



The Priory School, Hitchin

Excellence in education, for every young person, every day

Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2UR

☎ 01462 622300 · ✉ admin@priory.herts.sch.uk · www.priory.herts.sch.uk · @TPS_Hitchin

Headteacher: Mr M. Blayney MEd (Cantab)

29th September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Reference: Welcome to the new academic year

It will not have escaped your notice that we had a visit from Ofsted recently. As a result, my welcome back letter is being sent to you much later than I had hoped or anticipated. Nonetheless, whether this is your child's first year at our school, or whether you are a parent of older children who have been here for some time, I am very pleased to welcome you to the new academic year.

I hope that you, and your family, had a restful summer break and, even if you weren't able to get away on holiday, I hope that a break from the normal routines brought with it some time to recuperate. In this letter, I hope to provide you with some essential information, and updates in readiness for the new academic year.

Examination results

We are extremely proud of our Year 13 and Year 11 students who have just completed their A-Levels, BTECs, Vocational courses, and GCSEs. There were many individual stories of success and our results continue to compare favourably to outcomes at a national level. In some subjects, TPSH has exceeded national outcomes by a significant margin. We will continue to work hard in support of our new cohort of students taking their public examinations in 2027.

Updated systems

During our two September INSET days, no time was wasted in launching new systems in response to student, staff, and parental feedback. Our updated behaviour system maintains the same conceptual framework as the previous system, whilst attempting to make the system more transparent to students and their parents through the use of our TPSH Responsibility Card. Student feedback was very much focused on the delay between a behavioural incident being recorded and a detention being sat. In some cases, this delay was several weeks. To address this, we have introduced same-day detentions that last 20 minutes instead of an hour, offering students the chance to get the detention over and done with as quickly as possible, leaving them free to enjoy the remaining 40 minutes of their lunch without a detention hanging over them for days or weeks.

We have also launched a new Feedback policy, Teaching Toolkit, Progress Check, and Behaviour Leadership policy. You can find the policies on our newly updated website here: [The Priory School Hitchin – Excellence in education, for every young person, every day](#)

Communication protocols

In response to parental feedback, we have clarified our communication protocols to support parents in being able to contact the right person in a timely and efficient manner. Included within this letter is our updated Communication Protocol document that I hope supports you in accessing the best support.

Term dates and key dates for the diary

Please see below some key dates for your diary for the year ahead:

Thursday 1st October 2026: Open Evening for September 2027 cohort (Early closure at 2:30pm)
Wednesday 21st October 2026: Year 7 Halloween Disco
Thursday 22nd October 2026: Intermediate Recital
Tuesday 3rd November 2026: Enrichment Day 1 (More information to follow)
Thursday 12th November 2026: Year 13 Consultation Evening
Wednesday 25th November 2026: Post-16 Pathways Information Evening
Thursday 26th November 2026: Curriculum Day 1 (School closed to most students)
Friday 27th November 2026: Occasional Day (School closed to students)
Wednesday 2nd December 2026: Christmas Concert
Wednesday 6th January 2027: Year 11 Parents' Evening
Thursday 14th January 2027: Presentation Evening
Wednesday 20th January 2027: Curriculum Day (School closed to most students)
Wednesday 27th January 2027: Year 8 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 10th February 2027: TPSH Apprenticeship Fair
Tuesday 23rd February 2027: Year 12 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 24th February 2027: Year 7 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 3rd March 2027: Year 11 Exam Support Event
Wednesday 10th March 2027: Year 9 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 17th March 2027: Spring Concert
Thursday 18th March 2027: Enrichment Day 2
Wednesday 24th March 2027: Year 9 Learning Pathways Evening
Wednesday 28th April 2027: Curriculum Day (School closed to most students – Year 11 / Year 13 in school)
Wednesday 19th May 2027: Year 10 Parents' Evening
Thursday 24th June 2027: Year 11 Prom

Further events may be added throughout the academic year, however, we will write to you separately with key details should this be the case. I also include, attached to this letter, an updated version of our Term Dates calendar that you can print and put on the fridge or family noticeboard, and 'Key information for parents'.

Finally

I would like to thank you for your continued support for your child and for the school. Please do reach out if we can support you or your child with anything. We very much look forward to working with your child and your family over the course of this new academic year.

With my very best wishes,



Matt Blayney
Headteacher



The Priory School, Hitchin (TPSH)

Key information for parents for 2026 - 2027

At the start of the new academic year, I would like to draw your attention to key information about the school and our expectations.

The school day

The school day begins at 8.50am and ends at 3.30pm. There are five lessons per day and a registration session first thing in the morning. The shape of the school day is as follows:

Students must arrive in school before 8:50am. We use bells to signal the beginning and end of lessons and provide students with 5 minutes of movement time between lessons. If a child arrives to their lesson after the second bell has sounded, they will be marked as late.

Session	Start	End
Morning Registration	08:50	09:10
Lesson 1	09:10	10:10
Lesson 2	10:15	11:10
Break	11:10	11:25
Lesson 3	11:30	12:30
Lunch	12:30	13:25
Lesson 4 (Incl. Afternoon Registration)	13:30	14:25
Lesson 5	14:30	15:30

Beginning and end of the school day

Students are expected to arrive and leave the school site in their full school uniform and to behave in accordance with our expectations. Students may arrive on the school site from 8am onwards and a free breakfast of toast or cereal is available in the school café from 8:15am. Please ensure that your child does not arrive on school site before 8am.

At the end of the school day students may leave either through the main gate or via the side gate onto the school playing fields.

Attendance & punctuality

Department for Education research shows a clear link between high levels of school attendance and positive outcomes at GCSE/A-Level. In short, the more your child attends school, the more likely they are to achieve strong GCSE or A-Level results. Furthermore, recent evidence shows that a child who misses a day in the first week is 2.7 times more likely to become a Persistently Absent (PA) student.

The minimum level of attendance required is 96% and any child falling below 90% will be classified as PA. The Priory School will always work to support children and families who are struggling to attend school regularly, however, if improvements are not made, then the local authority may issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and may move to prosecution.

The school day starts for students at 8.50am, so the expectation is that they are in school by 8.45am to give themselves time to hand in their phones and get to their tutor room on time. The school monitors the punctuality of students, and support strategies and sanctions will be used for identified persistent offenders where necessary. Punctuality between lessons is also monitored and we will contact home if there are issues. A parental information sheet is included as an appendix to this pack to support positive school attendance.

Car parking

The main school car park during drop-off/pick-up times can become congested and is very busy with students transiting on foot or by bicycle. Please may all parents picking up their child/children be patient and respectful whilst remaining vigilant of students moving through the car park on foot or by bicycle.

If you are waiting to collect your child, please may we also ask that you turn off your engine to reduce the impact of exhaust fumes on our students.

Students transiting to and from school

When transiting to or from TPSH, students remain under the authority of the school behaviour policy. We believe that our students are ambassadors of the school when in uniform and should be setting themselves the highest expectations and standards when engaging with the wider community of Hitchin. We would therefore appreciate it if you could talk to your child about the importance of representing the school and themselves in a positive way when in Hitchin.

Students using the local BP garage on Bedford Road also remain under the authority of TPSH and thus are subject to our normal behaviour policy. Senior staff from TPSH are on duty each afternoon by the garage and we will address concerns, in line with our behaviour policy, where required.

School policies

The school website includes all our statutory and other key policies that are regularly reviewed. These policies can be found on our website here: [The Priory School Hitchin – Excellence in education, for every young person, every day](#) The school updates policies on a rotational basis, so from time-to-time specific policies may not be on the website. Please feel free to contact Emma Sangster (esangster@priory.herts.sch.uk) if you cannot access a specific policy.

Teaching & learning

At TPSH we have very high aspirations for your child and their academic success. Our staff are well qualified, highly experienced, and dedicated to providing the very best education and pastoral care to every student. We all share the same values that are woven into our school's culture: Responsibility, Respect, and Resilience.

We believe in a curriculum that challenges students to think critically, ask questions, and seek to build knowledge and skills. We also believe in making education decisions based upon the available academic research and use organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to guide our pedagogy. You can find curriculum information, specific to each subject on our website.

Students must come to school prepared to study. High-quality sleep, the correct equipment, and homework completed to a high standard are vital in making academic success a reality.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

TPSH's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mrs F. Nearney.

Upon arrival back at school, all students receive a safeguarding assembly and are reminded of the processes and systems in place to support them should they have any concerns. In addition to this, all students receive lessons in online safety and other key messages as part of their PSHE curriculum.

If you have any safeguarding concerns regarding your child or another child who attends The Priory School, please contact our Safeguarding and Child Protection team childprotection@priory.herts.sch.uk. If you have an urgent concern you can telephone the school, contact the Police using 999, or request support from Hertfordshire children's social care using the following link: [Report concerns about a child or request support | Hertfordshire County Council](#).

