

25th August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

## **COVID-19 – Start of Term Arrangements – September 2020**

Welcome to our new school year in 2020-21! And if your child is starting in reception, nursery, Year 7 or 12, welcome to The Cranmer Education Trust (CET), a growing schools' Trust of (currently) 3 schools (Blue Coat, East Crompton St George's Primary and Mayfield Primary), which works to build excellent education, care and nurture for children and young people from 3 to 18.

We have had a very productive summer getting all our schools ready for full re-openings to all students, with all possible measures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our young people, our staff and our community. Mayfield is being transformed into a 2-form entry primary but even before we open the new build, the children who are returning will see improvements and redecoration in place in the existing classrooms. Major repair work to roofs at Blue Coat is well underway so there will not be disruption for students when they return. All parents will be aware of the mammoth effort that went into getting fair grades for both our A-Level and GCSE students, and the right progression routes, which depend on those grades, after the national method for allocating grades was cancelled.

The purpose of this letter is to explain how we have prepared our schools for full reopening. The Headteacher of each school – **Mr Higgins (Blue Coat)**, **Mrs Ross (East Crompton St George's)** and **Mr Couper-Barton (Mayfield)** will write to you also with the detail that is specific to their school. All our letters can be found on both the individual school's websites and the Trust's website.

### **Who returns when?**

#### **Blue Coat and St George's**

- Reception pupils will have a staggered start.
- Years 1-6 will have a staggered start across Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September.
- Years 7 and 12 return on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September.
- Years 8-11 and 13 return on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **Mayfield**

- Nursery and Reception pupils will have a staggered start
- Years 1-6 return on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Are our schools COVID safe?**

We have risk-assessed thoroughly all of the possible ways in which students (and staff) could transmit/catch COVID in our schools and have put controls in place to prevent this. The Trust Board, which is our Governing Body, has approved the risk assessments and the outcomes.

### **Hygiene controls**

When students enter their respective school, and when they leave, and throughout the day, they will clean their hands. We have sanitizers placed throughout our buildings. The "Catch-it", "Bin-it", "Kill-it" mantra is everywhere around our schools. Waste is double bagged for disposal.

### **Cleaning controls**

Cleaning has been increased, particularly of surfaces and frequently used furniture such as door handles. Where students learn in a more practical way (e.g. in PE and in secondary science and technology) equipment will only be used if/when it is possible to clean thoroughly.

### **Physical distancing**

We all realise that students maintaining 2-metres distance from each other at all times is not possible in schools. There isn't enough space. However, we have arranged classrooms so that there is distance

between students, and they don't sit facing one another. They will be reminded repeatedly about the importance of distancing, but parents particularly of very young children in Early Years especially should be aware that it won't be possible to enforce distancing all the time when children are playing and learning together.

### **Restricting mixing between groups of children**

Pupils at St George's will be in a class "bubble". They will have their own specialist class teacher and some TA support. They will stay in this "bubble" during break and lunchtimes. Pupils at Mayfield will be in bubbles of 2 classes (i.e. 60 children), with the exception of nursery.

In Blue Coat (secondary) students will be in year group "bubbles". Each year group will be based in a different building on the campus with its own toilets and recreation area. Secondary students are taught by subject specialist teachers who will move around the campus, but students will stay in their own area/building.

In this way, all our young people will have specialist teachers that they know, and who know them, which will help them feel confident and settled quickly. That will help everyone get up to speed with teaching, learning, making progress and achieving.

### **What about getting to and from school?**

Wherever possible, students are encouraged to walk or cycle to school.

When parents bring children to school, please remember not to congregate and chat, which could increase the chances of the virus being transmitted between people.

Please also remember that Headteachers will not be available for a quick chat as children arrive/leave; parents need to ring school and discuss any concerns they may have over the phone.

The vast majority of Blue Coat students live too far away to walk or cycle. They use designated school buses or a public service bus/tram/train or they are brought into school by car.

