

5 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you and your families remain well.

As you know, today we started to welcome back our Year 11 pupils into school, albeit for their initial Covid test. It's been fabulous to see them, and we look forward, in due course, to welcoming back all our pupils next week.

We will of course ensure that we continue to focus on the 'people' of our school community as our pupils return. As I've said before, we won't simply fixate on 'catch-up' from the beginning. Instead, we will focus on our pastoral care too. The return to school once again means our pupils will need to reacquaint themselves with the routines and habits of learning in school, but I'm confident that with the guidance of great teachers and our targeted support where necessary, they will quickly start to thrive once again.

Systems of control

As so many of you recognise, the modifications and adjustments which have had to be made within school for us to continue to function in as safe an environment for all, have been extensive. Prior to this lockdown, pupils and staff have been conscientious and diligent in adhering to our systems of control and these ways of working have now become established. We know the measures we have put in place, together with the maturity with which our pupils have responded to our Covid protocols, have worked well to date and all these will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Thank you therefore to all our pupils, in understanding their individual contribution towards our ongoing collaborative aim of keeping everyone in our school community safe. I'm sure that you will agree, it remains imperative that our systems of control continue to be rigorously applied to enable the safest possible environment for all, with the testing programme and the wearing of face masks in classrooms an important addition to this.

Face coverings

On that note, a reminder that the only significant difference to our existing Covid systems is the additional requirement that face coverings must now be worn in classrooms as well. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons. This will be reviewed again by the government at Easter.

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It is essential therefore that all pupils not only continue to bring their own face coverings into school, but they wear them as they have been doing and additionally wear them in lessons. Again, this will help each of us play our part in contributing to create an inherently safer environment for not only those in our school community, but our friends and family when pupils and staff return home at the end of each day. Masks should be plain. Please note, pupils travelling to school on public transport or a school bus must also continue to wear an appropriate face covering.

Uniform

A big part of your child's return to school is, of course, uniform and we will continue to expect the highest standards from our pupils in all areas, with uniform and appearance being no exception. We acknowledge however that it has been some time since uniform was last worn and, for some pupils, it may now have become outgrown. Whilst many retailers are closed now, supermarkets remain open and sell a range of uniform, including footwear. Our experienced uniform suppliers too are also operating an order and collection service.

Despite this, we appreciate that occasionally difficulties may occur with items of uniform and we particularly understand that, due to the pandemic, financial concerns and other factors may have impacted on families during Covid. If this is the case and you need support, please contact your child's Head of Year in the first instance.

Equally, if you have any unwanted school uniform, including PE kit, that still has good wear left in it, then please do drop this off at school by placing it in the blue bin in the reception area.

Reception is open from 8am to 4pm Monday - Friday during term time.

Twice weekly testing in households

You may have heard that households with secondary age children will be able to test themselves twice every week at home. However please understand that the organisation of this is not the responsibility of schools. Schools cannot give test kits to parents, carers or household members and should not order more test kits for this purpose. Instead, test kits can either be collected or ordered online.

Tests are fast, easy, and completely free. There are different ways for you to collect your test to take at home, twice weekly:

- through your employer, if they offer testing to employees
- by collecting a home test kit from a local test site – anyone aged 18 or over can collect two packs of seven tests
- by ordering a home test kit online – please do not order online if you can access testing through other routes, this frees up home delivery for those who need it most

If you have any queries about the tests, please call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines). Lines are open every day from 7am to 11pm.

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Whilst testing remains voluntary, it is strongly recommended to all who are eligible. Alongside the vaccine, washing hands, wearing face coverings, and maintaining social distancing, rapid testing plays a vital role in reducing transmission rates. Getting into the habit of regular testing as part of our everyday lives will help us all to play our part and do what we can to protect each other.

The school calendar

After all our pupils have returned to school, we will be reviewing the school calendar in terms of parents' evenings and progress reports. Once we have a revised calendar, we will notify you in due course.

Finally

With our pupils returning to school, next week, this will be the last time I will write to you on a Friday, unless there is something more specific to inform you of. Thank you once again then, for playing your part in supporting us as a school throughout this journey and for your continued messages of thanks throughout.

Please know, that the kind words of appreciation sent by so many of you have really lifted both myself and the staff here at Priory and have been greatly appreciated by us all, I can assure you.

For now then, here's to a safe and happy remaining academic year to us all.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher