

23rd October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

End of Term Update

Thank you for your support during the past half term, and particularly for your kind feedback, which makes all the difference. It hasn't been easy, but the systems and protections put in place over July-August have kept our children and staff safe. We have had to send children home to self-isolate, with some young people being hit more than once, because inevitably the virus has come into our schools through contacts in the wider community. That was always going to happen, because we don't live in a vacuum. But in our schools, the bubbles are working, and we haven't had in-school transmission. Blue Coat has had a full inspection by the Health and Safety Executive and had glowing verbal feedback with no recommendations. Our systems are robust.

That said, the Trust Board fully appreciates how difficult it is for young people who can't come into school because they are potential contacts. We will do everything possible to continue their education and development.

Next half term pupils will return on Tuesday, 3rd November.

Please can we ask all parents during half term and beyond, to be vigilant in following public health guidelines. We must continue to be careful about distancing, using masks in crowded indoor spaces where we can't distance and following hygiene rules.

If your child tests positive for Covid during the school holiday, please contact your school using the school's system with details of the date of the test and the date symptoms started. If the child was infectious whilst they were in school, others will be affected and must be contacted. Our schools will continue to monitor this over the break.

At any point, if your child shows symptoms, please **do not** send them into school. As soon as a child or anyone within the household becomes unwell and you wish to get them tested, **please all stay home** until that test result comes back. We want to reduce the impact of students who must self-isolate, and keep pupils in school, with their teachers, as much as possible. **We have to work together to keep everyone safe and our schools open.**

Parent Meetings

Under current circumstances, we will not be holding face-to-face parent evenings. In primary, teachers will contact parents by phone. In secondary, given the number of pupils that teachers work with, communication will be by written reports. If there are any particular concerns, please contact the school and be assured that school will contact you if there are particular concerns.

Other Constraints

Please be aware that all our schools are also affected by staff absences when staff themselves are ill or have to self-isolate because another family member has tested positive. Teachers are teaching pupils in school **and** those working from home. In secondary we are getting more of this onto Microsoft Teams so pupils will be learning in real time, teachers can share screens, model, interact and discuss. It is not "normal" teaching and learning, but it is closer. However, there are limits to how far this can be customised for individuals. **Please bear with us.** Staff are working hard, under huge constraints. We are doing our best and are improving all the time in these new circumstances, but the hours in any day remain finite!

Looking Forward

Advent isn't far away. We particularly want to make Christmas a special time for all our young people and our staff. Advent marks the beginning of the period when we wait for the light of faith and hope to come into the world, into the darkness. That is a very powerful message for everyone, particularly now. There will be an Advent Challenge to show that people are not forgotten in what are very difficult times. Further details will follow from our schools.

New Developments

Our Trust is expanding. St Anne's in Rochdale will join us in January of 2021. Our new secondary school in Oldham is moving into the design and construction phase – the website will be launched on 6th November. Do watch out for this – it is exciting!

Blue Coat Admissions 2022

Admissions arrangements for 2021 are sorted and that has gone smoothly, with many thanks to the clergy and leaders of worship.

I realise that parents are concerned about 2022 (and beyond) because churches have been directed not to record attendance at worship for the moment. We are working with Bishop Mark of Middleton and local clergy on this, for the future, and in the meantime are revising Blue Coat's Admissions Policy to allow for what is currently happening in 2020-21. We will go out to consultation on this in November-December, when it has been agreed and checked by all the authorities whose approval has to be gained first.

My personal advice in the meantime is to hang on in – attendance isn't being recorded at the moment but attend worship when and how you can. Help your parish to keep things going. This isn't just about school admission – it is about the whole future of collective worship, our churches, our parish communities. Where churches are putting on additional services to ensure distancing, register for those – and help with cleaning, as that is one of the biggest constraints. Where you cannot attend physically, take part in a streamed or otherwise online service. Faith is the rock we can stand on (even if sometimes it feels like the rock we are clinging to!) and, like everything else, it has to be worked on. Now more than ever, don't lose heart!

To conclude – COVID isn't going to go away for a while. We will live through this, for everyone, but most of all for our young people. Some people have had/are having a really difficult time with illness, bereavement, economic hardship, worry, and our thoughts and prayers go out to you. And we carry on, make the best of it and ensure that our young people and communities still have the companionship and those special bits that they will remember throughout their lives.

Message from our Trust Chaplain

I have been reminded this week of the wonderful image of God as the light shining in the darkness. As we head into the half term break can I encourage you to hold on to that image and the words of Jesus from John chapter 8 "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life*".

During the next week it would be wonderful if we could each take a moment, on our own or with family, to light a candle and pray for one another. A prayer doesn't need any special words and need not even be spoken. Simply lighting a candle and remembering someone else who needs God's light is a great way to continue to support one another, even when we are apart.

Wishing you all a peaceful and restful half term break.

Yours sincerely



JULIE HOLLIS
Chief Executive Officer - The Cranmer Education Trust