



### The Priory School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

As half term fast approaches, it is good to look back and take stock of the things we have been able to achieve this half term. Whilst we are in the midst of challenging times, we have tried to retain as normal an approach to school life as possible. I am meeting with all staff and unequivocally the common theme to the conversations has been how happy they are to be back and working with our young people. We are still running a full timetable with all cohorts in attendance and continue to monitor the local picture, with reference to Covid, on a daily basis.

#### **Covid operating plan and Face masks**

We have spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and reflecting on our current operating plan. You may be aware that some schools are revising their year group zones and returning teachers to their normal classrooms. We do not feel that the picture, in relation to Covid, locally supports this move here at The Priory and we must take into account our own site and buildings when looking at this. This does lean very heavily on our staff. Teaching five lessons per day, moving constantly around a large site is draining mentally and physically. I am sure you will want to join me in thanking the Priory staff for their unswerving commitment to ensuring that we can deliver a full curriculum and prioritise students' safety.

Up until now, facemasks have been voluntary but taking into account the change in medical and scientific guidance about the importance of face coverings, in an indoor setting, we have taken the decision to revise this. As of **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November**, wearing a facemask anywhere inside the building, except during a lesson, will be compulsory for all students (unless there is a medical exemption). **If your child has a medical condition, which prevents them wearing one, please provide them with a note to their form tutor and we will keep a record of this.**

It must be a facemask, not a face covering. It must be appropriate, to be worn in a school setting and not sport any inappropriate or offensive slogans. It must be, cleaned regularly and only worn or adjusted, when hands are clean. If a student is not exempt and does not wear a mask the same sanctions for uniform non-compliance, will apply. Thank you, in advance, for your support with this.

#### **House Run**

I was delighted to see House Run taking place, albeit in a different format, in PE lessons. It was fantastic to see the students participating whether that was running, or walking. I have met a number who contributed, through their attendance at Headteacher's Breakfast and it was good to hear how much they had enjoyed it. It was also good to see that the friendly House rivalry and competitive spirit was still alive and well, especially when the House Trophy was presented (in a socially distanced format) to the House Captain of Clive. Well done to all who took part.

### **Extra-curricular clubs/activities available.**

We have been able to begin hosting extra-curricular activities, after school, within our year group bubbles. The PE department are running a range of clubs from Tues-Thurs from Year 8 to Year 10, starting with Year 8 on a Tuesday. Details are on the Squad in touch system and students should speak to their PE teacher for more information. Year 7 Art club is, spread over two nights to cater for the huge demand we have had and already has a waiting list for those interested in attending. The Science Department have started their after school club and Mr Austin will be launching a Ukulele Club for Year 7 after half term. English will be running an online Creative Writing club for all year groups – details to follow from Mr Stacey and Mrs Lamprell will be hosting a Food Club. Many of our staff will be involved in delivering Year 11 catch up sessions but will endeavour to ensure there is something for each year group going forward. These contributions are purely voluntary and reflect the commitment of our teachers to provide an enriched curriculum for our young people.

### **Year 11 interim assessments**

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Year 11 for the way in which they approached their week of interim assessments. Their conduct and attitude were exemplary and the experience has not only reminded them of the formality needed in exams but has given staff a thorough and important insight into their understanding post lockdown.

It is inevitable that, given the disruption students have faced, any assessment at this time will not necessarily be a true reflection of their ability and achievement. Please be assured that we are using the results of these assessments as a diagnostic tool to gauge where students currently are in their learning and understanding so that teaching can be, specifically targeted to address any gaps in skills or knowledge. Departments are also beginning a rota of after school intervention sessions. To begin with, these will be, targeted to specific students and you may well receive correspondence from a Head of Department inviting your child to attend. This; is because they have been highlighted as needing extra catch up. Please encourage and support them to attend, as it will be essential in maximising their potential GCSE grade.

The government have announced that GCSEs will take place with a slightly delayed start date of 7<sup>th</sup> June. Exams will run into July and GCSE results day will be 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021. We will communicate more detail once we receive it but please ensure that there are no holidays booked during the exam period.

### **Mental Health Awareness**

We recognised Hello Yellow on 9<sup>th</sup> October as part of our Mental Health Awareness week in school, highlighting mental health awareness day on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Students engaged with mental health awareness activities and resources during tutor and assembly time during the week with many choosing to wear something yellow on Friday. It was a wonderful visual reminder of how important it is to acknowledge that we all, from time to time, struggle with mental health and that the importance of talking to someone and supporting others is even more important, now than it has ever been. Student wellbeing will be an important focus for Personalised Planning Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> November too.

### **Black History Month**

We have been focusing on this national event through, lessons, tutor time and assemblies. There has been a focus on literature, music, significant individuals and the huge contribution black people have made to our country since Roman times. This; has been approached from a perspective of raising awareness, acceptance, understanding and challenging stereotypes to ensure our students

are aware of the need for and expectation of equality. A key focus for our current school development plan is to embrace diversity in all its forms.

### **House renaming process**

During the summer term we began discussions to review the names of our school Houses. Many have been in place for a number of years. National events around Black Lives Matters, equality and diversity allowed us to reflect on the people our Houses are named after. I also feel that we need to ensure the people chosen epitomise a modern, diverse society and uphold the core values of our 3 'S's', specifically being Selfless. We are therefore beginning a period of consultation with the student body this is an exciting opportunity for them to put forward more relevant options. Students will spend some of their tutor time, led by School Parliament reps, looking at and deciding on some replacement names. I have tasked them to think beyond Shropshire, to look at both men and women and most of all to ensure that the person they nominate has (or still is; they could still be alive) made positive, selfless contributions to society. Please feel free to discuss choices and options at home and support them with some research. The senior leadership team and Heads of House will create a shortlist, which will then lead to a more formal voting process. I do not envisage the new House names being in place before September 2021. I am keenly aware that some parents may have only just purchased House Shirts and will ensure we give you plenty of notice before there is a change.

### **School website**

If you have not already had a chance to look at our new school website, please do have a look. If you have any suggestions or thoughts on the information it holds, or the layout, please do let me know. I am keen for it to be as useful for parents as possible and would be grateful for any feedback.

### **Reminders**

Please, a gentle reminder not to drive onsite with your child. Parking in the delivery bay area has caused difficulties for us to receive food for the school kitchen. It also causes a safety issue when parents drive back off site, especially at the start and end of the school day as students are often walking on the pavement in large numbers. It is very difficult to see a car emerging from the gate. In addition; we have been asked, by local residents that parents do not park in front of their houses, as some have been unable to access their private drives. We would encourage as many students, as possible to either walk or cycle to and from school. I must also insist that students use the pedestrian crossing on Longden Road; crossing the road independent of the crossing, on what is a very busy ambulance and commuter route, is just not safe. I would also urge parents not to drop their children off on the double yellow lines as this too could cause an obstruction for an ambulance. In the words of H.E. Luccock, 'No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it'. Thank you for working so closely with us since we reopened and I wish you and your families a safe and restful half term break.

Yours sincerely



Mrs A Pope  
**Headteacher**