



Balfour Newsletter Summer 2018

Dear Parents, Carers, Students, Grandparents and all other members of our Community

Here we are, at the end of the school year and I know that the students and staff alike are ready for a well-deserved break. This has been a wonderful year for our school with many highlights: the introduction of our new school uniform worn with pride by our students; an inspirational visit to SGB Cambodia by Sixth Form students and staff; Dodgathon and other fund-raising days, from which very generous donations will help those less fortunate than ourselves; numerous sporting successes, a fabulous production of 'School of Rock' and success in the Westminster debating team, to name but a few. Our Year 11 and 13 students approached their exams with calm determination and we all hope that their efforts will be well rewarded when the results are made known.

As ever, as we now approach the summer break, there are a few things I would like to share with you:

Vision and Values of Sir Graham Balfour School

At the start of the year, the Governors of the school tasked me with updating our Vision and Values statement. Having been a member of our school community for nearly 16 years now, this was a task I approached with confidence and great optimism. I am deeply proud of our school and the way in which it goes from strength to strength – our students and staff are wonderful ambassadors for our school, as are you, our parents and carers. I am very ambitious for our school – I want our students to be given the very best educational opportunities we can give them: we are very fortunate to have expert, graduate teachers in every classroom and a first-rate learning environment. I have, without apology, very high expectation for and of our students, staff and parents. It is this successful collaboration which will go on to make our students outstanding citizens in their own right, when they leave our care. Please see over for our Vision and Values Statement.

Update to Behaviour for Learning procedures from September 2018

As I repeatedly and proudly state to many audiences, I am immensely proud of our school, of its students and staff, and of our place in the community of Stafford. I am also aware that we can always make

improvements and one of the key focuses for next year is to reduce the low-level but repeated disruption to learning on the part of a small number of students.

Our current B4L system has been in place for around 12 years, so it is now ripe for an update. I have had many discussions with individual students, student groups, parents and staff and this has resulted in a tightening of our procedures with regard to disruption to learning (children calling out, refusing to follow class or school procedures, or disrespecting students and/or staff). I have delivered extended assemblies to all students in the last week or so, in order that they can all see how these changes will benefit the overwhelming majority of our students who consistently work hard, behave well and show respect to others around them.

One of the changes we have introduced are our student-facing descriptors of each Behaviour Consequence (BC), so students can be very clear of what it means if they receive one. I would be very grateful if you would read these, and discuss them with your child, so that everyone is clear of why it is so important to focus in lessons, make the most of opportunities, and show respect to everyone around us. I have enclosed the student-level descriptors within this newsletter.

Sixth Form unconditional offers

Something we are still very concerned about is the number of universities now offering Unconditional Offers to students studying A levels. On the face of it, it appears good – a student with an unconditional offer is guaranteed a place at university. In actual fact, what tends to happen is that some students start to think that their A levels no longer matter and that they can reduce their efforts. We urge parents to help us with this in encouraging students to achieve their very best grades. Evidence shows that higher A level grades lead to higher earnings and better positions in the future. We will be offering more help and guidance on this for sixth form students and their parents in the Autumn term.

Funding

Funding remains a very lively concern for us. We run a very tight ship and have done for many years. We have, with very careful management of funding, been able to maintain our staffing levels and the full range of subjects we have always prided ourselves on. Fairer Funding will mean a little extra money coming into school, but it does not cover the increased contributions we will have to make to pensions, NI etc. I therefore urge you to contact your local MP, (for Stafford this is Jeremy Lefroy) and ask them to stand up for your children's rights to a more equal share of funding. In many parts of the country, schools still receive anything up to an additional £3,000 per child per year – in a school of 900 students, you can see the difference this makes.

Entry signing in system

Our new sign-in system is now installed; all visitors, including our parents and carers, will be required to sign in before being allowed into the building. Access to the building will be severely restricted throughout the day, which helps to guarantee the safety of our students and staff. I know that I can count on your support with this.

GDPR

New regulations on the use and storage of data came into operation from 25th May this year. We have been working hard on this behind the scenes for many months and are confident that we are compliant. Our Privacy Notice has been updated on our website – this shows you why and how we keep data on your children. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at school.

Uniform

As ever, I want to thank you for your support of our school uniform. I receive many expressions of support and admiration of it on at least a weekly basis. If you are out buying new items over summer, please do look carefully at the uniform requirements in this newsletter and on our website – some items sold under the label of 'Schoolwear' in shops do not conform to our uniform policy. It's better to be safe than sorry! Many thanks for your consideration of this. Please remind your child that they need to wear full uniform (including ties and blazers which were optional during the hot weather) from the first day in September.

And finally

May I thank you for your never-ending support of your children and of our school and wish you all a restful and relaxing summer break.

Lesley Beck

Extremely Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Sir Graham Balfour School – Our Vision

Our vision is summed up in our mission statement – ‘Learning, Working and Succeeding Together’

For us, the ‘together’ is absolutely critical; collaboration, cooperation and teamwork are essential for developing the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary for academic and personal excellence. As well as the drive to achieve academically, the ability to self-regulate, to communicate clearly with others, to know and be proud of who you are, to be compassionate to others and to be ambitious for yourself and others are equally important.

We passionately believe that the circumstances of birth or upbringing should not be the key determining factors to success in life and we are relentless in our ambition for ALL children to achieve as well as possible at Sir Graham Balfour School, regardless of their sexual orientation , socio-economic, ethnic, religious or gender status.

Our Values

Our aim as a school, working alongside parents and our community, is to help students to become outstanding and effective citizens; to make responsible, appropriate and healthy choices in all things. Staff and parents will not always be there, at the point where critical decisions need to be made. This is why we are committed to **values based learning**; *rules* prescribe a set of appropriate/inappropriate behaviours (e.g. don’t run in the corridors) which are specific to given contexts, whereas *values* provide a set of aspirational guidelines within which children must choose the right behaviour or action for the vast array of contexts they will be faced with in life (e.g. how do I need to move around the school if I am taking responsibility for myself and others?).

