



Balfour Newsletter Summer 2017



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

We are rapidly approaching the summer holidays, which mark the end of another very busy and highly productive year in Sir Graham Balfour School. Our wonderful students have all grown – both physically and metaphorically! Our teachers have been very busy getting to grips with brand new curricula from Year 7 to Year 13. Our non-teaching members of staff have been just as busy, carrying out their invaluable roles which contribute so much to the learning and development of our students. I am immensely grateful to them all for their hard work.

At the end of an academic year it is usually the case that we say farewell to members of staff who are moving on; this year is no different. We say thank you and best wishes to all of the following:

- Mr Worthy, Ms Lockhart and Ms Schild, who have worked with us temporarily throughout this year
- Miss Worsdale, who is emigrating to Canada
- Mr Geory, who is going to train to become a teacher
- Ms Poole, who has been promoted to Deputy Headteacher at Haywood School
- Mrs Chamberlain, who is going to train to become a teacher
- and Mrs Ross, who is happily retiring.

As usual, there are a few things I would like to share with you:

New Uniform

By now you will have had full details of our new uniform – many of our students are telling us about the pieces they have already bought! I am really looking forward to seeing the children arrive on the 5th of September in their smart new uniform. I am sure it will make them feel even prouder of their school. I urge you to read the rules on the uniform really carefully – I do not want you to make any expensive mistakes. In particular, please see the rule regarding shoes and girls' trousers. Anything skinny or tight around the ankles will not be allowed. If in doubt, please contact us.

Parent App

Existing parents will be familiar with our Gateway – the portal through which you have been able to access information about your child/children. In September we will be rolling out our new Parent App – for use on smart phones, Android phones, tablets and on Windows PCs. This is a new departure for us and one I hope you will find immensely useful. Watch this space – we will be in touch with you all in September.

School Security

We have commenced an audit and plan for increasing student and staff safety in school – full details of which I will share with you in September. These measures will include: enhancing Reception and signing in requirements; stopping deliveries at break and lunchtime; introducing a 'lock-down'/'invacuation' procedure in the unlikely event of unwanted guests and a requirement for all staff, visitors and students from other centres to wear ID cards at all times. I do not wish to scare anyone in this regard – we will be taking simple precautions to make sure our school is even safer than it currently is.

On-line payments

May I draw your attention to the fact that, whenever you are making a payment for a trip, music tuition etc, you also have an option to make a small donation to our sister school, Sir Graham Balfour Cambodia. You will see the additional tab on the payment page. As they say, every little helps, and we are deeply grateful for any small amount you can afford, which helps us to pay the salaries of the teachers in SGB Cambodia, as well as sending out resources which go straight to the children.

School funding

At Easter, and before the General Election was called, I wrote to you with regard to school funding and the unfairness with which funding decisions are made across the country. Regardless of whether you are an Academy or Local Authority school, there are massive differences in the amounts of funding Staffordshire schools receive, compared with many other counties and cities around the country. As a result many schools, including several in Stafford, have had to make very painful decisions to reduce staffing, curriculum and subject choices. As I write this, the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, has announced that there will be a pot of money which will go into schools over the next two years – there is little indication of what that will mean for Sir Graham Balfour School. I urge you to keep abreast of the news regarding funding, and, if you are so minded, to contact your MP (Jeremy Lefroy is the MP for Stafford) to ask what can be done to make sure all schools receive the funding necessary to maintain staffing and subject choice. Over many years now, we have worked incredibly hard and efficiently in this school to make every saving we can, without it impacting on our students. I am fearful that we are reaching the limits of what can be done in the short to medium future, unless we receive a fairer funding settlement. Many thanks for your support in this – if you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Subsidised Bus Travel - Have Your Say

Staffordshire County Council is reviewing the bus journeys it can continue to subsidise from April 2018 and is holding a public consultation on the best way to spend the budget it has available. The consultation is only looking at the bus journeys subsidised by the county council, the vast majority (more than 90 per cent) are not subsidised and are therefore not part of this review. The eligibility criteria for free home to school transport will not be affected by this consultation and alternative transport provision will be made for those pupils should their bus journeys be affected by the final proposal.

