



The Blue Coat School

www.blue-coat.oldham.sch.uk

Proud to be part of the Cranmer Education Trust

Egerton Street, Oldham OL1 3SQ

Tel: (0161) 624 1484

Email: secretary@blue-coat.org

Headteacher: Mr R Higgins, M.A.

Our Ref: RHIGG/CLA/531

27th August, 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are safe and well and that you have managed to have a restful and relaxing break.

Can I take this opportunity on behalf of us all to congratulate our Year 11 and Year 13 pupils, and their families on their examination results this year. As you will have undoubtedly picked up in the press, it was an anxious couple of weeks for them all. Amidst all that worry and concern, to see them achieve such a strong set of results and to secure their progression routes for next year, has hopefully made it all worthwhile for them. Well done and good luck to you all with the next stage of your educational journey.

Next week we will start to welcome pupils back to school, which we are all eagerly looking forward to. Without children, schools are just empty buildings and it will be wonderful to see Blue Coat come alive once again with the energy and enthusiasm of our young people. We will be staggering the return to pupils at the start of term and the arrangements are as follows:

- Monday, 31st August – School closed (Bank Holiday).
- Tuesday, 1st September – Staff Training Day 1.
- Wednesday, 2nd September – Staff Training Day 2.
- Thursday, 3rd September – School opens to Year 7 and Year 12 only.
- Friday, 4th September – School is open for Year 7 and Year 12 only.
- Monday, 7th September – School reopens to all Year Groups (Years 7 – 13).

(We will be setting pupils in Year 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13 pre-learning tasks via Bloodle on Thursday 3rd September in preparation for their return on Monday, 7th September)

When the pupils return to school, Blue Coat is going to look very different. In order to keep the pupils in Year group bubbles and to follow all the government guidance about the safe reopening of schools, we will be operating a school within a school model. Each Year group will have its own 'school' (building) where all their lessons will take place. Each 'school' will also have its own designated external social space, so that we can keep the pupils apart from all other Year groups as soon as they arrive at school and during social time.



Year Group	Location
7	Lower Brian Clarke plus Sports Hall
8	PS Building plus Undercroft
9	MM Building
10	AK Building
11	Lees Building
12	Upper Brian Clarke plus Restaurant as a social space and area for supervised study
13	GT, JT, Kirkman House plus Mezz as a social space and area for supervised study

The pupils will follow a broad curriculum as always and will follow their normal timetable. They will be taught by subject specialists and will have their own teacher for each subject as usual. We are doing this because the campus nature of our site allows it, and it is also by far the safest way to ensure we can accommodate 1750 pupils on the school site without Year groups mixing.

Whilst this sounds quite straightforward, it has taken a monumental amount of work by our Support Service teams to get us to this stage, and I must thank them for all they have achieved. Rooms have been redesigned and reconfigured so we can deliver our broad curriculum to all Year groups. Over 300 computers have been moved and new data points have been installed so that each 'school' has its own computer suite. We may have to adapt schemes of work slightly in some practical subjects, but all pupils will be taught by subject specialists across the full curriculum.

Whilst the pupils will move from classroom to classroom in their own 'school', the main difference will be that teaching staff will be constantly moving across the school site to teach. Schools are traditionally made up of department blocks and bases for teaching staff, but when you prioritise blocks and buildings for Year groups to keep pupils and staff safe, this is no longer possible. This is going to be a huge change for our teaching staff and is going to take some getting used to, which is why we have added the additional training days at the start of term. It is also why we are prioritising the return of pupils in Year 7 and 12 because it is difficult enough transitioning to a new school in 'normal' times, let alone with the additional rules, regulations and guidance that will be in place from the start of term.

We have done everything we can to make the school as safe as possible for pupils, staff and our wider school community. I cannot stress enough how much work support staff have done over the summer holidays to get the school ready to open.

You will have received the letter from Julie Hollis, CEO of The Cranmer Education Trust about the principles the Trust are working to across all schools to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and our wider communities. I will now take you through the details of what a 'normal' day will now look like at Blue Coat.

Arrival at School

We cannot stagger arrival and start times for different Year groups. The vast majority of pupils at Blue Coat rely on school buses and public transport to get to school, so the time pupils can arrive at school is determined by bus timetables. Once the pupils leave the buses, it is much safer to get them onto the school premises, rather than leave them loitering on the streets until a specified Year group start time.



Pupils will be able to access the school site from 8.00am. We will have SLT on duty at the front gates and across the school site who will ensure that as they arrive, they sanitise their hands and that they walk in single file, following the designated route to their Year group 'school' and social space. Once in their Year group area, the pupils can either stay outside in their own social space or sit in classrooms which will be supervised and used as designated social areas for their Year group.

