

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



PREPARING FOR SUCCESS: YEAR 11 MOCKS AND YEAR 12 ASSESSMENTS

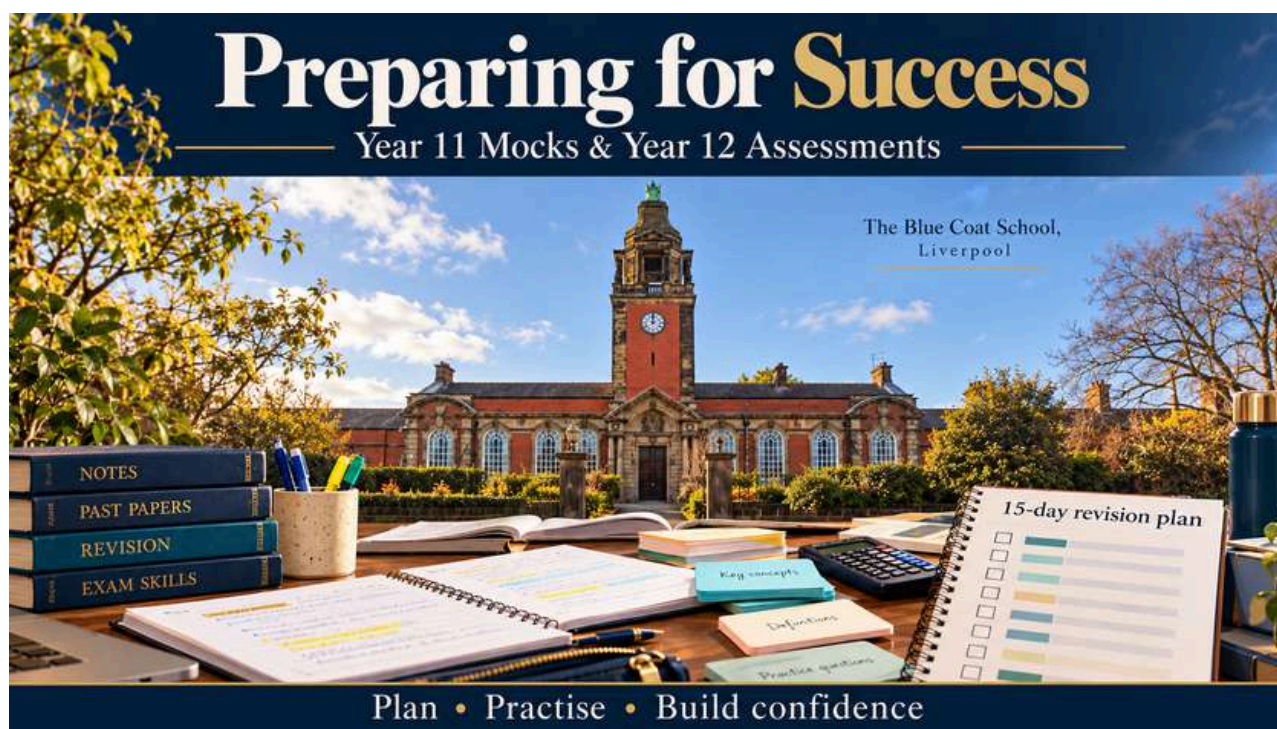


Our forthcoming Year 11 mock examinations and Year 12 assessments provide an important opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning and identify areas for improvement. Year 11 Maths and English mocks will take place during the week beginning 12 October 2026, with mocks in all other subjects taking place during the week beginning 30 November 2026. Year 12 assessments will run for two weeks, beginning on 9 November 2026. Teachers will use the results to review progress, address gaps in understanding and plan further teaching and support.

For Year 11, the mocks offer valuable practice in applying GCSE knowledge under examination conditions, managing time and developing confidence ahead of the summer examinations. For Year 12, the assessments provide an early opportunity to review the transition to A-level study. This is the first of three Year 12 assessment windows that will contribute to the evidence used to inform UCAS predicted grades, making careful preparation particularly important.

