

29 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Reopening Information**

As you may be aware, there has been a great deal of speculation in the media about how and when schools and colleges might open to more pupils. This week, the Prime Minister announced that it will not be possible to resume face-to-face learning immediately after the February half-term and instead hopes it will be safe for pupils to start returning to schools from Monday, 8 March. This is in response to the national public health data and pressure on NHS capacity.

I must stress though that this is just the hope, and in reality, I do not expect schools to reopen fully to pupils until mid-April or even as late as May. Even then, it is understood this may well be on a staggered basis, with those in specific year groups, such as those studying for GCSEs, allowed to return first. Rotas could also be introduced, with pupils in certain year groups being taught every other week from home.

What we do know, is that we will be given at least two weeks' notice to prepare for a return to face-to-face education, so we will continue to communicate our plans with you as we know more ourselves.

### **In The Meantime**

Therefore, it remains imperative that our philosophy here at Priory remains the same. That we continue to function in as much the same way as we normally would, in all areas, with the only exception being that pupils are taught at home, rather than being in school. In other words, whilst 'in house' face to face teaching is not possible, Priory remains open, and it remains 'business as usual', as much as possible, in all aspects.

That is why our move to live lessons, our focus on delivering what would normally be being delivered in school, gives us the confidence to know lessons are being taught as they would be, the planned curriculum is continuing as it would normally and pupils are receiving as close to the same offer at home, as they would be if they were still in school. This remains imperative for us, as the longer pupils are away from school, the realistic time for any 'catch up' diminishes.

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We sincerely hope that through this approach, pupils will not need extensive amounts of 'catch-up' time. Instead, they will simply continue with their next lesson 'in house' rather than their next lesson 'at home' - something we look forward to immensely.

### **Live Learning @ Priory**

We've made a great transition across to live learning, yet as you know, we never stand still here at Priory. We're always looking to evolve our learning experiences for our pupils further, so continue behind the scenes to really get to grips with what more MS Teams has to offer. Using 'Assignments' and/or 'OneNote' to submit and track work for example, will be much more efficient long term and we hope to communicate more about our plans in relation to this before the February half term. This will enable a smooth transition to us using these functions once we return after the break.

### **February Half Term**

As per the government directive, schools will close as usual over February half term and are not expected to remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week.

### **Contact Tracing Over The February Half Term**

Should any pupil, who has still been attending school, test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) during the half term break, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace. However, please do email us as well to keep us informed at [enquiries@priory.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@priory.lancs.sch.uk). This will ensure we can take the necessary precautions in terms of our cleaning protocols before pupils return to school.

For any pupil who tests positive having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, we are still being asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. Should this apply to your son or daughter, it remains just as important to let us know by emailing [enquiries@priory.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@priory.lancs.sch.uk). This will ensure we can take the necessary precautions in relation to track and trace, contacting other pupils as necessary before they return to school.

### **Free School Meals Over The February Half Term**

Schools will not provide lunch vouchers during the February half term. There is now wider government support in place to support families and children outside of term time through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. The £170 million scheme is being run by local authorities in England, with at least 80% of the funding earmarked to support with food and essential utility costs and will cover the period to the end of March 2021.

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### **New York Trip**

As things currently stand, schools are not allowed to take pupils on overnight or overseas trips. However, we are forced to assume that the trip is still running as this travel advice could change and the travel company would then expect us to travel.

It does however look highly likely that the school travel ban will stay in place, and as soon as this is confirmed for the date of our departure, we would be able to start the claims procedure to recover all monies paid.

It is now vital then that all parents pay all outstanding balances. A failure to pay the whole amount will likely be viewed as a breach of contract by the travel company. This breach of contract could result in no insurance payment being made to individuals. As we have previously stated, if the trip is cancelled by the travel company, all parents will get all monies back so long as a full payment has been made.

With the above information in mind, Mr Watters has asked those on the trip to complete the last payment by 30 January and ensure that the passport for your child/children has been handed to the school office by the same date.

We recognise these are difficult times and we are fully aware of the uncertainty surrounding this trip, however we must continue to assume at this stage, that we are still travelling to New York until told that the trip is cancelled.

If, or more likely, when, the trip is cancelled, we will look to rebook another New York trip at some later stage, so that your child does not miss out on the opportunity to take part in this *'trip of a lifetime'*. Thank you for your continued support with our approach in relation to this and please do contact Mr Watters directly if you have any further questions.

### **Year 9 Parents Evening/Options Evening**

We are going to move the Year 9 parents evening/option evening back until after half term. A new date will be sent out in the next few days. We want to provide the opportunity for pupils and parents to ask staff, face to face, questions about their options as necessary, so we will be introducing the use of a new piece of scheduling software that automates the whole process for us, using a webcam as an alternative to calling parents by phone. More details on this will follow. Year 9 full reports will still be issued as planned.

### **Well-being and Support – Our Well-being Day**

As you know, on Wednesday, 27 January, we suspended 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. Therefore, our focus switched from a focus on our academic care, to a specific focus on our pastoral and well-being care. This went really well and we had some excellent feedback about the day from both pupils and parents. As a result, we will look to do this in the middle of each half term from here on in, for as long as our pupils continue to learn from home. We will confirm the date of our next Well-being Day with you in due course.

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## **Finally**

Despite this lockdown please remember, our school, Priory, is not just a building, is not just an 8.50 till 3.10, is not just a place for exams. Priory remains a community, a team, a place where we learn and grow together. We are in our homes, but we are still Priory. Not one building, but a campus of 1000 homes. Still connected. Still a community. Still growing and learning. You in your homes. Us in ours. Working together, trying together, learning together. Overcoming the challenges. Open to new opportunities. Continuing together. We may feel stuck in our houses, but we belong to a campus of 1000 homes. We belong to our school. To Priory. And together, we will continue to strive to achieve our Priory standard. *'The best of all, from all'.*

My continued best wishes to you all,

Yours faithfully



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