Transport to School

Where possible, we would ask that pupils walk or cycle to school. We appreciate that for the majority of children this is impractical due to the distance that needs to be travelled each day.

Travel by bus/train/tram/taxi – **All pupils must wear** face coverings if this is their method of travel to and from school. Badges are available if your child cannot wear a mask. We also advise parents to provide a small hand-sanitizer so the children can take additional personal hygiene precautions.

We have been in regular consultation with Transport for Greater Manchester throughout the summer. We have received the risk assessments from all our school bus providers, who will ensure that the pupils are following the guidance and rules about safe travel on buses. Designated school buses do not pick up members of the public. We will be asking pupils to sit in roughly the same seats each day to help if we were ever required to do track and trace quickly.

For pupils using public transport, social distancing measures are in place which limit capacity to one person per seat. Transport for Greater Manchester have received additional funding from the government, and they have assured us they are using this to increase the number of service buses they operate in the mornings and evenings, to assist with travel to and from school.

The school bus timetable for 2020/21 is now available on the school website (<https://www.blue-coat.org/our-school/bus-timetable-information/>).

If you drop off/pick up your child – If this is your preferred or only method of transportation, I must ask (insist) that you drop them off or pick them up at a safe place away from Blue Coat, that allows them to walk the final part of their journey. The shops and flats opposite the school **are not** a suitable place for drop off and pick up. We are carefully trying to manage the flow of pupils into the school gates and this causes additional congestion for the arrival of pupils and also local traffic.

Unless for significant health and wellbeing needs, we will not be allowing parents to pick up or drop off pupils from the school site. Our school drive has always been an extension of our corridors, and this will be even more the case this year as we have to limit the outside spaces that each Year group can access. We will also be restricting the vehicles we have on site during the school day to essential deliveries and medical emergencies only, so please bear this in mind if you feel you need to visit the school for any reason. Due to continued social distancing requirements we can only welcome parents and visitors on site by invitation or where this has been prearranged. All visitors will need to wear masks upon arrival, which they can remove when they are escorted to the venue for their meeting.

Break and Lunchtime

Each Year group has their own 'school' with internal and external social areas, so we do not need to stagger break and lunchtimes. As a result, the school day will remain as normal:



	Normal School Day	School Day Q Wednesday
AM Registration	8:40am – 8:50am	8:40am – 8:50am
Period 1	8:50am – 9:50am	8:50am – 9:50am
Period 2	9:50am – 10:50am	9:50am – 10:50am
Break	10:50am – 11:10am	10:50am – 11:10am
Period 3	11:10am – 12:10pm	11:10am – 12:10pm
Period 4	12:10pm – 1:10pm	12:10pm – 1:10pm
Additional 6 th Form PM Registration		1:10pm – 1:15pm
Lunch	1:10pm – 2:00pm	1:10pm – 1:45pm
PM Registration	2:00pm – 2:20pm	1:45pm – 2:05pm
Period 5	2:20pm – 3:20pm	Supervised study available until 3:20pm

Due to the need to keep Year groups apart, we are not able to open the restaurant to pupils. If pupils want a mid-morning snack, they must bring their own. If they do, please ensure that it is a healthy one. For lunch, pupils can either bring a packed lunch or parents can pre-order a grab bag meal that will be delivered to their form room at lunchtime. We have also had to decommission the water fountains that were available for pupil use around the school site. It is important that pupils bring with them at least one bottle of water per day, as they will not be able to fill up empty bottles on the school premises.

Details on how to pre-order the grab bags are on the school website (<https://www.blue-coat.org/wp-content/uploads/GRAB-A-BAG-INSTRUCTIONS.pdf>). Sixth Form pupils will be able to leave the school site at lunchtime as usual. We have clear systems in place to ensure they sterilise their hands before they leave and when they return, and that they avoid mixing with other Year group bubbles.

As I stated in my letter before the summer break, we will be continuing with the early finish on Q Wednesdays. We will be asking pupils in Year 11 to stay until 3.20pm on Q Wednesdays and expect parents to support us with this. When we introduced the early finish on Q Wednesday last year, we changed the English curriculum model to allow more lessons for pupils in Year 10 than Year 11. This was so they could cover significant parts of the course content in Year 10 and spend Year 11 consolidating and deepening their knowledge and understanding. Obviously, they have lost out on this additional time, so will be using this additional period to support their learning.

The curriculum model for all other Year groups across all subjects requires a 49-period week, so no other Year group is disadvantaged by the early finish. If any pupil in Year 7 - 10 or in Sixth Form needs to stay at school until 3.20pm on Q Wednesday, because they are unable to make their way home until then, we will offer supervised study sessions for them. Pupils will be supervised by non-teaching staff in their 'school' (Teaching Assistants, Learning Mentors and Learning Managers), where they will be able to get on with their homework.

