



Executive Headteacher: Mrs L. A. Gwinnett

Ref: 3071/LMA

18th December 2020

Dear Parent,

Burscough Priory Academy – January 2021 Arrangements

I am sorry to be writing this letter now (at 4pm on the penultimate day of term). You may have watched various announcements from the Department for Education over the last week with a growing sense of disbelief. You will also be wondering what this means for you and your child in January.

Some schools and councils, notably Greenwich in London, have been threatened with court action for suggesting that their schools could switch to remote learning in the week before Christmas. It is ironic that this afternoon, without warning, the Government has advised a staggered start to the new term in January with some students learning remotely. The government has said that Primary school pupils and students in exam years 11 and 13 will return to school immediately after Christmas but that other secondary aged students will return the following week (11th January). Our plans are slightly different to this for good reason.

Arrangements at Burscough Priory Academy

After discussion with senior colleagues this afternoon, I have decided that in January, students will return to school as follows:

- Students in Years 11, 12 and 13 will return to school on Tuesday 5th January as planned
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will be taught remotely (as Y7 and 8 have been this week), following their normal school timetable on MS Teams from Tuesday 5th January until Friday 8th January 2021 and will return to school on Monday 11th January
- Students in Year 10 will be taught remotely following their normal school timetable on MS Teams from Tuesday 5th January until Friday 8th January 2021 and will return to school on Monday 11th January EXCEPT for students taking OCR Sport or Health and Social Care (see below)

I am truly sorry that Y7 and 8 in particular, who has missed face-to-face teaching this week, will do so again. Despite an overwhelming urge to ignore Government advice, I believe one underlying reason for the staggered start, will be a halt to possibly rise in infections after Christmas. For this reason, it is best that we are cautious.





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Students in Year 10 who take Sport or Health and Social Care

Students in Year 10 who take sport or Health and Social care have examinations in the week commencing 11th January so they should attend school on Thursday 7th January for a revision day with their subject teacher. This was already planned and is vital in supporting those students with their exam the following week. These students will work remotely for the rest of that week and return to school normally on Monday 11th January.

Remote Learning

Most of our students are now used to accessing lessons remotely. For those students/parents who aren't, there is a guide on our website with the following link.

<https://lnz.08a.myftupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Family-and-Guardian-Guide-to-Microsoft-Teams.pdf> Students should follow their normal timetable (5x1-hour periods per day, logging on at the time the lesson would normally take place). Some lessons will be live, others will have materials or recordings by the teacher attached.

Vulnerable students, children of Key Workers and those younger students where childcare is a concern

I do not believe the Government have given sufficient thought to those younger students in Year 7 or 8 whose parents return to work in the week commencing 4th January. Those students in Years 7 or 8 who have attended school this week should continue to do so. We will do our best tomorrow to contact the parents of students in Y9 who may be in a similar position but, whatever year group your child is in, if you are really stuck and would like support, please let us know asap.

Year 10 Mock Exams

We were originally going to hold a mock examination series in January for the small number of students taking early entry subjects next summer. However, we have taken the decision to delay these exams until the week commencing Monday 1st February 2021. These examinations will be held in a similar fashion as the external GCSE examinations in the summer, so that our Year 10 students can experience the formal setting and examination routines. Further information, and examinations timetables will be shared with students in the new year.

Testing

You may have seen it announced this week that students and teachers will have access to mass testing from January. Specifically, that means that staff will be tested weekly (with results taking 30 minutes) and students who are identified as close contacts of someone testing positive, can





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be tested daily for 7 consecutive days and remain in school if they test negative. This testing would be optional, but those not consenting would be subject to the normal 10-day isolation.

I support the aim of testing to ensure that fewer days are lost to self-isolation. The problem comes with the timing and nature of the Government's announcement. Specifically:

- Schools must administer the tests themselves, allocate or employ at least 9 staff to do the tests, and identify a suitable space where testing can take place
- We received notice of this yesterday, and the handbook for schools with guidance, today.
- A training session has been offered at 1pm tomorrow where many schools have broken up for Christmas.

As you can imagine, we have had no time to even think about this and I refuse to have my staff working and planning during the Christmas holidays. We will return to this issue in January and more information will be forthcoming then. We will do our best to make testing work within the constraints we have. I may be writing to you again in January asking if any parents wish to help (and be paid) to run our testing programme, but it really is too early to be definitive about this.

Finally

I am truly sorry that these announcements appear so rushed. Those who work with me would say that I am usually very measured and calm, but the events of this week have left me angered and frustrated on your behalf. I hope I have provided you with the information you need. In the meantime, have a lovely Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

L. MaLaren

Mrs L. MaLaren
Head of School



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