



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM

2nd November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As you will undoubtedly be aware the situation regarding Covid transmission is rapidly changing in our local area. Despite the attempts by the vast majority of people in our community, this virus is clearly making a come-back and as such, we are all having to make new or further adjustments to the way we go about our lives. With the onset of the new national lockdown from Thursday, I thought it appropriate to bring you this update.

Inevitably, sadly, we have seen our first confirmed cases here in school. Over half term, I have been in very regular contact with the Local Health Team over our response and actions whenever a new case is confirmed. We follow all advice as it is appropriate to us and will always do so, in order to do all we can to lessen disruption to our students' education. This will inevitably mean that students and staff will be made to self isolate, and in some cases, more than once. There is no blame to be attached to this, nor cause for anger. None of us asked for this virus to come to our doors and none of us is to blame for its refusal to go away.

Our staff take their responsibilities to the school very seriously, but they are not immune to the impact of this virus. If they are told to self-isolate, clearly they must do so. Up to present, we have been able to manage the small number of staff having to do this. I must warn you, however, that there is no guarantee that we will be able to do this whilst numbers of infections continue to rise. We do have plans in place to help us deal with all eventualities, but it is highly possible that we may have to move to a rota system at some point this term, which would see one or more year groups working from home, whilst others remain in the building. Given the unpredictability of this virus, I may not be able to give you much notice of this, so please do make preparations for if this should happen.

As you know from my letter just before the holiday, I am asking all staff and students who are able to, to wear a face covering or visor for as much time as possible, when inside the building. I do this purely from the point of view that if this offers some reduction of risk of transmission, then it is a small price to pay. Exemptions will continue to apply, of course. Students will not have to wear them outdoors, when doing PE indoors which involves increased respiration, or when eating in the dining hall or wet break areas. Could I also ask you to make sure your child comes to school with more than one face covering, so that they can change it throughout the day, thus cutting the risk of catching the virus through using a dirty one. I sincerely hope that this is short-term measure, lasting only so long as it takes for the numbers of local transmissions to fall again.

In addition, I write today to urge you to keep your child at home **if they are in the least bit unwell**. From my regular contact with the Local Health Team, it is clear that many young people do not exhibit the symptoms we all know about, but can instead present with Covid, having had a bad headache, nausea, stomach cramps, a sore chest and a sore throat. Please, help us to help you and the community: if your child is unwell in the least, keep them at home and seek a Covid test, rather than take the risk of sending them to school with the infection, only to spread it around to even more people.

Please phone us, or email us at office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk if your child is confirmed as having Covid, or if they have to self isolate as a result of coming into contact with a confirmed case. Covid related absences will not count against your child's attendance figures, and work will always be set by their teachers when they are not in school.

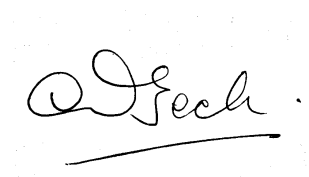
I am very much aware that we have a large number of blended families, and those living with elderly or vulnerable relatives. If you are in this situation and worried about the current situation, and wish to discuss this with us, again, please contact us at the above email address and we will be back in touch with you as soon as we can be.

Please do help us to impress on your child the importance of avoiding direct contact with other children. We all know that children by their nature enjoy being close to each other, but at this moment in time, this needs to be avoided as much as possible. It is highly likely that we have asymptomatic people walking around school, but this does not stop them from passing on the virus to someone who may go on to develop symptoms. By keeping our distance from each other, we lessen this risk.

So, from a period of relative stability over the first seven weeks of term, we are now moving into more volatile times. I know this will undoubtedly give rise to some anxiety in all of us – me included. This is the time, however, for us all to do our best to keep cool heads and to do our best to keep ourselves and our community safe, for the children in our care and the vulnerable people we love.

Many thanks for your unending support of all we are trying to do – it is very much appreciated by all of us at Balfour.

Yours faithfully

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

Lesley Beck
Headteacher