Some pupils who currently pay to travel on the bus could see their journey affected if it is one of those subsidised by the county council and depending on the final proposal in these cases parents would have to make alternative travel arrangements for their children from next April. The consultation starts on Monday 24 July and will run for eight weeks. So if your son or daughter travels to or from school by bus please find out more and have your say online.

And finally

I wish to thank every one of you for the support you give the school, our staff and your children. I tell everyone I meet how proud I am to be the Headteacher of this wonderful school. With your support we have the ambition and determination to make this school the best for many miles around. Working together, I am certain we will continue to go from strength to strength. I wish you all a fun-filled and hopefully relaxing summer break.

Lesley Beck

Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

Bikeability

Year 7 Bikeability

Well done to the 42 students in Year 7 who have successfully gained their Level 3 Bikeability. They learned to stay safe on busy roads; signalling and negotiating parked cars and busy traffic conditions. The students honed their skills by taking part in a sizeable bike ride around Stafford and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. All students were a real credit to the school and received glowing reports from their instructors, both for their cycling skills and their attitude and behaviour. Very well done to all those who took part!

Mr Parry



Celebration Evening

Thank you to everyone who attended our Key Stage 3 Celebration Evening on Wednesday 28th June. Congratulations to all of the students who received awards on the evening, proof of all of their hard work throughout the school year.

Displays on the evening included pieces of artwork produced by our A level students, cabinets made by the Resistant Materials group and textile wall hangings by Year 10.

Thank you also to the Year 10 Food Preparation and Nutrition Students who spent their lesson during the day preparing a range of baked products for the Celebration Evening. Savoury Chelsea Buns, Piped Muffins and Scones were prepared for 300 guests. A fantastic well done!

In addition, a big 'thank you' to the PTA for funding new chef whites and aprons.



Competitions

Bio Challenge 2017

In March this year our Year 10 students were given the opportunity to participate in the Biology Challenge, a national competition run by the Royal Society of Biology.

All students who took part received a certificate of participation and registration for a free year of BioNet membership, which provides them with electronic subscription to *The Biologist* magazine and e-newsletters featuring bioscience-related news, events and careers advice.

From the students who took part, SGB results were amazing with one student receiving a Gold Award, our Balfour Biology Brain Box award and who was also given the opportunity to attend the Awards Ceremony held in London.

In addition 7 students were awarded Silver, 7 received Bronze, 7 achieved Highly Commended and 15 were given Commended Awards. Congratulations to everyone who participated.

Rotary Young Artist - Gallery 12 Young Artist Exhibition 2017

Observational drawing and painting skills are being showcased at Gallery 12 in Eccleshall where three A Level students have work included in the 'Rotary Young Artist of the Year' exhibition. Work was shortlisted following the competition and from the 123 entries from five schools 12 have been selected to appear in the exhibition. Eve I, Anya E and Kirsty W were especially selected for their detailed paintings and drawings.

Kirsty's duo of bird canvases which gained her second place in the competition were once again selected, showcasing her mixed media ability.



Eve's biro work once again stunned the judges and both her St Paul's Cathedral and piece inspired by the work of Jim Dine were chosen.

Anya's expressive study wowed the judges and once again radiates energy at the exhibition.

A huge well done to all students, this is a just reward for all the hard work they have put in. The exhibition is on the top floor of the gallery and will be displayed throughout July.



Rotary Young Photographer

The Presentation Evening for Rotary Young Photographer 2017 took place on Thursday 11th May 2017 at Weston Road Academy. The competition is open to all schools in the Stafford area and each year we have been very fortunate to be acknowledged within the awards, this year was no exception. Katie G (Year 7) entered the Colour Print category with three entries and was awarded 3rd Place with 'Calm Waters' print. In addition her other two photographs; 'Busy Bee' and 'Amongst the Stones' were chosen to be part of the Exhibition due to take place later in the year.



We also had success with a number of students who had recently taken part in the Rotary Club of Stafford Knot's community project 'Urban Explorer'.

This project, despite being independent to the school had included a number of Sir Graham Balfour students. A number of photographs taken during the project had been entered for the competition both individually and as part of a portfolio. This resulted in Reijay F (Year 8) achieving 2nd Place in the Colour Print Category with his print 'Subway' and Xander P (Year 7) receiving a commendation for his photograph 'Dead Leaf'. The group also won the Secondary School Portfolio Category.



Stoke City Enterprise Competition:

Stoke City Football Club offered every school in the Stoke/ Stafford area the opportunity to participate in an enterprise programme which involved designing a mug to be sold in the official Stoke City stores at the Bet365 stadium and the Potteries Shopping Centre.

Students were requested to work in teams of 4 to produce a presentation and mug design. There were 129 entries of which 20 were selected to go to the final at the Bet 365 stadium on Monday 10th July 2017. We did exceptionally well as 3 of our teams were selected to participate in the final! The students selected prepared a presentation, produced a design board and even made tee shirts with their mug design in a bid to impress the judges. Despite outstanding presentations we did not win the final but the students had a wonderful time participating and the designs they produced were exceptional.

SURPRISE!!! By Dyna S (Year 7)

It started off like a normal house time, then Mrs Hales said there was a mug designing competition for Stoke City. It seemed like no one took interest so I decided to enter the competition with my friends. A few days later after handing in my design, one of the teachers told me that our group had got into the finals. I was SURPRISED!!! We couldn't believe it! We then started to do our presentation on our mug design. We had lots of advice from Mrs Hales and the Technology teachers. On the day of the finals we found out that there were two more teams who had been selected. Mrs Hill drove the minibus and Mrs Travis also came with us. We were all very nervous. Eventually we arrived at the BET365 Stadium for the competition. There were 17 schools in the hallway when we got inside. The man at the reception gave us our passes. We were teams 15, 16 and 17.

The competition was held in a big room and it started off with some grownups talking about their jobs and how our designs were chosen from the 129 designs. After 10 minutes the judges came around looking and asking us questions about our design. Soon after asking everybody, they chose 5 designs that they liked. No, they didn't select us. But we had one more chance... 'The Golden Entry' - The task was to design a box for the mug. We got started.

After lunch we gave in the box designs and then listened to the presentations of the 5 chosen groups. Finally it was time for the results of the winners... everyone's heart was speeding up and thudding hard, everyone closed their eyes tight to hear the results. Then there was silence... and the judges announced the winners. Sadly ... it wasn't us, we hadn't won. Before we left for home

we were all given some goodie bags and we came dancing and singing back on the minibus. Even though we didn't win, we are still proud how far we got.

Departmental News

PE Department

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. We are extremely proud of the number of talented sports performers that we have at SGB and we look forward to supporting their continued progress in sport.

Football:

Once again, a number of our school football teams have had extremely successful seasons this Year. In particular, our Year 11 team has reached the final of 2 major cup competitions. After an outstanding performance in the semi-final of the Staffordshire County Cup, the boys progressed to the final where they faced Sir Thomas Boughey School at Stafford Town F.C. After an extremely tense opening to the game, the Balfour boys opened the scoring with another goal from Lenny B. However, in the second half, Sir Thomas Boughey equalised and took the game to extra-time. In an extremely tight and hard fought period of extra-time, Liam G produced an outstanding piece of play on the right wing and crossed for Lenny B to score what looked like the winning goal. However, in dramatic fashion, Thomas Boughey scored in the final seconds of extra-time and took the game to a penalty shoot-out. Unfortunately, the boys missed out on County Cup success, losing in the shoot-out. However, reaching the county cup final is an incredible achievement and we are extremely proud of all of the players.

The boys then turned their attention to the district cup where they again managed to reach the final of the competition where they met Walton High School. In another fiercely contested cup final, the boys produced an outstanding second half performance and with only a short period of time remaining the game was tied at 2-2. Unfortunately, Walton scored a late winner and went on to win the game 3-2. Despite the result, the boys have had 5 extremely successful years as a team and we are very proud of their achievements. (Below: Our Year 11 football team with their medals after the district cup final)



We would also like to congratulate our Sixth Form football team on a successful season. The boys reached the semi-final of the County Cup competition, beating some extremely talented college teams along the way. In addition, like our Year 11 team, the boys also reached the final of their respective District Cup competition. However, King Edwards came out on top in the final at Wolgarston high school. (The image below is of our sixth form team with their district cup medals)



We would also like to congratulate our Under 13 Girls football team on a fantastic District Cup campaign. The girls produced an outstanding performance against Walton Priory to reach the final of the competition where they faced county champions Christchurch Middle School. In another fiercely contested final, Christchurch came out on top and won the competition. However, congratulations should go to Polly B who scored a hat-trick in the final! We also have to mention that a number of the girls, including Polly are only in Year 7 so they were playing a year above their own age group! (Pictured - the girls with their medals)



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 Megan P, Molly S, Charlie P and Charlie O who all progressed through to the county competition.

