



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM

25th November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Parent & Carer Update – 25th November 2021

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones well. Three weeks into the new half term and I thought I'd update you on a few bits and pieces. Some will be relevant to you all, some just to parents of specific year groups, so please do see the headed sections later on for those sections.

Covid update

We have had, since September, around 100 students off after testing positive for Covid; the highest number of confirmed cases in the school since the beginning of the pandemic. However, with the wonderful commitment shown by our students in wearing their face coverings, using the hand sanitisers, wiping down their desks etc, we have still managed to keep one of the lowest numbers of overall infections across the county. I am extremely proud of our students and grateful for the support you have given them and us in sticking to these strategies. We have been able to run fixtures, have not had to reintroduce classroom 'bubbles', and have allowed children to freely mingle at break and lunchtimes.

We currently have around 60% of students who have taken up the offer of a vaccine, and I know of others who are arranging them via the vaccine centres around Stafford. This, taken alongside all our other mitigation strategies should ensure we continue to operate fully from now on. Please do help us in making sure your child tests for Covid using the Lateral Flow packs we give out regularly, and, as you have been doing, keep your child at home if awaiting a PCR test result.

Attendance

At the same time as we are reducing Covid infections, we are seeing an upsurge in the number of children off with coughs and colds and other bugs; this is clearly due to them mingling and also exacerbated by their not having developed any immunity to these same bugs over the past year. Please help us reduce any further learning loss by getting them back into school as soon as possible; dose them up if necessary – our Office will be happy to assist with storing tablets or other medicine. Thanks for your help with this.

Online Parents' Evenings

We are rolling out online parents' evenings this term, in order to reconnect you with subject teachers. You will receive notification when your child's parents' evening is coming up, with full instructions of how to make your appointments. Please look out for the letter coming to you shortly.

Making the Most of...

We are running a series of virtual 'Making the Most of Year 7, 8, 9' etc evenings. In the Parent section of the website you will find a tab called 'Making the Most Of'. At the beginning of the week, which has your child's Parents' Evening in, you will find a series of Frequently Asked Questions and a link to a video which will provide advice and guidance to help you support your child to be successful in each relevant academic year. These are presented by Leadership Group and your child's Year Head. Year 8 information will be on the website the week beginning 29th November as the Parents' Evening is on the 30th November. Your child will also be completing some Making the Most of tasks in Form Time.

Homework and Independent Learning

Just a reminder that we now have a section of the school website dedicated to supporting students with their homework. The website has details of the homework schedule, details of all the support that students can access to help them complete their homework on time, what happens when homework is not completed on time and the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions. Here is the link to the website - [Homework/Independent learning - Sir Graham Balfour School](#).

Sandon students' final day off reward

A reminder that, for those students **who were in Sandon House last year**, they are entitled to take the final morning of this term off school as a reward for winning the House competition last year. I suspect that many of them will choose to come into school, and this is fine. We really hope that Sandon students will enjoy their just reward.

For all other students, their House Merits are all being continuously counted in the current year and the successful House will enjoy the final morning of the summer term off school.

GCSE and A level exams summer 2022

We are still planning for, and expecting, GCSE and A Level exams to take place next summer. We receive regular updates from examination boards over the changes they are making to exam papers and we are scrupulous in making sure these changes are incorporated into the work teachers are doing with students in class. However, we are also up to date with making contingency plans, just in case the exams are again cancelled next year. Part of this entails using assessment information gathered over the year and so it is vital that students approach the December PPEs with all due diligence; they must revise, follow the guidance of their teachers, and approach each exam paper and each question with their best possible efforts in order to reflect what they know at this point.

Children in Need 2021

We were overwhelmed with the generosity shown by children and staff at the recent Children in Need event. Altogether we raised £806.82, every penny of which has been sent to the charity. We thank you for your support and generosity of this event.

Open Evening and intake numbers for 2022

With lots of safety measures in place, we were able to run our Open Evening in October. We were really happy to welcome prospective parents and children in to see our school in action, but equally, we were delighted to see parents of current Year 7 children, who had been unable to visit us at the height of the pandemic last year. We have just had an indication of our first preferences for September 2022 and it is

clear that we will be significantly over-subscribed again. We are currently working hard to see how and if we can accommodate these families and hope to welcome around 200 children into the Balfour Family next year.

Spare Uniform?

Do you have any spare, re-usable uniform at home that you no longer need? If so, we would be delighted to receive it, in order to share with other families in our school. Please send in clean items which we can quickly make available to children, handing it into reception in a plastic bag tied at the top. Many, many thanks

I will write to you all again before the end of term, but for now, please accept my very best wishes and my sincere, endless thanks for all the support you give your children and the school. It is very much appreciated.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Beck', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lesley Beck
Headteacher