

28 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As I write this letter, I really hope you have all managed to have a happy and safe Christmas break so far. Our continued best wishes for the remainder of the festive period.

Update

You will no doubt be aware of the government's latest announcement, just today, concerning new plans for our return to school in January, given the spiralling rates of Covid infection and the fact that Lancashire has now been placed in Tier 4 from midnight tonight. As I said in my last letter to you, we, like the rest of the country, now need to respond to the current situation. As a result, I would like to write to you specifically about two aspects:

1. Covid-19 'mass testing' for all pupils in the New Year
2. Updated back to school plans in January

1. COVID-19 'mass testing' for all pupils in the New Year

All schools have been offered the opportunity to test all staff and pupils from January, which we fully want to support and engage with to keep all those in our school community as safe as possible. This testing is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'. We know these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity, but they are better at picking up cases when a person has a higher viral load. Along with the other protective measures we have in place in school, these tests will help staff and pupils to remain in school safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms, so by taking part in the testing, we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our school open as safely as possible. Testing will be offered free of charge.

The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take it. Those taking the test will be supervised by trained Priory staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and or throat. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with pupils participating and parents or legal guardians will also be informed should the test prove to be positive. We will not notify you of a negative test.

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2.

We are therefore planning to test all pupils in Years 7 to 10 who want to participate from the week commencing 11 January 2021. Year 11 will be tested on Friday, 8 January. Our plans for this testing and the considerable logistics required are already well underway and we will send out further information on this early next week.

However, prior to this happening, consent must be given for your child to have the Lateral Flow Test so can I ask you to provide your consent by completing the consent form using the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=id9BE8UjUUqLD9VLKIqMFp7MGKsaqzNDIcHSpoNbUvdUQUc4OEtPS0IWWFFKM0Q2RkFRSDdKR0hZRi4u>

By doing this now, it will allow us to put our 'mass testing' into operation as swiftly as possible in the new year. Please bear in mind that if, on the day of testing itself, your son or daughter decides not to take part, they will not be made to do so and consent can be withdrawn at any time ahead of the test by contacting Mr Gee by email at n.gee@priory.lancs.sch.uk.

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 our existing Privacy Notice on the school's website.

2. Updated back to school plans in January

In line with the new advice from Government, schools have now been given more time to plan and prepare for the roll out of this mass testing which will impact on our original return to schools plans for pupils. Therefore, the new arrangements will be as follows:

Back to school plans in January – All pupils

All pupils in all year groups will work remotely from home from Tuesday, 5 January. Monday, 4 January remains an Inset day for staff.

Back to school plans in January – Year 11

School will be open to Year 11 pupils only from Monday, 11 January. They will follow their normal timetable in school from this point forward and all current arrangements that are in place for them will continue.

Back to school plans in January – Years 7 to 10

Years 7 – 10 will continue to work remotely from home for the week beginning Monday, 11 January as well and will not return to school until Monday, 18 January 2021.

Learning from home - 'Live Learning' @ Priory - all pupils – all year groups

As outlined in my last letter, all pupils now in Years 7 – 11 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 therefore will still 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. Please refer to my last letter for our expectations of 'Live Learning' @ Priory.

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Finally

As I mentioned previously, I remain confident we can continue to work together over the coming weeks to play our part in ensuring as many in our school community and equally therefore in our wider community, remain as well as they can for as long as possible whilst maintaining our high expectations of learning, be that remotely or in school itself.

For now, then, please do take the time to complete the consent form. We will write again early next week with further information on our plans for mass testing, so until then, I wish you all the very best for a Happy New Year.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher