



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/615

4th January, 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you and your families are safe and well and that you had a peaceful Christmas.

As promised at the end of last term, this letter is to provide an update on what the Spring Term will look like at Blue Coat from Tuesday, 5th January. Following on from the Government's announcement about the return of pupils to school last week and from Mrs Hollis's letter, CEO of the Cranmer Education Trust, on 31st December, you will see that our arrangements have had to change. In essence, everything has been delayed by a week.

As a result, below are the arrangements that we will currently be working towards for the first three weeks of the Spring Term. I must emphasise currently, because as we know, the guidance can change very quickly. What is key is that everyone understands the principles that we will be working towards over the next few weeks, but also that everyone remains aware that things may change. The priority as always, is to ensure that our young people continue to receive the highest levels of education and pastoral care possible, during this very challenging time.

Week beginning 5th January

- School will be open to vulnerable pupils and children of Key Workers only.
- Pupils in all Year groups will move to online learning.

Week beginning 11th January

- School will be open to vulnerable pupils, children of Key Workers and Year 11 and Year 13 pupils will also return.
- Year 13 pupils will return to lessons as normal. Year 11 pupils will start their mock exams on the 11th January. Wednesday 6th January was originally due to be Day 1 of the Year 11 mocks. Day 1 will now be Monday 11th January and we will follow the same sequence of mock examinations as per the exam timetable. We will issue pupils and parents with a new copy of this during the week.
- Pupils in Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will continue with online learning.

Week beginning 18th January

- School will be open as normal to all pupils. We will also continue with the building swap for Year 7 and 8 pupils as planned.

These are the principles we are working towards over the next few weeks. Please be aware that things may change and that if they do, we will communicate this with you as soon as we have any additional information.



Vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers

We have already started contacting the families of our vulnerable pupils to offer additional provision and support.

If you are a key worker and your child needs a place at school to work during this week for pupils in Year 11 and 13 and for the next two weeks for pupils in all other Year groups, please click the link at the top or bottom of this letter. **(If you miss the 4pm deadline for requesting a key worker place, please email studentservices@blue-coat.org as soon as possible)**. Places are limited, so please only request a place for your child if absolutely necessary and where there won't be a parent/carer or other appropriate adult to supervise them at home.

Please note, the provision we will be providing for key worker children is the same online learning offer that all other children will receive. They will receive no face-to-face teaching and will be supervised in a computer room by members of support staff, where they can complete their online work.

Online Learning

During this phased return of the pupils to school, the majority of online lessons will be delivered live via Microsoft Teams. We will also continue to use Bloodle to share lesson resources for pupils who are unable to access the live lessons.

Details of how pupils can access live lessons can be found on our website under [Quick Links / Microsoft Teams](#). Every day (if possible), pupils should follow their normal timetable and log into the relevant live lesson on Microsoft Teams at the appropriate time. If for any reason your son/daughter is unable to attend the live lesson, they can watch it back at a later time and the details of how to do this are included in the link above. For pupils who cannot access Microsoft Teams, the resources for their lessons and any subsequent tasks will be added to Bloodle.

As most lessons will be delivered live, it is important that the pupils prepare for each day just as if they were attending school. They need to look at their timetable, prepare in advance for the day ahead and have all their equipment and books ready. They must also join the live lesson at the appropriate time. As we have swapped the school buildings for Year 7 and 8 this term, we have had to make a few changes to the pupils in these Year groups timetable. These updated timetables can be found on Bloodle and it is essential that all pupils in Years 7 and 8 look at and follow these, or they are likely to miss live lessons.

If live lessons cannot take place for reasons such as teacher absence, we will communicate in advance with the teaching groups affected. In situations like this, work for the lesson will be added to Bloodle.

Just because we are moving to live lessons during this phased return of pupils to school, we do not expect pupils to be sat at a computer screen for 5 hours a day, and in fact this is something we are keen to avoid. Teaching and learning via Microsoft Teams is very different from a lesson in a traditional classroom. In most instances the teacher will be sharing key information or new learning with the pupils before providing them with a task to complete offline. The teacher may ask the pupils to re-join the live lesson later to review the work set, or this may be picked up at the start of the next lesson.

Covid Testing

We are currently investigating this, but we are still waiting for more clarity. Schools have been asked to consider three types of testing:



- Mass testing of pupils
- Mass testing of staff
- Serial tracing of close contacts

We are looking at all of these and I hope to be able to provide you with an update at the end of the week. As you can imagine, this is far from straightforward. Any testing we carry out in the future will be voluntary and will require the consent of parents for pupils in Years 7 -11.

Prior to the announcement about the mass testing of pupils in secondary schools, we had engaged in discussions with Public Health about a testing pilot with Year 11 prior to their mocks. We have maintained this dialogue over the Christmas period, and this is something we are still hopeful to do, although there is still some considerable work to do to make this achievable.

Today a Testing Team will arrive at Blue Coat and look to create a temporary testing centre in the gym. We have been very well supported to secure this resource and if they can do this, then there is the possibility that we will be able to offer all pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 a COVID-19 test prior to returning to school on 11th January. If this is the case, I will write separately to the parents of pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 to provide further information. Any testing would be purely voluntary but would potentially help us to identify asymptomatic cases before the pupils return to school.

We expect to learn a lot this week about the potential testing of pupils for COVID-19 in schools. Much of this will come from the pilot project we are involved in, but we are also expecting more information to be released from the DfE. What we learn from this week will influence any approach we take to testing in the future. I will aim to provide you all with an update as soon as we have more information we can share.

Communication

A reminder that the main point of contact for any queries you have in relation to pupil progress or any pastoral concerns is Student Services (studentservices@blue-coat.org). Please do not email teaching staff directly. Student services are the gatekeepers to all our communications with parents and they will ensure that your message gets to the appropriate member of staff.

As we start the Spring Term, we will once again work with Public Health to support track and trace in the wider community. If your son/daughter has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been identified as a potential close contact since the start of the New Year, could you please let us know so that we can update our records. Please do so by completing the COVID-19 report form on the school website.

Finally

It is safe to say that last term wasn't without its challenges for us all! However, despite the difficulties faced, the term was a great success. The pupils all returned to school safely and it was wonderful to see them engaged in their learning and to enjoy spending time with their peers and their teaching staff. Unfortunately, there was disruption to the pupils' learning, just as there is likely to be during this term, but I was incredibly impressed by the resilience and the positivity the pupils all displayed in the face of adversity.

None of us know exactly what the next few weeks and months are going to look like. Throughout this pandemic, our approach has been to put the health, safety and welfare of our young people, our staff and our wider school community at the heart of every decision we make, and this is how we will continue to operate moving forward.



I don't think any of us underestimate the challenges that lie ahead this term. Hopefully this letter reassures you that we are prepared, and we have a plan. The plan may of course have to change..... but we will keep you fully updated if and when we receive any additional information.

Thank you for your continued help and support

Yours sincerely,



Mr R. Higgins
Headteacher
The Blue Coat School

