



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Dear Parents & Carers

5th March 2021

I hope this letter finds you all safe and well. Your role as home-teacher is almost at an end, and I hope that gives you some sense of relief for the respite you are about to get. We are making final preparations to welcome all our students back throughout next week, and genuinely cannot wait to see them.

This will hopefully be my final *weekly* newsletter, in which I will share with you some FAQs from the past couple of weeks regarding the Lateral Flow Tests we have been asked to carry out in school over the first two weeks of reopening:

I am happy to give consent, but my child is very nervous about having a test and may therefore refuse to have one. What should I do?

- Please complete the consent form and send it in to school as requested. We recognise that some may feel nervous about taking a test, but we will do all we can to ease their fears and support them through the process. If they are still nervous at the point of the test, they will NOT be forced to take one.

As part of my job I have to carry out LF tests on myself at home. Can I do the same for my child, rather than them being tested in school?

- Yes, you can. Remember, after the first two weeks, your children will be given test kits to use at home anyway, so getting them used to doing this under your watch may well be helpful. The key thing is to seek the confirmatory, official PCR test if the Lateral Flow test reports positively, and to keep your child away from school until you know for sure the result.

I do not consent to my child receiving the Lateral Flow Tests in school. Can you confirm they will not be required to have one?

- Yes, I can confirm this. Without consent, no student will be tested. However, I would urge all parents to agree to this test taking place. It is one of a range of measures we have in place to keep everyone safe, which hopefully will minimise any future disruption to children's education. The test is not painful, it is privately done behind a screen, and support will be on hand for all children. Please help us do our bit to keep everyone safe by consenting to have your child tested.

My child has already had Covid-19. Do they still have to do the tests?

- Government advice on this is sketchy and changeable. Currently, it suggests that Lateral Flow tests should only be given '90 days after a positive test was taken.' We are obviously not clinicians and cannot offer medical advice, I am afraid. Please consult your own GP for the best advice on this.

This has been a horrible year for everyone. What guarantee can you give us that there will be no more outbreaks of Covid-19 in school which will affect my child?

- I cannot, sadly, give any kind of guarantee. What I can say is that, with the measures we put in place in school in September, added to by the compulsory wearing of face coverings from November, we

experienced a relatively very low incidence of transmission, and therefore relatively very little disruption for the whole of the first term. I am pleased to say our school was commended by members of the Public Health Team, who were surprised at how few cases we had, compared with many other schools. We will continue to follow all our measures until such time that we are confident to relax them and do all we can to minimise the risk of transmission.

Will it be clear what we have to do with the home testing kits, once the tests in school have been completed?

- We hope so! We have not yet received our allocation, so I cannot share with you what instructions will be included in the packs. We will, however, demonstrate them with all students before sending them home.

What do I do if my child is showing Covid-19 symptoms, but the Lateral Flow test has shown a negative result?

- We are aware that the Lateral Flow tests are nothing like 100% accurate and that 'false negatives' and 'false positives' may occur. If your child, or indeed anyone in the family exhibits any symptoms, regardless of the result of a Lateral Flow test, then please keep your child at home and seek a confirmatory, official PCR test, according to the advice from the NHS:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19

I hope that these FAQs are helpful to you – if you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at school.

At the end of this letter are the key points relating to school re-opening which I shared with you last week. If you didn't get a chance to read them last week, please have a good look at them now so that everyone has a smooth re-start next week.

Finally, then, I want to share my own and our staff's appreciation for all you have done to support your children and the school over this period of lockdown. This one has felt much harder than the first one for us all. I know that you, like my own staff, have had to juggle many competing priorities whilst home schooling; you have done an excellent job in very trying circumstances and I am immensely grateful for it.

I truly hope that we are through the worst of this pandemic and that better and brighter days are ahead for us all.

My very best wishes to you and your families



Mrs Beck

Very Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Other Information:

Full re-opening of School

In order to keep us all as safe as possible, the Government has asked us to carry out simple Covid tests with all students on their return. For this reason, we are going to stagger their return so that we can carry out these tests safely throughout the week, and quickly identify and isolate any asymptomatic cases.

So:

- Years 13, 12 and 11 will come back to school on **Monday** the 8th March
- Year 10 will come back to school on **Tuesday** the 9th
- Year 9 will come back to school on **Wednesday** the 10th
- Year 8 will come back to school on **Thursday** the 11th
- Year 7 will come back to school on **Friday** the 12th

Buses will run as normal each day. The school canteen will open as normal before school, at break and lunchtime.

Until your child comes back to school during that week, they will continue with remote learning, as now.

As is normal, please do NOT send your child to school if they show any possible signs of Covid-19. Instead please arrange to get them tested at the testing sites and await the results before sending them back in to school.

Children of Key Workers who have been with us throughout this lockdown will stay in their current bubbles until their year group returns, at which point they will go back into their classes with everyone else. They should all revert to school uniform from 8th March.

The Covid-safety routines we had at school before Christmas will all stay the same. Students will remain in their class and year group bubbles; they will wear PE kit on PE days, and full uniform on all the other days. They will have the same break and lunch arrangements as before Christmas. They will (with the accepted exemptions) continue to wear face coverings at all times inside the building and will regularly use hand sanitiser throughout the day. Doors and windows will be kept open, so remind them, please, to bring a warm coat or jacket to wear in classrooms until it gets a bit warmer outside.

The normal rules and requirements are still in place. Please help us by ensuring your child is in school on time, in full uniform (or PE kit). I need them to come prepared with books, equipment, pen, pencil and ruler. I need them to get their head in the game quickly, settling to working back in school with their teachers. We will be reminding them of our expectations and standards of behaviour and attitude. I am sure that they will quickly get back into the swing of things and pick up from where we left off in December.

They will stay in the same classrooms as they were in before Christmas, so there is nothing new to get used to there. I spoke with Mr Trenbirth yesterday about PE lessons, and I am pleased to say that we will be going back to team sports straight away, whenever lessons are outside.

We are really looking forward to everyone coming back and being with their friends again. We know how important that is for wellbeing. We are also really looking forward to seeing students in classrooms, face to face, rather than via a computer screen or email message. Teachers will be assessing students very quickly to see where they are up to, and what support they may need to get back on track. For some students, this will mean attending extra sessions and compulsory homework club, in order that they can catch up quickly with everyone else. I await confirmation of the support package from Government that schools will be offered, to help them catch up. I will send out more details once I have them.

We understand that most of them will be very excited about coming back. Some of them will feel a bit anxious about it too. Both of these feelings are perfectly normal. We are here to look out for them all and help them settle back down very quickly.