell, runny nose (it may look as if they have a low level cold) you will need to take them for a **PCR test. DO NOT USE YOUR HOME LFT TESTING KITS.** These are sometimes not sensitive enough to pick up the viral load once symptoms start to show. We have had to send a number of children home who should not have been in school. **Please do not send them into school with any symptoms.**

To ensure we are proactive we have made the decision to introduce a number of measures in school to help to bring the rise in cases in down.

Testing

If you are testing at home using LFTs we would now recommend that you move to more frequent testing than twice a week, if you can try to do this every day or as often as possible this will help to catch any infections in the early stages.

If you have a positive result on an LFT please arrange a PCR test as soon as possible.

We had a high uptake for LFT testing when it was first launched but we would encourage more people to sign up for this. If you started to use them and have since stopped this is a new opportunity to receive the LFT kits we have in school. We have seen a high number of asymptomatic cases picked up by the LFTs and have been a useful early indicator for families.

Could I ask all parents to complete the MS Forms link below to tell us if you are still using them or would now like to receive them so we can gain an up to date picture of how families are testing and encourage more to do so?

<https://forms.office.com/r/c3W6ra1qm6>

Face Coverings

This is being reintroduced for all students and staff but only in communal areas, not classrooms (however the option remains for a student to wear one in class if they so wish). Now we no longer have year group zones there are some very busy parts of school and this will help to reduce the chance of transmission. The very small number of students exempt for medical reasons, will still be on our school lists.

Staggering of lunches

The lunch queue is an area of priority for us because of where the students stand to queue. We will be introducing a more staggered year group approach between 12.30 to 1.20, with some slight changes to where different year groups queue. This will help to reduce the number of children in one area.

PE kit

One of the things that has helped a smooth start to term in relation to conduct and behaviour has been our return to full school uniform. I realise there are reasons why you wanted us to keep students coming in PE kit but the vast majority of staff did not want to retain this primarily relating to a drop in standards, students not adhering to the PE uniform (and therefore having to manage two sets of uniform), this had a significant toll on staff workload and behaviour in and out of lessons (a significant number of students were wearing kit when they did not have PE and were coming to school in hoodies). This is not what we want for Priory. It had a direct impact on the way a number of students chose to conduct themselves. A significant concern was also that if students come in their PE kit they have no way of changing again if they become cold, wet or muddy whilst playing sport on the school field. During the worst months of January and February, last year, we were in lockdown and therefore students did not experience coming to school in PE kit and having to wear it all day, when the weather was poor.

However, in an attempt to reduce the number of close contacts I have made the difficult decision to return students to wearing Priory PE kit on days they have PE lessons. **This is a temporary measure and does not mean we will return to this in the long term for all students.** This will start from Monday 27th September 2021.

Only Priory PE kit is acceptable. If they do not have the long sleeved PE jumper or top, students should wear their school jumper. Any hooded jackets or jumpers will not be accepted and students will be told to remove them. Any student not in the correct PE kit, unless accompanied by a note from home, will be given a sanction.

Hygiene and cleanliness

Staff will continue to ensure students sanitise hands when they come into classes and we have enhanced cleaning on site throughout the school day as well as every evening.

Assemblies

We will continue our smaller assemblies but larger groups, such as full school and key stage assemblies, will now be paused.

Open events

I have cancelled our open evening, this has moved online. Open morning events have been slimmed down and now will just consist with meeting myself, with a talk in the school hall by appointment only.

Extra-curricular and House Events

These will continue as an integral part of school life as it is something students have genuinely missed.

I realise it will appear we are putting some restrictions back into place at an early stage but this is a deliberate effort to avoid the return to bubbles, zones, lack of access to specialist rooms and to ensure we can continue to deliver high quality face to face education.

As always we appreciate your ongoing support in helping us to provide the very best for our students. We will be reviewing these measures on a weekly basis and I will advise you as soon as any changes are made.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Pope".

Mrs A Pope
Headteacher