



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM

2nd September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

At the end of the first day back I am pleased to say that our attendance was absolutely excellent. It has been wonderful to see our students after such a long time, and whilst no doubt there was some nervousness, there was also a great sense of home-coming and, fingers crossed, the prospect of getting back to something approaching normal. I have delivered an assembly to every child this morning, welcoming them back, and getting them used to our new ways of working. They observed the new rules beautifully throughout the day.

I want to share with you some key messages and reminders so we all get off to a really good start:

- I emailed your sons/daughters and enclose a letter to you today regarding face coverings, which need to be worn outside of classrooms. Please do read the letter carefully, as it should answer most of your questions.
- Please do not send your child to school if they are exhibiting any of the signs of Covid-19. Instead, keep them at home, seek a test as soon as you can, and keep us informed.
- On the same topic, please do be aware that we will send home any child exhibiting signs of Covid-19, and will need you or someone else to be available very quickly to collect your child, or give permission for them to come home by themselves.
- Please do not drive onto the school site to drop off children – please use the neighbouring side streets or better still get your children to walk from a more distant drop-off point. We will be closely monitoring this situation over the coming weeks – please do not be surprised if we approach cars coming on site as we will be doing the best for the safety of our students.
- A reminder too, please, not to come to school without an invitation. We are doing all we can to minimise the number of adults coming into the building as part of our Covid-19 security plans in a bid to ensure we can stay safe from an outbreak and thus remain open from now on. The majority of meetings we hold will be remote, usually by telephone.
- Our Parents Evenings, Open Evenings, Celebration Evenings etc will be suspended until further notice, but rest assured we are working on alternative ways to do what we would do during those events.
- Your child's Form Tutor will have made contact with you by email or phone by the end of September latest. Please remember, they are your first point of contact for any issue in school.
- We have made safe arrangements for children to buy food from the canteen, but please be aware that in order to minimise queues we have moved to a 'Grab Bag' containing lunch. We have slightly reduced the range of food offered for now, opting instead for meals we know children will eat (pasta, shepherd's pie, sausage and mash etc). Would you please ensure that funds are always available in your child's meal account, as we will be advising students not to use the cash loader unless absolutely necessary for safety reasons.

We seriously hope that we will not have to close either wholly or partially again, but we are working on our Plan B just in case. I cannot give you details of this just now, as it will depend entirely on the circumstances at the time, and therefore, there are a number of different scenarios. Rest assured that our absolute hope and intention is to stay open from now on, for the good of all our students.

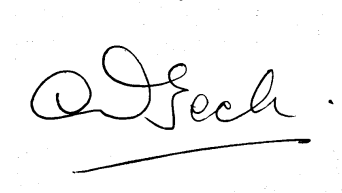
As you will be aware from my weekly updates during lockdown (still available via the website if you wish to read them) we have been working very hard on our plans to return to school safely. We have had to make changes to our building, to our curriculum, to the ways in which we interact with each other, whilst trying our level best to ensure school remains a welcoming and reassuring place to be. We will be relying very heavily on our students, our staff and our parents and carers to each do our bit to make this work. We will all need to retain calm heads and accept that we cannot just pick up from where we left off in March. There are serious compromises all of us will have to make, and I thank you all sincerely for helping us to help your children settle back down into school.

I must be very honest with you, however, and point out that despite everything we have done to re-open and stay open, I cannot give you any guarantee that Covid-19 will not find its way into school. I have no control over the other people your children mix with; I have no way of knowing if anyone in school is carrying Covid-19 asymptotically, and thus potentially spreading the virus to others. Most school buildings in the country are unable to allow for social distancing – we are no different. The measures we have put in place come from Government and Local Authority guidance, but as with all things, they are not risk-free. Please therefore help us to impress on your children the need to follow our rules as well as maintaining safety outside of school hours.

Finally, I want to thank you again for the wonderful support you gave the school during lockdown. It meant the world to us all that we were able to maintain our Balfour spirit whilst being so far apart.

I wish you, your children and your families all the very best as we start the new term.

Yours faithfully



Mrs Beck

Extremely proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School