**Students over the age of 10 must wear a face-covering on a public service bus/train/tram** unless there is a specific reason why not. Badges are available if your child cannot wear a mask. We also advise parents to provide a small hand-sanitizer just in case, for use when travelling on public transport. Distancing rules are in place on public service buses, i.e. one person per seat. Government has said that it is providing additional funding for more public transport so that everyone can get to work/school etc with the distancing rules in place.

**The designated school buses are run by Transport for Greater Manchester** which has also asked that students wear face-coverings, as these buses don't just provide school transport. Again, we advise students have a small hand-sanitizer with them.

Designated school bus services don't pick up members of the public. Because the students using the bus are a known group, the companies have not put distancing arrangements in place. Students will sit 2 to a seat. We rely on our students to behave responsibly and respectfully on buses, whether on a designated or public service, to stay in their places and ideally sit/stand in roughly the same place each day so that we can do track and trace quickly if we need to.

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### **Will the Schools Meals Service be running?**

Yes, in every school. However, it is very unlikely that we will be able to provide hot meals. These have to be served in the dining area and getting all the students through and cleaning/disinfecting between groups of children will make hot meals virtually impossible. Your Headteacher will advise you about the arrangements in your school. As soon as it is safe and practicable to provide hot meals, we will do so.

### **Keeping the balance, and looking after our young people**

We all realise that “normal” as it was before COVID isn’t going to return for some time. Many people/organisations are dedicated to developing and trialling a vaccine, but that will take time. Until that point, we all have to do what we can to manage the situation safely, whilst ensuring that our young people enjoy the fullness of life as we go.

We are all social animals. Children need social contact with one another to develop fully. They also need the structure of the school day and face to face learning where they can interact with the teacher and the class and get rapid feedback and help. We know our young people have missed quite a bit of learning and have planned that next year, at every level, we will make up for what young people have missed and ensure they move on and progress through this year’s work as well. We **may** have to have a few temporary closures for different groups of students, but we have contingency plans in place for short-term closures, if they are necessary.

The important thing is that we work together as schools and parents, to safeguard our young people and give them the educational springboard for their future that they all need and deserve. We mustn’t fail them. They are all our future.

### **If my child is at home, will lessons be available online?**

From 1<sup>st</sup> September, the requirement is that all children and young people are provided with education. If parents do not send their child to school, then they may be liable to a fine.

If a young person is absent through sickness, they aren’t up to learning, and we help them when they return to school. If a young person is absent because the family has to self-isolate, we will make resources available to help the child to continue learning. If we have to send a group of students home for testing, we will provide resources whilst they await the results. But when our schools are fully open to all, we cannot provide individualised education as well, so attendance is necessary.

### **What happens if there is a local lockdown?**

We are all aware that restrictions have been reintroduced in Greater Manchester and other parts of the North West. Oldham has further restricted social contact because the number of cases is higher in our area. That said, for the reasons explained above, we all want to keep schools open. It is vitally important for our young people and frankly, it is necessary for parents who also have to work.

The wellbeing and future of young people are seriously impacted by family income and security. They will need a thriving economy for their future employment. Therefore, so long as a school doesn’t become a COVID hotspot itself, our Trust, school leaders, the Local Authority, and the Public Health authority want schools to stay open. Education will be a priority for transport services.

### **What happens if a student (or member of staff) contracts COVID?**

If a case is confirmed, we will work with the local public health authority (who have a lot of experience of tracking and tracing interaction in the local area) It appears that the transmission route is more likely to come from outside school from the family or wider community than from inside school, where controls are quite tightly enforced.

The public health authority would need to know who the child/member of staff had been in contact with which is why it is so important to maintain the school bubbles and to know where students are, roughly, on dedicated school transport. One student (or member of staff) being confirmed with COVID will be worrying for their family who will have to self-isolate, but it doesn’t mean there is an outbreak in the school.

### **What happens if I want to speak to my child’s teacher or another member of staff?**

Please **phone** the school. Our Headteachers and Senior Leadership Team have a lot to manage and they won’t be instantly accessible. If the matter is urgent, a member of our staff will get back to you quickly. It

could be the Headteacher or another member of staff and if they need to meet you, this will be arranged, with full distancing in place to protect everyone. Please **don't** email the Headteacher directly. They cannot reply personally to every query. Our office staff will forward your concerns/questions made by telephone, to the best person to get back to you.

