



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Dear Parents and Carers

At the end of the penultimate week of term, school is very busy with our staff making all the necessary preparations for our full return in September. I know from the messages you send me that some of you cannot wait for school to reopen and that others are still very apprehensive about sending your children back. Believe me, I understand both sides of that coin. We are doing everything we possibly can to get school ready, but the challenge is a big one, and despite our very best efforts, there may well be unforeseen issues which we will need to quickly get our heads around once September comes. All of us – we, you and your children will need calm heads to cope with all that will be thrown at us in September.

As I have pointed out to you and our students already, school will look and feel very different to what we are all used to. There will be very little free movement inside the building at any time; outside, students must stay in their Year Group bubbles at break and lunchtimes. Students will carry particular responsibility for abiding by the rules we will have in place at all time; they really must comply with those rules in order to keep everyone safe. Please, work with us in order to help prepare your child for coming back and making sure they can re-commence their schooling in a safe and calm manner. Our House Tutors, House Heads, TAs and Senior Pastoral staff are currently busy making contact with you and our students to inform and reassure about September.

I have been working on our updated Risk Assessment, which is currently with staff, Governors, and Trustees who are busily checking it through. I will publish this on our school website very shortly. Please have a look at it, as there are lots of controls which involve you: from what to do about COVID-19 testing, making contact with school, and what you can do to help us keep your children safe. As I know you will understand, I can offer you no guarantee that school will remain Covid-19 free, now or from September, but if everyone does their best and follows the rules in and outside of school, then the chances of it happening are reduced. I know that some of you who are shielding or vulnerable may be very nervous about sending your children back – please do not hesitate to get in touch with us as [office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk) and your concerns will be passed to the relevant members of our Pastoral Team.

As I mentioned last week, the Government published the long-awaited guidance on school re-opening for September. Here again is the link for those of you who wish to read it in full:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

I have included at the end of this update the key points I made to you last week about school re-opening. Below are a few other points and clarifications I would like to share with you today:

## 1. Uniform almost as normal from September.

This is the section taken from the Parent Handbook which will be on our website shortly. Please take careful note of the requirements in order to avoid having to replace inappropriate items.

We believe uniform is important because it helps to develop a sense of personal pride and form good habits for a student's journey into adult life. As a school, our aim is for an affordable, but smart uniform which identifies our students as part of the Sir Graham Balfour community. Our rules on uniform are simple and straightforward and we rely on parents to support the school in ensuring a high standard of appearance at all times.

We expect all students to wear the school uniform which is smart and practical. Wearing the uniform makes students feel dressed for work and encourages them to develop a pride in their school.

**Please note** that from September 2020 until further notice, students should come to school in their PE kit on the days they have PE – this is to avoid students crowding into changing rooms. Students may wear plain black/blue tracksuit bottoms and sweatshirt to keep them warm as we go through the winter. **Please note, skin-tight leggings are not suitable and will not be allowed. Please also avoid clothing with extensive or overt logos.** They are not necessary and are an expense which none of us needs right now.

Please encourage your son/daughter to wear the uniform correctly. It is especially appreciated if you check their appearance before leaving for school so that inappropriate 'extras' such as jewellery, heavy make-up and trainers can be avoided in order to avert a bad start to your child's school day.

The school reserves the right to confiscate items that are being worn or used inappropriately and can ban unforeseen items that may come under 'fashion items' but are not specifically stated in our uniform code. If you have any doubts or concerns, please contact your child's House Head.

Sixth Formers do not wear school uniform, but they are expected to dress smartly and appropriately for a professional setting.

### **Uniform Supplier**

We do not have one set supplier to purchase our school uniform from, please feel free to purchase different items from different suppliers if you choose. There is no requirement to just buy items from one shop. We deliberately chose a uniform whose pieces can be bought from most supermarkets and department stores.

PE Uniform – All PE uniform items can be purchased from any supplier apart from the SGB Logo Black Quarter Zip Track Top and Royal Blue SGB Logo T Shirt which are available from Crested Schoolwear (St Marys Mews, Stafford. ST16 2AP).

Should you have any queries about uniform, please contact Mrs Metcalfe - Assistant Headteacher or our Office Manager, who will be happy to help.

## Uniform Rules

Boys and Girls Uniform		Comment
Blazer	Navy blue blazer with badge on chest pocket and sleeves rolled down.	NO student is permitted to not wear their blazer in and around school except during extremely warm weather and at the School's direction. Students have a choice whether to wear their blazer during lessons. Blazer sleeves are NOT allowed to be rolled up.
Trousers	Standard dark grey trousers.	NO hipster, skinny, flared trousers, jeans or trousers with exposed fashion buttons, laces or zips.
Belts	Plain black belt.	NO large belt buckles.
Skirt	Dark grey knee-length skirt.	NO jersey skirts (eg. tube skirt) and skirts MUST NOT be rolled up.
Shirt	White cotton shirt or blouse. These may be either long or short sleeved but must be capable of being tucked into trousers or skirts and must be tucked in at all times. There must be a top button that can be done up so that the clip-on tie can be attached.	NO Short fitted blouses or un-tucked shirts.
Jumper/ Cardigan	Navy blue "V" necked sweater or cardigan <b>(optional)</b> worn underneath their blazer.	NO Hoodies.
Tie	School Tie – Clip-on with House colour.	NO ties unclipped or positioned lower than the top button in school.
Socks	Plain socks (Black, Grey or White).	NO coloured socks or leggings.
Tights	Black, grey or flesh coloured.	NO patterned tights, lace tights, fishnet tights, coloured tights or footless tights.
Shoes	Sensible, plain, black leather or PVC leather school shoes with sensible heels (height 3cm). They must be plain black shoes and if they have laces they must be black.	NO fabric, canvas, trainers, converse, sports shoes, pumps, sandals, creepers, wedges, dance slippers, sling backs, mules or boots.
Coat	Plain coats are recommended but not compulsory. Coats to be worn over uniform to and from school.	NO coats worn in school and they must not have inappropriate logos.
Bag	Large enough and strong enough to carry the necessary books.	NO small handbags that cannot fit books.
Make up	Subtle make-up is acceptable - this is natural foundation and includes clear nail varnish and a subtle coat of mascara.	NO blusher or bronzer.  NO thickly coated eyelashes, false eyelashes, eye shadow, eyeliner or heavily pencilled in eyebrows.  NO false nail extensions, clip-on nails or coloured nail varnish.  Teachers reserve the right to ask students to remove excess make-up at their discretion.
Hair Styles	Sensible hair styles.	NO extreme hair colour or styles /shaved patterns (natural tones only).
Hair Accessories	Plain, dark blue or black hair bands or bobbles.	NO coloured hair bands, bobbles or large flowers.

Jewellery	A watch and one small plain gold or silver stud per ear. All other body piercings (tongue, nose, lips, belly button, eyebrow etc.) are forbidden on the grounds of health and safety in and around school.  A religious bangle may be worn and any religious necklace can be worn underneath the shirt, to be confirmed in writing by the parent.	NO large earrings, ear gauges, ear cuffs, dangly earrings or fashion earrings.  NO bangles, bracelets or non-charity wristbands, non-House charity badges.  NO rings.
Contact Lenses or Glasses	Prescription lenses and glasses only.	NO coloured contact lenses or fashion glasses.
<b>PE Uniform</b>		
<b>PE Outdoor Kit:</b>	Quarter Zip Black Track Top, Black Shorts, Royal Blue Football Socks, Football Boots (for Rugby and Football only), Shin Pads, Outdoor Trainers, Gum Shield (for Rugby only)	Optional Outdoor Kit: Black or blue Tracksuit Bottoms, black or blue sweatshirt, Black Long Sleeved Base Layer.
<b>PE Indoor Kit:</b>	Royal Blue T-Shirt, Black Shorts, Royal Blue Football Socks/White Sports Socks, Indoor Trainers	
<b>All jewellery and piercings must be removed for PE.</b>		

- If students catch public or school buses, from September they **must** wear face coverings until they arrive at school. At school, they should put their face covering safely in a plastic bag until the end of the day. They must always abide by the instructions of the bus drivers or risk losing their seat on the bus.
- There is **currently** no requirement for students to wear face coverings once in school. Guidance states, and we agree, that face coverings can interfere with communication and that they can give a false sense of security. In order to try and prevent transmission of Covid-19, handwashing, good respiratory hygiene and maintaining distance where possible, are more effective than the wearing of a face covering alone. Students may choose to wear a face covering if they find it reassuring. Please watch this space, as this guidance may change at short notice.
- We have sorted out the areas of school in which students will exist in their year group bubbles from September. This will mean far more to your children, so I will share that information with them in their update.
- We are just finalising our arrangements for reporting to you next year, as well as how we will carry out our Feedback Weeks, which will be the alternative to face-to-face Parents' Evenings for the coming year. I have asked our Pastoral Team to write to you all with key dates specific to the year group your child/children is/are in. In that letter we will outline how our Feedback Weeks will run.

There will undoubtedly be more information I will be sending out to you in my final update next week. If you have any general questions in the meantime, please let me know – I will collate them and provide answers in my next update. If you have any questions relating specifically to your own child, please contact their House Tutor or House Head.

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



**Lesley Beck**  
**Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School**

## Reminders from previous weeks:

### 1. Key points from last week re school re-opening:

- Our school is due to re-open fully from Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September to all year groups.
- Students will need to be in full school uniform from this date.
- If students can walk to school, they should.
- The Government is very clear that attendance will be compulsory from September, and that the 'normal' rules for attendance will be back in force from the start of term.
- However, it is also vital that if your child or anyone in your family is exhibiting signs of Covid-19 (new continuous cough, high temperature, and change to sense of taste or smell) you must not send your child to school and instead seek tests for the whole family; self-isolation is then vital whilst awaiting the results.
- Should we experience a Covid-19 outbreak in school, we have clear guidance on what we should do. If we must close the school to certain year groups or even to the whole population at any point in the future, we are working closely with our teachers to ensure they can again quickly adapt to remote teaching. Where students have to self-isolate, we will be able to send work home in the ways we are currently doing.
- For students of the new Year 11 and 13, there is clear Government intention that GCSE and A level exams will take place next summer. We have been invited to participate in a consultation over what arrangements might be in place for students, and I will let you know once the final decisions have been made.
- In the first few weeks of term we will be carrying out Assessment Weeks for all students, to help us pinpoint any gaps in knowledge or understanding. This will then allow us to plan for catch-up work. Especially for students of the new Year 11, there will be planned additional after-school sessions taking place from early in the term to help them catch up and re-build any lost confidence.
- In order to maintain order and safety, we will be relying heavily on students' compliance in following our usual behavioural expectations, but now, in addition, the rules on social distancing, hand washing, and respiratory hygiene. We will be sending out easy to follow guidance to students over the next two weeks, but I do urge you to help us by making sure your child recognises the importance of following rules which are there to keep everyone safe. We totally understand that students can make inadvertent mistakes. We also know that some will come back to us apprehensive. I hope that all our students will come back ready to settle and learn. Be assured that if necessary, we will deal promptly with any students purposefully seeking to endanger the safety of others or threatening to do so.
- The Government acknowledges that social distancing is virtually impossible in a school setting, and as such advises us to operate in Year group 'pods', the purpose of which is to stop students from different year groups mingling. This will present serious challenges for us, but ones we will work hard to overcome. What we have already established, however, are the following:
  - Students will largely stay in the same classroom for all lessons to reduce their movement in the building. For Year 7, 8 and 9 students, this will mean they will be in mixed ability groups according to the Modern Foreign Language they study. They will remain in this grouping for all other subjects until further notice.
  - Year 10 and 11 will inevitably have to move within their year group to take account of their options subjects, but they too will be based in a single area of the school and will not be moving outside of their year groups during the day.
  - Our wonderful vertical tutoring system will be temporarily suspended and students will remain with their same-age class-mates for House Time. They will, however, continue to belong to their Houses, and as soon as we are able, we will move back to mixed age House groups.
  - We will be looking at how we can keep year groups apart at break and lunchtime. The Dining Room will be open and will be selling food from the start of term. We will encourage students to spend as much time as possible outdoors and therefore students bringing packed lunches will be asked to eat outdoors in order to free up the dining room for students buying food.