These are the values which we believe will help our students to become excellent citizens of Stafford and beyond:

- Commitment to excellence
- Responsibility for ourselves and others
- Care for the local and wider Community
- Respect, Kindness and Compassion for ourselves and others
- Ambition for ourselves and others
- Perseverance and resilience
- Pride in working hard and the success it brings

Our values drive and shape every aspect of school life, taking the place of school rules. They seek to reinforce the development of the whole person, in addition to the academic. They are values which will, if routinely exemplified and embedded, give our young people all the skills and characteristics necessary to become outstanding citizens of the future.

Behaviour for Learning (B4L) for students

All students have the right to receive the best education we can offer, uninterrupted by poor behaviour from other students. Teachers have the right and responsibility to teach and help develop the necessary skills which you will require as adults.

Our first priority is to reward hard work and effort with praise and rewards – we all like a pat on the back for a job well done. You will receive lots of House Points and recognition for working hard, doing the right things and behaving well in and around school. We will **only** move to BCs where **your** choices of behaviour make it necessary to do so.

In the first couple of weeks your teachers will remind you regularly of the class and school values – we do expect you to abide by these out of respect to yourself and everyone else. Please follow these and you need never be concerned with the following:

- BC1
 - Entirely different from how you have known it up to now. This is a serious breach in behaviour – you have disrupted learning of others and you need to refocus and engage in learning NOW. You did not respect the values of the class and the school and therefore you have been sanctioned as a result. This goes on your school record and will count towards your accumulated BC record. Your parents and House Tutor will be made aware.
- BC2
 - Even more serious. You will receive a one hour after school detention for your disruption and continued lack of respect for those around you. This is not acceptable. This goes on your school record and will count towards your accumulated BC record. Your parents and House Tutor will be made aware. You will be escorted by your teacher to your detention at the end of the day it has been set.
- BC3
 - Yet more serious. The behaviour you are choosing runs contrary to everything we believe in. You are continuing to disrespect all of the students around you and your teacher. You will not be allowed to do so any more. **The rights of the other children and your teacher now take priority.** You will be removed to work with another class and teacher in the faculty. You will also do a one hour after school detention with your class teacher. Should you refuse to go into another class, the punishment will be even greater.
- BC4
 - Even more serious. Your choice of behaviour or attitude is such that you cannot be allowed the privileges that all other students get to enjoy. You will now spend the day in the Internal Isolation Room. You will not be allowed out for break or lunch. Should your behaviour not improve dramatically and quickly, your stay in the Internal Isolation Room will be extended. Your parents will be informed. If you go into the IIR more than *twice*, your parents will have to attend a meeting at which we will be discussing your behaviour, and possibly your future.
- BC5
 - Almost the end of the road. Your behaviour and/or attitude is such that you have been referred to a member of the Leadership Group. You will spend the day plus a two hour detention in isolation with a member of the LG. Your parents will be informed and you will be made to sign a behaviour contract in their presence and you will enter the more serious pastoral sanctions we have in this school. Should you get more than one BC5 the sanctions you will face will be extremely serious and may well result in a Managed Move to another school.

Bikeability

In July, a group of 63 Year 7 students passed their Level 3 cycling proficiency with Bikeability.



The students braved the blistering heat to learn about cycling safely on the roads, and enjoyed a lengthy bike ride around the roads of Stafford.

The students were a real credit to the school; the instructors were 'in awe' of their enthusiasm and their outstanding behaviour and attitude.

Very well done to all who took part! Mr Parry

Bike Safety Reminder – See School Information Section

Celebrating Success

Celebration Evening

Our annual KS3 Celebration Evening was held on Wednesday 27th June to celebrate the academic successes of our Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students. Awards were presented for Outstanding Effort and Progress, Year 10 Subject Awards, House Awards and PE Colours, along with a range of individual awards. The evening culminated in the Best House Award, this year being won by Chetwynd. All Chetwynd students are given the opportunity to take the last half day of school off as a reward. Well done Chetwynd students!

The Year 11 and Year 13 Celebration Evening is due to take place on Tuesday 11th September, invitations to follow shortly.



Year 11 Prom

The Year 11 Leavers Prom was held at The Moathouse, Acton Trussell on Monday 3rd July. Yet again, the weather was kind and all of the students looked wonderful in their evening attire. The evening commenced with a 3 course dinner followed by an awards ceremony and disco to finish. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed and deserved, a fantastic evening.



