



Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Our Ref: LDB / VM

20th November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this update finds you and your loved ones fine and well. As ever throughout this pandemic, I must give great praise to you and your children for how you are all coping with these difficult and worrying times. In school, we are trying our best to maintain some sense of normality, whilst working within structures and systems that just a year ago would have been unimaginable.

As you will be aware, we have had a number of students and staff who have either tested positive, or who are having to self-isolate due to contact. This was sadly inevitable given the spread of the virus both locally and nationally. Everyone is following the rules we have in place and therefore doing their absolute best to contain the spread. Your children have complied brilliantly with the requirement to wear face coverings everywhere indoors at the moment. None of us likes having to wear them, but there are signs that doing so is helping to prevent further spreading. So far, since our return in September, we have had 11 students and 6 staff members who have tested positive. Apart from one case, there is no apparent connection between any of these situations, which puts my mind and hopefully yours at rest. We have no way of knowing what the future holds, but I am as confident as I can be that we are doing our bit to both keep the school open and to keep people safe. I firmly believe it is in children's best interests to be in school at present. I am proud to have a highly dedicated staff who feel the same.

What happens when there is a confirmed case of Covid?

I thought it might be helpful to share with you the processes **we** follow when we are told of a confirmed case. Please see the flow diagram we work to, at the end of this update. I suspect there is talk of how other schools are managing Covid cases, but it is really important to know that each school is different, that they may have different capacity for year group 'bubbles', for staff available to supervise, for cleaning and maintenance. There is no one right way of managing schools through this pandemic; I regularly talk to the other Headteachers across town and feel certain we are all doing our very best in these circumstances.

A few FAQs for you:

How do we identify 'contacts' of an infected person?

- There is clear DfE guidance on what constitutes 'contact' and this is what we follow. Mr Mason contacts the families of a confirmed case and speaks at length with each child to establish who they have had 'contact' with. We then isolate those students if they are in school, contact parents and share the news of self-isolation. If we do not contact you, then as far as we can ascertain, your child did not have close enough contact to be sent home. So far, it looks like we have got this right.

What happens if a teacher has to self-isolate?

- If a teacher is self-isolating, but without the symptoms, then they will be teaching from home, either via Teams, or in live contact with the person covering their class. The latter would happen in cases where technical difficulties interfere with the flow of a lesson.

What happens if my child has to isolate due to someone in the family testing positive?

- They must stay at home for the full term of isolation EVEN IF they are tested and the result comes back negative. This is Government instruction, not ours. In these cases, please inform the school and we will ensure that work is available for your child via Office 365.

What happens if my child is one of several in their class told to self-isolate by the school?

- In these cases, we will have contacted you to come and collect your child. They must stay at home for the period of self-isolation. During this time your child will then be able to access live streamed lessons according to their timetable. There may be exceptions to this, where technology or connections let us down. Where this is the case, work will always be available via Office 365.

My child is not showing the well-know symptoms of Covid, but is unwell. What should I do?

- We are increasingly receiving information that infected children can present with other symptoms: sore throats, headaches, stomach pains and nausea. Please, for now, if your child is showing any of these symptoms, or the obvious Covid symptoms of high temperature, a new continuous cough or change in their sense of taste or smell, DO NOT send them into school. Please seek a test and keep them at home until they have their result back. If negative, please send them back to school as soon as they are well enough to come. If positive, they must stay at home until the period of self-isolation ends, even if they feel well.

Can I send my child back to school whilst waiting for the results of a Covid test?

- No – please keep them at home until you know the results. Nobody from school will ever ask you to send your child into school whilst awaiting results of a test.

My child's self-isolation is coming to an end, but I have just tested positive. Should I send my child back into school?

- Test and Trace will be in contact with you about your positive result. Please seek advice from them regarding your child and anyone else living in the house. We cannot give you a definite response to this, I am sorry to say.

Why are you not sending home a full year bubble where there are cases of infections in that year group?

- With the systems in place in school, the seating plans our children stick to, and our contact tracing system, we are relatively confident that we can spot those most at risk of catching the virus. I always discuss cases with Public Health and will always take their advice and guidance. If it were necessary to close down a whole year group, I would not hesitate to do it.

I hope the above is useful to you – if you have any other questions, please do get in touch:

office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk and I will include them in my next update.

Other bits of news:**Fundraising**

Thank you so much for supporting our fundraising activity last week. We raised £833.19 which will be equally shared between Children in Need and Katharine House. We will continue to raise funds throughout the year, for our well-established causes: Sir Graham Balfour School in Cambodia, Katharine House, and national campaigns such as Children in Need or Sport Relief. Every single penny raised on these events goes directly to those causes and we are hugely grateful to our school community for supporting these events.

Anti-bullying week

We have spent the last week in Form Time on anti-bullying, reflecting the nationwide focus on this important topic. We would be very grateful if you would speak to your children about this and see what learning they have taken from it. Just before the start of this week you may have heard from your children or via social media about a fight which took place in the community, involving a small number of our students. We were able to identify those involved and took rapid steps to sanction and praise where applicable (some of our students stepped in to help and support the victim). I have been very clear with our kids that fighting will never be acceptable and that any involvement in inciting or participating will be dealt with using all measures at our disposal, regardless of when and where the fight takes place.

Social media

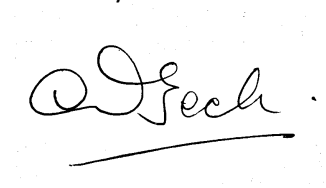
For all the good social media can do, it does harm in equal measure. We regularly have to deal with issues regarding comments made via social media and will be revisiting this important topic in the coming weeks. We do need your support with this, however, as clearly our power is limited to educating, rather than enforcing what takes place when children are on their phones away from school. A growing number of parents are checking their children's phones and, in some cases, removing various apps which can be used to negative effect. Please, involve yourselves with what your children are doing on social media if you do not already.

INSET day Friday 27th November

Most of you will be aware of this already, but just in case – please note school will be closed to all students on this day, for staff training purposes.

I will end by thanking you again for your abiding support of the school, especially in these trying times. It is noted and very much appreciated. Take good care of yourselves and your loved ones; with the recent news of the rapid development of vaccines, there is some light at the end of this tunnel.

With very best wishes

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

Lesley Beck

Very proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Reacting to Covid Case

Rectangles: during school day

Diamond: weekend/evening

