

July 16th 2020

Dear Parents, carers and students,

As I come to the end of my first year at Priestnall School, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all students, parents, governors and staff for working together to achieve so many great things, particularly during 'lockdown'. When I stop and think how unfair this all is for everyone and how society has changed its thinking in so many ways, I remind myself that we have seen many, many acts of kindness and compassion. We have seen people helping each other to get through it all. We have seen amazing work from so many different work sectors – obviously the NHS but also, all of the other areas where people have pulled together to keep supplies and industry going as much as possible. The Priestnall team have played a significant role here and provided resources and support to those who have needed it. This whole time period has also created hardships for many families and I hope that good times are just around the corner for them. I hope that you and your families have managed to remain safe and well; I send my sincere condolences to you if you have lost anyone to the virus; as many of you will know, several of our staff have lost members of their family to the virus and I send my deepest sympathy to those colleagues again too.

Since lockdown started back in March, staff have been busy setting work via our online platforms and reassuring our students as much as possible. They have had to learn to work in ways that they could never have imagined when they trained to be a teacher or member of the support staff team. They've had to learn new things quickly but they have done so with enthusiasm, dedication and positivity. The feedback we have received from the overwhelming majority of our parents/carers has been very positive; I appreciate you taking the time to write in to school showing your appreciation for the improvements we have made, particularly with regards to our remote learning strategy. There are things we could have done better but we have learned from this and feel confident that, should we end up in lockdown again in the future, we are ready to go and proceed with phase 3 of our remote learning plans. Mr Clarey will share further information about this in due course.

Students have had to find new ways to work from home and motivate themselves as much as possible. They have had to learn a new way of producing their work. Some students have found it difficult when there are not enough items of technology for everyone in the household to use. They have learned to communicate with staff more via email instead of face to face. Some youngsters have found all of this easier than others and produced some amazing work and some have found it very difficult to deal with. We are all different and it is ok to be different.

Parents/Carers have had to play a role in helping their youngsters adapt to a different way of working – sometimes this has been very rewarding, sometimes frustrating and worrying for parents/carers. In the new academic year, please continue to contact staff directly at school if there are things you are concerned about so that we can address it. We do not profess to have all the answers, but we will do our absolute best to support your child.

The Senior Leadership Team have now finalised our plans for opening in September; we cannot wait to welcome back our students. We have produced a new risk assessment, along with a detailed guide for parents/carers and students, which explains how things will work in September. These documents are available to read on our website under the Coronavirus section, as well as attached to the email.

We are currently creating a one-way system in school and putting up new signage; as soon as this is completed, there will be a virtual tour of the school available for students to watch. We will send further information to parents/carers and students during August.

I'd like to make reference to some of the school's developments this year, despite lockdown:

- Opening of our new Student Wellbeing Centre
- Closure of the Study Centre and opening of the new Behaviour Support Centre (in September)
- Staff Professional Learning Centre – this has been of great benefit to staff during lockdown, where they have been able to record or host Teams lessons
- Introduction of a second modern foreign language (Spanish) from September for new Year 7
- Becoming a strategic partner in the national Outstanding Leadership Partnership Programme, meaning we can deliver bespoke national leadership qualifications
- Trained Outstanding Facilitators with OLEVI International and ready to roll out national Outstanding Teacher programmes at Priestnall
- Further development of ICT across the school with 300 new computers and IT resources arriving over the summer
- A new school day, which will improve social time for our students
- An enhanced activities week programme (although we were not in a position to run this in July, it is in place for the summer of 2021!)
- New primary transition team, which has significantly improved the communication with our primary schools
- Additional Senior Leadership Team appointments to lead on our key Ofsted recommendations.

There are a number of key priorities for the school in the new academic year but one of particular importance will be to develop the student voice across the school, in all year groups. We are also looking forward to introducing our new personal development curriculum, which will run during the new personal development time every morning. Building on the excellent work already started, we will be enhancing our teaching and learning strategy, as well as developing the school's rewards system.

With regards to the September return, the arrangements are as follows:

FOR THE FIRST WEEK ONLY:

Wednesday 2nd September: Year 7 only (Induction Day). Arrangements will be sent out separately by Mrs Drury

Thursday 3rd September: Year 7 and 11 only. Both year groups to arrive at 9am, Year 7 via the Sports Hall carpark and Year 11 via the Student Entrance

Friday 4th September: All year groups, staggered arrival times as follows:

| Year Group | Arrival Time | Entry Point |
|------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Year 11 | 9.00 | Student entrance |
| Year 10 | 9.00 | Science carpark entrance |
| Year 7 | 9.05 | Student entrance |
| Year 8 | 9.10 | Student entrance |
| Year 9 | 9.10 | Science carpark entrance |

Please refer to the attached guidance for students and their families which provides further details regarding student arrival times, for the remainder of the half term (subject to further Government guidance).

Students are to return to school in full school uniform. During students' first day in school, there will be some time with their Learning Co-ordinator during the morning. There will be a virtual assembly led by myself for students to watch during their first LC session.

We will do everything possible to ensure that your child has all the support they need on their return to school, whether that is a quick check in, pastoral support or more specialist counselling. Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the school College team should you have any questions or concerns. Key contacts list attached.

Thank you for your continued support during my first year at Priestnall; I look forward to getting to know more of our fantastic students in the new academic year.

I look forward to seeing our students in September.

Yours faithfully,



Craig Burns
Headteacher