Community Events

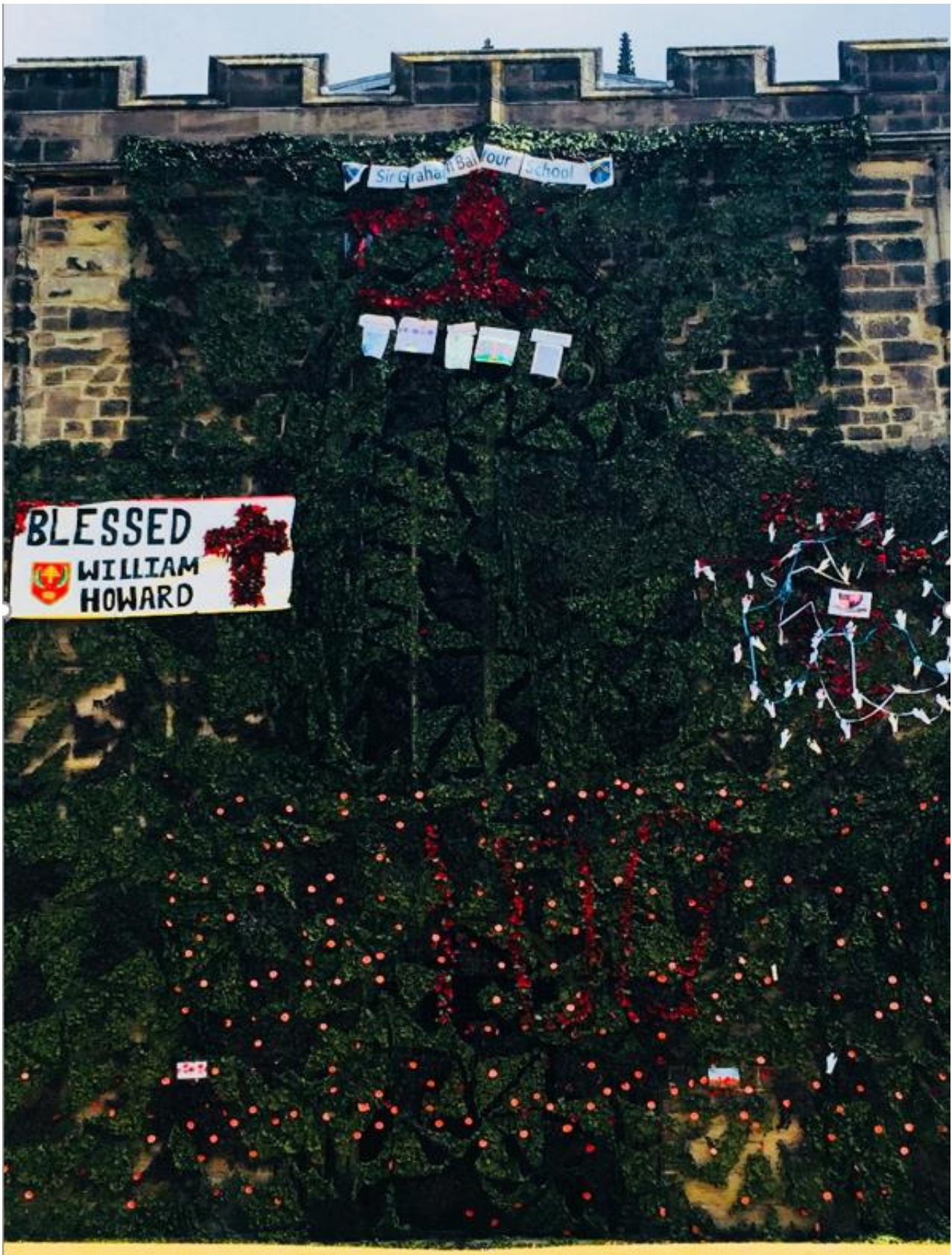
Centenary of the Armistice of World War 1

This year sees the centenary of the Armistice of World War 1, which will be marked with numerous events taking place throughout the country. As part of the commemoration, Sir Graham Balfour School, along with the other secondary schools in Stafford, was approached by The Royal British Legion to decorate a camouflage net with 400 poppies for displaying at St Mary's Church in Stafford. (See below).

The Stafford Branch of The Royal British Legion(RBL) would like to as many schools as possible involved in the commemoration of the end WW1. Our proposal is that all six secondary schools are invited to decorate a Military camouflage(cam) net(approx. 6x6 metres) with 400 special Poppies(supplied by the RBL). The schools would decorate the net as they see fit pertaining to the school. In order to maximise the involvement, we would urge the high schools to invite their feeder(primary) schools to be involved in some way. The six cam nets would then be stitched together and cascaded from the rear wall of St Mary's Church down over the ruins of St Chads where the WW1 memorial is situated with all the names of Stafford service personnel who died during the period 1914 – 1918. This would have a dramatic effect on the towns efforts to remember this event and getting to as many young people as possible to be involved.



The display was collected on Monday 9th July in readiness for attaching to the church. Each of our primary schools decorated an A3 poster, all of which were attached to the camouflage net. The finished cascade is now in place and can be viewed by the general public; it will form part of a big celebration of the Great War, which is taking place on the 4th August with senior military personnel and dignitaries being present. Any children, parents or staff who wish to attend are very welcome.



Choir Visit - Brooklands House Retirement Apartments



Thank you to Miss Braverman and the choir who visited the new retirement complex , Brooklands House, and performed to the residents on Monday 16th July. The performance was very well received and they have already been asked to return and perform again with their Christmas repertoire.



Careers Fair – Bishop Lonsdale Primary School

As a new initiative, on Wednesday 11th July, Bishop Lonsdale Primary School hosted a Careers Fair for their Year 6 pupils. Sir Graham Balfour School was invited so students could ask what it was like to be a teacher but just as importantly, ask our students about being at school at Sir Graham Balfour. The event proved to be very popular and in turn, we have invited the primary school to attend our Careers Fair due to be held in January. If any parents/companies are interested in exhibiting please contact

gannon@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk

Thank you to Jack B and Saul A and Grace G who represented the school and acted as fantastic ambassadors.



Competitions

Rotary Young Photographer Competition

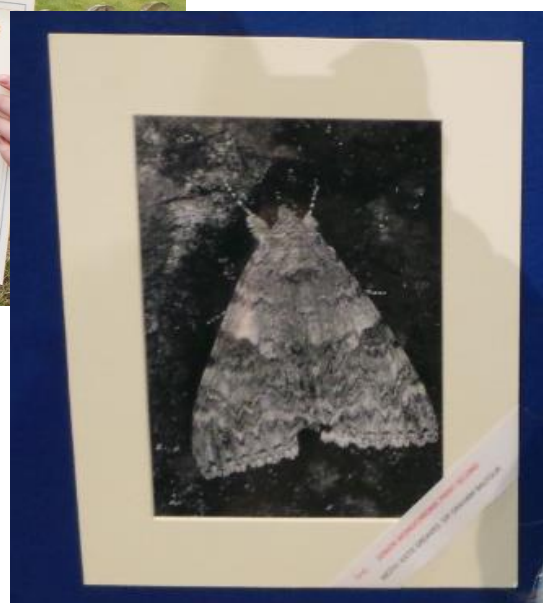
Congratulations to all of our students who entered The Rotary Young Photographer Competition. The presentation evening took place on Thursday 3rd May at Weston Road Academy. Katie G - Year 8 was awarded 2nd prize in the Senior Mono Print category with her print 'Moth' and Eva P - Year 10 was awarded Highly Commended in the Senior Colour Print category with her print titled 'Derwent Dam'. In addition, from the 400 pictures entered into the competition the following students' prints were also chosen to be displayed in the exhibition on the evening.

LIFECYCLE OF A DANDELION
AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN
EMPEROR'S THRONE
GREY SQUIRELL
LUCKY DIP

LUKE T
THOMAS L
JESSICA J
KATIE G
JESSICA J



Katie's print 'Moth' was also chosen to be entered into the district final of the completion held at Barr Beacon School, Aldridge on Thursday 7th June. Well done to Katie; she was awarded 2nd prize again and received an enlarged mounted print of her image.



