



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

17th May 2021

Dear Parents

I hope this letter finds you all well. We are now hopefully through the worst of the pandemic and I hope that you are starting to feel more optimistic about the coming months.

I'll start by praising your children. Since the return to school after Easter, students have been far more settled than they were when we first came back in March. They are very much engaged in their work in lessons and are demonstrating their allegiance to our school values on a daily basis. We have had occasion to show around the school a large number of visitors over recent weeks; it is fair to say that many of these visitors have been hugely impressed with our students' focus in class, their behaviour and their kind and respectful attitude when addressed. This just adds to my pride of our school.

Changes to pastoral structures and systems

We are in the final stages of our plans for changes to the structures and systems involved with our pastoral care, and I will be in touch with you with more details after May half term. Many of our systems are unchanged for many years and therefore in need of a re-fresh, helped by the appointment of a new post to the school, that of Deputy Headteacher for pastoral care, a role to which Mrs Metcalfe has been appointed. We are really excited about these changes and I look forward to sharing them with you shortly.

Face coverings

Given the changes announced by the Government, it will be no surprise that students have been asking me about face coverings and whether the rules will be changing. As you know, we moved to wearing face coverings before the Government decided to encourage them back in the autumn. I am very proud of the way that our students overcame their natural discomfort at wearing them and the understanding they have shown throughout; they all understood from the beginning that wearing face coverings was a key tool in protecting each other from catching Covid and we have been extremely successful at reducing transmission in our school since that point. We have experienced very little disruption whilst in school, with only very small numbers of students and staff having to self-isolate.

Despite what the Government is now suggesting, I have asked our students and staff to continue to wear face coverings, as now, until the end of this half term, the 28th May. We have only had one positive case this half term, and whilst numbers may be reducing across Stafford, I don't want us to risk numbers rising by abandoning our face coverings right now. We have all experienced enough disruption over the last year – let's stick with the face coverings for just two more weeks and then, fingers crossed, we will not have to wear them at all after half term.

Just in case you are not aware, children and young people aged 11 and over must still wear a face covering on public transport. In accordance with advice from PHE, they must also wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college. This does not apply to children and young people who are exempt from wearing face coverings.

Easing of restrictions on 21st June?

We are planning for a variety of scenarios pending national decisions which may be taken on the 21st June. We

are weighing up the risk and rewards of moving out of bubbles before the summer holidays and will be ready to make any changes by that date. Again, I will let you know about this nearer the time.

Parents with children coming to us in Year 7 in September

We are planning transition activities for current Year 6 students which will see them coming into school for visits, prior to the summer holidays. You will receive further details about this from your child's primary school shortly, including details of the Transition Evening, to which you will be invited.

Parents of Year 11 and 13 students

I am deeply proud of the way these two year groups have coped with the seemingly never-ending rounds of assessment and feedback they have been part of, over recent weeks. It has been really tough on them all, probably just as tough as formal exams would have been. Luckily, the end is now in sight.

For the vast majority of students, their formal assessments will end on Friday 21st May. Next week will be a 'Contingency Week' – a week in which students will be gathering all their evidence together, but also a chance for students to do additional assessments if, for example, they have been ill, or if the teacher may feel they are on the cusp between two levels. During this week, students will be able to suggest any additional pieces of assessed work to be taken into consideration, which they did prior to March 8th, before this assessment period started.

We will have the traditional leavers' morning on the 28th May for Year 11, who will be given permission to leave school at 12.30.

For both year groups, we will need students to be available to come into school, with 24 hours' notice, right up to the 18th June, which is the final date by which grades need to be sent to the exam boards. Please do take this into consideration if you or they are planning holidays.

For those Year 11 students who are planning to come back to the Sixth Form, we have planned a 3-week transition period, starting Monday 14th June and ending on Friday 2nd July. In this time, we will be giving students the chance to do some of the activities they have not had a chance to do during the pandemic, including science experiments, field work visits, practical PE lessons etc etc. They will also spend time with A level teachers and carry out transition tasks and activities to help prepare them for September.

We are awaiting from the exam board further information on the grading process, including how students may appeal their grades. As soon as we receive this, I will let you know.

I'll leave it there for now. Many, many thanks for the ongoing support you give to your children and to the school. We could not do what we do without your help and backing, so thank you for that.

With best wishes



Mrs Beck

Very proud headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School