Where parents wish their child to stay in school for supervised study, we will need parents to give formal written authorisation, which we will update every half term. A MyEd message regarding this will be sent out next week. If parents wish the school to take responsibility for their children, then the pupils **must** stay in school. The expectations of students timetabled in this session will be the same as any other lesson. They will be expected to be in attendance each week and any absence dealt with like an absence from any other timetabled lesson. Pupils who leave at 2.05pm **must** go straight home – they must not descend en masse on the town centre or local shops. I will be deploying senior staff in these areas to ensure this does not happen.



Face Coverings

As per latest government guidance, we will be insisting that all pupils wear face coverings as they move around the school and whilst they are in communal areas. Can you please make sure that your child arrives at school each morning with a suitable face covering. We will be asking pupils to remove their face coverings when they enter lessons, so they will also need a sandwich bag that they can put their face covering in before they put it into their blazer pocket.

Face coverings should be plain in colour, cotton (so that they can be washed) and fasten behind the ears. As students will have to remove and reapply their face coverings frequently throughout the school day, single use masks should not be used – purely due to the number they would need to bring with them each day and dispose of safely after their use. Snoods and other similar items will not be acceptable. We will have a small supply of face coverings we can give to pupils who forget or lose their face covering on the way to school. We do not have the budget nor the space to store a large volume of these, so please ensure that your child arrives at school prepared.

Movement around school

We have created one-way systems in each 'school' to ensure that movement around school is calm and controlled. We will be insisting that pupils always walk on the right-hand side of corridors and have line markings in all buildings to illustrate this. As you know our corridors are quite small so we need the children to walk on the right so we can create a lane for staff to get from one side of the site to the other without them having to follow ten different one-way systems. If they had to do this, with the size of our school site, it's unlikely they'd have any time to teach!

We have also incorporated external routes into our way systems to create additional space and capacity on the corridors between lessons, and also to provide the pupils with some fresh air and exercise! They will get used to it, but if they come home complaining about it, please reassure them why it is necessary.

Classrooms

All classrooms are stocked with hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, paper towels, tissues and lidded bins. We also have signage with the "Catch-it", "Bin-it", "Kill it" mantra along with other information about what to do if the pupils feel unwell displayed in every classroom. Desks are arranged so that pupils are always forward facing and will not work directly opposite each other. All teaching spaces have a designated teacher zone marked out that is two metres away from the closest pupils.

We will have seating plans in every classroom, so we know exactly where pupils have been sitting in every lesson. As pupils arrive at classrooms, they will be expected to remove their face covering, sanitize their hands and sit in their designated seat. We are also introducing 'do- now' tasks in every lesson that we expect the pupils to get on with as soon as they enter the classroom. As teaching staff are travelling across the school site, the 'do-now' task is going to become an integral part of our starters to lessons and our approach to teaching and learning. We expect all pupils to complete this sensibly and without the need to be reminded.

We will have SLT supervision in all 'schools' on the corridors at lesson change over to ensure that pupils are following the one-way system and entering classrooms sensibly and calmly. At the end of each lesson, we will ask pupils to attach their face coverings and then sanitise their hands before they leave for their next lesson or social time.



Dismissal

We will stagger the dismissal of Year groups so that we don't have 1750 pupils from 7 Year groups trying to squeeze through the front gate at the same time! We will start dismissing each Year group at:

- Year 7 and 8 – 3.10pm
- Year 9 and 10 – 3.15pm
- Year 11 and Sixth Form – 3.20pm (as always Year 13 can leave the premises if they don't have a lesson during Period 5).

When pupils are dismissed from their 'school', they need to leave the premises immediately. They cannot wait for siblings or friends in other Year groups. If pupils are getting the school bus home, they should walk directly to the school bus collection area and board their bus. If pupils are getting service buses home, they need to walk directly to the bus station or relevant bus stop. If they are walking home, they should head home immediately and if you are picking them up, they should walk directly to your pre-arranged pick-up point.

Can you please stress the importance to your son/daughter about making their way straight home after school, by whichever mode of transport they use. We have gone to a considerable effort and spent a lot of time putting in place procedures to keep the children safe and in separate Year groups. We do not expect to receive complaints from members of the public about seeing Blue Coat students walking or congregating in large groups both on their way to and from school.

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 will advise us what to do and if we need to take any necessary steps.

If your son/daughter becomes ill during the school day with COVID symptoms or is suspected to be unwell by a staff member, they will be taken to the Lodge (small building by the school gates) which we are using as a first aid base. We will then contact you and you must be available to collect them immediately. As per government guidance, as a family, you would all be required to self-isolate and arrange for a test. It is vital that you provide an update to school with the outcome of the test.

Standards and Expectations

As a school, we have the highest standards and expectations of all our pupils in every area of school life. Our pupils are a credit to the school, and we cannot wait for them to return next week.