Summer Concert - Programme Cover Competition

Miss Braverman and Miss Hart set the task of designing the cover for the Summer Concert Programme, in total there were 8 entries chosen as worthy winners. Congratulations to the following students for their prize winning entry designs: Tom B, Megan C, Isabel C, Ellie ML, Millie H and Tabitha C.

The Summer Music Concert took place on Wednesday 18th July.



Debate Club

The Sir Graham Balfour Debate Club meets once a week, on a Thursday lunchtime and is open to all students at Balfour. It is coordinated by Mrs March and Miss McConnachie alongside two volunteers from the Mid Staffs Youth Net, Sam and Jason. Throughout the duration of Debate Club this year, we have covered a comprehensive range of topics and issues ranging from the plight of immigrants leaving their countries to environmental issues and the ethics of vegetarianism. Many of our topics have been based on current dilemmas found in the news such as the Syrian airstrikes and Donald Trump's recent child immigration scandal. Alongside the main debates, we also have smaller activities to help strengthen and enrich our debating skills. We engage in these on a regular basis. Not only do they teach us how to structure our debates and allow us to be more incisive when making a point, they build confidence in our public speaking and being able to talk in a persuasive manner. A rudimentary level of debating etiquette is also implemented into the meet ups.



Moreover, attending a debate club is a worthwhile activity that can be shown on a CV. There is the chance in the future that we will have the opportunity to take part in debates outside the school. Most importantly the debate club is really good fun and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone at Balfour.

Eco News

Forest Schools

As part of our the Eco-Schools Network the Stafford Borough Council offer funding for various projects for schools, we received £450.00.



We were granted funding for Matt Long to deliver the Forest School Programme. Forest School is a holistic educational process that aims to raise self-awareness and self-esteem in an outdoor, non-classroom environment. Students participate in small achievable tasks, connecting them with the environment and encouraging free exploration. This time particularly we were fortunate to fund two groups giving more students the opportunity of learning various new skills. All students thoroughly enjoyed the experiment.

Outdoor Classroom Day

In May, Sir Graham Balfour took part in the National Outdoor Classroom Day 2018. Numerous departments headed outside for a lesson in the sunshine. Here are some of the comments:

- “Students really enjoyed it and hopefully they’ve made links between the learning and the fact they were outside” SMSC class
- “We read an article based on our topic. They worked in small groups to read it through and pick out the key points. The key information that was highlighted will be used in future lessons to help them write a report. They worked exceptionally well!”
- “Music will be outside today doing Samba drumming. Apologies for the noise!”

Fundraising

Cheque Presentation to Katharine House Hospice

Thank you to Sheryl from Katharine House Hospice, who kindly visited the school to receive a cheque for £1028.69 as part of the funds raised from our Dodgathon held in March. Millie S and Imogen G kindly presented the cheque.

Big Walk for Cambodia

Our annual Big Walk for Cambodia took place on Thursday 2nd July. Fortunately, the sun continued to shine for our students to walk as many laps of the field as possible, during the last period of the day. Cambodia 2018 team were in force doing a roaring trade on ice pops and ice lollies with all funds raised being donated to the school. To date, the Big Walk has raised over £1800.00 with money still continuing to be collected. Thank you to everyone involved and the generosity of our staff, students and families in the Balfour Community.



Vounteer it yourself - CREATE YOUR FUTURE

A massive well done to the students who participated in the Vounteer It Yourself workshop and built 6 wooden benches for the school. A fantastic experience and the finished items of furniture were brilliant. They are now 'in situ' under the trees at the rear of the school.



A big thank you to the Volunteer It Yourself mentoring programme for coaching students on how to build the benches and for supplying the materials.



Year 10 Work Experience

Work Experience this year took place from Monday 9th July to Friday 3th July with over 160 students experiencing a week in a workplace. The selection of careers and types of companies participating was extremely varied. Feedback from the providers was outstanding and very positive, with some students being promised a part time position upon turning 16. Comments included outstanding, 'hands on', polite, hardworking, punctual, organised and positive, a credit to our school and students.

Pictured: Nicole W at April Flowers Florist in Stafford



MFL Plays

Languages Plays 2018

In Year 9 we have watched three separate plays, in Spanish, French and German. The plays took place in the School Hall where two actors performed all of the scenes in the



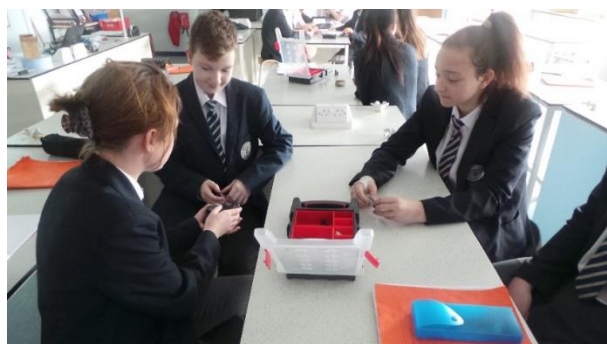
foreign language, using the set and props to help. The actors interacted really well with the audience by getting students up on the stage. They had a really fun attitude and encouraged us to take part. The plays were made easier to understand by the use of gestures and the fact that we had studied the scenario and some key vocabulary prior to each play taking place. In our opinion, all three plays were very well performed and really inspired us to continue to learn a language. It was a great opportunity to experience more about the countries' languages, culture and performing arts. By Molly C and Philippa P

Moon Rocks

In April Sir Graham Balfour was fortunate to acquire samples of NASA Moon Rock and Meteorites borrowed from the Science and Facilities Technology Council. The moon rocks are priceless samples that have been bought back from the NASA missions.

The meteorites have been found mostly in desert regions as they are easier to find. Thousands of meteorites fall each year but very few are found.

The students found it fascinating to hold the



samples and learned about the content of meteors, comets and asteroids.