The 15-day revision plans provide a clear and manageable structure for preparation. Each day focuses on a particular topic, with suggested activities such as watching a short video, completing focused reading and attempting practice questions. Students should work through the daily tasks, use the checklist to record their progress and identify topics that need further attention.

Regular revision is more effective than leaving preparation until the last few days. Students should use the tasks actively by testing their recall, explaining ideas and answering questions before checking their notes. Parents and carers can help by encouraging a consistent routine, supporting a sensible balance between study and rest, and asking students to explain what they have revised. Revisiting less secure topics and seeking help from teachers will help students make the most of their preparation time.



Preparing for Success
Year 11 Mocks & Year 12 Assessments

The Blue Coat School,
Liverpool

Plan • Practise • Build confidence



NEW BIOGRAPHY SHEDS LIGHT ON BLUE COAT CO-FOUNDER BRYAN BLUNDELL

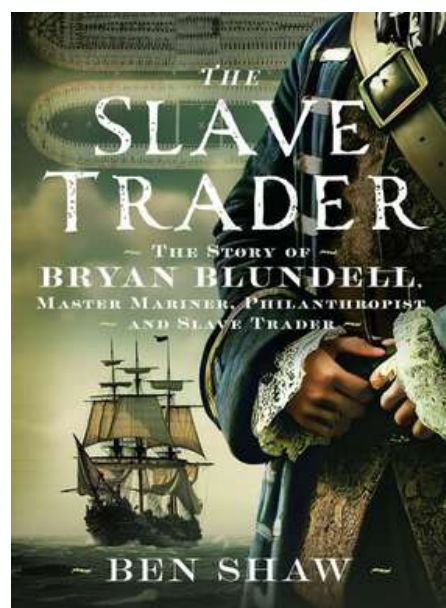
The first biography of Bryan Blundell, one of the co-founders of The Blue Coat School, has now been published, bringing the story of one of eighteenth-century Liverpool's most significant and complex figures to life. *The Slave Trader: The Story of Bryan Blundell*, written by Ben Shaw and published by Pen & Sword History, draws on Blundell's surviving sea journal, historical records and genealogical research.

The book explores Blundell's life and ambitions while also examining the wider world of eighteenth-century Liverpool and the city's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Blundell's connection with Blue Coat has been an important part of Ben's research, and he has worked with Paul Wainwright to explore Blundell's role in the school's history and the circumstances in which it was founded.

In September, Ben returned to Liverpool to launch the book at the Bluecoat Arts Centre. The sold-out event attracted around 60 people and explored Blundell's life, the research behind the biography and some of the discoveries made during the process. These included a sermon preached directly to Blundell in 1711, six years before he became involved in the slave trade, warning of its moral dangers.

The publication comes at a time of renewed interest in Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. New research into British slave traders, alongside recent media and television coverage, is helping to demonstrate how deeply slavery was embedded within British commerce, society and institutions. For Blue Coat, examining this history openly and thoughtfully is an important part of understanding both our own story and the history of Liverpool.

Ben is now hoping to visit The Blue Coat School to speak to pupils about his research, Blundell's connection with the school and the experience of investigating someone who is both part of his own family history and an important figure in ours. His visit would provide pupils with a valuable opportunity to explore how historians investigate complex individuals and how new research can deepen our understanding of the past.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026: HONOURING OUR COMMUNITIES

