



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Dear Parents and Carers

## Spring Update

I am sure that you, like me, are rejoicing in the lighter mornings and evenings, with the promise both bring of warmer weather. I am taking the opportunity at the end of the half term to send you a brief update of school news and information. I do hope you find this additional newsletter useful and informative. Our termly 'Balfour News' will be out at Easter.

## Entry to the school building

As I have mentioned before over recent months, we have been looking at our security and how visitors to our school gain entry to the building. It will come as no surprise that I and the Governors have realised a need to tighten our procedures in the interests of safety to students and staff. Therefore, a couple of things:

- We have installed bollards on the perimeter of the playground to deter any vehicle driver from coming onto the children's break and lunch area.
- We are having a new 'sign-in' system installed in Reception, which will mean that any visitor to the school, including parents and carers, will sign in on our new electronic system before being admitted to the school. Where we are expecting visitors, this should be a very brief process. Please do be aware, though, that if you are making a speculative visit, where we have to try and track down staff to help you, this may involve a wait. For this reason, we urge you to always make an appointment with relevant staff before arriving at the school. As now, it will be mandatory for visitors to wear Visitors' Badges during their time in the building. Once we have signed you in, you will be shown to a seat in Reception.

## 'Lockdown' procedures to be introduced

I write this section to you with a somewhat heavy heart, but resolutely, knowing it is the right thing to do.

Over the past year we have undertaken a variety of audits, information gathering and research into our site security throughout the day and decided that some of our practices leave the school, and most importantly, the children and staff within it, in potential danger should the unthinkable happen; namely, should someone with malicious intent try to enter the building.

In discussion with Governors, we have approached this from the angle of impeding free access to the building and then to introduce 'Lockdown' procedures to be drilled on a regular basis, as we currently do for Fire Practice. Having always been an open and welcoming school, it is sad that we are having to make it more secure, but I am sure you will agree that it is a necessary move, given experiences in Britain and further afield over recent months and years.

Our Lockdown Procedure guidance, which will be rigorously shared with staff and students over coming days, follows all the best guidance currently available from the Police and Counter Terrorism Unit. As part of the roll-out process, I will be conducting introductory assemblies with all students and arranging to show them videos and leaflets specifically produced by the National Police Chiefs' Council and Counter Terrorism Policing. Full details of the programme can be found on this website:

<http://www.npcc.police.uk/CounterTerrorism/actforyouth.aspx>

It is really important that we manage this process really carefully so as not to frighten children or build unnecessary fears in them. We will have a calm and measured introduction to all of the above and ensure communication routes are open and accessible should anyone wish to discuss the issues with an adult. I urge you too, please, to help us in this, in allaying unnecessary fears. There is currently no credible evidence that any malicious incursion on site is planned or likely. We simply need to be able to respond appropriately should this situation change.

### **Leadership Group Detentions**

You may be aware that as part of our Behaviour for Learning Policy, a student will receive a two-hour detention with Leadership Group if they fail to turn up to the first, one hour detention. Very few students ever find themselves in this position, and most detentions of this sort are for failure to hand in homework. If a student fails to turn up to a two-hour detention, they will spend the following day in our Withdrawal Room. It has come to my attention that some students 'choose' Withdrawal Room as an alternative to staying behind for two hours. To counter this, and hopefully reduce the number of detentions set for a small number of students, with effect from 26<sup>th</sup> February, any student missing a two-hour detention will go into Withdrawal Room the following day, **immediately followed** by a two-hour detention. As now, we will contact you to let you know if your child is being detained in this way. Whilst the law states that we do not need permission to detain, we believe it to be imperative to let you know in these circumstances. Please do support your child by making sure their homework is done and by ensuring they are organised – in this way, no-one should find him/herself in detention.

### **Celebration of effort and achievement**

We are currently speaking to students about ways in which we can increase the frequency of, and the ways in which, their effort and achievement are recognised. We want our students to be proud of working hard and the rewards and recognition it brings. Clearly, we are not in a position to talk about rewards which have a financial implication, but if you have any ideas of how we can further celebrate students' successes, please do get in touch with me or Mrs Hartley.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the school if you have any questions about the above.

