



# Sir Graham Balfour School

Member of Sir Graham Balfour Multi-Academy Trust

Dear Parents and Carers

## Weekly Update letter - Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

I sincerely hope you are all well and adapting as well as possible to the new restrictions imposed on all of us. These are interesting times indeed, throwing up the kind of challenges I suspect none of us has had to face before. It has certainly made me re-evaluate many aspects of my professional and personal life and made me all the more appreciative of things I have taken for granted up to now.

I intend to write to you on a weekly basis for so long as our school is closed, in order to keep you up to date with school-based issues and to give you any information I can about developments. This will be sent out in the usual way, but will also be put on our school website and as a link on our Face Book page.

May I begin by saying a heartfelt thank you for the many dozens of supportive messages you have sent in over the past two weeks. They were very gratefully received by us all and offered us very useful initial feedback that our communication and plans were meaningful to you.

As we now approach the second week of school shut-down, I would like to share with you a few bits of information and advice:

1. We are very aware that some of you have experienced some teething problems with access to work set by teachers. This was almost inevitable. Be assured that we have lots of people working on these issues. If you are not sure who to email, for help and support, then please email: [office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk), and staff overseeing this area will ensure your message gets to the right person.
2. As you are aware, we have worked hard in a short space of time to set up our work with students in such a way as to maintain order and routine; we feel that this will help our students to maintain really good habits, but also assist you as parents and carers to give structure to your day. We do not expect you to be teachers and we certainly do not wish to add to the burdens you already have; if your child has a problem with the nature of the work, please ask them to email their teacher, who will be pleased to help. Whilst waiting for a response, please ask your child to do some private reading or work from another area.
3. Please reassure your child as well, that it will take a little time for us all to get used to working in these new ways and that they are not to worry if they don't get all their work finished in the one hour of that lesson time. There will be many more days to come when work can be finished. We are also planning to introduce breaks into the work that is being set so students who have finished can explore a different area of the subject whilst any student who may have fallen behind can catch up.
4. It is important that the day allows for fun and wind-down activities: please do give your child a little space and time to catch their breaths, get some fresh air and help around the house. We will not be spying on you, I promise. It looks as if we are in this for a sizeable length of time and it is important that we all work together in a sensible pattern and rhythm that works for everyone.

5. We have been absolutely delighted with the huge amount of feedback and emails that have been pinging around between teachers and students; staying in contact, establishing the momentum for the future. Many thanks for giving your child the resources to manage this.
6. We have been aware that some families have been finding themselves having to print off many pages of work. Please be aware – where work can be done via the computer, there is absolutely no need to print it off – if it can be emailed to the teacher, or photographed and emailed, then that is perfectly acceptable. Mr Mason sent a message to students earlier on this week asking them to work from one Word document for each subject so that they can keep adding to it every time they do work for that subject. When we return to school we will arrange for your child to use school printers and paper to print out the work they have done.
7. If you are on Face Book, please do check in to our page – we regularly post to it, talking about the anonymised successes of our children, as well as sharing useful websites and tips for coping with school shutdown. We are including on there as well ways for young people to stay occupied whilst staying safely at home. All of the above goes for our website too, so please do check into that regularly. We will be posting our usual newsletters throughout school shut-down.
8. As per the instructions given by the Government, the vast majority of students and staff are now working from home. We have just two members of Leadership Group working in school each day, looking out for the tiny number of children coming into school, whose parents are Key Workers. We have very limited coverage of cleaning and maintenance staff who are doing a great job of keeping us safe and sanitary in school. We are very grateful that so many of our Key Workers have been able to make alternative arrangements for their children; it is clear that they, as all of us, are far better off staying at home, than mixing with other people.
9. Key Workers: you will be aware from my letter last week, the school building will be completely shut for the period 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April for pre-planned deep cleaning and maintenance. Please do take steps to arrange alternative cover. I will be pleased to put you in contact with the Local Authority if you need an alternative setting for your child during this time.
10. We are currently drawing up plans of how we can support you and your children during the Easter holiday, whilst ensuring that they and our staff take a break. I will be in touch with details of this next week.

I have today emailed every student to keep them up to date and to thank them for their hard work. I have also reiterated to them, very strongly, the importance of staying at home, self-distancing, and not mixing with groups. I know that you will be doing your very best to support this as well.

Finally, for now, may I repeat my thanks and appreciation for all the support you have given me and the whole school community over the past two weeks. You may be assured that Team Balfour will continue to do its best to guide us through these tricky times, through to a time when we can all come back together.

With very best wishes to you and your families and friends



**Mrs Beck**

**Very proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School**