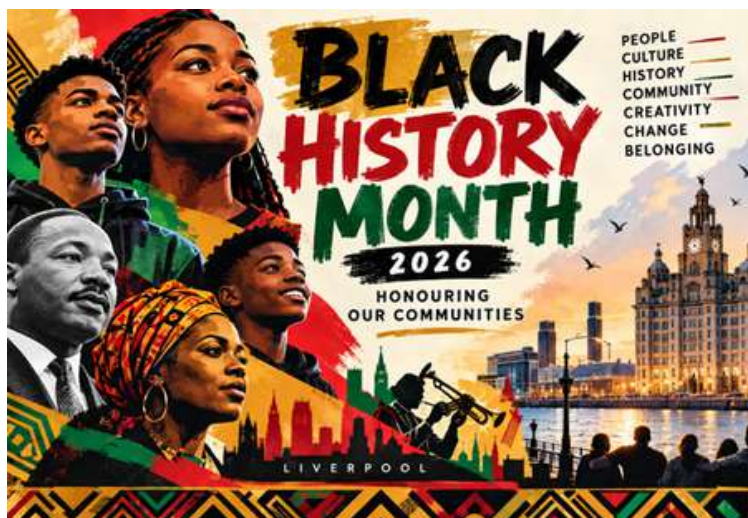
Throughout October, Blue Coat will join schools and communities across the country in marking Black History Month 2026. This year's national theme is "Honouring Our Communities", recognising the people whose everyday leadership, service, creativity, care and commitment help to strengthen communities across Britain. [Black History Month 2026](#)

Black History Month has been celebrated in the UK since 1987. It provides a dedicated opportunity to recognise the contribution of Black people to Britain's history, culture and society, while also ensuring that stories and achievements which have not always received sufficient attention are explored and understood. It is not about limiting Black history to one month; rather, October provides a particular focus for learning, reflection and celebration that should form part of our understanding of British history throughout the year. Black History Month 2026

At Blue Coat, Mrs Heery has been presenting assemblies to students across all year groups, introducing this year's theme and encouraging pupils to think about the individuals and communities whose contributions deserve recognition. Our Sixth Form students are also taking an active role and are organising a Show Racism the Red Card event on Friday 16 October, giving students another opportunity to discuss racism, challenge discrimination and consider the role each of us can play in building an inclusive community.

Liverpool is an especially appropriate place in which to explore Black history, with a long-established Black community and a rich cultural heritage. There are many opportunities for families to become involved this October. BlackFest 2026 is bringing together Black artists, writers and performers across the city, with events including visual arts workshops at Granby Winter Garden and community, arts and cultural events at the Palm House. On 6 October, author and poet Dean Atta will appear at The Black-E, while BlackFest events continue throughout the month. [Culture Liverpool](#)

Families can get involved in many other ways too: visit Liverpool's museums and galleries and explore the city's Black history; read work by Black British writers; discover the stories of local Black musicians, artists, campaigners and community leaders; attend a performance or workshop; or simply use the month as an opportunity for conversations at home about history, identity, equality and belonging. Liverpool's programme demonstrates that Black history is not only something to study in the past – it continues to be created through the people, culture and communities around us today. [Culture Liverpool](#)



YEAR 7 HERITAGE EVENT: UNDERSTANDING OUR PAST, SHAPING OUR FUTURE

Our Year 7 pupils recently took part in a fascinating Heritage Event led by Dr Wainwright, exploring the rich, complex and sometimes uncomfortable history of Blue Coat School. The event encouraged pupils to look beyond dates and buildings and ask an important question: what can we learn from our past to help shape our future?

Pupils explored the origins of the original Blue Coat School in the city and its journey through history to our present home in Wavertree. They discovered how the school has changed significantly over time, while considering the people and wider circumstances that have shaped our school and our community.

The event therefore encouraged pupils to understand that we cannot change the past, but we can choose how honestly we understand it and what we learn from it. By confronting uncomfortable aspects of our heritage rather than ignoring them, we can use our history to help build a more inclusive and respectful future.

At the heart of the event was our school motto: "Not for Oneself, but for All." Pupils considered what these words mean today and how they should influence the way we treat and support others. The motto provides a powerful link between our history and our future, reminding us of our responsibility to contribute positively to the lives of others.

The Heritage Event was therefore much more than a history lesson. It gave our Year 7 pupils an opportunity to understand where Blue Coat has come from, to ask challenging questions about our past and to think about the kind of community they want to help create. Knowing where we have come from helps us understand who we are; learning from our past helps us shape where we go next.