- In order to avoid crowded changing rooms during the new term, students will be asked to come to school in their PE kit on the days they have PE – we will send out more information on this shortly.

Mr Hancock and I will shortly be writing to parents of **current Year 13 students**.

This following section is specifically aimed at **parents of current Year 11 students**:

As I have said in the past, one of the major impacts of this pandemic has fallen on the shoulders of our senior students facing public exams. Many of them (and you) feel cheated that they did not get the chance to sit the exams for which they had been preparing so diligently. They were equally denied many of the traditional rites of passage: a proper leavers' day, book signings, photos with teachers, goodbye parties with their House Groups, the joy and relief of the final exam session etc etc. This is highly regrettable and we all feel the same sense of disappointment at what they have missed through no fault of their own. We still hope and plan for the Prom to go ahead sometime in the Autumn term, but if continuing restrictions do not allow for this to be at the Moathouse, then we will plan a different kind of celebration at school, when students come back to collect their official exam certificates in late November. Be assured we will invite you all in as well. Watch this space.

We do look forward very much to seeing our Year 11s when they come to collect their exam results on the 20<sup>th</sup> August. In order to ensure all students do not arrive at once, thus putting social distancing at risk, please note the times we would like them to come in on that date:

<b>8.30 to 9.00</b>	Students whose surnames begin with <b>A-C</b> (32 students)
<b>9.00 to 9.30</b>	Students whose surnames begin with <b>D-G</b> (28 students)
<b>9.30 to 10.00</b>	Students whose surnames begin with <b>H-L</b> (37 students)
<b>10.00 to 10.30</b>	Students whose surnames begin with <b>M-R</b> (34 students)
<b>10.30 to 11.00</b>	Students whose surnames begin with <b>S-Z</b> (34 students)

At their allocated time, students should make their way to the front of the school, from where they will be directed to collect their results and, if they ordered one, their leavers' hoodie.

In their results envelope, some students will be given a date/time to come back to school to talk with a member of Leadership Group, Mr Hancock, Miss Watson or our careers advisor, Nikki Lambert. For those students who have applied to our Sixth Form, and who are successful in gaining the necessary grades, they will be contacted by Mr Hancock to confirm their subject choices.

Any results which have not been collected by the end of the day will be posted home the following day.

If, upon receiving their GCSE grades students are unhappy with a result maybe because they feel that it is not a fair reflection of how they would have done, it is important that they contact Mrs Metcalfe or Mr Mason in the first instance via [smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk) or [mmason@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:mmason@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk). They will then contact your son or daughter and discuss their concerns. Depending upon the nature of the concern, the following could take place:

- Students may opt to sit GCSE exams in some or all their subjects in the Autumn term. Students would most likely do this at College, but we could make arrangements for them to sit the exam at our school; please note the cost for this, and any additional tuition required, would be the responsibility of each family and not the school (as is normally the case).
- The school could appeal to the exam board on the grounds that the exam board used the wrong data when calculating grades and/or incorrectly communicated the grades calculated.
- The school can also check there were no errors made when submitting the grade to the exam board, however, there was a rigorous checking process prior to the grades being submitted, so the chances of this are slim.
- At this point if students are unhappy with the above resolutions, please contact me.

## 2. Covid-19 Testing

Testing 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>

3. 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.
4. A reminder that school will be fully closed from 12.30 on 17<sup>th</sup> July, including to the children of Key Workers. This will allow us to carry out painting, maintenance, deep cleaning and to reorganise classrooms so that they are ready for much greater numbers of students returning in September.
5. 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>