Student wellbeing

We take the wellbeing of your child incredibly seriously at TPSH and want to support your child in being healthy and happy whilst they are part of the school community. This can be achieved in a variety of ways from group support to individual one-to-one support.

We work with a variety of external organisations, including the North Hertfordshire NHS Mental Health Support Team, NHS GRIT, the Hertfordshire School Nurse Service, and PHASE. Our in-school qualified counsellors are Miss Thompson (Tuesday to Friday) and Mrs Laycock (Friday).

The Senior Mental Health Lead at TPSH is Mrs Omar. If there is ever a concern regarding your child's wellbeing, please do not hesitate to send her an email at cfollano@priory.herts.sch.uk.

Medical information

If your child has any updated medical information, please ensure that you email this to medical@priory.herts.sch.uk. It is vital that our records about your child are up to date so that we are able to support them appropriately. If the medical information remains the same as that provided on the essential forms originally handed in, or if you are aware that the school has already made any necessary updates to your child's records, you do not need to provide us with that information again. Please use this email address to update us throughout the year. Our allergy policy can be found in the policies section of our school website here: [Policies – The Priory School Hitchin](#)

Behaviour for Learning

At TPSH, we believe that high expectations and standards of behaviour are crucial in supporting children to achieve their ambitions and access the very best learning environment. Furthermore, everyone at TPSH has a right to come to school or work each day without having to experience poor or disrespectful behaviour.

The school's Behaviour Leadership policy is published on our website and outlines our expectations and standards. We also ensure that students are briefed on these expectations when they arrive at our school. Our Behaviour Leadership policy, in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying policy, Drugs policy and Searching, Screening & Confiscation policy, provides the framework for how we deliver a safe learning environment for all students and staff.

Research shows that where parents and carers support the school in applying sanctions or consequences for behaviour that falls short of our expectations, the child often goes on to regulate or alter the behaviours that resulted in the initial sanction or consequence.

TPSH's expectations of behaviour and conduct also extend outside of the school premise and we work closely with the police, children's social services, and other external agencies where concerns are raised. The school reserves the right to take interest in and impose sanctions for any misconduct by any student at any time, beyond the bounds of the school day/week/term, where such misconduct prejudices the good order and welfare of the school and its students or brings TPHS into disrepute.

School detentions will be held in the school hall daily at lunchtimes and after school until 4:30pm.

I am pleased to say that the vast majority of students at TPHS have excellent behaviour and are a credit to their families and local community.

Recognising achievement

We aim to acknowledge students' achievement both in and outside school hours as often as we can. Students have the opportunity to pick up daily reward points, as well as Headteacher commendations.

Parents can make nominations for Headteacher commendations for achievements outside of school hours by emailing Emma Sangster (esangster@priory.herts.sch.uk). Reward points can be exchanged for items in the reward shop, which is open every Monday.

This includes items of stationery, footballs, netballs, calculators, revision materials and power banks for their phones. Our Heads of Year will also be promoting rewards incentives and trips with thresholds for behaviour and reward points. This includes trips to local places like Gravity and further afield to Southend and Winter Wonderland.

School uniform

At TPHS we believe that school uniform unites all students, no matter what their background, into a single school community. It also supports students to focus on their learning without the distraction of deciding what to wear each day.

Unless otherwise communicated, students must attend school and leave school wearing full school uniform. The new-style uniform will become compulsory for all students from September 2027 (with the exception of Year 11). An outline of our uniform can be found as an appendix to this document.

Make-up and jewellery

The school policy is that students do not wear make-up or jewellery (including any kind of studs/sleepers) and, like the rest of our uniform policy, this is non-negotiable. Please note that if students get their ears pierced during term time they must wear clear spacers until the piercing has healed sufficiently enough for them to remove their earrings on a daily basis.

Financial support

For families who are struggling to cover the financial costs of educating their child, various support grants are available. Uniform grants are available through the Hitchin Education Foundation and an application form can be found on our school website (<https://www.priory.herts.sch.uk/information/financial-support/>). If your financial circumstances have changed over the summer holidays, I would strongly urge you to look to see if you are eligible for free school meals (<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/at-school/free-school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>).

We are also able to provide limited financial support for school journeys and trips. Please contact the school's Finance Office (finance@priory.herts.sch.uk) for further information.