YEAR 12 PARENTS' INFORMATION EVENING

It was wonderful to welcome so many families to our Year 12 Parents' Information Evening on Thursday 24 September. We were delighted by the excellent turnout and would like to thank everyone who gave up their time to join us at the start of this important stage in students' education.

The evening focused on helping families understand the transition into Sixth Form and the greater independence that comes with A-level study. Parents heard about our expectations around being Ready, Respectful and Responsible, including the importance of attendance, punctuality, organization and making purposeful use of independent study time.

We also shared our wider vision for Sixth Form: that every student should belong, be valued and be empowered to thrive. Alongside high academic expectations, we want our students to be known, supported and stretched, and to take full advantage of opportunities for leadership, mentoring, enrichment and service within the school and wider community.

A central message of the evening was the importance of partnership between school and home. Encouraging a steady study routine, taking an interest in what students are learning and contacting school early if support is needed can make a significant difference over the next two years.

All of the materials from the evening will be made available to families, and a link will be sent to all Year 12 parents and carers, so that everyone has access to the information shared and can refer back to it throughout the year.

Thank you again to all of the parents and carers who attended. It was a fantastic turnout and a very positive start to our work together as we support Year 12 students to belong, flourish and thrive throughout their Sixth Form journey.



BLUE COAT GOES PINK FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

During the week commencing 5th October, The Blue Coat School will be supporting Breast Cancer Awareness, helping to raise both awareness and funds for an important cause that affects thousands of families every year.

Throughout the week, pink ribbons will be available to buy for £1 during form time. Pupils and staff are encouraged to wear their ribbon with pride as a visible show of support for those affected by breast cancer and for the vital work taking place in research, treatment and support.

Breast Cancer Awareness provides an important opportunity to increase understanding of the disease and to recognise the experiences of patients, survivors and their families. Small actions across a school community can also help start important conversations about health and the value of supporting others.

We hope as many members of our school community as possible will get involved. Please bring £1 during form time in the week beginning 5 October and help us turn Blue Coat pink!



SEBASTIAN SERVES UP SUCCESS IN LA MANGA

Congratulations to Sebastian, who recently had the fantastic opportunity to spend a week training and playing tennis in La Manga, Spain, representing East Wavertree Lawn Tennis Club (EWLTC).

Sebastian travelled to La Manga following an excellent start to September, when he won EWLTC's Under-16 doubles competition. During his week in Spain, he took part in an intensive programme of development training, working on his skills and gaining valuable experience in a different training environment.

His success continued overseas, with Sebastian going on to win another doubles competition in La Manga — a tremendous achievement and a fitting reward for his hard work and commitment to the sport.

We are delighted to celebrate Sebastian's success and look forward to following his continued progress on the tennis court. Well done, Sebastian!



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS CAREERS EVENINGS – LAW, BUSINESS, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

Parents and students are invited to two exclusive online careers evenings hosted by Young Professionals, designed to help families make informed decisions about future career pathways, apprenticeships, university and graduate opportunities.

The sessions will be led by hiring managers and representatives from major employers, giving students and parents the opportunity to hear directly from the people involved in recruitment. They will explain what employers look for, when applications should be made, and how young people can make themselves stand out.

The first session, focusing on Law, takes place on Tuesday 13 October from 6.00–7.30pm via Zoom. It will explore solicitor apprenticeships, training contracts, vacation schemes and careers within leading law firms. Employers taking part include Slaughter and May, Freshfields, Linklaters, Clifford Chance, A&O Shearman, Baker McKenzie, Mishcon de Reya, Farrer & Co, Charles Russell Speechlys and The University of Law.

The second session, on Business, Accounting and Finance, will take place on Wednesday 14 October from 6.00–7.30pm via Zoom. This evening will cover degree and school-leaver apprenticeships, graduate schemes, professional qualifications and important application deadlines. Organisations represented will include PwC, KPMG, BDO, S&W, CIMA and The University of Law.