PE News

Once again, the PE department would like to congratulate all of the students who have attended extra-curricular clubs or represented one of our school teams this year. We are extremely proud of the significant number of talented sports performers that we have at Sir Graham Balfour and we look forward to supporting their continued progress in sport.

Football:

A number of our school football teams have had successful seasons this year, performing extremely well in both district and county competitions. Our Year 10 team in particular have had a very successful season. After losing in the quarter-finals of the county cup competition, the boys managed to progress to the final of the district cup. In an extremely tense and fiercely contested final against Walton High School, our boys managed to secure a 1-0 victory thanks to a second half strike from Charlie B. The boys soaked up some pressure in the final stages of the game and defended extremely well to hold on to their lead and become the 2018 Under 15 District Champions.



We would also like to congratulate our Sixth Form football team on reaching the final of the Under 18 District Cup. In an extremely physical and competitive final, the game could have gone either way. Balfour took the lead in the first half through a Dom K goal. However, the boys could not hold on to their lead and Stafford Grammar went on to win the game 3-1.

National Basketball Finalists:

This year, we have seen the development of an extremely exciting Basketball team at Sir Graham Balfour. Our Year 7 team has had an exceptional season, receiving a number of accolades throughout the school year. After competing in a selection of local games and remaining undefeated, our boys competed in the county championships. After defeating St John Fisher Catholic School 33-12 in the quarter finals of the competition, the team went on to secure a 10-4 victory over Chesterton in the semi-finals. Balfour secured home advantage against Clayton in the final and performed exceptionally well. After an extremely competitive first quarter, the boys secured a 54-4 victory. To score over 50 points in a County Final is an incredible achievement and the team is showing real potential going forward. Balfour's most valuable players in the final were Jesang L and Max A.

After securing the county title, the boys then progressed through to the National Finals in Manchester in May. The boys faced winning schools from Northampton and London and performed extremely well against some exceptional opponents. We are very excited to see the continued progress of the team.



Athletics:

Once again, we took a number of our students to the District Athletics competitions at Rowley Park. All of the students performed extremely well and represented Balfour with a high level of pride and competitiveness. Particular congratulations go to Morgan M, Danny M, Katherine D, Jesang L, Finley C, Caitlin M, Grace G, Charlie P, Billy J and Joe M who all qualified for the Staffordshire County Finals and competed in Tamworth for the district.

Balfour Leaders:

This year, we have once again sent a number of our outstanding leaders to some of our Primary Schools to support their staff and students at their Sports days. As a department, we are extremely proud to announce that our leaders were outstanding ambassadors for our school and they received exceptional feedback from both staff and parents. Our students really do embrace the opportunity of leading activities at sports days and we see it is a great experience and an opportunity for them to further develop their

leadership and communication skills. Thank you to the wonderful Year 9 and 10 students who attended both Bishop Lonsdale and Cooper Perry Primary Schools for their Sports days this year.

Sports Day!

Congratulations to Chetwynd house who were the winners of this year's sports day. Going into the final of the Year 9 girls' tug of war between Chetwynd and Sandon house, the results were extremely close. The victory for the Chetwynd girls enabled them to secure the title of 'Sports Day Winners 2018'. It really was a fantastic day and the PE department would like to congratulate all of the students who competed for their house. Particular recognition goes to Lewis W, Harrison B, Zoe K, Morgan M, Evan J and Mulenga K who all broke school records on the day.



Netball:

Once again, a significant number of our students have represented Sir Graham Balfour School in Netball. All of the teams have competed in festivals throughout the year and performed extremely well, showing an enthusiasm for the game and a desire to improve. The Year 7 girls in particular have shown a lot of potential and we look forward to seeing them perform again in Year 8.

Individual students:

- Congratulations to Amy P in the Sixth Form for her continued success as a national Athlete! She is currently ranked fifth in the country as a hurdler!
- Congratulations to Ruby S in the sixth form who is continuing to make excellent progress as a Boxer.
- Congratulations to Danny M who has attended national team Rugby trials.

Once again, a significant number of our students have attended County Football Trials. Congratulations to Polly B, Jennifer H, Kamil D, Charlie P, Joe P, Danny M, Lenny B, James H, Sam J and Chris P.

We look forward to celebrating the continued success of our students in sport and physical activity in September. The PE department.

School Parliament

School Parliament has been active in numerous events this year in particular fundraising and attending District Parliament meetings at Weston Road Academy. The main focuses for the District Parliament over past year have been:

- LGBT issues and representation
- Improvements to interschool understanding and unity
- Wider community involvement
- Improving recycling in schools
- Counselling in School

Next year's Stafford Schools Parliaments will be hosted by Walton High School and a meeting has been set for 9th November 2018.

School Information

Facebook

Follow us on Facebook!

Welcome to the launch of the Sir Graham Balfour Facebook page.

Sir Graham Balfour School Stafford

This page will primarily be used to let you, our parents/carers know of events, reminders about Parents Evenings and to celebrate the successes of our students.

Further information is available on the school website www.sirgrahambalfour.co.uk

Newsletter Announcement

ParentPay - our new online payment service

We are pleased to announce that we will shortly be accepting payments online for items such as dinner money, school trips and uniform. Using a secure website called ParentPay you will be able to pay online using your credit or debit card or continue to make cash payments at PayPoint stores. ParentPay will be our preferred method of making payments to school.

What are the benefits to parents and pupils?

- ParentPay is easy-to-use and will offer you the freedom to make online payments whenever and wherever you like, 24/7
- The technology used is of the highest internet security available ensuring that your money will reach school safely – offering you peace of mind
- Payments can be made by credit/debit card or cash payments at one of 33,000 PayPoint stores
- full payment histories and statements are available to you securely online at anytime
- Your children will not have to worry about losing money at school
- Parents can choose to be alerted when their balances are low via email and/or SMS text

What are the benefits to our school?

The more parents that use ParentPay, the greater the benefit is to our school.

You can help us reduce workloads for all staff, creating more time to lend to educational support and the smooth running of the school.

Using ParentPay also ensures that all financial transactions are safe and secure - helping us to remove costs associated with us having to manage cash securely on the school premises.

How to get started with ParentPay



We will shortly be sending you your account activation details, just follow the instructions in the letter we give you to get started with ParentPay.