Balfour Leaders:

This Year, we have once again sent a number of our outstanding leaders to some of our feeder 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 helping out at sports days and we see it is a great experience and an opportunity for them to further develop their leadership and communication skills. The images below are of a selection of our Year 9 students who supported Cooper Perry and Bishop Lonsdale Primary Schools at their respective Sports days.



Individual students:

Congratulations to Iris D (Year 11) for competing in the English Schools Cross Country championships.

Congratulations to Amy P (Year 11) for her continued success as a national Athlete!



District Parliament

The Stafford Secondary Schools District School Council has now held three meetings at Sir Graham Balfour School with the last taking place on Friday 23rd June 2017. All three sessions have received positive feedback with ideas and projects that will be carried over into the next academic year. The two main focusses for next year are the organisation of an interschool bike ride and also an interschool quiz in the Autumn term, which the students are already planning.

The next meeting is due to take place on Friday 29th September at Weston Road Academy who will be hosting the meetings for the next academic year.

Eco News

Outdoor Classroom 2017 – May 18th 2017

Anyone who has seen the impact that learning and playing outdoors has on students knows how powerful such experiences can be. Learning outdoors creates lasting memories, helps build a greater awareness of the environment, provides more opportunities to think independently, and gets children feeling challenged and excited by learning. Children are more active when they play outdoors; it is essential for their healthy development and enjoyment of childhood.

Sir Graham Balfour took part in this day and here are some of the details of lessons which took place outside:

- I took out the Year 7 students for a Graphics lesson, we were doing sketches of the school building so that we can develop them in future lessons into detailed isometric drawings. Ms Mitchell
- I took 8E out to collect a leaf to perform the starch test on next lesson. We normally use potted geraniums. Miss Collins
- Year 9: Measuring recovery time after exercise. It was interesting to note that members of staff left the school to find out what we were doing, doesn't normally happen when I'm doing it in lesson. Mr Simmons
- I took Yr 13 reviewing projectile motion with giant catapults. Miss Lavelle
- Outside with 8C doing revision games! It was good for this group especially as they are better when doing things. Mr Brewer
- Year 10 French went outside to write sentences about what they could see, using dictionaries to research new nouns, and practising using adjectives to describe. Mr Parry

Forest School

As part of the Eco-Schools Network Stafford Borough Council offers funding for various projects for schools. Sir Graham Balfour School was 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.



Mock Interviews

Mock Interview Evening Tuesday 4th July 2017

There was a fantastic atmosphere in the school canteen on Tuesday night as 20 students waited nervously to participate in a mock interview. 5 local business people took time from their busy schedules to come to Sir Graham Balfour and conduct interviews with our students that involved a series of questions about themselves and the strengths that they had to offer an employer. All of our students eagerly practised in small groups as they waited for their 1:1 interview and Miss Watson, Mr Trenbirth and Miss Marshall helped to ensure everyone was prepared for the experience. Opportunities like this are incredibly important to ensure our students are prepared for college, apprenticeship and job interviews.

All the students received detailed feedback from the employer who interviewed them, which will allow them to make progress and feel more confident when they go in for the real thing over the next few years. We were incredibly proud of all of our students who came smartly dressed in business wear and conducted themselves in an impeccably professional and mature manner. Feedback from everyone was fantastic with many students asking if they could do the experience again next year. Well done to everyone who took part!

Miss Marshall

School Trips

Iceland Trip

Thank you to Mr Mason for organizing yet another very successful school trip to Iceland for our GCSE Geography group. The students flew into Keflavik on Sunday 9th April with a transfer to Hellisholar via Reykjavik.

- Monday - the students experienced the South Shore Adventure visiting Skogafoss, Mydalsjokull Gglacier, Reynisfjara Beach, Vik, and swimming.
- Tuesday – The Golden Circle Tour to Thingvellur National Park where they visited Gullfoss Waterfall, Strokkur Geysir and Thingvellir National Park.
- Wednesday – The Thorsmork Tour, which included climbing Stora Dimon and visiting Seiljandsfoss
- Thursday - Reykjanes Circle Tour visiting the Blue Lagoon for bathing before checking in for the return flight home.