Mrs Beck  
Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

### **Uniform reminder from Mrs Hartley**

Many thanks for your continued support of the school and its policies. We feel consistency is a critical thing to try and achieve for all of our students. As well as enjoying a break with your children, parents will no doubt be looking forward to a trip to the shops to update any school uniform and school shoes! Before any of you embark on this please could I take this opportunity to remind you of some key parts of the policy. The intention of this is to avoid unnecessary confrontations at the start of the new term with students returning to school not dressed in accordance with school uniform policy.

School shoes: Plain black sensible leather shoes (no logo), maximum 3cm inner edge of heel, no boots, no canvas shoes, no trainer style shoes. Please see photos on our website to help you in your purchase.

School shoes are particularly expensive, but we have had issues this year with parents spending a lot of money on footwear which clearly does not take note of the above information. We would very much like to avoid this

as it puts the school at odds with the student which is not what any of us would wish for and is a negative start for all concerned.

Jewellery of any description is not encouraged and is not practical for many reasons. All jewellery must be removed for PE activities and is brought into school entirely at the student's own risk. Nose studs and all other types of piercing are not allowed.

If you do decide to allow your child to have additional piercings please ensure that they are removed for school. This will be strictly enforced and students not correctly attired for lessons will not be allowed to attend lessons until the issue has been fully resolved. Again, I should stress that this is absolutely the last thing we want as a school as we all place great emphasis on good attendance to school and to lessons.

Students will be required to remove any items of jewellery which contravenes this code; they will be confiscated and given to House Heads/Main Office until parents collect them from school. Our uniform guidelines below set out what students may wear.

### Make Up – Mrs Hartley

Subtle make-up is acceptable – this is natural foundation and includes clear nail varnish and a subtle coat of mascara. Coloured nail varnish is not allowed. False nails are not allowed.

### Uniform Rules

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 (e.g. 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 <b>(optional)</b> worn underneath their blazer.	NO Hoodies.

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 (height 3cm). They must be plain black shoes and if they have laces they must be black.	NO fabric, canvas, trainers, converse, sports shoes, pumps, sandals, creepers, wedges, dance slippers, sling backs, mules or boots.
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.	NO blusher or bronzer.  NO thickly coated eyelashes, false eyelashes, eye shadow, eyeliner or heavily pencilled in eyebrows.  NO false nail extensions, clip-on nails or coloured nail varnish.  Teachers reserve the right to ask students to remove excess make-up at their discretion.
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	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.  A religious bangle may be worn and any religious necklace can be worn underneath the shirt, to be confirmed in writing by the parent.	NO large earrings, ear gauges, ear cuffs, dangly earrings or fashion earrings.  NO bangles, bracelets or non-charity wristbands, non-House charity badges.  NO rings.

Contact Lenses or Glasses	Prescription lenses and glasses only.	NO coloured contacts or fashion glasses.
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We are very proud of our school and of our students and believe that high standards of uniform, behaviour, being properly equipped and attending regularly give each and every one of our students the very best chance of learning well and achieving their very best. Thank you all very much in advance of your support and understanding.

### **Are you parent of a Year 10 or 11 student? Mrs Metcalfe**

GCSEPod is now available at Sir Graham Balfour! We have subscribed to the award-winning service to give your child access to thousands of hours of professionally produced, audio-visual content which will benefit them throughout their GCSEs.

GCSEPod has over 5,000 teacher-written, audio-visual pods which have been produced specifically for learning, homework and revision. The Pods contain all the right facts, quotes, keywords, dates and annotated diagrams that your child needs for GCSE success. They won't need to use GCSEPod for long to see the impact; in fact, consistent use of just 10-minute chunks is proven to support achievement.

GCSEPod can be viewed on mobiles, tablets and PCs and the Pods can be downloaded for offline viewing. The Pods are mapped to the curriculum and students can access pre-set exam playlists which collate all the Pods relevant to a specific exam into a neatly organised list.