If you want to find out more about ParentPay go to: <https://www.parentpay.com/parents/>



Is your child studying for GCSEs?

If so, or if they will in the future, we want you to be aware that **GCSEs in England are changing – this started with English and maths in 2017**. The reforms ensure that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century. The new GCSEs ensure that students leave school better prepared for work or further study. They cover more challenging content and are designed to match standards in high performing education systems elsewhere in the world.

Top facts about the new GCSEs

1. The new GCSEs in England have a 9 to 1 grading scale, to better differentiate between the highest performing students and distinguish clearly between the old and new qualifications.
2. Grade 9 is the highest grade and will be awarded to fewer students than the old A*.
3. The first exams in new GCSEs for English language, English literature and maths were sat in summer 2017 and the rest of the new GCSEs will be introduced over the following three years to 2020.
4. The old and new GCSE grading scales do not directly compare but there are three points where they align, as the diagram shows:
 - The bottom of grade 7 is aligned with the bottom of grade A;
 - The bottom of grade 4 is aligned with the bottom of grade C; and
 - The bottom of grade 1 is aligned with the bottom of grade G.
5. Although the exams will cover more challenging content, students will not be disadvantaged by being the first to sit the new GCSEs. The approach used by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator in England, ensures that, all things being equal, broadly the same proportion of students will get grades 1, 4 and 7 and above in the reformed subjects, as would have got G, C or A and above in the old system.
6. The Department for Education recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass' in all subjects. A grade 4 or above marks a similar achievement to the old grade C or above. It is a credible achievement for a young person that should be valued as a passport to future study and

GCSE Grading	
New Grading Structure	Old Grading Structure
9	A*
8	
7	A
6	B
5	
4 Standard Pass →	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

employment. A grade 4 is the minimum level that students need to reach in English and maths, otherwise they need to continue to study these subjects as part of their post-16 education. This requirement does not apply to other subjects.

7. Employers, universities and colleges will continue to set the GCSE grades they require for entry to employment or further study. We are saying to them that if they previously set grade C as their minimum requirement, then the nearest equivalent is grade 4. The old A* to G grades will remain valid for future employment or study.

When is this happening?

- The first exams for new GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths were sat in 2017. An additional 20 new GCSE subjects will have their first exams in 2018.
- All GCSE subjects will be revised for courses starting by 2018 and examined by 2020.
- Between 2017 and 2019, GCSE exam certificates may have a combination of number and letter grades, depending on the mix of subjects taken. By 2020, all exam certificates will contain only number grades.

First teaching in 2015, first exams 2017	First teaching in 2016, first exams 2018	First teaching in 2017, first exams 2019	First teaching in 2018, first exams 2020
English language, English literature and maths	English and maths plus... art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies, combined science, computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, classical Greek, history, Latin, music, physical education (including short course), physics, religious studies (including short course), and Spanish	2015 and 2016 subjects plus... ancient history, Arabic, astronomy, Bengali, business, Chinese, classical civilisation, design and technology, economics, electronics, engineering, film studies, geology, Italian, Japanese, media studies, modern Greek, modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Polish, psychology, Russian, sociology, statistics and Urdu	All previous subjects plus... biblical Hebrew, Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese and Turkish

Cycle and Scooter Safety

The vast majority of our students who ride their bikes or scooters to school, do so in an appropriate manner with full regard for both the Highway Code and road users in general.

However, recently we have had a number of incidents reported to us by members of the public of students cycling in a dangerous and hazardous manner to and from school.

Please can you remind your sons/daughters of the following:

- Earphones should not be worn when cycling or riding a scooter as this can impact on the student's ability to hear and respond to other road users
- Cycle helmets should be worn when cycling to and from school
- Bikes and scooters MUST be securely locked in the designated areas.
- Students should not ride their bikes on the pavements or on the school yard through groups of walking students
- Students should not ride on the wrong side of the road during the build- up of traffic at the end of the day on our school drive
- Students should not cycle in the centre of the road, carry passengers on handlebars, or perform stunts in front of cars

As you will be aware we take student safety extremely seriously at Sir Graham Balfour. It is therefore essential that students are continually reminded of cycling safely to and from school, particularly as the traffic in North Avenue and The Oaks is very heavy and congested at the beginning and end of the school day. We are inviting a representative from Staffordshire Road Safety to talk to students during our Personal, Social, Health Education programme in 2018-19 about the importance of road safety.

Thank you for your continued support in this matter.

Uniform - Reminder

As a reminder for the September start, please find below our uniform rules. Uniform is important because it helps to develop a sense of personal pride and form good habits for a student's journey into adult life.

As a school, our aim is for an inexpensive and sensible uniform which identifies our students as part of the Sir Graham Balfour community. Our rules on uniform are simple and straightforward and we urge parents to support the school in ensuring a high standard of appearance at all times. If your child does attend school in the wrong attire, the school does have a stock of spare uniform which will be lent out to ensure the correct uniform is adhered to.

The school reserves the right to confiscate items that are being worn or used inappropriately and can ban unforeseen items that may come under 'fashion items' but are not specifically stated in our uniform code. If you have any doubts or concerns please contact your child's House Head.

Boys and Girls Uniform		Comment
Blazer	Navy blue blazer with badge on chest pocket and sleeves rolled down.	NO student is permitted to not wear their blazer in and around school except during extremely warm weather. Students have a choice whether to wear their blazer during lessons. Blazer sleeves are NOT allowed to be rolled up. Parents will be notified if blazers do not need to be worn in times of warm weather.
Trousers	Standard dark grey trousers.	NO hipster, skinny, flared trousers, jeans or trousers with exposed fashion buttons, laces or zips.
Belts	Plain black belt.	NO large belt buckles.
Skirt	Dark grey knee length skirt.	NO jersey skirts (eg. tube skirt) and skirts MUST NOT be rolled up.
Shirt	White cotton shirt or blouse. These may be either long or short sleeved but must be capable of being tucked into trousers or skirts and must be tucked in at all times. There must be a top button that can be done up so that the clip-on tie can be attached.	NO Short fitted blouses or un-tucked shirts.
Jumper/ Cardigan	Navy blue "V" necked sweater or cardigan (optional) worn underneath their blazer.	NO Hoodies or other jackets to be worn under the blazer.
Tie	School Tie – Clip-on with House colour.	NO ties unclipped or positioned lower than the top button in school.
Socks	Plain, dark socks (Black or Grey).	NO coloured socks or leggings.
Tights	Black, grey or flesh coloured.	NO patterned tights, lace tights, fishnet tights, coloured tights or footless tights.
Shoes	Sensible, plain, black leather or PVC leather school shoes with sensible heels	NO fabric, canvas, trainers, converse, sports shoes, pumps, sandals, creepers, wedges, dance slippers, sling backs, mules or boots.

