



The Blue Coat School

www.blue-coat.oldham.sch.uk

Proud to be part of the Cranmer Education Trust

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are safe and well. We have continued to keep you all in our thoughts and prayers throughout this challenging academic year, especially those of you who we know have suffered illnesses or bereavements within your families.

As we near the end of the Autumn Term, this letter is to provide a brief update and to also look ahead to the Spring Term. Before starting with the details, I would firstly like to thank you all for your support over the last 15 weeks.

The last term has been incredibly difficult for us all and especially for you as families. Everybody has had to make sacrifices for the health and wellbeing of our school community. This has included keeping children off school when they, or someone in the family home has displayed Covid-19 symptoms, and also keeping them at home when they have been identified as a potential close contact. I appreciate how difficult and frustrating this is but regrettably, in the current climate, this is how we must continue to operate so that we can look after each other and our families.

It has now been over three weeks since we have had to send a cohort of pupils home to isolate after being identified as close contacts. We have been incredibly thankful to have the school full once again over the last few weeks and for all the children to engage in a sustained period of education without disruption. As a school, we have benefitted significantly from the lockdown and the impact that this has had on the number of positive cases in the community. We have always said that school is the safest place for our young people and that transmission of Covid-19 has been taking place in the wider community, which has been further highlighted over the last three weeks.

Whilst Covid-19 has not gone away and is clearly going to be with us for some time to come, we have also benefitted from the sacrifices that you as families continue to make. We have had a number of pupils test positive for Covid-19 over the last 3 weeks but because families have all followed the rules and guidance about isolation when someone in the family home becomes symptomatic or tests positive, we have not had to send any pupils home. Again, I would like to thank you for your support with this. I know isolating as a precaution whilst waiting for test results can be frustrating, but it has a significant impact on the other pupils and their families at Blue Coat, which is why it is so pleasing that we've managed to have such a prolonged run without having to ask any pupils to isolate.

On your behalf, I would also like to thank all the staff at Blue Coat. They really have gone above and beyond every single day to keep our young people safe and to provide them with the high-quality education they deserve and are entitled to. The daily operation of school is still far from normal and staff continue to have to make substantial adjustments to their normal ways of working, which in many instances create additional workload and pressures. They have also had to do this whilst juggling the same barriers we all face; personal illness, family illness, lack of childcare when bubbles at other school are sent home and in a number of cases, family bereavements. I'm sure that you will all join me in thanking them for their hard work and commitment.



End of term arrangements

The Autumn term comes to a close on Friday 18th December at 1.20pm. Lessons will continue as normal until Wednesday, but on Thursday and Friday we will commence our Christmas celebrations with the pupils.

A lot of hard work has gone into arranging our end of term celebrations. At Blue Coat we always celebrate Christmas as a faith community and as a family; we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and embrace the hope and light that is coming into the world. Despite the challenges that current guidance about social distancing and large gatherings present, we have managed to replicate all the activities that make up a Blue Coat Christmas for our young people and to do it safely. You will have had details about these events in the Christmas letter that was sent out a few weeks ago. The end of term celebrations will give our young people the opportunity to have fun and laugh together (which is more important than ever this year) and also to reflect on those for whom Christmas is going to be incredibly challenging this year.

As a school we will continue to track and trace up to and including Christmas Eve, if we are needed to. This is a directive from Public Health and something we must continue to do as part of the wider efforts to reduce the prevalence of Covid-19 in our communities. With this in mind, please do not send your son/daughter during the final week of school if they or anybody else in the family households starts with symptoms or is awaiting the result of a Covid-19 test. If we all continue to do this, then hopefully we should reduce the need to contact any of our young people as potential close contacts during the holiday period.

If your son/daughter tests positive for Covid-19 up to and including on Christmas Eve, can you please contact us through the Covid-19 response form:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=v4fq2raVOE668tA9PQrgMz15OxD9h_IPpLEICbNA579UQ1Q2S05XWUs2SFFOQ1pQWUFWRTNQMUY4UiQIQCN0PWcu

If your son/daughter test positive for Covid-19 after Christmas Eve or is required to self-isolate due to someone else testing positive in the family home, there is no need to contact us until the start of term.

Spring term arrangements for Year 7 and 8

When we return after the Christmas break, we will be swapping the buildings that Year 7 and 8 are currently using as their 'school within a school'. Year 7 will move into the PS building and Year 8 will be based in the lower BC building and Sports Hall. Pupils will continue to follow their broad and full curriculum as normal.

Examinations for Year 11 and Year 13 pupils

The Department for Education has confirmed that GCSE and A-Level examinations will take place in the summer. There will be some slight adjustments to what these will look like and we have been promised more detail in the New Year. As soon as we get this, we will communicate it with pupils and parents.

It is reassuring to hear the announcement about the examination series. It provides the pupils with the confidence and certainty they need that their exams will go ahead and allows them to take responsibility for their own outcomes. We will continue to support all our young people in the build up to their examinations just as we do every year, but it is vital that the pupils now start to fully prepare for sitting the examinations in the summer term.



When we return after the Christmas break, Year 11 will start their mock exams and it is important that they use some time over the next few weeks to get ready for them. The mock exams will take place over a nine-day period. We have also built in some contingency time for any pupils who have to isolate during the mocks due to their own illness, the illness of a family member or if someone in the family household is awaiting the outcome of a test. If this is the case, please do not send the pupils to school. They will get the chance to sit any exams they miss when they are fit and well.

Parents' Evenings

The Spring term is when we usually hold the majority of our Parents' Evenings and many of these have already been scheduled in the school calendar. I am pleased to confirm that the Parents' Evenings will go ahead as scheduled in the New Year. These will take place remotely via an online portal, and all parents will get the opportunity to discuss the progress and wellbeing of their son/daughter with their teachers. More details and instructions for how to book appointments will be issued in the weeks before the Parents' Evenings for each Year group are scheduled.

We will also be rearranging the Year 7 and Year 13 Parents' Evenings we had to cancel from earlier in the year. We will write to parents to confirm dates as soon as we have arranged these.

Covid-19 Symptoms

I know everyone is familiar with the guidance, but it does no harm to provide a reminder. We really depend on your support with this. **Please, do not send your son/daughter to school if they have:**

- a high temperature – this means feeling hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature),
- 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),
- 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.

Additionally, **if anyone else in the family home** displays symptoms, everybody must self-isolate until the poorly family member has returned a negative test result. Even if someone in the household goes for a test as a precaution and you expect the outcome to be negative, the entire household **must** isolate until a negative test result is confirmed.

Whilst this goes against everything we usually say in relation to attendance, if your son/daughter is generally feeling unwell, but they aren't necessarily displaying Covid-19 symptoms, it may be best to keep them off for a day as a precaution. This will ensure that any general illness symptoms (in particular severe headaches and upset stomachs), don't transform into Covid-19 symptoms the following day.

I know I have shared this with you on numerous occasions, but it is vitally important that we all continue to look after and support one another.

Finally

It has been a long and challenging term for us all, but we have achieved so much. It has been wonderful to have the children back in school and to see the progress they have made and continue to make in their studies. The energy and engagement of our young people in their learning over the last 15 weeks has been exceptional. We should all take great pride in the commitment they have shown to their school work, but also in the resilience and maturity they have shown in the face of the constant change and disruption that the current climate can create without a minute's notice.



I hope that you all manage to get a break over the holiday period and spend some quality time together as a family. I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R. Higgins
Headteacher
The Blue Coat School

