



The Priory School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you to express our significant concern over reports of the nature and level of social activity of a number of our students (from Year 8 and above). Specifically that they, with students of similar ages from other schools, are gathering in large numbers in relatively remote locations in Shrewsbury. One area that has been quoted to me from a number of sources – parents, staff, local residents and students themselves, is an area between the Mount and the river, where students (in their hundreds) have been gathering.

The warm weather has no doubt contributed to this, and whilst the challenges of our present context do mean that many may seek greater social contact, the consequences for our young people are significant.

Notwithstanding concerns expressed about social distancing, and the amount of litter that needs to be cleared up in the aftermath, our greatest fear is the possibility for exploitation. You may recall that earlier this year we carried out significant work with parents and carers across Shrewsbury, giving presentations on the challenges of criminal exploitation in our locality. Such gatherings create a target for those involved in any form of exploitation and make our young people vulnerable. From a number of independent sources, it has been reported that alcohol was supplied (by adults unknown) in significant quantities and that drugs were being supplied and consumed.

I know very well the natural desire of our young people to enjoy each other's company and would never wish to prevent them being part of what is essentially a part of growing up and moving into adulthood (as long as it is in a safe context). But the present restrictions imposed on society have made our young people vulnerable to those who would exploit them, and our collective vigilance may mean that (in the current climate) being safe may need to restrict their level of interaction.

I am sure you will have discussed the content of Mrs Knight's letter, sent earlier this term, with the young people in your care. It would seem a sensible time for me to ask you to re-visit these conversations, in light of the above.

I have written to the police to report my concern and anxiety about this.

Yours sincerely

M J Barratt
Principal, The Priory School