



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Dear Parents and Carers

Weekly Update letter - Thursday 7th May 2020

I hope that this brief newsletter finds you all well and healthy. As we go further into spring, I hope that the weather is lifting spirits and giving us all more reason for optimism.

This is a shorter newsletter this week, but I hope, no less useful. At the end, it still contains previously mentioned links, guidance and information which might still be of use to you.

School re-opening

The message is clear that the Government will be publishing some kind of plan at the end of this week which should set out the steps for easing lockdown. I, like you, look forward to reading this, and making plans going forward. For much of this week, we have been making both concrete and tentative plans for what school re-opening might look like. What we currently know and what we think might happen:

- Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, stated last week that when schools do begin to re-open, pupils would return in a “phased manner”. I take this to mean that there will be neither demand nor expectation that all students will come back to school from day one, at the same time, whenever that time will be.
- In order to maintain the necessary social distancing rules, which are likely to be in place for us all, it is highly likely that different year groups could return separately, and may be in school on different days, with some days still being spent working at home.
- We are looking into what this would mean for us here at Balfour. We have, for example, started to model classrooms, the dining hall etc and how they would need to be arranged to maintain social distancing. We have been discussing with our site staff how we might arrange one-way systems and how they will be maintaining even higher standards of cleaning and disinfecting. We have been thinking about how we might stagger break and lunchtimes, so that there would be less contact between any students who are in the school.
- Until we have further concrete details, there are lots of questions without answers. I do want to reassure you, however, that I take the safety of our students, their families, and my staff extremely seriously. I will listen very carefully to the advice and guidance that will be provided by the Government, but will only re-open in such a way that I can be absolutely sure that everyone coming into the building is as safe as we can possibly make it.

GCSE and A Level results

With regard to the estimated grades for GCSE and A Level, could I please remind you that **we are strictly forbidden to discuss these grades** with either student or parent at any time, so please do not ask us. This is because the Examination boards will have the final say on every grade awarded, and not the school. We will not know the grades awarded to students until August, when the students themselves will find out. We will let you know the arrangements for collecting grades as soon as we know what they will be.

Transition work for students wishing to come back to Sixth Form

Teachers have been busily working on these transition units. They aim to present a focus and rigorous preparation for students who wish to pursue A Level study. These will be sent out to students who have applied to our Sixth Form from Monday 18th May.

Laptops and internet connection

For those families eligible for support in the supply of laptops or internet connection, announced by the Government a month ago, I am sorry to say that there has been no further news on this. As soon as I know anything, I will be in touch.

Consultations on new block build and shortening of lunchtime

The deadline is now passed on both consultations. We had very few replies for each and I will be discussing the findings with Governors and Trustees next week and will let you know the outcomes of both soon after. Many thanks to those of you who took part in these consultations.

And finally...

We continue to be extremely impressed with the work being done by our students. The vast majority are maintaining very high standards, both in terms of the work they are completing and the levels they are achieving. We recognise that this is no mean feat given the situation we are all in, and speaks volumes about the worth they are putting on their education. I am also aware that we have not been assigning as many House Points as we would be doing if we were in school. I have asked teachers to rectify that, and therefore you should see more appearing on the Parent App in the coming days.

We are also equally impressed and grateful for the support you are giving to your children with regard to their school work. Every one of you deserves a Headteacher's Award for your patience and resilience in balancing your own pressures alongside assisting in your child's education. We think you are all brilliant and we take our hats off to you all. Remember, if you are not doing so already, take time out whenever you need to, spend down-time with your children, and don't hesitate to contact us if you need ideas and support.

All best wishes to you, your family and friends



Lesley Beck

Very proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Reminders from previous weeks:

1. Please remember, if you are not sure of how to get in contact with us, please email: office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk and staff overseeing this area will ensure your message gets to the right person.
2. Could I repeat, please, the message I have received from local Health practitioners, urging you to get in contact with your doctors, or the hospital, if you are concerned in any way about your own, or your children's health. They are extremely concerned that illnesses are being ignored, or going untreated, which could lead to serious complications. Please do seek medical help for yourself and your families if you need it.
3. I was sent the enclosed link by a headteacher friend who works in Cumbria. It is a collection of really good advice and guidance to parents and other adults on how to cope and make sense of the current situation, from an adult perspective. I hope you will find it of some use. <https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ELM006-COVID-19-public-info-a5-booklet-AW-online-1.pdf>
4. We have been informed some learners and parents have received a letter from ESFA asking for personal learner bank details in relation to the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Please be aware that the ESFA *never* ask for personal bank account details. This is a fraudulent letter – please do not respond. If in any doubt, take advice before giving this kind of information away.
5. A reminder about **Stafford's House of Bread** should you have need of it:

Who is it for? The House of Bread Food Bank is to supplement those who have food but for some reason need that extra support.

How does it work? The House of Bread Food Bank is not only a referral food bank, it is accessible to anyone in need.

If you wish to contact the House of Bread, please email: info@hobstafford.co.uk

Or Tel: 01785 243492. Alternatively, please email Mrs Hedges, our Student Support Manager: rhedges1@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk and she will be happy to arrange a delivery for you.

6. The following link will take you to advice put out by the Government, aimed at parents, and which offers advice and guidance on **how to support young people's mental health and wellbeing**:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

7. The online activity pack from CEOP has a wealth of age appropriate activities to address keeping young people at both primary and secondary school age safe whilst accessing the internet and social media platforms.

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/?utm_source=Thinkuknow&utm_campaign=03f521e658-TUK_ONLINE_SAFETY_AT_HOME_21_04_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0b54505554-03f521e658-55023069