Across both evenings, families will gain practical advice about corporate application processes, online assessments, interviews and assessment centres. Sessions will also explore commercial awareness, degree apprenticeships and the different routes available after school or university. Breakout panels and sector-specific workshops will give parents and students the opportunity to take part together and ask questions directly.

We strongly encourage students with an interest in these sectors to attend alongside a parent or guardian. Families can choose to join either one session or both. Participants should ensure that they have the Zoom app installed on a laptop or mobile device, as this will be needed to access the breakout rooms.

STAND UP, SPEAK OUT: BLUE COAT MARKS NATIONAL HATE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

National Hate Crime Awareness Week, which runs from 10–17 October 2026, is an important opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that Blue Coat is a safe, respectful and inclusive community for everyone. The week encourages schools and communities across the country to challenge prejudice, support those affected by hate crime and make clear that discrimination has no place in society.

At Blue Coat, this work extends well beyond one week. We actively promote the idea of being an active bystander: helping pupils develop the confidence to recognise inappropriate behaviour, challenge discriminatory language safely, support others and report concerns. Our aim is for pupils to understand that standing by in silence can allow harmful behaviour to become normalised, while positive intervention can help create a culture in which everyone feels that they belong.

We are also proud to work with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership and partner organisations to develop peer education within school. Programmes such as Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) train young people to recognise and challenge behaviours including racism, misogyny, homophobia, bullying and harassment, and then use their learning to support and educate younger pupils. Across Merseyside, this approach has been used to empower pupils to become active bystanders and play a direct role in preventing harmful behaviour.

Alongside this, Merseyside partners continue to provide schools with resources and workshops that help young people understand discrimination, exploitation, violence and the importance of speaking up. By combining education, peer leadership and clear expectations, we want every Blue Coat pupil to know how to recognise hate and discrimination, challenge it appropriately, report it and support those affected.



ORIGAMI BIRDS TAKE FLIGHT AT LIVERPOOL CENTRAL LIBRARY



Students from across the school have been working incredibly hard in Origami Club to create a wonderful collection of paper birds.

This exciting project is a collaboration with Liverpool Central Library, which is hosting an exhibition celebrating John James Audubon's magnificent natural history masterpiece, *Birds of America*. Our students' beautiful paper birds will form part of the exhibition decorations.

We were delighted when Liverpool Central Library invited us to collaborate again, following the great success of last year's project, when our Origami Club created hundreds of paper horses for an exhibition celebrating Chinese New Year. It is fantastic to see our students' creativity once again becoming part of the cultural life of our city.

We are so proud of the hard work, enthusiasm and imagination shown by students from all year groups. We will share the details of the exhibition next week so that you can visit Liverpool Central Library with your friends and family and see our students' creations taking flight!

Well done to everyone involved in making this project such a success, especially to students in 8 Roscoe!





DOUBLE SUCCESS FOR BLUE COAT MUSICIANS IN THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN

We are delighted to celebrate the outstanding achievements of two of our talented musicians, Jaye (Year 13) and Leo (Year 11), who have both secured coveted places in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (NYO), one of the UK's leading youth orchestras.

Jaye, who plays the viola, has achieved particular distinction, having not only secured a place in the orchestra but also been appointed String Leader. This is a tremendous honour and a reflection of her musical ability, leadership and commitment.