Once your child has activated their account they can browse the Pod library and create their own playlists – just as they would when they're listening to music. We recommend that you discuss GCSEPod with your son or daughter to ensure that they have successfully activated their accounts and encourage them to make use of this service throughout their GCSEs.

All students have already been registered with GCSEPod and simply need to activate their account and choose a username and password. To access GCSEPod for the first time, students should follow these simple steps:

- 1) Go to [www.gcsepod.com](http://www.gcsepod.com) and click "Login" in the top right hand corner
- 2) Click "New here? Get started."
- 3) Select "Pupil"
- 4) **Enter your child's name, date of birth and type the school name.** Your school should appear in a dropdown list. Click on the school in this list to confirm it.
- 5) Select a **username, password**, and a **password hint** to help you remember the password.

Once logged in, students can search for Pods by keyword, a specific exam or subject area.

For more ways you can help support your child using GCSEPod, visit [www.gcsepod.com/parents](http://www.gcsepod.com/parents) where you'll find lots more information and resources.

If you have any questions regarding GCSEPod please contact me, Mrs Metcalfe. For specific technical advice please use the help pages on the website or email [support@gcsepod.com](mailto:support@gcsepod.com).

We're looking forward to helping your child get the best from this new resource!

### **Revision Sessions for Year 11 students - Mrs Metcalfe**

Teachers have used the pre-public examinations to identify specific topics which your son/daughter may require extra help with. Your son/daughter will be invited to attend specific sessions which will added to their gateway

as a Compulsory Catch Up session. The timetable for revision sessions are on Office365 in the Y11 Resources section under the Consolidation envelope. This will be updated as further sessions are added.

### Reports - Mr Mason

See below for details of the Reports that we will be publishing before the end of the year and when to expect them.

Year	Report
7	At February half term = Attitude to Learning At May half term = Attitude to Learning, Teacher & Pastoral Comment
8	At Easter = Attitude to Learning Before the Summer holidays = Attitude to Learning, Teacher & Pastoral Comment
9	At Easter = Attitude to Learning Before the Summer holidays = Attitude to Learning and Pastoral Comment
10	At Easter = Attitude to Learning and Teacher Comment Before the Summer holidays = Attitude to Learning and Pastoral Comment
11	At February half term = Attitude to Learning At May half term = Attitude to Learning and Pastoral Comment
12	Mid March = Stafford Sixth Form Review At Easter = Stafford Sixth Form Report Before the Summer holidays = Stafford Sixth Form Review
13	At May half term = Stafford Sixth Form Review

- The Attitude to Learning Report contains detailed information regarding how well your child is performing against thirteen criteria which support excellent learning in the classroom and at home. For all Y7-10 students these reports will also contain a colour coded progress marker indicating whether or not your child is likely to achieve on, above or under their target grade. For all Y11 students the reports will contain a target grade and predicted grade for each subject.
- The Attitude to Learning and Teacher Comment Report contains the information outlined above plus comments from your child's subject teachers giving detail regarding how well your child is doing in each subject.
- The Attitude to Learning and Pastoral Comment contains the information outlined above in the Attitude to Learning Report section. In addition to this we also provide a Report regarding how well your child is performing against twelve Pastoral criteria, which focus on attendance, punctuality and behaviour. There is also a comment from your child's House Tutor giving an insight into how well settled your child currently is at school.
- The Stafford Sixth Form Review Statements goes out once a year. For each subject studied by a student at A-Level the report identifies the centre where the subject is taught, the target grade, the current working at grade and the projected grade. Comments on the student's general skills and qualities are given alongside strategies to improve performance.
- The Stafford Sixth Form Report goes out annually. As well as the information in the Review Statement outlined above it also contains a teacher comment regarding the student's progress during the year.

### Target Grades in Reports

We have made a conscious decision not to attach a target grade or current GCSE predicted grade for all students other than those in Year 11. Teachers do keep a wealth of assessment information about the performance of each student, but we want students to focus on the development of the core skills and critical knowledge which their expert teachers know to be key to their future success instead of focusing on the specifics of what their current predicted grade is.