	(height 3cm). They must be plain black shoes and if they have laces they must be black.	
Coat	Plain coats are recommended but not compulsory. Coats to be worn over uniform to and from school.	NO coats worn in school and they must not have inappropriate logos.
Bag	Large enough and strong enough to carry the necessary books.	NO small handbags that cannot fit books.
Make up	Subtle make-up is acceptable - this is natural foundation and includes clear nail varnish and a subtle coat of mascara.	<p>NO blusher or bronzer.</p> <p>NO thickly coated eyelashes, false eyelashes, eye shadow, eyeliner or heavily pencilled in eyebrows.</p> <p>NO false nail extensions, clip-on nails or coloured nail varnish.</p> <p>Teachers reserve the right to ask students to remove excess make-up at their discretion.</p>
Hair Styles	Sensible hair styles.	NO extreme hair colour or styles /shaved patterns (natural tones only).
Hair Accessories	Plain, dark blue or black hair bands or bobbles.	NO coloured hair bands, bobbles or large flowers.
Jewellery	<p>A watch and one small plain gold or silver stud per ear. All other body piercings (tongue, nose, lips, belly button, eyebrow etc.) are forbidden on the grounds of health and safety in and around school.</p> <p>A religious bangle may be worn and any religious necklace can be worn underneath the shirt, to be confirmed in writing by the parent.</p>	<p>NO large earrings, ear gauges, ear cuffs, dangly earrings or fashion earrings.</p> <p>NO bangles, bracelets or non-charity wristbands, non-House charity badges.</p> <p>NO rings.</p>
Contact Lenses or Glasses	Prescription lenses and glasses only.	NO coloured contacts or fashion glasses.

School Trips

Iceland Trip

Over the Easter Holidays a group of 22 Year 11 students and 3 staff travelled to Iceland on the fifth annual Geography department expedition to this fascinating country. Once again, this visit to the spectacular landscape of Iceland was a fantastic experience for everyone involved, culminating in a magnificent Northern Lights show on the last night, truly an experience for anyone's bucket list.

Arriving at Keflavik airport in Iceland following our flight from Heathrow on Sunday morning the group immediately travelled by coach to Reykjavik, the world's most northerly capital city to embark on a brief walking tour through some of the city's highlights, including experiencing the views across the city from the top of the amazing Perlan, and the imposing Hallgrímskirkja cathedral. From there we travelled across Iceland to the lodges at Hellisholar, which would be our base for the rest of the week.

The next three days were filled with some of the highlights of Iceland starting with the South Shore adventure which included climbing to the base of the Mydalsjokull glacier, a visit to the black beach of Reynisfjara and a climb to the top of the amazing Skogafoss waterfall. Day 2 focussed on the famous Golden Circle Tour of Gullfoss Waterfall, Strokkur Geysir and the Thingvellur National Park. Our final full day is the most



adventurous day as our off road coach took us on the Thorsmork Tour fording rivers and braving the bouncing track to take us to the base of the Eufjallajokull volcano before climbing to the top of the Stora Dimon volcanic plug.

Before flying home late on Thursday afternoon we spent the morning in the breathtaking Blue Lagoon pools, bathing in the mineral heavy water and applying mud masks to our faces before finishing our trip with a photo opportunity at the bridge across the continents on our way back to Keflavik airport and our flight back to Heathrow.

Staffordshire University Science Visit

On Friday 29th June, Year 12 Biology students, Miss Collins and Mr Simmons visited the 30 million pound Science Centre, at Staffordshire University. The Science Centre houses all of the University's science teaching and research endeavours across forensics, environmental and biomedical sciences, as well as psychology and sports science and biomechanics. Students took part in a lab session which involved planning, carrying out and analysing the results of an investigation into yeast metabolism. They also had a short tour of the facilities, pictured is Amy P next to a machine that can read the genome of organism – this means it can map out all the genes within that organism.



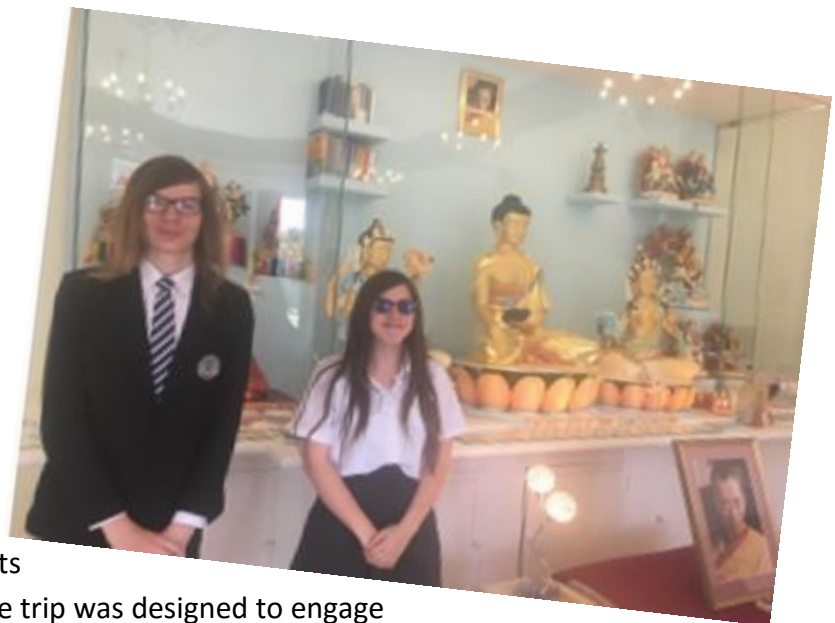
Buddhist Temple

As part of our Philosophy and Ethics course, we have been studying Buddhism and had the opportunity to visit a Buddhist Centre. We went to TARA Buddhist Centre and had a very peaceful day.

