



Dear All,

I hope you and all your families are safe and well.

What a term it has been. Who would have thought we would still be contending with lockdowns almost a year on! Can I start by passing on our thanks and appreciation to yourselves. We understand how challenging it must be at home at the moment with combining work, supervising children and managing live learning. We could not do this without you and your continued support.

Year 8 have had a start like no other to Blue Coat and the resilience all our students are showing is phenomenal. As new Directors of Learning to Year 8 we would just like to say thank you to all of you for your support. This is certainly not how we envisaged starting as new Directors of Learning for Year 8 with all the plans we had on hold and not being able to meet the students physically. We are incredibly thankful to all the pastoral team who have made check-in calls, check-in emails, PM registration meetings, personalised support from personal wellbeing to technical difficulties and staff who have been supervising our students on site. I feel confident in saying that we have delivered amazing pastoral support and provision and will continue to broaden this even further moving into next half term whatever the situation may be.

I am sure over the past 6 weeks there have been challenges and hurdles to overcome, but now as we reach half term, we can celebrate the achievements of your young people. Students have been attending lessons, although learning is different – they are still learning. They are engaging with their lessons using the chat function on Microsoft Teams and they have all learnt new skills regarding how to use Microsoft Teams alongside Bloodle. They are submitting work that is being marked by their class teachers and we are seeing that students are much more motivated than the last lockdown. To think this time last year students (and teachers) didn't even know what Microsoft Teams was and now we are all using it daily is simply incredible.

We know the lack of out-of-school activities is making things hard and the limitations are difficult for all of us but some of our young people have been making the most out of the situation and have been involved in the 3K run challenge, the loneliness campaign, the step count challenge and the reading challenge. It has been wonderful to see the engagement with these extra-curricular offers. We will continue to offer ideas around extra-curricular activities students could do at home to help motivate and inspire them. Hopefully, you are aware, but students also have two weekly assemblies as they would in school, please could you remind your young people of this as it ensures we can meet together as a community to share information and celebrate success.

The Pupil voice activity indicates that the pupils have found that their focus, engagement and organisation have improved during this lockdown and this is evident with the number of subject stars we have in Year 8. The attendance for Year 8 has also been brilliant throughout this half term, it has improved each week so the constant prompting and reminding from yourselves and teachers is hopefully paying off! Please could you pass on a massive congratulations to your young people on their achievements. We are extremely proud of every one of our students.

Next Half Term we have so much to look forward to, there will be a focus on careers and choices as we look at options, hopefully the return of students at some point and Year 8 reports and parents evening. We understand Year 8 have had a difficult start to their Blue Coat journey and we can only look forward and try our very best to ensure their experience is as good as it can be right now. Whatever the next half term holds, we are prepared and working together, and I have no doubt we can have another successful half term.

Please remember to check for any correspondence from Mr Higgins with regards to the plan for returning to school.

Kind regards,

Miss Robinson and Mr Reece
Year 8 Directors of Learning

Options and thinking about the future

As you will know, next half term our students will be choosing their options. This is such an exciting time and hopefully this has given Y8 a little motivation to start thinking about future plans and career options. I know that some students have had opportunities with their form tutors during PM registration this week to start thinking about these plans and this is brilliant – what an opportunity to get excited about something again!

During the last week of half term students have been accessing videos from subject teachers and heads of department. These videos have given an insight of what it is like to study their subjects if they were to choose them as options.



What to look forward to when we return after Half Term

1. We will be launching options week with parents and students from March 1st. This will be our opportunity to share information on how the process works.
2. Students will have a Wellbeing lesson focused purely on options where they will think about their potential choices and make links to careers they may be interested in.
3. Students will then be taking part in a 'taster lesson' from the 2nd March -5th March where they can experience what it would be like if they chose those subjects as their options.
4. Students will be making their choices.



Celebrating success



As mentioned, Y8 have shown complete and utter dedication to their learning this half term. We are so proud to say that we have achieved over 93% attendance to live lessons on average every week. Hopefully by now we are used to this way of working and if we do need to continue this into next half term – we are ready. Well done to all students.

We know some students have needed some little reminders from Form Tutors, teachers, student support and Director's of Learning about their attendance so thank you to everyone involved in working together to make this 93% attendance happen. Thank you again to parents and carers at home who are supporting us daily with our expectations around live lessons.

Many of our year 8 students have also been nominated by subject teachers to receive a subject star award. These will be with you in due course. Well done to everyone who has achieved one of these. Clearly not only our students are attending but they are engaging with their lessons and are going above and beyond.



100% ATTENDANCE

This is something to be extremely proud of. The following students have attended ALL live lessons since January. This means every single day for every single lesson these students have been engaging and making the most of their learning. A HUGE congratulations goes out to the following students:

Alexander C	Lilly S
Amber H	Lilia E
Amelia R	Lucy C
Amelie B	Luke S
Anna M	Meadow T
Ava R	Megan C
Caleb P	Megan R
Charlotte N	Melissa W
David J	Mya H
Emily H	Okobi M
Emily O'N	Princess D
Evangeline S-M	Rowan L
Evie B	Sarah R
Francesca L	Shree C
George B	Tahlia C
Grace C	Thomas A
Harriet C	Zunara K
Harriet G	
Harry C	
Harry M	
Isaac C	
Izzak	
Jacob K	
Josh V	
Keira I	

Supporting the Mental Wellbeing of our Y8 students

We have now conducted two student voice activities where we have gained feedback from students with regards to how they are finding working from home. One of the student voice questionnaires was focused on Wellbeing. The results of the student voice did raise some concerns that students were struggling with the following:

- Routines
- Keeping in touch with friends
- Managing anxieties around balance of work and free time
- Rarely leaving the house

In response to this we have created a 'Wiki' page within the Year 8 Teams area which will be updated with activities and ideas to motivate students and support their Mental Wellbeing. Currently there are sections on fitness, healthy recipes, book recommendations and motivational podcasts / videos. We would like to encourage students to visit the 'Wiki' page and try to explore some of the options.

Below are five ways that students can look after their Mental Health:

1. Connect – make sure to stay connected with family, friends, teachers
2. Keep Learning – keep up with live lessons, work, homework and even challenge projects on offer
3. Be Active – sports, fitness programmes, walks, runs, dancing – anything that takes your fancy
4. Give – research suggests that giving to others can help to improve mental wellbeing, it could be anything from a thank you to giving your time to listen to how others feel
5. Take Notice – Be mindful and pay attention to the present, you could practice meditation (see Wiki page for links) or simply just think about how you are feeling