However, as you read through this letter, you will start to understand that school is going to be a totally different experience for them, and from what it was previously. Despite the changes we have had to make to the day to day life at Blue Coat, we will still have the same high standards and expectations of our pupils as always – in fact they will be higher.

We are going to need our young people to take even more responsibility for their actions, behaviour and how they approach their studies. They may not like the one-way systems, that they have to wear a face mask, that we can't offer hot meals yet, or the fact they can't mix with friends in different Year groups. The brutal truth is, none of us do. But we **all** have to do it, and our young people need to do it all of the time and without question.



The rules and regulations we have had to introduce are not by choice, they are out of necessity. We have also created an addendum to our behaviour policy as a result of Covid-19 which is displayed on the school website. Normally policies and procedures are introduced in schools to ensure their calm and good running. Everything we have introduced for September and how we will expect our young people to behave and conduct themselves on a daily basis is so that they look after the health, safety and welfare of themselves, each other, their staff, their families and our wider school community.

I will take very serious action against any pupil who puts themselves or any other member of our school community at risk through their behaviour or refusal to follow instructions. Can you please take the time to discuss this with your son/daughter and how important it is that they take responsibility for their own actions. Our pupils are fabulous, and I know that they will be very sensible and follow all instructions, but I must reiterate how important this will be.

School Ready

It is really important that our pupils come back to school next week school ready. Before the pandemic we had the capacity to support and challenge any pupil who didn't arrive at school with the necessary equipment or uniform. With the restrictions on social distancing and sharing of equipment, we simply can't do this anymore, so we are going to need (rely on) your support with this as parents.

What school ready means:

- That they are in full uniform. What is acceptable and what is not is clearly outlined on the school website. Please do not send them in wearing trainers, inappropriate trousers, jewellery (other than a watch), inappropriate haircuts, false nails/eyebrows or excessive make up.
- That they are ready to learn. Check their bag with them the night before. They need their books, pens, a pencil, a ruler, a glue stick and any subject specific equipment ie. calculator. They will also need their PE kit on days when they have PE.
- Mobile phones are not to be used once the pupils enter the school site. If possible, please leave these at home. If it is essential that they have mobile phones as they travel to and from school, then they must be turned off and put in school bags as soon as they enter the school site. If pupils use their mobile phone during the school day, they will be confiscated for five days as per school policy – think of the challenges this will present having to collect a mobile phone off a pupil. We will do it and have the systems in place to do so but think of the unnecessary time and resource this will take.
- That they are ready to learn. They've done their homework or pre-reading tasks. Many of our young people will have developed strange sleeping habits over the last term. They need to get back into a normal and healthy sleeping pattern.
- That they follow the behaviour policy of the school – in school and on their way to and from school.
- That they follow our rules on hygiene. Trust me, we will not run out of sanitizer! The pupils must clean their hands as they arrive on and leave the school site, as they enter and leave classrooms.

Remember. Please do not send your child to school if:

- they have a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature),
- have a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual),
- have a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal



Finally

Apologies for the length of the letter but it is important that you have all the detail. On the school website you will also find the updated school calendar for 2020/21. Due to current restrictions and the difficulties planning events, it is much lighter than in previous years for obvious reasons.

We have included the dates for key events – Parent’s Information Evenings, Parents Evenings to give you time to prepare. Parents’ Information Evenings will take place via Zoom and more information will be sent via MyEd over the next few weeks. We are committed to providing Parents’ Evenings, but what format these will take, we don’t know yet, and will largely depend on the restrictions (or hopefully lack of restrictions) in place at the time. We will also start to add more events to the calendar such as Duke of Edinburgh, communions, Christmas and Easter concerts when we get a sense of what is practical and achievable.

The start to the 2020/21 academic year is going to be an unusual one for us all and who knows how long we may have to continue working like this? The most important thing is that we can welcome our young people back to Blue Coat - get them back into their daily routines and into a nurturing environment where their relationships with their peers and teachers can thrive once again.

We can’t wait for the pupils to return next week and I know the majority of them feel exactly the same. Some of them may be nervous, but please reassure them of the steps we have taken to make the school as safe as possible and that as always, we will look after them. Some may be anxious about being behind in their studies – they are not. They are in the same position as every other child their age across the country and if anything, they are in a much better place because of the work they completed and produced last term.

I leave you with the school verse for 2020/21 – Psalm 62: 5-6

“Find rest my soul, in God alone;
My hope comes from Him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
He is my fortress,
I will not be shaken.”

Thank you once again for all your help and support during the 2019/20 academic year and I’m really looking forward to working with you all again this year, and seeing the progress and development that our young people will make.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R. Higgins
Headteacher
The Blue Coat School

