



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of **INSIGHT**  
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Our Ref: MMM / VM

15<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you well and that you had a relaxing and refreshing summer holiday. This letter is lengthy as it contains news and important reminders from the school as we begin the new school year.

Our new Year 7 students have made an incredibly positive impression on all of us in school. They have settled into their Form Groups and already know their way around school. Well done Year 7! Years 8-13 have returned to school in a mature, focused and positive manner. As well as timetabled lessons, we are covering issues such as GCSE options, careers, university applications, introduction to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, preparation for GCSE exams and PSHE with the students in Form Time and assemblies. I would strongly encourage every child in school to get involved in the wide range of lunch time and after school clubs that we offer. Many of these are sports clubs, but we also have clubs in drama, debating, coding, Lego and a range of music lessons. Our next school show will be Oliver Jr and students need to tell Mr Field or Miss Winwood if they would like to audition for this by September 28<sup>th</sup>. It will be a joyous occasion and wonderful experience for the students, so please do encourage your child to audition.

We have also welcomed new colleagues to Balfour. Mr Simmons has joined us as Head of Chemistry; Mrs Williams has joined us as Head of RE; Miss Gumbley has joined the Humanities Faculty; and Mrs Jaman has joined the Technology Faculty

## **Summer Exam Results**

The A level results were excellent. We had a 99% pass rate and just under half of the grades awarded were A\*-B. The students really did themselves and their families proud. We have students leaving us to start degrees at the universities of Oxford, Durham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham, Aberdeen, Keele, Cardiff, Plymouth, Bath, Staffordshire and Missouri in the USA. Students are also starting prestigious degree apprenticeships with the NHS, the Police, engineering firms, accountancy firms and computing firms.

The GCSE results were exceptional. Students achieved the highest average grade under the 9-1 grading system that we have ever had at Balfour. 52% of students achieved 5 passes, including English and Maths, at grade 5 or above. 71% of students achieved 4 passes, including English and Maths, at grade 4 or above. 27% of all the grades awarded were a grade 7 or higher. 62% of all grades awarded were a grade 5 or higher. 79% of all grades awarded were a grade 4 or higher.

We are so proud of the students and their achievements. They showed such ambition, resilience, perseverance and commitment during their time with us at Balfour. We wish them well as they take the next steps in their education or career, and I am sure that they will look back on their time at Balfour with a great deal of pride.

## **Mobile phone and Air Pod use**

We have a clear rule regarding mobile phone and Air Pod use in school. Students are not allowed to use their mobile phones or Air Pods inside the building. They should not be checking phones for messages in the corridors,

classrooms or dining hall. We have clocks all around the building, so there is no need to use a phone to check the time. They should not be listening to music through Air Pods inside the building.

During lessons mobile phones should be switched off and left in bags. Students are free to use their phones or Air Pods outside the building at break and dinner. If you need to get an urgent message to your child, please phone the school reception and they will pass the message on immediately. We have this rule to ensure that these items do not cause disruption to learning and we will confiscate them if students are caught using them inside the building. We really appreciate your support with this issue.

### **Free School Meals**

If you think that your child may be entitled to claim free school meals, please click on this link - [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-free-school-meals)

### **Uniform**

Our school website contains a section on our uniform rules ([School Uniform - Sir Graham Balfour School](#)). The vast majority of students wear the full uniform with no issues. Where there are issues, please ask your child to speak to their Form Tutor to ensure that problems are resolved quickly. We have these rules to help instil a sense of pride, to help the students form good habits for adult life and to make sure that the focus in school is on learning, not appearance. We ask that you support us in ensuring high standards of uniform at all times. I would like to emphasise the following points regarding uniform:

- Hoodies should not be worn in the building.
- Shirts should be tucked in.
- Skirts should not be rolled up.
- Nail extensions, coloured nail varnish, clip on nails and false eyelashes should not be worn to school.

We continue to offer a uniform exchange in school, where you can bring in pre-loved items and exchange them for the next size up. If you do not have anything to exchange this time, then that is fine, just let us know and we will still be able to help. Please contact Mrs Metcalfe ([smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk)) or Mrs Travis ([ttravis@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:ttravis@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk)) [if you would like to take part in this exchange, if you have any pre-loved uniform to donate or if you have any difficulty in purchasing school uniform.](#)

### **Detentions**

Our detention system does not affect many students in school as the vast majority of students do not receive behaviour detentions. However, I would like to ensure that all parents and carers are aware of our policy. Behaviour detentions take place after school on a Thursday. All of our students are aware of this consequence when they choose to disrupt the learning of others or behave inappropriately in school. Detentions will only be re-arranged in extenuating circumstances, so please do not request this unless necessary. Detentions are given on the following basis:

- 1 D2 or D3 over a one-week period = 1hr behaviour detention after school
- 2 D2s or D3s over a one-week period = 2hr behaviour detention after school
- 3 D2s or D3s over a one-week period = Isolation for 1 day with a 1hr detention after school
- 4 or more D2s or D3s over a one-week period = Isolation for 1 day with a 2hr detention after school.

You can track your child's behaviour and see the reasons for any merits or demerits on the SIMS parent app. Students who are absent or unable to attend due to extenuating circumstances will always have their detentions re-arranged for the following day (Friday). Should you have any queries regarding a D2/D3 that has been issued, please contact the subject teacher or your child's Head of Year.

### **Vaping**

You will be aware of the huge national increase in school students vaping. Last year we dealt with more issues of vaping than ever before. Vapes are being advertised and marketed in a way that appeals to children, and we have now reached the point where they are being disguised as highlighter pens and sold in shops or online. These vapes

are super strength and contain a range of harmful chemicals. Please be aware of this and speak to your child about the dangers of vaping. For clarification, vaping is banned on the school site.

### **Attendance**

This remains a priority for the school. We aim for every child to have an attendance of over 95%. Attendance percentages can be misleading. We would all be happy with a score of 85% in a test, but when it comes to attendance it would mean a child missing nearly 6 weeks and 145 lessons of education. Please do work with your child to ensure that their attendance in school is as high as possible and as close to 100% as possible.

### **Dates for the diary**

- Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September – Year 7 Parent and Form Tutor meeting. This will be a face-to-face meeting in school to further support the transition of our Year 7 students to Balfour. Invitations will follow.
- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October – Open Evening for prospective parents
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October – 6<sup>th</sup> Form Open Evening for our Year 11 students. Year 10 students who are thinking ahead are also more than welcome to attend.

### **Finally**

I would like to thank you all for the great support that you offer to your children and our school. I am determined that the school will continue to provide the opportunities and care for our students to enable them to leave us with the very best GCSE and A level grades possible. We cannot do this without your support. All of us here at Balfour recognise that working together offers the best chance for our students to thrive during their time here and we are deeply appreciative for the great support you provide to your children and to our school.

Yours faithfully



**Mr M Mason**  
**Headteacher**