



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM / 17

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We have reached the end of this first half term after lockdown! As I have said over recent weeks, we have been so impressed by the way our students, staff and community have worked so hard and pulled together to make this time so successful. School has felt settled, calm and purposeful, with students ready and willing to follow the new rules for movement, for bubbles and for our staggered breaks and lunches.

Please accept my thanks and gratitude – this is a wretched period in all our lives, but the support you give your children and the school has helped us all to get this far, and, until recently, relatively unscathed. You are all brilliant, and, as far as we are concerned, doing an excellent job in tough circumstances.

You will all be aware that, having had the first seven weeks without any significant Covid issues in school, this week it has reared its head. We have had to ask two groups of young people to self-isolate as a result of coming into contact with a confirmed case. We have also had a number of staff having to self-isolate over recent days, which has inevitably brought some disruption to our normal situation. No-one is to blame for this. Everyone in school has done everything asked of them during the day; sadly, with the rapid increase in confirmed cases across the country and in our community, there was a strong chance it would hit us too.

One of the factors which has, we believe, helped us so far was the decision taken in the summer holidays to make face coverings mandatory in all communal areas. Given the current spike in transmission, I will be asking all students and staff to wear face coverings or visors whenever they are in the building, including inside classrooms during lessons. I sincerely hope this will be a short-term measure whilst the transmission rate is so high. If wearing face coverings inside the building helps us to stay safe and open for just one extra day, then it will be worth it. I will be sending this message out to students this morning too. Please be assured that if your child is exempt from wearing a face covering, then they will not be made to do so.

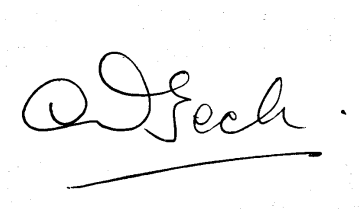
I am still waiting to hear from the Health and Safety Executive and Department for Education on guidance for how schools will cope with keeping windows open as we approach winter. I will let you know as soon as I do. In the meantime, students and staff are free to wear coats, jackets, fleeces etc to help keep them warm. Not ideal, I know, but it is part of what we need to do right now.

For our families who are eligible for free school meals, we have been in touch with you this last week over how you can access a voucher to cover this half term. Please do respond to that message we have sent out to ensure you can receive one. On a related note, I have this morning contacted Stafford's MP Theo

Clarke, asking why yesterday she decided to vote against a move to extend free school meals during this half term and Christmas. I look forward to receiving her reply. Should you wish to contact her yourself, on this, or any other issue, her email address is [theo.clarke.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:theo.clarke.mp@parliament.uk)

As half term approaches, please help us by pressing on your children the need to maintain social distancing whilst out and about over half term. They are well used to wearing their face coverings now and do not shy away from the copious amounts of hand sanitiser we are using!

I will end by sending my very best wishes to you and your families. Your kids are ace and so are you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Beck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

**Lesley Beck**

**Very proud (and currently tired) Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School**