



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this update finds you and your loved ones all well. It is hard to believe that we are already half way through January; whilst I do not want to wish my (or your) lives away, I cannot help but think that every day passing is bringing us all nearer to receiving our vaccine and hopefully, therefore, nearer to the restart of our normal lives.

As usual now, the following are updates or reminders, which I hope you will find useful:

## **Home schooling**

I want to thank you all for the great support you are giving your children whilst they are having to work from home. You are doing a brilliant job and we all warmly salute you. Last week I gave you a quick outline of what our approach to remote working would be; it is a blend of individual work from textbooks or worksheets, recorded lessons which students can refer to again and again and 'live' lessons. This is all backed up by teachers available throughout lessons, who respond to individual or group queries, and who give feedback and guidance on how to improve. I was happy to see the Ofsted report published this week, which very much mirrored our approach, in its 'What's working well in remote education'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education/whats-working-well-in-remote-education> I urge you to read this; it will give you reassurance that our approach is the right one as well as dispelling some myths, key amongst them that 'live' teaching is the only way to properly teach children remotely. We knew that this was problematic and are delighted that Ofsted agrees with us!

We want you to have a really good idea of the work we are doing with your children and so we have set up the following page on our school website:

<https://www.sirgrahambalfour.co.uk/page/?title=Remote+Learning&pid=95> This will show you the outline of work being done over a two week period and will be updated every fortnight.

If you have any questions or concerns about school work, please contact your child's teacher or form tutor in the first instance. Remember, we are here to help.

## **Laptops and devices for home-schooling**

We have been informed that the Government will be making available to schools and families an additional 300,000 laptops or tablets in the near future. Once we have received our allocation, we will be in touch with you. Mrs Metcalfe is overseeing students' access to schoolwork at home; if you have any serious issues which are impacting on your child's ability to access the work we are setting, please do not hesitate to get in touch with her: [smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:smetcalfe@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk)

## **Positive mental health**

Please see the enclosed link if you are looking for any hints or tips for assisting with your children's mental health: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>. Mrs Metcalfe and the Pastoral team are putting together our latest Safeguarding Bulletin shortly, and in that will be lots more help and advice on dealing with social issues, mental and physical health, social media etc.

### **Facebook page**

For those of you who use Facebook, we do have our own Page which is regularly updated with useful links and information. Please search for 'Sir Graham Balfour School Stafford'.

### **Free School Meals**

For families in receipt of Free School Meals, we will be in touch with you early next week to confirm whether you wish to take advantage of the Government scheme for online vouchers or whether you prefer to have a voucher to spend at Co-op stores. For those children of Key Workers currently in school who are in receipt of Free School Meals, parents will be given a choice as to whether they wish to receive vouchers or continue to receive a meal from school.

### **Testing for Covid-19 in school**

Further to my message last week, we have now undergone training and have set up our Lateral Flow Device tests in school. Staff in school are now being tested regularly and, where we have completed consent letters, we will begin tests for those children of Key Workers currently in school, from next week. Once we have an indication of when school is likely to partially or fully re-open, we will begin to send out consent letters to you all. Remember, under no circumstances will we test any student for whom we do not have written consent from a parent or carer.

### **Parents of Year 11 and 13 only**

- If you haven't yet had a chance to see the email I sent to your children (and subsequently sent to yourselves) about the cancellation of the summer exams, could I please ask you to seek it out. It contains details about what we currently know regarding arrangements for awarding GCSE and A level grades. It also specifies really clearly that there can be no dialogue between teachers and students (or parents) on any aspect of a teacher's initial assessment. This was the case last year too; it is the right thing to do, as it avoids any hint of unfair bias.
- We anticipate the opening of the DfE's consultation on how grades will be awarded, any day. We know there will be a short window (two weeks) for us to input our views; as soon as a final decision has been made, I will let you know clearly the parameters we will be working to. As I said to your children last week, please trust us; we have a vested interest in every one of your children and will do all in our power to ensure they receive the grades they deserve, which will then take them on to their next destination. If you are interested, the following link shows the letter sent from Gavin Williamson to Ofqual and the principles he has asked to be considered, regarding how grades will be awarded this year:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951797/Letter\\_from\\_Gavin\\_Williamson\\_to\\_Simon\\_Lebus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951797/Letter_from_Gavin_Williamson_to_Simon_Lebus.pdf)

- **Y11 Master Class sessions**

We are now offering remote Y11 Master Class Sessions to all Y11 students. The aim of these sessions is to help the students with the revision of their subjects and to help them to consolidate previously taught material. These sessions will play an important part in preparing the students for assessments in the future, which could contribute to their final grades and help prepare them for their next steps in education. Please encourage your child to access these sessions. Students will receive a Teams invite via their school email from their teachers, this will allow them to join the session. All the sessions are after school, please see the timetable below:

Week 1	Monday	Science
	Tuesday	English Lang & Lit
	Wednesday	Maths
	Thursday	DT / DT Food / DT Textiles / Health & Social Care / Spanish / Philosophy & Ethics
	Friday	Business Studies / History / PE
Week 2	Monday	Computing / Creative Media / Drama / French / Psychology / Travel & Tourism
	Tuesday	English Lang & Lit
	Wednesday	Maths
	Thursday	Child Development / Geography / German
	Friday	Science

I will end there, and again thank you for your unstinting support of your children and the school; the appreciation you have shown us is very gratefully received and does mean the world to us.

Stay safe and well

Very best wishes



**Lesley Beck**  
**Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School**