

18 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

You will have by now seen the latest announcement just yesterday by the government concerning plans for Covid testing in the new year, and a staggered start for secondary schools and colleges in January. These measures are aimed at schools in order to prevent a possible peak of the Covid 19 coronavirus following the Christmas break.

We of course recognise we are in a fast-moving situation, and that it is imperative the government does everything possible to halt the spiralling rates of Covid infection. And we are pleased they realise the importance of large-scale testing of staff and pupils in our schools, yet the last-minute and somewhat chaotic nature of this announcement has been unhelpful coming right at the end of term.

That said, we, like the rest of the country, now need to respond to the current situation in relation to what continues to be a rapidly changing picture for us all.

Back to school plans in January – Covid testing

In line with the new advice from Government, Monday, 4 January 2021 will now be an INSET day. Staff will return to school on this day, but pupils will need to stay at home. This is because the government expects us to set up testing facilities in school for staff and pupils that is likely to continue for the remainder of this academic year. You will understand that these late announcements have significant implications for us here in school and so the INSET day has been granted to allow us to prepare for the possibility of mass Covid testing taking place in school, with school staff being tested each week and a daily test for seven days for pupils in contact with a positive case.

As I write this letter, the detail behind this and the considerable logistics that will undoubtedly go alongside its implementation have not been shared with us, other than the fact that, where possible, this should commence in the first week back.

However, we will only do this when we feel it is safe for us to do so and when we have been provided with the resources and training to do so. Whether this transpires for us in the first week back therefore remains to be seen but, we will do our best to support this planned testing regime.

We will include any plans regarding this facility at the appropriate time following the Christmas break via our usual communication channels.

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Back to school plans in January – Pupils return – Year 11

In line with the new advice from Government, from Tuesday, 5 January, school will be open to Year 11 pupils only. They will follow their normal timetable in school and all current arrangements that are in place for them will continue.

Back to school plans in January – Pupils return – Years 7 to 10

All other pupils will work remotely from home from Tuesday, 5 January. Years 7 to 10 will then return on Monday, 11 January 2021.

Learning from home - 'Live Learning' @ Priory

With that in mind, all pupils in Years 7 – 10 will be expected to work from home, following their ordinary timetable. Staff will teach live lessons, take their registers as normal and be contactable through Microsoft Teams.

Your child's classroom teachers will deliver their lessons at the normal times for their full timetabled lessons. Pupils are expected to be ready to engage in their learning for these sessions. In essence, it will be a normal school day, but with pupils at home.

Live lessons need not last an hour, there may be an instructional period at the beginning of the lesson and then the pupils may be tasked with doing something for a period of time. The average 'live lesson' will last approximately 30 minutes and the teacher should then be available for live chat through the text or video function to answer any questions pupils may have.

Just as when they are in school, we have the highest expectations of pupils' attitude to and behaviour for learning.

When they are in a live lesson they must:

- Be dressed appropriately, for example, no pyjamas or revealing clothing-you may turn your camera off completely if you wish.
- Preferably, be in a room which is used by the whole family, for example, the dining room, not a bedroom.
- Join the lesson at the advertised starting time. We will follow your normal timetable.
- Mute your microphone when the teacher is talking to avoid any background noise or feedback disturbing the lesson.
- Do not add comments, emojis or contribute to the lesson unless you are invited to do so.
- Do not do anything to purposefully disturb the learning of others. You will be sanctioned if you do so and your parents informed via Synergy.
- Share your work with your teachers if you are requested to do so. For example, send a Chat or email with an attachment.

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- Maintain the Priory Standard for the presentation of your work.
- Respond to any feedback given by your teachers about how to improve or develop your work.
- Once the live part of a lesson has ended, if you are struggling with any of the work, message your teacher using the Chat function in Teams and the teacher will either respond to you in writing or may give you a video call back.

Behaviour Expectations and Illness

During online lessons, we would expect pupils to behave in an acceptable manner and they can expect normal school sanctions to apply on their return if they disrupt or misbehave.

If your child is ill and cannot engage in the live lessons, parents and carers must still call into school and follow our normal procedures. In all other cases, attendance at all lessons is compulsory.

Key Workers

We will continue do all we can to support those whose work is **critical** to the COVID-19 response, if they cannot keep their child safe at home. This remains an offer to parents and carers working in these critical sectors at this time. However, with staff teaching live lessons our resources are limited and we can only do what we can do within the resources that are available to us. Priority for places therefore may need to be given to certain families, with places only being offered to a smaller group where the need is most urgent, for example, the children of A&E nurses and doctors. Provision in school remains the last resort. Please email Mr Gee by 3.30pm on Monday, 21 December should you need to apply for a place for your son our daughter (n.gee@priory.lancs.sch.uk).

Vulnerable Pupils

Our pastoral team in school will continue to contact families on our return to offer continued support where appropriate.

Voucher scheme to support free school meals pupils

Again, our pastoral team in school will be contacting certain families directly regarding the voucher scheme to ensure that children who qualify for free school meals do not go hungry during the period of home learning.

Finally

I am confident we can continue to work together over the coming weeks to further our overall aim of ensuring that as many of our school community remain as well as they can be for as long as possible whilst maintaining our high expectations of learning in the school.

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Many thanks for your continued support with this.

For now then, I hope you and your families continue to stay fit, well and safe over the Christmas and new year period and on behalf of myself, the staff, pupils and Governors I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher