



Dear Parents and Carers

26<sup>th</sup> June 2020

At the end of this sweltering week, I hope this letter finds you all well. Yesterday evening should have been our Key Stage 3 Celebration Evening. If there is one good thing to have come out of this time, it's that we didn't all have to sit in the hall with a temperature measuring 32 degrees centigrade when I left the building last night!

Not unsurprisingly, there is still a great degree of uncertainty over what September will look like in all schools. The Government has this week stated its clear intention that it wants all children to be back in school full time from September. We still await guidance over how that is supposed to happen, especially if we still must maintain social distancing at that time. As you will all know, our school is full to bursting already, with no space to expand into. There is also a question mark still over school uniform, and whether it is required to be washed every day. I recognise that you will want as much notice as possible on purchasing uniform, and as soon as I have any further information, you may be sure I will let you know.

We now have three weeks left of this term before the summer holidays. I hope that you will all have the opportunity to take a well-earned rest when that time comes. As far as school is concerned, it may come as a relief to you to know that we will not be setting *new* work throughout the six weeks, which will give our young people the opportunity to catch up on any work in which they have fallen behind as well as taking a break, which they too will need.

In the next three weeks, teachers will be setting out clear markers to their classes regarding where students should be by the end of this term; which topic they should know well, which skills they should have practised, which knowledge they should have revised. In this way, students will be able to come back to us in September, at similar points in their learning. It is therefore important that students do not 'take their foot off the gas' as we approach the summer. There is still much work to be done before we all break up on the 17<sup>th</sup> July.

It was brilliant to see our Year 10s this week. We had a good turn-out, which was both heartening and reassuring. Throughout next week, all Year 10 and 12 students will have received a subject-specific self-assessment sheet which they need to fill in and return to their teachers. This, alongside assessment weeks very early in the new term will help us see which gaps need to be filled and what additional support will be needed. We are currently planning to have additional sessions being delivered after school for those students in need of extra support, particularly in the key subjects of English and Maths, up until Christmas. After that time, we will look to see what other support is needed in their other subjects.

Whilst there is uncertainty about many aspects of school life in September, there are some things that we are already planning for with surety:

In order to minimise the number of people coming in and out of the building, and therefore helping to minimise the potential spread of Covid, we have decided to do things a little differently next year with Parents' Evenings. Instead of asking you to come to school, we will instead be holding Family Feedback Weeks, in which your child's House Tutor will phone you up and discuss their progress and attitude across the school. Of course, you will still be able to contact individual subject teachers, but we will be asking you to do this remotely, rather than in person.

Our 'Making the Most of...' evenings will be done remotely too. As we are developing our skills and knowledge in recording lessons, we will do the same for these sessions, putting together key advice to parents of Year 7, 10 and 12 parents and sending you the links to view them from. Finally, we will not be holding our annual Celebration Evenings in the way we have always done. We still celebrate our students' success, but differently, and in ways that exposes us all to less risk.

I will be working on the Risk Assessments and Action Plan for September as soon as I have more guidance from the Government. Again, you will be sure to receive these as soon as they are ready.

The Government has announced the geographical areas in which it is funding summer schools and camps, and unbelievably, there will be none in the West Midlands. I cannot understand the reasoning behind this and have contacted the Department for Education for an answer. If this changes, again, I will let you know. There will be activity clubs springing up, I suspect, but they will be at a cost to families. Please keep your eyes on the Local Authority website for more information <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Homepage.aspx>

As I mentioned last week, school will be fully closed from 17<sup>th</sup> July, including to the children of Key Workers. This will allow us to carry out deep cleaning and to reorganise classrooms so that they are ready for much greater numbers of students returning in September.

Here are a couple of new DfE links which may be of interest to you:

The first offers advice and guidance for parents on home learning:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>

And the second offers an update on how parents can keep their children safe online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online>

I will leave it there for now. Thank you for continuing to read these updates – I know from your feedback that they have been of use to you during lockdown. I will write to you all again next Friday with any new information I have at that point. As usual, I will leave for your information some of the key points and links which may still be useful to you.

Take good care of yourselves and your loved ones, have a smashing weekend and all best wishes for the week to come.

Yours sincerely



**Lesley Beck**

**Proud (and currently very warm) 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>

**2. 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.

3. 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.buttuk.org/>

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

4. 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>

5. 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.

6. 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>

7. 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.