



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/616

8th January, 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are all well.

In my last letter, I said that our arrangements for the term ahead may change! I was hoping for more than 24 hours, but this just illustrates the challenges that lie ahead and reinforces the fact that we are all going to have to continue to make sacrifices to look after each other and our wider communities. Hopefully the latest measures will help reduce the spread of the virus and allow us to have the children back in school as soon as possible.

We are currently closed to all pupils apart from those who are vulnerable or the children of critical workers. All pupils are continuing their learning via remote education. Vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers are receiving the same online learning as all other pupils, we are just providing a warm space for them to work in. Parents who are critical workers should only request a place if it is absolutely necessary and where there won't be a parent/carer or other appropriate adult to supervise them at home. We are expecting to continue working this way until February half term.

Remote Education

We are using a mixture of Microsoft Teams and Bloodle to support all pupils whilst they are working from home. We are providing live lessons across all subjects via Microsoft Teams. To access these, pupils need to log onto Microsoft Teams and join the relevant meeting for the lesson they would be due to have, if they were in school. The live lessons take place at the same time that the lesson would occur in school, so pupils simply need to follow their timetable.

There is a "How To" Guide for how to use Microsoft Teams on the school website. Live lessons are completely different to what lessons would look like in a traditional classroom. In most instances, the teacher will be sharing key information or new learning with the pupils before asking them to complete a task offline. We are not expecting the pupils to be sat at a computer screen for five hours a day.

I would advise you to encourage your son/daughter to follow their timetable and join as many live lessons as possible. The live lessons provide the opportunity for our young people to maintain those essential relationships with their teachers and their peers. It is also where they will get the opportunity to ask questions if they are unsure about something and allow their teachers to address any misconceptions. They will also correct any unhelpful sleeping patterns that have been picked up over the Christmas holiday period!

For those pupils who cannot access the live lesson in real time, they will be able to watch a recording of the lesson. These will also be stored on Microsoft Teams and details on how to access these are in the "How To" Guide, which is on the school website. If pupils are unable to watch the recorded lesson, the work and the resources from the lesson will also be stored on Bloodle for them to access and complete.



We will also continue to provide the pupils with online assemblies, and they will have two of these a week. One will be their Year group assembly led by the Director of Learning and the other will be our whole school assemblies led by either our school chaplain or a member of SLT, which provide the opportunity for collective worship.

Free School Meals

From Monday we will return to providing vouchers for those families and pupils who receive free school meals. Any pupils in school will receive their lunch as they have this week.

Mobile Data

You may have picked up in the press that mobile data increases are being offered by the DfE. As a school we can now make additional data requests for young people and their families who do not have fixed broadband at home or cannot afford additional data for their devices. Any decisions about who qualifies for additional data are made by the DfE – the decision does not lie with us. During this period of remote learning where it is important that pupils have reliable internet access, we want to support any families who need this additional data as best we can.

We have created a form, that can be accessed by clicking the following link [Extra Mobile Data Request Form \(office.com\)](#), which will allow us to capture the required information schools are asked to collect to apply for the extra data top-up. We will then submit any requests to the DfE and this ends our part in the process. Any decisions about additional data are made by the DfE and families who qualify for this will be contacted directly by their mobile phone provider.

Examinations

On Wednesday we received confirmation that GCSE and A-Level examinations have been cancelled for 2021. We have yet to receive any information about vocational examinations. I understand how frustrating and worrying this will be for pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 and their families. Please be reassured that we will do everything we can to support pupils in the months ahead to ensure that they are well equipped and awarded the outcomes they deserve.

At the moment we have no more information than is in the public domain. It is being reported that 'teacher assessments' will be used to provide final examination grades. As yet we have received no guidance or information as to exactly what this will look like, or what we will be expected to provide and evidence as a school.

This announcement emphasises just how vital it is that pupils in examination year groups (as well as all others) continue to engage with their remote learning. When Year 11 and 13 return to school, they will complete their mock examinations. Both Year groups will also complete additional in class assessments in the months ahead. To ensure that they are as best placed as possible when it comes to providing 'teacher assessments' (however they may look) they **absolutely must** continue to engage with their remote learning and their studies. We will do everything we possibly can to help and support them, but they must continue to work hard and put themselves in the strongest possible position over the next few months.

I have spoken to pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 in their assemblies to hopefully provide them with the reassurance they need but also to remind them of how important it is that they keep working. I will write to parents of Year 11 and Year 13 pupils as soon as we have any more details.



Moving Forward

This is not the start to the new term that any of us wanted. The decision to close schools is to protect the NHS and to ensure that we all do our bit to look after each other and our loved ones.

Although school is closed, we are very much open! Our remote learning systems are well established, and they provide the opportunity and support for our pupils to continue with their learning journey. Our systems and structures for remote learning also mean that our young people can maintain contact and relationships with their teaching staff and peers, so that hopefully they don't feel isolated and alone during this lockdown.

Staff are still working from school and are available to provide any support you need. If you do need to contact a member of staff, please remember to do so via studentservices@blue-coat.org. Please do keep in contact with us. If you or your son/daughter has any worries, anxieties or needs additional help or support, please let us know. We will do our best to help and support you as best we can, but we can't help if we don't know.

I hope that you all stay safe and well, and we will continue to pray for you and your families at this very challenging time.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R. Higgins
Headteacher
The Blue Coat School