Chromebooks, Google Classroom and Security

Students are expected to charge their Chromebook every night so that they are able to benefit from using their device in all lessons throughout the day. Please remember that any damage or accidents must be reported to Network Support immediately and that the protective case should be used at all times when transporting the device.

We recommend that you download the Securly app to monitor your child's Chromebook use outside of school and remind you that you can also sign up to guardian summaries on Google Classroom to check upcoming assignments and activity.

More details on the Securly app and how to sign up for guardian summaries will be sent separately to all parents.

Self and Society (RSHE)

Your child will participate in RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) for two lessons a fortnight (Years 7 to 9) or one lesson per fortnight (Years 10 and 11) throughout the year. The content of these subjects is listed on the school website under RSHE & Citizenship. Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Watkins on cwatkins@priory.herts.sch.uk.

Appendix 1: Attendance information for parents

At The Priory School, Hitchin, we believe that for your child to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend school, on time, every day! As a parent, you are best placed to support your child to enjoy their education as well as provide them with the tools to overcome any barriers to attending school that they may face. Please take a moment to look at the information provided within this document; we hope you will find it helpful.

Non-school days:	Approx. 175 non-school days per year 175 days to rest, spend on visits, holidays, and appointments.					
Number of days absent:	0 days absence	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence (half a term missed)	38 days absence	47 days absence
Number of days in school:	190 days of school	180 days of school	171 days of school	161 days of school	152 days of school	143 days of school
Learning hours lost	0 hours lost	37.5 hours lost	95 hours lost	142.5 hours lost	190 hours lost	290 hours lost
Attendance (%):	100%	96%	90%	85%	80%	70%
Summary:	GOOD: Best chance of success! Well done!  		WORRYING: Impact upon educational progress. Missing key content and developmental opportunities. 		SERIOUS CONCERN: Significant impact upon educational progress and development. Legal action, including Fixed-Penalty Notices (FPN), may be issued by Hertfordshire County Council.	

We recognise that some children (primarily those suffering from serious medical conditions/ injuries/ or bereavement) cannot always attend school as regularly as they would wish to. However, for some children, the following advice may help you encourage regular and sustained school attendance.

How you can support your child to attend school regularly (in line with advice from the Hertfordshire County Council Attendance team):

- Work together with school staff on a joint plan, agreed by all parties.
- Maintain good communication with key adults in school (and other agencies).
- Present a united and consistent approach. If school and home are perceived as a 'united front' the positive impact upon attendance/behaviour is significant.
- Be prepared to place reasonable pressure on your child when urging them to go to school (try to ignore threats/crying/screaming/extreme reactions etc.)
- Try to acknowledge that an element of worry/anxiety around going to school can be perfectly natural. Consider ways in which you can build a sense of resilience within your child which will serve them well for the demands of adulthood.
- Make morning routines as smooth and calm as possible.
- If your child does not make it into school on time, they should be made to go to school as soon as possible.
- Manage the home environment to avoid rewarding school absence (e.g., removing access to mobile phone, gaming consoles, or TV if your child is not ill).
- Consult the NHS guidance 'Is my child too ill for school?' available online. Link here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Appendix 2: Term dates for 2026 – 2027

Term Dates 2026-27

September 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

July 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

	= School holidays		= School days (Week 1)		= School days (Week 2)
	= Bank holidays		= Staff training days [INSET] (school closed to students)		
	= Curriculum days [INSET] (school closed to <i>most</i> students) Check below/overleaf for details				
	= Occasional Day (school closed to students)		= Year 7 and Year 12 students only		

Curriculum days:

Curriculum days are counted as INSET days and will be utilised to support staff in marking and moderating Year 11 and Year 13 mock exams, coursework, and NEAs on school-site. By using some of our INSET time to undertake crucial marking and moderation, we will ensure that students get the most accurate, timely, and helpful feedback possible. These days have been strategically placed within the Autumn, Spring, and Summer terms to ensure that they achieve maximum impact whilst avoiding the same days/lessons.

On some days, we will be inviting selected groups of students into school in order to support coursework completion, revision, or complete NEAs. Please see the dates of our curriculum days for 2026/27 below:

- 26th November 2026 – Year 11 mock marking and moderation. Invited students attending school to complete coursework or NEAs.
- 20th January 2027 – Year 13 mock marking and moderation. Invited students attending school to complete coursework or NEAs.
- 28th April 2027 – BTEC assignment marking and moderation. Year 11 and Year 13 attending school, in normal lessons.

