

6 November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

At the end of this first week back after the half term break and considering the current national lockdown, I thought it would be useful to send you a brief update on issues.

Firstly though, I hope that you and your families enjoyed a restful half term break last week and this first week back to school has been a good one for you.

### **National Lockdown**

Currently, given the new national lockdown, we know that schools remain open and we agree that this is the right priority. However, we must be continually mindful that it is perhaps inevitable that the increase in the number of people locally who are testing positive for Covid 19 might ultimately have an impact on us here in school.

To date, we have been fortunate that the number of those self-isolating in our school community has been minimal and so we have been able to keep the school open, continuing to offer our full curriculum for our young people.

This may well be an increasing challenge in the winter months, and we ask for your continued support in the coming weeks to ensure we work together to safeguard the wellbeing and safety of all in our school community.

To go alongside this current national lockdown, the DfE published guidance on what the new national restrictions mean for schools. For us, already being in Tier 3 locally, there were no changes needed to the current procedures that we already have in place.

However, the situation of growing transmission rates may mean that some restrictions will become necessary sooner rather than later, such as implementing the rota system in secondary schools suggested in the government's own contingency planning.

With that in mind, we hope the government will look to support schools and parents in the near future by clarifying the circumstances that might trigger their own contingency plan for rota systems in secondary schools.

We appreciate that this is not the intention during the current national lockdown but given that the situation is clearly precarious, this would provide clarity and confidence – for pupils, parents and staff – that there is a robust and responsive plan in place which would be helpful for our planning moving forward.

Continued...



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As we hear more, we will be sure to share this information with you.

### **Face coverings**

In schools where pupils in Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This was already the case for pupils in Year 7 and above, and staff and visitors for those schools such as ourselves, that were in areas where the local alert level was already 'very high'.

Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in Year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college.

It is vital that this requirement continues to be respected by all parents and pupils.

### **Clinically vulnerable/extremely clinically vulnerable staff and children**

Staff and children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance.

Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice. Parents should be advised to speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.

Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place.

Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children should be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice and we would ask that a copy of this letter be given to us here in school should it apply to your daughter or son. This will ensure we are able to record the correct absence for each individual pupil.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

### **Transport**

Children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport. Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in Year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to school.

Travel in or out of local areas should be avoided, and parents, carers and staff should look to reduce the number of journeys they make - but travelling to deliver and access education is still permitted.

Staff, children and their parents and carers are encouraged to walk or cycle when travelling to and from school where this is possible, and to plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. This will allow social distancing to be practised.

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## **Exams**

The Prime Minister and Education Secretary continue to be clear that exams will go ahead next summer. Pupils will only be given three more weeks to prepare than they would normally under the usual exam timeframe. Whilst this will help to address some of the disruption caused by the pandemic, I'm sure we can all recognise a collective effort from pupils, parents and staff will be required to support our Year 11s over the coming weeks. By assisting each other in this common aim, I'm certain we will all do our utmost to ensure our Year 11 pupils are as well prepared for their upcoming exams as they can possibly be.

## **Finally**

We recognise that this second Covid wave and the announcement of a new national lockdown will be worrying for many pupils, parents, and staff.

However, please be assured that we continue to ensure all adhere to our Covid risk assessments and protocols here in school and by continuing to follow the government guidance and maximise our own control measures, we are confident any risk is being managed effectively.

Priory, like other schools, will remain open to pupils in all year groups for as long as we are able and as ever, we will keep you informed of any further changes that may be necessary due to changing circumstances in school, or at local or national level.

Thank you again for your ongoing support of all that we continue to do.

Yours faithfully



**Mr M Eastham**  
**Headteacher**