We started off with looking in the room with a shrine; it was very powerful and refreshing. The whole building was tranquil and we carried on having a discussion about Buddhists' beliefs and any questions we had were answered by the two helpful guides. After this, we then continued to do some meditation that was guided by the Buddhists. This was very insightful and a good opportunity to get it from Buddhists themselves. It was nice to have a quiet atmosphere and to sit in the appropriate rooms with the shrine. Once it had finished we all felt peaceful and calm.

The building had gardens and a large meditation hall, so we looked around in the hall and the surrounding areas. There was then chance after this, to have lunch in the gardens or café and explore the quiet grounds.

Everyone was really helpful and gave us a lovely greeting. They helped us to get a further understanding of this specific type of Buddhism and the way we could incorporate it in our lives if we chose to. This visit has helped us to gain a wider understanding of the religion and will help with our GSCE course. Katie D.



Liverpool Day Visit

On Thursday 28th June a group of 30 KS3 students travelled by train for a day visit to Liverpool. The trip was designed to engage students with the wider culture of Britain and ran alongside a Key Stage 4 trip to London later on in the year.

The itinerary included:

- A coach tour, followed by a walking tour of the city and surroundings.
- A visit to Crosby Beach to visit the Iron Men and enjoy some free time on this Blue Flag beach.
- Exploring the Albert Dock including the Piermaster's house and either the Maritime Museum or the Museum of Liverpool.
- A visit to Liverpool One, which is the modern shopping district with views of the Albert Dock.
- A tour of the Radio City Tower, which is fully accessible, and gives views over the city.
- Finally, the opportunity to visit some of the locations that were used for the filming of Harry Potter; the Liverpool FC memorial, and also the Victorian Round Reading Room.

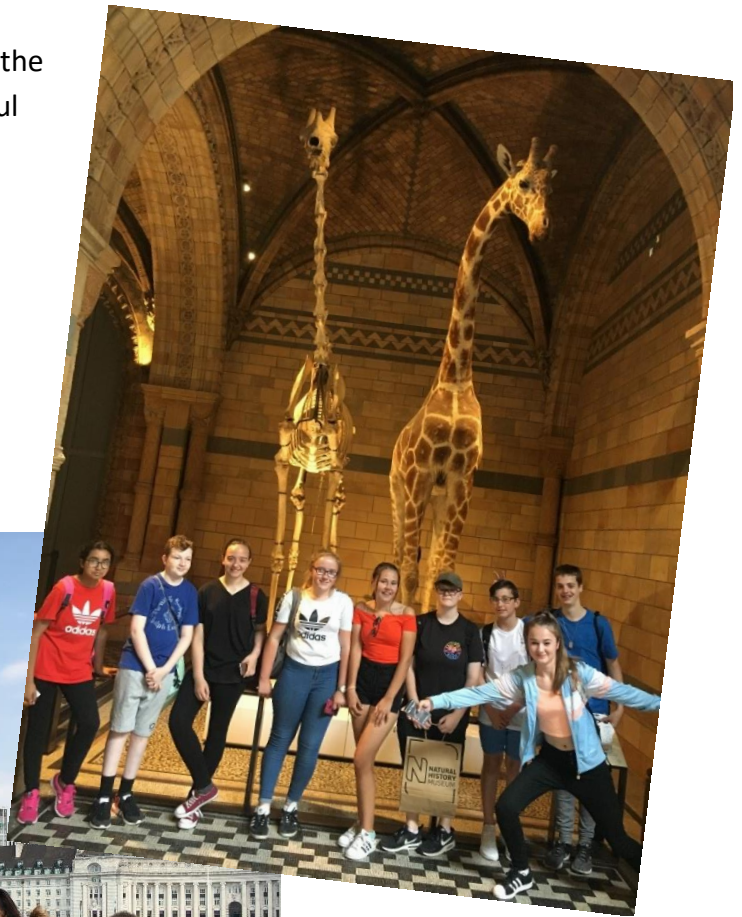
A very weary group arrived back at Stafford at 16.45 after a fantastic and busy day out!



London Day Trip

On Thursday 4th July a group of Year 10 students had the opportunity to visit London for the day; this wonderful opportunity allowed the students to explore life and culture in one of the world's most important and historic cities.

Their first stop in the capital was the Natural History Museum viewing artefacts and exhibits from Britain and around the world. After lunch, the group undertook a sightseeing walking tour of the city, taking in some of the key London landmarks.



London Theatre Trip

In March this year, Sir Graham Balfour took 28 enthusiastic students to London for a Drama and Music trip. We arrived for a stroll around Piccadilly Circus, followed by a fantastic evening watching Matilda the Musical at the Cambridge Theatre. All of the students were enamored by the performance and left excited about the next day.

Saturday morning we had a fascinating tour of the National Theatre: seeing how theatre performances are created from ideas on paper to the hit shows they are on the stage. We learnt about how props and lighting can be used to trick the audience and create atmosphere.

The afternoon was a fantastic session with an actor previously in Matilda, where we worked through a script from the play. All of the students worked hard and gave it their all. Thank you to everyone involved.



Dan Snow – The History Man

Sir Graham Balfour students in Year 10 and 12 attended 'Dan Snow - The History Man' at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on the evening of Wednesday 4th July 2018. Students listened avidly as Dan Snow enthralled them with his tales of TV, travels and even his own family history.

After the show, Dan met the students and spoke to them personally. What a fabulous one-off experience. Students were able to ask him questions, such as; which historical character would you invite to dinner and which is your favourite castle; one cheeky chappie asked if football was coming home. Dan took this in good mirth. He was a true inspiration and the students did their teachers proud.



**Have a fabulous Summer break
and we look forward to
welcoming students back in
school on
Tuesday 4th September 2018!**

**Staff Inset
Monday 3rd September 2018
Closed to students**