### **What will happen about parents' evenings, open days, school performances and concerts etc?**

We will be calendaring dates for forthcoming events. Quite how we run these will depend upon numbers involved, the local situation and what the demands will be on cleaning. It may be that there will be more online events and possibly parents' evenings via Microsoft Teams. Your school will get back to you later in September/October about the arrangements for such events.

### **Can my child wear a face-covering in school?**

Our schools are quite controlled environments. We have the key public health controls in place – hygiene, cleaning, distancing, - to keep children and staff safe without the need for face coverings, which are not required or advisable for children under 11. Educationally, students need to be able to interact and communicate with their teacher/TA. It is very difficult to do this if the child (or teacher) is wearing a face-covering. Teachers, like parents, read a lot from a young person's expressions. They can tell when young people are "stuck" or thinking or anxious. You can't get that from the eyes alone. It is better that we can hear and see clearly what each other is saying and we keep some distance apart.

In secondary we have organized our school so that student movement is at a minimum (it is the staff who will be moving across the campus) and students will not all be eating or otherwise congregating together.

However, if secondary students feel more comfortable using a face mask, then they may wear a plain mask when not in lessons. When the mask isn't being worn it should be put in a bag in the student's pocket, so it does not contaminate other surfaces or become a hazard in itself

If national advice changes, we will of course follow this.

### **Have you considered visors?**

Yes, in detail and we have taken advice. Visors would be not be legally acceptable on a bus or in a shop if they are used as an alternative to a face-covering. Their purpose is to protect the eyes from fluids from coughing, spitting or vomiting. So, first aid staff will have visors, if they are not able to maintain a distance of 2-metres from students whilst treating them.

### **Have you considered taking children's temperatures on arrival?**

Yes, but we have decided this is not the right way to go. Home and school must work together. You will notice if your child is not well. **If your child has a temperature, please do not send them into school.** If they have any other COVID symptoms (a dry cough, a loss of taste/smell etc), arrange for them to be tested.

### **What happens if someone develops COVID symptoms in school?**

They must return home, arrange a test, and self-isolate. The family must also isolate. If your school contacts you to say we are concerned that your child is showing symptoms, you must arrange to collect them immediately.

### **Will school arrangements change?**

None of us has ever gone through anything like COVID before, so we are learning all the time. We will give you the best advice we can, based on all the information we have.

**We ask you to work with us** so that we can look after the wellbeing of our young people, our staff and our community.

### **Briefly:**

- Don't send your child to school if s/he is unwell. If s/he shows any of the COVID symptoms, arrange a test, keep your child at home until you get the result. Let us know, by phone.
- There is more now for staff to do and they also need to keep a 2-metre distance from students, so please help us by ensuring your child is in full school uniform (including shoes) and hasn't customised or accessorised this. We are not letting our standards slip because of a pandemic!
- Keep an eye on homework (i.e. that your child is doing it) and contact the school, by phone, if there are any problems.
- Check their bag is packed with what they need. If they don't want a packed lunch from school, make them a healthy one to bring into school with them (i.e. no fizzy drinks, and watch out for sugar and salt levels)
- Keep an eye on the school's website and its social media, which we will be using to keep you up to date with news, what young people are doing, and school developments at a time when it may be difficult for parents to visit in person.

If you are concerned, or we get things wrong, please let us know directly. We value your feedback and we will keep learning. We are all only human and kindness is really important.

### **Verse of the Year**

The verse for next year is from the Psalms, 62<sup>5-6</sup>

*"Find rest, my soul in God alone,  
My hope comes from him,  
Truly he is my rock, my salvation,  
He is my fortress; I will not be shaken"*

This verse provides really powerful images that will help and sustain us over the next year.

### **Finally**

Thank you for making your way through all of this. Notwithstanding the challenges, we cannot wait to welcome back **all** the young people and get on with life and learning. We wish all our families good health and happiness in the weeks and months to come.

Yours sincerely



**JULIE HOLLIS**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**The Cranmer Education Trust**