



The Blue Coat School

www.blue-coat.oldham.sch.uk

Proud to be part of the Cranmer Education Trust

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Our Reference: RHIGG/CLA/512

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are safe and well and that you are coping as best you can in these challenging times. I am sure that amongst our wider school community many of you may have experienced a bereavement or be worried about someone who is currently ill. Any families who are experiencing, or who have experienced such difficulties are in our thoughts and prayers.

We are now nearly 6 school weeks into the enforced closure of schools, and I hope that as a family you have managed to adjust your normal routines and find of way of making things work for you. As I have said in previous letters, what that looks like for each family and individual pupils will be totally different for everyone and will be based upon your circumstances and what works for you. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to our current situation, and as families all you can do is what is best for you.

School Re-Opening

There has been lots of discussion in the media recently about the re-opening of schools. Whilst this is very much in the news at present, in reality, nothing has changed for Blue Coat and our pupils. We are still closed and only remain 'open' to the children of key workers and any vulnerable pupils, as stipulated and outlined by the DfE.

It would appear that there are to be discussions in the weeks and months ahead about trying to get some year groups back to school. At the moment, the focus seems to be on pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 as they are due to sit examinations next year. Schools have now been asked to consider what a potential return for these year groups may look like. I must reiterate that schools have been asked to **consider** this only.

We may find ourselves in a situation where we are able to introduce a phased return for some pupils; for half year groups; for full year groups, or maybe even all year groups. We may also find ourselves in a situation where we can do neither! The simple answer is that we don't know yet, but we are planning for all eventualities and we will be guided by advice and instruction from the government.

Please be assured that as soon as we receive any additional information, we will contact you directly and outline any change to arrangements. As you will imagine, we have been working very hard on developing different models for if schools were told to 're-open'. If and when we do get to this point, a typical school day will look very different to what it did before the pandemic. We are unable to share what these different models may or may not look like because there is still no national guidance.



At the heart of all our discussions are the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and the wider families of our school community. These are the absolute priority and will drive any decisions we have to make in the future. As soon as we have any information or updates, you will be contacted immediately.

School Trips

Unsurprisingly, the DfE has announced that all school trips are to be suspended indefinitely. We have therefore had to cancel the Battlefields trip and the Berlin trip that were scheduled for later in the summer term. Our insurance will cover this cancellation, so all pupils and their families will receive a full refund on any monies paid. We can't give you a timescale for this at present, as the turnaround time for insurance companies is slower than normal for obvious reasons. As soon as we know how and when we can issue refunds, we will contact the relevant families.

We have also had to cancel the Year 9 and 10 Blackpool trip, and all Duke of Edinburgh trips will be cancelled. Families who have already paid for this will receive a refund automatically via Wisepay in June, however if you would prefer to have the refund moved into your child's catering account please email trips@blue-coat.org by Friday, 29th May.

Whilst we can financially reimburse families for the cancellation of these trips and activities, the fact that the pupils will not get to experience these opportunities is going to cause a great deal of disappointment to our young people. When we return to 'normal', whenever or however that is, we will look to see if we can provide pupils with these or similar opportunities in the future, so that they don't miss out. We can't commit to this or in fact have any idea what it may look like, but we will try.

Online Learning

Thank you for all your positive comments about the work that is being set for pupils. Working from home is difficult for us all and staff are working tirelessly to try and support our young people as best they can. Online lessons and learning will never replicate what can be achieved in a traditional classroom, so the most important thing is that the pupils engage with and access the materials that have been provided for them. We will get over this pandemic and when we do, we will build in time for the pupils to consolidate their distance learning as well as catch up on what they have missed.

We have also now uploaded bridging work onto the school website for Year 11 pupils. This work is to prepare pupils for their Key Stage 5 studies and can be found on the 6th Form section of the school website. The work has been carefully planned so that it consolidates learning from GCSE and builds over the next few months to prepare them for Sixth Form studies. We have also added additional English and Maths resources on Bloodle to support pupils who are looking at different post-16 routes.

Over the last few weeks, Mr Ford our school Chaplain has been posting school assemblies for the pupils to access on Bloodle. I'd encourage that you get your children to watch these. The school assemblies remind us what we stand for as a school; what our values and principles are and remind us that we are all part of a much greater and wider community. Some of young people will undoubtedly be worried and anxious and these short videos remind us that we don't stand alone during this crisis and time of worry. It may be nice to take time to reflect on the school assemblies as a family if you can.

Directors of Learning will also be posting assemblies on Bloodle from now on. Again, this is to help the pupils connect with their wider school community; their friends, form tutors and Directors of Learning. Form Tutors will also start to set pupils a weekly challenge so that pupils can start to reform those daily relationships that have been so difficult to maintain over the last 6 weeks.



This week we will also be starting to share a Student of the Week Award in all subjects across Years 7 - 10. So far, we have acknowledged some of the wonderful work produced by our pupils via Bloodle and Twitter. As it appears that we will continue to work remotely for some time to come yet, we have managed to transfer a version of our current reward system to one that is more compatible with distance learning. Details of how rewards will work will be displayed on Bloodle.

Finally

I really wish I could give you more detailed information on what the next few weeks and months will look like. Like the entire country, we can only work with the information we are given. As soon as anything changes, or we have more information, we will contact you immediately.

Hopefully, you will see that we are planning for every eventuality and taking one step at a time. As/If things start to develop over the next few weeks and months, the safety and welfare of our pupils, staff and wider school community will be at heart of all the decisions we make. We are all looking forward to being able to provide some sort of normality for our young people in safe conditions.

I hope that you and your families stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R. Higgins
Headteacher
The Blue Coat School

