

22 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome to our end-of-week update. I hope that you and your families have continued to stay safe and well since I last wrote to you. I know as the days in lockdown continue, the challenges presented by it can alter and change for us all, sometimes daily, yet we hope everyone feels supported by ourselves as a school, both academically and pastorally. We will carry on making daily contact with our pupils through their lessons, but in addition, do get in touch with us as and when you might need too.

Reopening Information

You've probably seen or heard the Education Secretary's comments this week on the prospects for full reopening which are, naturally enough in the circumstances, inconclusive. However, I think it's fair to say now that pupils are unlikely to return to school until Easter or beyond and we need to prepare ourselves for that prospect. Equally, even when pupils do return, there may well be regional disparities in COVID infection rates and new mutations of the virus which may mean that schools will reopen to pupils at different times across the UK or to different year groups at different times. There will continue to be a lot of uncertainty about this moving forward I'm sure. However, rest assured, however long our pupils must learn from home, we are confident our move to live lessons and your son/daughter's participation in them, will continue to ensure the lessons being taught are a continuation of the planned curriculum and therefore when we return, we hope pupils should not need extensive amounts of catch-up time.

Live Learning @ Priory

Throughout this lockdown, it's important to remember that we may have some staff unable to deliver live lessons at times for reasons such as illness or appointments for example. For your awareness, where this is the case, pupils will be notified through their normal communication channels with something similar to the following, outlining our ongoing expectations:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

From (date) (teacher's name) will not be teaching live lessons for (length of time). Live lessons will resume on (date). Throughout this period, you should access the Files tab at the top of this page and continue working through the lessons.

If you have any queries, please still contact (teacher's name or department lead) via Teams or email and they will endeavour to respond at the earliest opportunity.

Continued...



2.

Word of the Week

Pupils' Word of the Week will run through the entirety of lockdown and is a great opportunity for pupils to capitalise on new vocabulary. Please encourage pupils to submit a new word from any lesson to Mrs Gidden at her email address and the best and most interesting one for that week will be selected for 'word of the week'. It encourages reading too, which as we know, is the 'single biggest predictor of academic achievement'.

PE

Don't forget, in pupils' PE lessons we want them to be active! What this involves is up to our pupils. It may be that they want to go for a walk, a run or a bike ride during their lesson. If the weather is rainy, we have provided a number of links in the 'files' tab of their PE class Team. These include links for over 80 activities from cardio workouts and boxing sessions to Pilates and yoga. These can all be done from the comfort of your home. There are two requests from staff - firstly please ensure the activity is finished in time to start the next lesson and secondly, pupils shouldn't forget to let their PE teacher know what they've been doing. So far we've heard how some students are getting on with their 'Couch to 5K' Challenge, received screenshots from Strava of their runs and even videos of 'Just Dance'!

Covid Testing

You may have heard this week about some changes to the Government's plans for testing in schools. This change only applies to pupils identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive in school. Now, instead of being tested in school each morning for a period of 7 days before being allowed to lesson, as was the suggestion, individuals who have been in close contact with someone who has coronavirus will once again need to self-isolate at home for 10 days. If your son or daughter were to be affected by this at any point in the future, they would still log into their live lessons as they are happening in school and receive the same lesson their peers are getting in school as normal.

The proposed programme of 'mass testing' however, is still likely to resume prior to pupils returning to school. If this is the case, we will continue with our plan to test all pupils who want to participate. If you have not already done so, I must ask you to provide your consent by completing the consent form in the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=id9BE8UjUUqLD9VLKIqMFp7MGKsaqzNDIcHS%20poNbUvdUQUc40EtPS0IWWFFKM0Q2RkFRSDdKR0hZRi4u>

By doing this now, it will allow us to put our 'mass testing' into operation as swiftly as possible when we are asked to do so. To understand how your child's personal data is to be used in the event of both positive and negative tests and the rights that individuals have, please refer to the DfE or to our existing Privacy Notice and some FAQs regarding testing on the school's website.

Continued...

Year 11 – College Information

We can confirm Runshaw College have cancelled their normal process of interviews and instead will give everyone who applies a conditional offer, even those who haven't yet applied, as long as they do so before 1 April. There are links to videos for parents and pupils about this in the school newsletter and Mrs Eastham will share the information in Monday's Year 11 assembly with pupils.

If you have any questions you can contact Runshaw College directly on 01772 643000 or email welcometorunshaw@runshaw.ac.uk

Newman college has informed us that pupils will now be interviewed after they have received their GCSE results on enrolment day. They too are available to contact if pupils want to discuss anything with them.

Well-Being and Support

Unlike the first lockdown, with staff now doing live lessons, it is more difficult for them to make calls and contact those pupils that might be in their form groups. However, all staff will, as part of their academic lessons, include a pastoral element, asking pupils how they are and whether they require any further support, either academically or pastorally. At least this way we know pupils are being checked in on from a pastoral well-being perspective every day in every lesson, rather than a call or contact perhaps once a week. Equally, as parents, please don't forget that all our usual channels of communication are open to you in terms of emails to staff, including heads of year and pastoral staff, so you can continue to communicate with us as and when aspects arise for you in your households.

Well-Being Day Confirmed

On Wednesday, 27 January, we are suspending our usual lessons for one day in favour of providing a menu of activities for pupils to engage in to enhance their personal well-being. Pupils will be asked to log onto their usual period one lesson to register their attendance with their teacher. Thereafter, they will be able to choose any activities that they wish to do from the lists and resources that will be provided for them on Teams. There will be a wide range of activities suggested from competitions to puzzles, outdoor pursuits to video workshops. The choice of activities is up to your child; there will be things to appeal to a wide audience and lots of different interests.

We'd like everyone to take the opportunity to pause and learn in a different way for the day. Children may choose to work away from screens for one day, take on a new skill, enhance their mental and physical health, engage in learning that adds breadth to their studies - all of which offers a little respite from the current pandemic. We'll communicate with the pupils so that they understand what to do, how to access the resources and what we expect from them.

Finally - Parent Survey

Thank you to all who took the time to support us by completing the online Remote Learning Parent Survey. We continue to adapt to new ways of working and we want to ensure that we are providing the right support, both pastorally and academically for your child during this time.

Continued...

4.

The aim of the survey was to

- find out what we're doing well and where we might do better
- make sure that as much as is possible, we're meeting your needs and the needs of your children

Your responses were very encouraging, and in this week's newsletter you will see our response to some of the main points raised by yourselves that, as a school, we are going to evolve to allow remote learning to continue to be as successful as it can be.

As always, thank you for your dialogue with us and your support for the values of our school.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher