



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM

15<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I do hope that this final letter of the year finds you and your loved ones well. Please accept my grateful thanks and appreciation for the support you have shown your children and our school over what has been a second year of disruption and uncertainty.

We are currently making plans as best we can for the September start, based on the latest available information issued to us from the Department for Education. Given the experiences we have had over the past 18 months, this guidance is likely to change and at short notice. Please bear with us if this is the case.

We all break up from school at 12.30 on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July. School buses have been arranged for those students who use them.

We will not be awarding our usual last day off for students of the winning house. We felt it more appropriate to allow students to spend time with each other in school, given the huge disruption they have experienced over the past year. The House Points they have accrued this year will, however, carry over into next year, when this highly anticipated reward will be reinstated.

We have been asked to again participate in the Track and Trace process over the first few days of the summer holiday. If your child tests positive for Covid following a PCR test, up to and including Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, please email us at [office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk), telling us the date symptoms commenced AND the date of the positive PCR test. We will check this email address at or around 11am each day up to Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July and will assist NHS Track and Trace by identifying, as best we can, close contacts. Please do not shoot the messenger if you are contacted and if your child is asked to self-isolate – we are doing our bit to reduce transmission.

Finally, could I please urge you to continue carrying out Lateral Flow Tests with your children over the summer holidays. We have not been sent testing kits to last over summer – instead, you are asked to seek them from local chemists or testing centres. By identifying positive cases and self-isolating, we are all following the guidance aimed at keeping us all safe.

## From September

- Depending on the number of infections at that point, I may be asking students to continue to wear **face coverings**. Whilst it looks like close contacts of infected people will not need to self-isolate at that point, infected people will continue to have to; if the infection rate continues to be high amongst unvaccinated people, most of whom are now under the age of 18, then we will have to do all we can to reduce the number of students affected and therefore the number of days lost from school. Face coverings have helped us to do this up to now.

- We will continue to use **hand sanitiser**, alongside cleaning desks and surfaces on a regular basis. Windows will be kept open for ventilation. Doors will be kept open to assist with this. When winter comes, students may have to wear sweaters/coats in classrooms in order to stay warm.
- As it stands at the moment, we will be moving back to 'normal' movement around the school, with students moving to different classrooms each lesson. The pandemic has meant that children have not been able to access specialist science labs, technology and art rooms etc and we are determined to reinstate their use from September.
- We currently anticipate that there will remain some '**bubbling**' at break and lunchtime in the short-term, in order to reduce the mixing of students and therefore the risk of transmission of Covid.
- The Government has issued an instruction to schools to carry out two in-school **lateral flow tests** at the start of term to try to identify positive cases. After these two tests, students will be required to carry out tests from home, as they do now. Letters have been issued to families where we have no record of a yes/no to consent; please be advised that if you have given consent, you can remove consent at any time by contacting us in writing at school. Please note, we cannot and will not test any student for whom we do not have consent.
- We will be reverting back to normal **PE lessons** from September, and the changing rooms will be back in use. For this reason, students will also revert back to wearing full school uniform each day, and changing into PE kit in school, on the days they have it on their timetable.
- In order to help ease their transition, **school will be open to Year 7 and 8 only on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**. Our current Year 7 have had no opportunity to get to know the rest of the school this year, and have had limited access to whole school assemblies. We will try to redress this on the same day we induct our new Year 7.
- **Years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 will all come back to school on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**. As usual, they will spend the first part of the day with their Form Tutor before starting lessons as normal.
- You recently received a letter from our Deputy Head in charge of Personal Development and Welfare, Mrs Metcalfe, setting out our new **pastoral structures** from September. If you haven't had a chance to read that, please do so – it contains a lot of important information you need to know about Form Time, the move to year groups rather than 'vertical' tutor groups as well as our brand-new reward and sanction systems. We have been busy speaking with your sons and daughters about these changes and I am pleased to say they are already on board with them. One thing we are really excited about is that we have been able to store up a small amount of money which we will use to subsidise a number of visits throughout the year, meaning that we will be asking a little less in terms of parental contributions. Please watch this space for more details.
- Finally, for now, we will be reinstating 'Making the Most of Year 7-13' evenings, alongside in-school Parents' Evenings next year. We will send you details in the new term. Our Open Evening is also currently due to take place in school, on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

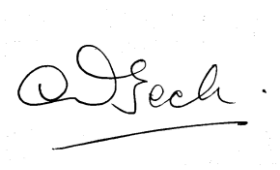
We are very much looking forward to our combined Sports day and Balfour picnic on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July. The weather forecast is looking very favourable, so please would you ensure your son/daughter comes to school

with sun cream, a sunhat or cap and a refillable water bottle. If they have an umbrella, that might be useful to offer a little shade on the field.

This week we have held celebratory assemblies to praise and reward huge numbers of our students who have really stood out this year, either in subjects, in Form Time, or by showing their allegiance to our school's values. I signed every one of the certificates, using up two pens and getting a sore arm at the end of it! I am immensely proud of and humbled by the way the vast majority of our students and your children have coped with the past 18 months. They have shown resilience, forbearance and general good humour throughout and they give me great hope that, having come through a pandemic, they will be able to take on the world when it's their turn.

I wish you and your families a safe, healthy and relaxing summer and look forward to better days ahead.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mrs Beck', with a horizontal line underneath it. The signature is enclosed in a faint, dotted rectangular border.

**Mrs Beck**  
**Headteacher**