



19th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this week has passed well for you and that you and your family are all safe and sound. Many more of you will have been able to return to work this week or to start to resume some sense of normality following the recent, continued easing of lockdown.

There is not a huge amount of concrete news to report to you this week, as there is still a great degree of uncertainty over what September will look like in all schools. There are, as you will know yourselves, a large number of competing pressures (containing and further reducing the spread of the virus, restarting the economy, easing pressure on hard-pressed families, to name but three) and schools are caught right in the middle of this tussle. To a large degree we are still following national and local guidance, but always through the filter of our consideration of the needs of our whole school community. I do admit to some frustration at the lack of advice and guidance from the Government, as planning for September is likely to be a complex matter, especially if social distancing, even at 1 metre, is required at that time.

Anyway, moving on. We were absolutely thrilled and delighted to see our Year 12s back this week. Every single one of them who could medically attend, did so. Some of them were understandably a little apprehensive, some were clearly shell-shocked at having to get up so early and most were joyous at seeing their friends and teachers again after such a long break. I must admit to being a little emotional myself, seeing them again. They have worked well with their teachers and sixth form mentors and we are now going through the information we have picked up from them this week, and planning how best to support and challenge them over the remaining weeks of the term.

We are now looking forward to seeing our Year 10s throughout next week. I have sent out a lot of information to parents and students about this, but here is a very quick reminder of the key points:

- Normal school day applies (8.50-3.20) in accordance with the bus times.
- If walking to school, please maintain social distance from other students at all times. Do not congregate in groups.
- We have made contact with all families who normally catch the school bus; most of you are bringing your child to school, and therefore only a tiny number of students will be on buses.
- No school uniform – but we advise that clothes worn during the day should be washed that night.
- Chetwynd students only to come in on Tuesday, Sandon only on Wednesday, Tixall only on Thursday, Weston only on Friday.
- Students need to head straight to the Sports Hall where they will be met by staff and informed about the day.
- Bring a packed lunch and enough water for the day as the canteen is closed and students will remain on site at break and lunch.
- If the weather is dry (!) we're all hoping to have our picnic lunches outside, so bring a small blanket/towel to sit on.
- Students should keep their belongings to a minimum, as they'll need to keep everything with them all day. They will need a note pad and a pen/pencils to write with.
- Social distancing, hand washing and oral hygiene will be maintained throughout the day.

We have drawn up detailed plans of what students will be doing on their day in; it is a mixture of catching up, time to chat with friends and teachers, sessions on pastoral care and others on finding out in more detail how they have been getting on with their work. Again, we will collate and analyse the information we receive and make further plans on how to support students for the remaining weeks of this term.

In other news:

- Unbelievably, there are only four weeks to go until we break up for summer. Whilst there is talk of the Government possibly giving financial support to schools to open up summer camps etc, we have been given no indication that this will be the case. We currently anticipate that school will be closed for the summer break, as would normally be the case, including for those children of Key Workers. We are working with the Local Authority to see what activities they are helping to pull together for the children of Stafford and will keep you informed of any new developments regarding this.
- We have just received notification that the 9 laptops we have been assigned by the Government for some of our hardest pressed families are shortly to arrive – we will be in touch with those families re collection etc very soon.
- I am delighted that Marcus Rashford's support of Free School Meals for the summer has persuaded the Government to change its mind. We will be in touch with our families who are entitled to them, and ensure that they receive their vouchers over summer.
- Staff are now working hard on finding ways to 'interact' more with students, by adding recordings of instructions, or videos into the work they are setting. We are deeply conscious that not all families have access to technology and in some houses we know that a laptop computer may be being used by 3 or 4 members of the family. This is the reason that we cannot and will not go down the line of delivering 'live' lessons for all classes, but we hope that you and your children enjoy this addition to our work. The feedback we have already received has been very positive.
- I have been asked to share the following links with you by the Local Authority team

Grants for White Goods

The following links have been provided to us for if and when families are in need of white goods but cannot afford them:

- <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/>
- <https://www.buttleuk.org/>
- <https://www.familyfund.org.uk/> - if there is a child with a disability within the household

I'll finish by yet again thanking you for the continuing wave of appreciative emails you send us. At a time when you, your children and we are all starting to tire of the constraints placed upon us, reading a kind word makes all the difference.

I'll write again to you next week, but for now, I send you and your loved ones my very best wishes.



Lesley Beck ☺

Very proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Reminders from previous weeks:

1. Covid-19 Testing

Testing now available to anyone with symptoms of coronavirus

The government has announced that anyone with symptoms of coronavirus is now eligible to book a test, ahead of the rollout of the test and trace service. Anyone experiencing a new, continuous cough; high temperature; or a loss of, or change, in their normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia) can book a test.

A coronavirus test can be booked here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

Government guidance for parents

The Government has also put together this guidance document on how parents of secondary age children can assist with their child's remote learning:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-secondary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

For those of you with primary aged children, you may also be interested in looking at the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

2. 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.
3. Healthy minds and bodies.
 - 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>
4. 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 or directly to any of the email addresses of staff with whom you are in contact.
5. 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)

6. 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.
7. 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>
8. 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.