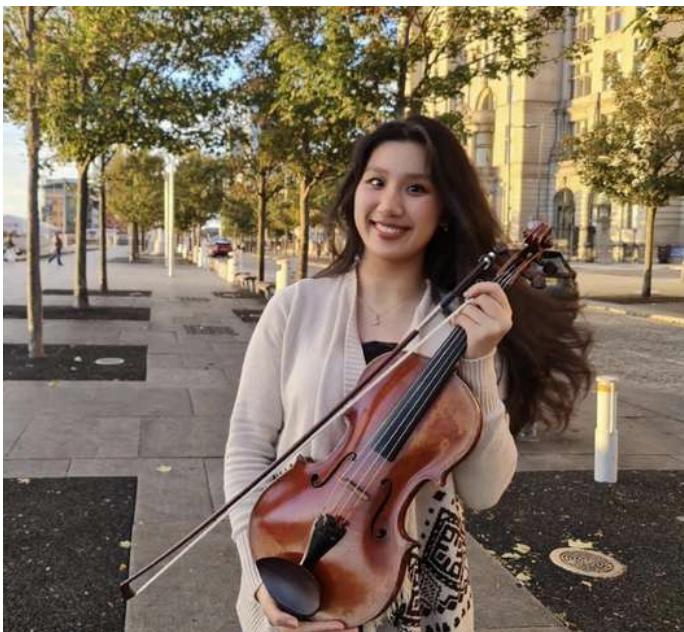
Leo has also achieved an exceptional milestone, gaining a place in the orchestra as a French horn player. Membership of the NYO is highly competitive, with young musicians from across the country auditioning for a limited number of places. His success is a wonderful recognition of his talent and dedication.

The National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain brings together some of the most gifted young musicians aged 13–18 from across the UK. It offers an extraordinary opportunity to work with leading conductors, professional musicians and renowned soloists, while performing challenging repertoire in some of the country's most prestigious concert venues. Alongside its concert performances, the NYO provides an inspiring environment in which young musicians develop their skills, creativity and confidence, both as individuals and as members of a world-class ensemble.

As members of the NYO, Jaye and Leo will have the opportunity to take part in an exciting programme of rehearsals, workshops and concerts, culminating in performances for audiences across the UK.

Their success is a fantastic achievement and a source of great pride for the whole school. We look forward to following their progress and, of course, to hearing about their experiences performing with the National Youth Orchestra.

Congratulations to Jaye and Leo!



'YES OUI CAN' FRENCH CLUB IS BACK AND BIGGER THAN EVER!

'Yes Oui Can' French Club is back and bigger than ever, and we've changed day: join us every Thursday in W15, at 12:45.

Who's it for?

Years 7, 8 and 9. Whether you're a French whizz or you've only just learnt "bonjour", you're welcome. If you want to discover more about France, practise your French and make friends in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere, this is the club for you!

What do we do?

We explore French culture and practise our French through games, quizzes and hands-on activities. The club is run by Miss Zidi with the help of our brilliant Year 12 and 13 students.

Our first session was a huge success, with a big turnout for our French culture quiz. This week, we celebrated Black History Month by travelling across the French-speaking world, all to the rhythm of Francophone music from the Caribbean!

Students worked in teams across workstations, exploring France's overseas territories (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, La Réunion and Mayotte), looking at the history behind them, and discovering inspiring figures such as Joséphine Baker, Aimé Césaire, Louis Delgrès and Alexandre Dumas. We had another fantastic turnout and we'd love to see even more of you.

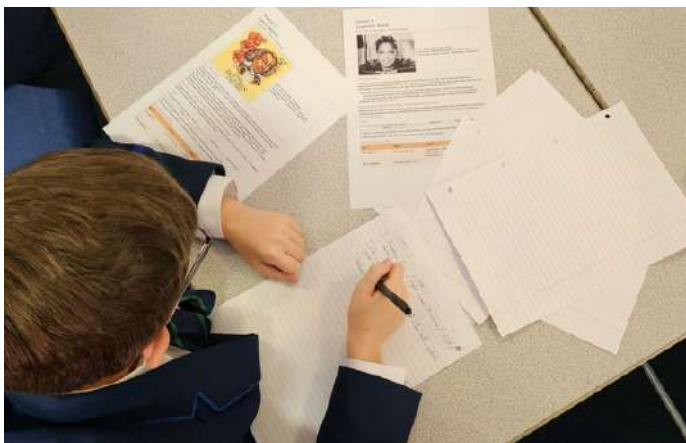
Collect your stamps!

Every student gets their own French passport, stamped at each session. Come to 10, 20 or 30 sessions and earn rewards!

Come and join us!

You don't have to commit. Even if you can only come once, just turn up, you'll be very welcome.

À jeudi!



21 DAYS OF SIXTH FORM

The first few weeks of the new academic year have been incredibly busy, purposeful and exciting, and I am delighted to share some of the many things our sixth-form students have already achieved.

A Levels are demanding qualifications. They require commitment, independence, resilience and a willingness to engage with learning at a much deeper level. However, we firmly believe that three excellent A Levels, while important, are not the only measure of success.

Our BCS100 programme, alongside our extensive enrichment, volunteering, leadership and student-development opportunities, is now in full flow. Our aim is to ensure that every student has access to opportunities that will help them move confidently towards their future ambitions. Universities, employers and life beyond school increasingly require young people who can think critically, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, lead others and demonstrate resilience and confidence.

Developing these qualities sometimes means encouraging students to step outside their comfort zone — and this is something we actively embrace. We are incredibly proud of the way our students have risen to these challenges over the past three weeks.

Year 13 – Ambition, leadership and opportunity

Our Year 13 students have made a strong start to the second year of their A Levels. With only around eight months until their examinations, this is a short and very important academic year.

Many students have been preparing for and sitting university entrance tests, with testing continuing throughout October. Our early-entry students have also completed their UCAS applications.

This year, we have approximately 100 students applying for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Medicine courses — the largest number we have seen so far. The quality of these applications has been exceptional. They showcase not only academic ability, but also the breadth of our students' experiences through volunteering, work experience, leadership and enrichment.

These applications are a wonderful reflection of our school motto: "Not for oneself, but for all." Our students are demonstrating that success is about much more than individual achievement; it is also about the contribution they make to others and the wider community.

We are incredibly proud of them and look forward to supporting them throughout the university application process.

House competition begins!

Our House Leaders, as part of our Senior Prefect Team, led our first House assemblies this term, and the friendly competition between Houses has officially begun!

We will be sharing House points on our website and through the Rewards and Behaviour section of the Parent App, so families can follow the progress of each House throughout the year.

Making a difference

Our Year 13 Senior Prefect Team has also planned a fantastic programme of events for the coming weeks, and we hope students and families will support them.

School duties and Student Council update

We are delighted to see our students stepping forward and embracing opportunities to make a positive difference across our school community. Our Year 12 and 13 students have taken on School Prefect duties during lunchtime, supporting activities and helping to create a welcoming and enjoyable environment for everyone. We are also pleased to announce that School Council representatives have now been appointed across all forms, with their first meetings scheduled to take place soon. We are incredibly proud of our Student Council and excited to hear their ideas, experiences and voices as they play an active role in shaping our school community.



Breast Cancer Awareness Week – 5th October

Students will be able to purchase pink ribbons for a £1 donation, with cakes also available to buy on Wednesday. All money raised will be donated to The Sunshine Group, a local breast cancer awareness charity that is particularly close to the hearts of our Year 13 students.

Show Racism the Red Card – 12th October

Seacole House will lead a cultural awareness quiz for students as part of Show Racism the Red Card Week. Students will also be able to purchase a red wristband for £1 and wear it throughout the week, reflecting the charity's Wear Red for Racism campaign.

Diwali Ball – 21st October

Our EDI Team will be holding our annual Diwali Ball on 21 October. Students have been invited to audition to take part in the dance performances, and rehearsals are already well underway.

Tickets will be available for students to purchase through the ParentPay app. We are looking forward to celebrating the cultural diversity of our sixth-form community.

Bake Sale – 22nd October

On 22 October, we will be holding a bake sale, with all proceeds donated to bowel cancer research. This is a cause particularly close to the hearts of two of our Year 12 students. Students should bring cash if they would like to purchase cakes and support this important cause.



CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION RETURNS FOR 2026



Students across Years 7–13 are invited to take part in this year's Blue Coat Christmas Card Competition, with the winning design set to become the school's official Christmas card.

The competition is a chance for pupils to showcase their creativity while celebrating the character and heritage of Blue Coat. Entries should feature the school in some way, whether through its distinctive buildings, crest or another recognisable element of school life. Designs can be produced using any medium, with colour encouraged.

Entries can be created in A5 or A4 format, either landscape or portrait. Previous winning designs have shown just how imaginative our students can be, combining festive themes with familiar Blue Coat imagery to produce striking and memorable cards.

Completed entries should be submitted to Ms Weights or Mr Cain by Friday 23 October, the final Friday before half-term. The winning design will then be professionally printed and used as the school's official Christmas card, giving one student the opportunity to see their artwork shared widely across the Blue Coat community.

We are looking forward to seeing this year's entries and the many different ways students choose to capture Christmas at Blue Coat.



Year 7 Form Tutor Evening



**Thursday 15th
October 2026**



4pm – 6pm





GOALS, GRIT AND GREAT PERFORMANCES FOR BLUE COAT FOOTBALL

It has been another busy week of football for Blue Coat, with plenty of goals, determination and strong team performances across our teams.

The U13 Girls produced a fantastic comeback against Pensby. Trailing 2-0 at half-time, the girls showed tremendous determination to fight their way back to 2-2. Unfortunately, Pensby scored from a corner in the final minute to take a 3-2 victory, but the Blue Coat team can be extremely proud of their resilience and performance.

There were two excellent results for the U18 Boys. They secured an impressive 7-2 victory over Deyes High School at home in the ESFA competition, with Tyus, Tafara and Shahin each scoring twice. The team then followed this up with a hard-fought 1-0 away victory against St Margaret's, thanks to a great all-round team performance and Jack's first goal for the 1st XI.

Good luck to our U16 Boys, who will be representing Blue Coat in the Liverpool Cup Tournament on Friday. We wish the team every success!



KEY DATES

Date	Event
Thursday 08th October 2026	Year 12 & Year 13 'Death of a Salesman' (Liverpool Everyman Theatre)
Friday 09th October 2026 - Saturday 10th October 2026	Year 7 Residential Trip to Conway Centre
Thursday 15th October 2026	Year 7 Form Tutor Evening
Thursday 22nd October 2026	Ski Trip Parent Meeting at 6pm
Friday 23rd October 2026	Term Ends at 3.30pm
Monday 26th October 2026	Half Term Break
Monday 2nd November 2026	Students Return
Monday 09th November 2026 - Friday 13th November 2026	Y10 & Y12 Internal Assessment Week
Tuesday 10th November 2026	Year 11 Parents' Evening
Tuesday 24th November 2026	Year 13 Parents' Evening
Monday 30th November 2026 - Friday 4th December 2026	Y11 Mock Exams Week
Tuesday 8th December 2026	Christmas Carol Concert
Friday 11th December 2026	Christmas Markets
Wednesday 16th December 2026	Term Ends for Students at 3.30pm



THE
BLUE COAT
SCHOOL

Non Sibi Sed Omnibus

SEND Coffee Event

PARENT MEET & GREET



Join us for an informal coffee event to meet our SEND team and find out more about the support we have on offer for our SEND students.



Tuesday
6th October



2:00pm –
3:15pm



The Blue Coat
School

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT:



SEND support
available
in school



The Graduated
Response process
(Assess, Plan,
Do, Review)



External agencies
and specialist
services



Meet the SEND
team and have
the opportunity
to ask questions



TO ATTEND, PLEASE EMAIL:

senco@bluecoatschool.org.uk



Turn your daily shopping into everyday magic for us with easyfundraising

You shop, brands donate to us. It won't cost you any extra!



Help us make a difference when you shop.
Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk



1 Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk

2 Sign up and search for us

3 Your favourite brands donate to us whenever you shop with them

Shop with 8,000+ brands including:

Booking.com

ebay

M&S

GROUPON



TUI

JOHN
LEWIS



Viking

ASOS



Uber Eats

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes complicate that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviours – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or via the group chats.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if a stranger is added. Tell children that if they're added to a group they didn't agree to beforehand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure they understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware, who has developed anti-bullying and cyber-safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government, comparing the internet use and online behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



The National College