Appendix 3: TPSH Uniform



THE PRIORY SCHOOL
HITCHIN


Year 7


Year 8


Year 9


Year 10


Year 11

Compulsory Daywear

Core Uniform	Choose One	Choose One
 Classic/Fitted Blazer (Year Group Colour)	 LS / SS Revere Blouse	 or   or 
Black Ankle/Knee Length Socks • Black Tights • Black Leather Shoes		

Optional Daywear


V Neck Jumper
Key Stage 3 Key Stage 4

Black Coat

Core Sports Uniform


Polo Shirt


Black Shorts


Midlayer


Black Socks

White Sports Socks • Football Boots • Non Marking Trainers

Optional Sportswear


Skort


Leggings


Track Trousers


Boot Bag


Drawstring Bag


Sports Holdall

Plain Black Base Layer • Mouthguard • Shinpads



Beat School Uniforms, 4-5 Hermitage Road, Hitchin, SG5 1LT
020 3362 2930 • www.beatschooluniforms.co.uk



Standards for our Sixth Form can be found on our website here: [Standards – The Priory School Hitchin](#)

Appendix 4: Communication Protocol



The Priory School, Hitchin

Excellence in education, for every young person, every day

Communication protocol

At The Priory School, Hitchin (TPSH) we believe that clear, constructive, and mutually respectful communication are key to supporting all children who attend our school to meet their fullest potential. In order to support the crucial working relationship between home and school, the following protocols exist.

Parents can expect to receive the following written/electronic communications:

- A regularly updated school website.
- A termly newsletter celebrating school life.
- Additional information letters as required.
- Key dates for each year group.
- Regular Progress checks.
- Instagram updates.

In the case of emergency communication, parents can expect the following:

- An urgent phone call if an incident involves their child in particular.
- In case of an emergency school closure during the day, a email home and a note on the school website.
- In case of an emergency school closure before the start of the school day, messages will go out to parents via email, on the school website (www.priory.herts.sch.uk) and on the Local Authority website.
- An unexpected change of arrangements in clubs, fixtures or trips will be communicated to parents via email/social media.

TPSH can reasonably expect parents to:

- Sign and uphold the home/school agreement.
- Read and respond to letters/emails sent home.
- Phone or email the school to arrange an appointment to meet a member of staff.
- Contact their child's Form Tutor or class teacher in the first instance and avoid the temptation to escalate a matter to more senior colleagues until other channels have been explored (see below for further guidance).
- Keep us informed of changes in contact information and personal circumstances which affect their child – this is particularly important.
- Send emails directly to staff members but be sensitive to the fact that the first priority of every teacher is to teach their classes and that frequent emailing can be disruptive and counterproductive.
- Respect the work/life balance of staff and restrict emails that require a response to a working day, avoiding contacting staff during evenings, weekends and holidays.
- Raise concerns with an appropriate member of staff, in a polite manner that is likely to achieve a better outcome for your child, rather than making comments about the school on social media.

We can reasonably expect staff to:

- Reply to emails, phone messages and notes in the planner within three working days. There is no expectation that a member of staff should reply to any message received during a weekend or holiday until the next working week begins.
- Reply using a holding message if more than three days is required to investigate the matter raised.
- Use an appropriately formal tone in emails and letters to parents.
- Not reply to any email or letter that is rude or aggressive in tone or content.

We expect everyone to:

- Be calm, friendly and polite in all communications (including in writing, in face-to-face meetings, during parents' evenings, phone conversations and at school events).
- Have respect for each other.
- Set out to build and maintain a positive home/school relationship in the interests of the child.

General guidance for who to contact:

The diagram below is designed to support parents in knowing who is the best person to contact should you or your child need support.



*SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Useful contact details:

School telephone number	01462 622300
General enquiries	admin@priory.herts.sch.uk
Finance Team	finance@priory.herts.sch.uk
Attendance enquiries	attendance@priory.herts.sch.uk
Form Tutor	First initial followed by surname @priory.herts.sch.uk For example: jsmith@priory.herts.sch.uk
Classroom Teacher	First initial followed by surname @priory.herts.sch.uk For example: jsmith@priory.herts.sch.uk
Head of Year or Head of Department	First initial followed by surname @priory.herts.sch.uk For example: jsmith@priory.herts.sch.uk
Senior Leader	First initial followed by surname @priory.herts.sch.uk For example: jsmith@priory.herts.sch.uk
Learning Support Department	SEND@priory.sch.herts.uk
Child Protection Team	Childprotection@priory.herts.sch.uk