



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that, as usual, this week's update finds you and your loved ones safe and well.

Today's is a slightly different but very important update, in light of the recent announcements from the Government and Department for Education. Earlier in the week, the Government made clear its desire to plan for the **potential** for some children to return to school prior to the summer holiday. As far as we are concerned here at Balfour, the students in question are in Years 10 and 12 only. It seems at present that there is no intention for students in Year 7, 8 or 9 (outside the small number of Key Worker children we are currently looking after) to be back into school before September. If nothing else, this gives us something of a tentative timeframe to work towards.

I know that you will have your own views on the above, and maybe some questions you would like to ask. I certainly would value hearing them. For this reason, I would be very grateful if you would respond to the brief survey I will be sending out to you next week. It will give me an opportunity to get a feel for your views and if you have any questions, I will collate them in a future update, hopefully with some answers too!

In planning for the limited possible re-opening for some Year 10 and 12 students, as well as for whatever will happen in September, there are many different things we are considering, including how to manage social distancing, how to manage the need for regular deep cleaning, what our curriculum will look like, and whether we will have to make changes to the school day. Believe me when I tell you that I have four sheets of questions and issues to address sitting on my desk. However, in planning for a phased and partial re-opening, I want to reassure you of the principles I and my team are working from:

- Of paramount importance is the safety and wellbeing of our students (and their families)
- The need for our staff to feel safe and well supported
- The need for our parents and carers and the community to have the confidence that it is safe to send their children to school

In the following documents, the Government and the Department for Education have asked schools to prepare for the **potential** to offer 'face to face' opportunities for Year 10 and 12 students prior to the summer holidays. This is, by any measure vague guidance, and at the time of writing, we are attempting to ascertain what that will actually mean for us all. Please be assured that I shall be in touch with you with more concrete plans, once they are in place. You may also be reassured that I am in close contact with Headteachers of the other High Schools in Stafford and Stone in order to pool our thoughts, but the fact remains that I will always make decisions which I feel are in the best interests of our students, staff and community.

- [Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)
- [Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers](#)

I know these are lengthy documents but I would urge you to read them if you have any immediate questions regarding the reopening of schools, as this is the key source for educational information and the only, hopefully reliable, information we have at the current time. You may, however, feel that there are some obvious contradictions between what we are being told as citizens and what this guidance states for schools: an obvious one for me is the suggestion for us all to wear face coverings when using public transport or in confined spaces, such as shops, but in this documentation, it tells us that PPE is not recommended for use in school. This is one of the many things we are discussing with our key staff and Governors. Please be assured that when it comes to trying to ensure the safety of my students and staff, I will not hesitate to make decisions that I feel are in the best interests of our school community, rather than those laid out by the Government. Each school is unique, and I feel it is vital that we give due respect to any guidance and then **determine what is right for us and our school community.**

When it comes to planning for Year 10 and 12 'face to face' opportunities, at some point before the summer holidays, I would like to make very clear from the outset that we will only be offering such opportunities within the school when, as a Leadership Team including our Governors and Trustees, we feel that the provision we can offer is safe for pupils and staff alike. Until we have gained information from a range of sources and completed a robust risk assessment, the status quo of the current school provision will remain, ie to look after the small number of children of Key Workers currently attending.

Therefore, when and only when it is safe to do so in line with our school risk assessment will an increased number of pupils be able to return to school. We will continue to support those students who remain at home, in the ways we have been doing, up to now.

### **Healthy minds and bodies**

During these uncertain times, everyone at the school wants pupils and parents/carers to first and foremost be safe and well. That includes your mental health and well-being. Therefore, parents/carers: please do not apply more pressure to yourselves than you need to. You are doing an amazing job and everyone at Sir Graham Balfour applauds your efforts as honorary teachers. We know for many of you this is not a job you wanted or always feel fully equipped to carry out, and we truly salute you for doing so well.

We only expect our pupils to do their best as we would when they are in school. At the current time more than ever, ensuring that we look after our personal mental health and that of those we care about is paramount. Below are a range of resources, websites and apps that you can access and that provide links to further mental health and well-being materials.

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources>

<https://www.headspace.com>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

<https://lifeontime.co.uk/how-much-sleep-teenagers-need-in-lockdown>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

### **Safeguarding**

Keeping our students and their families safe is our most important job. Please contact us, in the first instance via [office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk) or directly to any of the email addresses of staff with whom you are in contact.

There is a lot of support available to help keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers:

Think You Know: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk> (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)

Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org> (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

Parent Info: <https://parentinfo.org> (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

LGfL: <https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety> (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)

Net Aware: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk> (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@hobstafford.co.uk)

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

6. 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](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)