



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of **INSIGHT**
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

13th September 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

On behalf of all of us here at Balfour, I would like to offer you a warm welcome to another busy and exciting academic year. I hope that this letter finds you well and that you all had a relaxing and refreshing summer holiday.

We have had a really positive start to the new school year. Last Thursday we were able to celebrate the superb GCSE and A level exams results achieved by our students in August. They did themselves proud and showed such impressive commitment, ambition, perseverance and resilience throughout their studies at Balfour. We wish them well as they begin their new adventures, whether that be at university, on degree apprenticeships, apprenticeships, college courses or A level study back here at Balfour in our newly renovated 6th Form centre.

Now that we have all settled back into the new school year, I want to say thank you to you all for helping your children to make a great start to the term. Our new Year 7 students, all 210 of them, have settled into their new form groups and are making excellent first impressions on their teachers. Year 8 are already demonstrating the maturity and extra sense of responsibility that we expect them to show as they move through school. Year 9 are beginning to think about the GCSE options they will make in the Spring Term. Our Year 10s have started their GCSEs with a clear sense of purpose and ambition. Year 11 have begun their final year of GCSE study with determination, they know that every day counts, and it is so pleasing to see this attitude reflected in the positive approach they have in their lessons. Year 12 and 13 are enjoying life in our refreshed and revitalised 6th Form centre. It has changed beyond recognition and is a wonderful environment for all elements of 6th Form life.

Our enrichment timetable is now up and running with plenty of lunch time and after school clubs available for students to join. Please keep an eye out for updates on our website and Facebook page and encourage your child to join in. Teachers are busy planning trips to Iceland, Cambodia and Austria. We are once again offering students in Year 9 and above the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award Scheme. Please attend our DofE Parent Information Evening on Monday 16th September if you would like more details.

I am also pleased to announce that our school show this year will be High School Musical. It will take place on the 26th, 27th and 28th March 2025, with auditions commencing on 25th September. The shows are always magical occasions, and I would encourage any students interested in an on-stage role or backstage role to attend a drop-in session in the Hall on Monday 16th September where they can find out more about the production.

New Staff

We have been joined by several new members of staff. Mr Brookes has joined us as teacher of Computing; Miss Turner has joined us as teacher of French; Mr Dunn will be teaching Maths; Mr Underwood-Jones has joined us as a teacher of Physics; Mrs Robinson has joined us this week to cover a maternity leave in Spanish; Miss Long has joined as a Teaching Assistant; Ms Dempsey is our new Pastoral Support Manager; and Mrs Flanagan is our new part-time Senior Learning Mentor. I am sure that you will join me in giving them a warm welcome to Balfour.

Protocol for dealing with unacceptable behaviour from parents/carers or visitors on school premises

The Insight Multi Academy Trust, of which Balfour is part, have developed a protocol for dealing with unacceptable behaviour from parents/carers or visitors on school premises. It is attached to this letter so please do read it. For the record, I do not anticipate having to use the protocol, but I fully support its introduction and I welcome the clarity that it brings.

Attendance

The Department for Education released a set of updated attendance guidance which came into force over the summer. I have attached a letter and a set of FAQs for parents from Staffordshire County Council which summarise the changes. Please be aware that the main change is that it is now virtually impossible for a Headteacher to authorise term time absences, especially holidays. Attendance remains a priority for the school and having good attendance is in the best interests of every child. It remains to be the case that the students with the highest attendance are also the students most likely to achieve highly in their GCSE and A level exams. We aim for every child to have an attendance above 95% and we will always provide whatever support we can to support and improve attendance in school. This, of course, can only happen in collaboration between home and school and I would ask that all parents/carers support school in ensuring high levels of attendance.

Uniform

I am really pleased to see that the students have returned to school looking incredibly smart in their uniforms. Our website contains a section dedicated to our uniform rules ([School Uniform - Sir Graham Balfour School](#)) and we do send regular reminders home about uniform. Please do refer to these prior to purchasing any uniform items. Our uniform helps to instil a sense of pride, help the students to form good habits for adult life and help to make sure that the focus in school is on learning, not appearance. If there are issues with uniform, please ask your child to speak to their Form Tutor so that we can resolve issues quickly as if we do not know then we cannot help. We continue to operate a uniform exchange in school and we also have a uniform store where students can borrow any items they have forgotten or misplaced.

Dates for the Diary

- Tuesday 1st October – Open Evening for prospective parents
- Monday 7th-Friday 11th October – Year 11 Pathways meetings to discuss post 16 options
- Thursday 17th October – 6th Form Open Evening for our Year 11 students. Year 10 students who are thinking ahead are also more than welcome to attend.
- Tuesday 22nd October – Year 7 and Year 12 Form Tutor Evening. This will be a face-to-face meeting in school to further support the transition of our Year 7 and 12 students to Balfour. Invitations will follow.
- Friday 25th October – INSET Day
- Monday 28th October – Friday 1st November – Half Term
- Tuesday 5th November – Year 11 Parent's Evening. Invitations will follow.
- Tuesday 12th November – Year 10 Parent's Evening. Invitations will follow.
- Friday 22nd November – INSET Day
- Tuesday 3rd December – Year 11 Form Tutor Evening. This will be a face-to-face meeting in school to support the preparation of the Year 11 students for their exams.
- Friday 20th December – we break up for the Christmas holidays at 12.30pm.

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 highest standards of teaching, learning, care and opportunity for your children and 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