



The Priory School
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Dear parents and carers

As promised at the start of the week, I am writing to you to update you on the key areas of focus this half term:

- The Situation in the Ukraine
- Attendance expectations
- Homework policy review
- Upcoming assessment points

The Situation in the Ukraine

Understandably, a large number of students have returned to us with an avid interest in the events which are currently unfolding in the Ukraine. Staff have been receiving their queries, and reassuring students where they have concerns. We will continue to take this approach as events progress. As a collective we will be looking to divert some of our usual charitable work to those who have been displaced and directly affected by the humanitarian crisis. The student body charity reps and Mr Bucknall will look to create a Priory School response to help our students feel they are supporting those affected. In the interim we have set up a ParentPay account if parents would like to donate on behalf of the school; we will be supporting UNICEF and the Red Cross.

Attendance

The effects of the pandemic and recent COVID outbreaks have made it difficult for many students to sustain their usual, high levels of attendance. We are hopeful that now things begin to settle we can start to refocus on the importance of being in school and maintaining high levels of attendance. It is the key factor to success. The effects of outbreaks and lockdowns over the past two years has dramatically impacted students' routines and the ability to get themselves into school, promptly and regularly. From this half term on, we will be having a renewed focus on attendance levels, highlighting its importance to students and supporting families where it remains at persistently low levels of under 90%, going forward (not retrospectively). It will be the focus of assemblies, encouraging and supporting students to improve their attendance. I have witnessed an increase in the number of term time holidays being requested and requests which do not meet the 'exceptional' criteria. I cannot authorise these absences as students need to make the most of every day in school, with their teachers. Even an attendance level of 93% over the term of 5 years equates to 60 (almost a term) lost days of learning. Our Attendance Policy, on the school website, highlights that

our school target is 96% overall attendance, a figure we used to achieve comfortably. This is largely down to your support as families and how closely you work with us to achieve this aim. I am under no illusion that this will be a long term journey for many young people and not an overnight transformation but we need to begin that focus now, to ensure our young people gain the most from their time with us. If you need any kind of support please contact your child's House Tutor or Head of House so we can work closely together.

Homework policy review

We have begun some initial work with various groups to review our current Homework policy and look to gather views and input on our current model and any alterations we should consider. As part of this Mrs Shaw, Mrs White and Mr Tudor will be hosting a parental forum to explain our current rationale and gather your viewpoints on Tuesday 15th March 2022 5.30pm. Please email Mrs Shaw at rcs@tpstrust.co.uk if you would like to be involved in the information gathering process.

Upcoming assessment points

Year 11's next internal assessment point begins on 14th March and runs until 23rd March. Parents and students will have received the timetable of exams but also the extra revision sessions available at lunch and after school, please encourage them to attend. For Year 10 we have a set of internal exams, they are usually at the end of June but due to the fact this year's GCSE exams run later than normal we have moved them earlier (5th-13th May). These are purely for internal use and to give students feedback as well as practice at sitting formal exams and won't count towards any final GCSE assessment. Subjects will begin to discuss these with students and prepare them for revision of specific topics this term. Year 7 and 8 students will not be sitting formal exams in the hall this year but will be formally assessed via in-class exams. For Year 7, this will predominantly be during the week commencing 6th June and for Year 8, the week commencing 20th June.

School News

World Book Day today has been wonderful and has certainly brightened up my day to see students and staff dressed up in some very creative costumes and the English corridor transformed into Wonderland. Please remember to view the school news section on our website at <https://priory.tpstrust.co.uk/news/> to keep track of wider life at The Priory.

Kind regards



**Mrs A Pope
Headteacher**