

17 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will be aware, late yesterday the government announced a series of measures aimed at delaying the onset of the Covid 19 Coronavirus throughout the country.

Whilst our overall goal is the same - to ensure that as many of our school community, both pupils and staff, remain as well as they can for as long as possible, I have to inform you that staff and pupil absences are making it increasingly difficult for schools to operate in the normal way.

I continue to thank parents/carers for your co-operation in helping us to manage the situation for our young people and staff and for taking seriously the responsibilities we all have to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community.

Self-isolated absence:

You will already have heard yesterday that the Prime Minister has announced new measures to combat the spread of coronavirus. We will continue to need your active engagement to implement this.

In the first instance, the government is asking that should any member of your household show the signs of Covid 19 then **all** members of your family should self-isolate for 14 days.

The symptoms of Covid 19 are a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature.

Any pupil(s) self-isolating will not be allowed back into school until the 14-day period is over.

Any self-isolated absence will be authorised by the school.

Please keep us informed of any reasons for pupil absence.

If we feel that any pupil we are teaching either develops or is exhibiting those symptoms, we will of course take measures to isolate them in school and contact you to collect them. Please can we respectfully request that you make arrangements to do this immediately.

This advice applies to **all** within the school community and, as such, presents potential issues with the school's ability to staff teaching groups adequately, prepare meals etc. should we have a significant number of staff who are no longer able to attend.

Currently contingency plans have been developed which may include joining teaching groups together and collapsing timetables for individual classes, part or whole year groups in an attempt to ensure that school remains open for all students for as long as possible.

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With several pupils now already absent from school, we have also been making contingency plans to allow a level of education to continue for pupils in the event of self-isolation via remote learning. It is essential that pupils continue with their learning at home wherever possible. Further information on this has now been posted on the school's website. Please click on the '**New Page – Pupil Remote Learning**' banner at the top of our home page www.priory.lancs.sch.uk to access the information and instructions for this. The work pupils will be expected to continue with whilst at home will begin to be populated in this area by staff from tomorrow (Wednesday).

Access restrictions

The Prime Minister talked about the importance of 'social distancing' yesterday. Therefore, direct contact from parents/carers to school will no longer take place in person. For example, rather than meetings taking place face-to-face, communication will now take place either over the telephone or via email.

Sporting events

There is a common understanding amongst all South Ribble secondary schools that sporting fixtures between schools are postponed for the foreseeable future.

Educational visits and other activities/events

In line with government advice, we have taken the decision to cancel our planned trip to Iceland. We are expecting to be able to reimburse the full amount of money paid at this time and would appreciate your patience as we await information from our insurance company. Further details regarding reimbursement will follow in due course. Other visits taking place later in the year will remain under review.

Visits within the UK will continue to be reviewed on an individual basis depending on when they are planned for, but, for the foreseeable future, trips out of Priory will not take place.

The Year 11 parents evening will take place remotely where possible and Year 11 parents will be sent that detail separately in due course.

Partial school closure

In the event that pupil/teacher/support staff ratios reach the point where it is neither safe nor practical for school to remain open to all students, we will first partially close the school. This will be decided on a daily basis, dependent upon the number of staff available.

Should this be a necessity we will endeavour to inform parents on the afternoon before the partial closure in order to support you in making appropriate arrangements; this may not always be possible, however, due to the nature of the virus. As a result, please ensure you view the school website and check your emails regularly; this is where any information regarding partial or full school closure will be posted.

Year 11 examination classes will be the school's priority during this time and, as such, it is unlikely that they will be asked to remain at home unless the decision is taken to close the school as a whole.

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In the event of full school closure

The current government advice is that schools should not close due to the Covid 19 outbreak. However, this decision is becoming increasingly difficult to manage in schools, and this approach itself is likely to change in the coming days and/or weeks. With this in mind, we have been making contingency plans to allow a level of education to continue for pupils in the event of whole-school closures via remote learning. As mentioned previously, please click on the '**New Page – Pupil Remote Learning**' banner at the top of our home page www.priory.lancs.sch.uk to access the information and instructions for this. The work pupils will be expected to continue with whilst at home will begin to be populated in this area by staff from tomorrow (Wednesday).

During a full school closure, staff will be available to answer email queries within the usual parameters of the school day and we will endeavour to respond within 24 to 48 hours of receipt of a request for information, either from parents or pupils. Please note, however, that individual members of staff may themselves be ill with the virus and so may be unable to set work and/or respond to requests if they are too unwell to do so.

GCSE examinations

For those with children in Year 11, naturally thoughts move towards their final GCSE exams. At this stage, the current advice from the exams regulator, Ofqual, remains for pupils 'to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal'. Should any change be made to the GCSE exam arrangements or timetable, we will communicate this as soon as we have the details, but for now plan for no change.

Year 11 revision and intervention after school will take place as planned wherever possible.

Updates

As a nation, we are seeing the official advice alter and amend on a daily basis. As a school we are endeavouring to keep up with this advice and adapt to it, whilst also ensuring that a sense of normality remains. We are all being asked to expect changes to our current routines and I ask for your patience and understanding in the days and weeks to come.

Please be assured that we continue to collaborate with, and act upon the advice of, the relevant organisations as we take the necessary steps to plan for the future.

We are also in daily contact with our colleagues in all of the South Ribble schools. Together, we are working collaboratively to share our experiences and work to the best possible solutions moving forward.

Please can I once again thank parents for your messages of support at this time and ask that you continue to work with us to manage the situation for the continued benefit of all in our local community.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Eastham
Headteacher