

23 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Update**

With school now being closed, I intend to provide an update at the end of each week from here on in, on a Friday afternoon, to ensure parents, pupils and the school feel an element of communication remains throughout the period we are shut.

Should there be any pressing announcements to be made or important information to be given, this will still happen at the appropriate time during the week via the school website, social media platforms and school email in the main.

These are of course worrying times for us all, but we'll continue to work hard to cope with the ever-changing situation as best we can for the benefit of all.

### **Year 11**

We are starting to get outline information on how GCSEs will be awarded. However, I must stress, this is only outline information at this stage.

To date, we have been assured that the Government's priority now is to ensure no young person faces a barrier when it comes to moving onto the next stage of their lives – whether that's further or higher education, an apprenticeship or a job.

This means ensuring GCSE students are awarded a grade which fairly reflects the work that they have put in.

To produce this, we are being told, at this stage, that they will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges in due course.

The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.

The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July.

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In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years and we have been assured that the distribution of grades will follow a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's pupils do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances.

Please also be assured, that if any pupil believes the correct process has not been followed in their case, they will be able to appeal on that basis.

In addition, if they do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance, we are being told they may have the opportunity to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity, once schools are open again.

Students may also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021 in these circumstances and there may be an option to sit an exam early in the next academic year for students who wish to.

With this in mind, we are still encouraging Year 11 to continue to engage with the online learning that staff are providing and to engage in revision to May half term, as would normally be the case if pupils were still revising for exams, just in case the above might apply to them.

Even if the above does not materialise in quite the way we are being told currently, the key focus for many of our Year 11s should also be about moving onto college. They should think therefore, about the courses they want to go on to do and think about preparing as best they can for the commencement of these courses.

In liaising with the colleges, we do know that they have plans to contact all applicants with some general information about their choices and in some cases, will look to contact them as early as the end of this week about possible future work.

I'm certain that the colleges will begin to signpost pupils to a few good essential skills websites for level 3 subjects, which will help many to have a renewed focus over the coming weeks.

Again, as soon as we hear more, we will be sure to share this with you.

## **Finally**

I am so grateful for the many messages of thanks and support that numerous parents have taken the time to send in to me over the last week or so.

However, there is no doubt that my job in terms of decision making has been made that much easier knowing we have a staff at Priory who are willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with me in times of challenge and uncertainty. I'm proud and sincerely blown away by the sense of community that Priory has.

In times of crisis, we might assume we look to government. This week – clearly and proudly – it's been the staff here at Priory that I would like to offer my sincere thanks to.

Their approach to the crisis has been so deeply impressive, so uplifting, so reassuringly visible, even in these uncertain times.

*And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.*

*And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.*

*And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.*

*Kitty O'Meara's poem*

The time will come when we will heal and rebuild.

In the meantime, must work together to ensure that we support each other as best we can in the coming weeks and months.

My very best wishes, as ever, to each of you and your families.

Stay safe, act sensibly and stay well,

Yours faithfully



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