Spanish Trip - Santander, Cantabria, Northern Spain

In May, 40 year 8 and Year 9 pupils from Sir Graham Balfour travelled to Santander in the region of Cantabria for five days. We chose this particular region in the north of Spain in order for pupils to experience a different side of Spain away from the usual “costas”.

An early start (2:30 am!!) meant we made good time to Heathrow for our flight and we had arrived at our hotel by early afternoon on Friday. We had time to settle in and spent the rest of the first day exploring the village of Santillana del Mar, where we were staying for the duration of our trip. Some pupils took the chance to sample some “churros” (a Spanish treat, a bit like doughnuts).

Our first full day was spent in Santander. Firstly, we completed a town trail challenge in order to find out more about the city – some pupils were brave enough to ask for directions in Spanish when we lost our way. We later went on a boat trip around the harbour and had time on the beautiful beaches.

The following day was spent up the Picos de Europa Mountains – fantastic views and walks at 1800 metres high which were reached after a cable car ride up to the top of the mountains.

Our final full day took us the Cabarceno Nature Reserve where we got to see a range of animals in a large natural setting. Later that day, we were able to stop off and do some retail therapy. The final evening saw everyone in fancy dress for Party night – everyone looked brilliant!

Mrs Thorndyke, Miss Bentley, Miss Brinson, Mr Rowley and Mr Massey would like to thank all the pupils who went with us in making the experience a resounding success and we look forward to returning again soon.



Student Safety

Please can we remind parents not to drop off or pick up students from the school car park at the start or end of the school day. This is to ensure the safety of our students and also maintain access for the school buses. Sir Graham Balfour School has three main access gates which students can be dropped off and collected from however, please also be mindful of the needs of local residents to access their drives and homes.

We have also received numerous phone calls from concerned residents and parents regarding the road safety of some of our students. Please can students be reminded of the need to concentrate when they are crossing the road.

As the summer holiday is approaching, this is a timely reminder to ensure a safe and enjoyable break.

Y11 Summer Prom

The annual Year 11 Summer Prom took place this year on Monday 3rd July at The Moathouse, Acton Trussell. The weather was extremely kind and all of the students looked stunning in their fine attire. There was the usual arrival in a whole host of different vehicles before the students enjoyed a 3 course dinner before dancing the night away.

A number of awards were presented to the students with the ultimate award Prom King and Queen (which were voted for by the students) was awarded to Shane H and Jade R (Pictured below).





Y13 Prom and Leavers Celebration Evening

Our Year 13 Leavers Prom was held at the Apothecary on Tuesday 18th July 2017. Year 13 enjoyed a three course dinner and disco to celebrate the end of their A Level exams and their time studying at Sir Graham Balfour School. A wonderful evening and night of celebration.

All Year 13 students are also invited to attend the Key Stage 4 Celebration Evening held on Thursday 7th September. An event to celebrate the achievements of our GCSE and A Level students and wish our Year 13s all the best in their future careers. Invitations will be handed out on the results days in August.

**Have a fabulous summer
and we look forward to
welcoming students back in school on
Tuesday 5th September 2017!**

Future Term Dates

School Terms & Holiday Dates 2017/2018

Autumn Term 2017

Staff INSET:	Monday 4 September	1 Day
Students:	Tuesday 5 September – Friday 20 October	(34 School Days)
Holiday:	Monday 23 October – Friday 27 October	5 Days
Staff INSET:	Monday 30th October	1 Day
Students:	Tuesday 31 October – Tuesday 19 December	(36 School Days)
Holiday:	Wednesday 20 December – Tuesday 2 January	14 Days

Spring Term 2018

Staff INSET:	Wednesday 3 January	1 Day
Students:	Thursday 4 January – Friday 16 February	(32 School Days)
Holiday:	Monday 19 February – Friday 23 February	5 Days
Students:	Monday 26 February – Thursday 29 March	(24 School Days)
Holiday:	Friday 30 March – Wednesday 11 April	12 days
Easter Sunday:	Sunday 1 April	

Summer Term 2018

Staff INSET:	Thursday 12 & Friday 13 April	2 Days
Students:	Monday 16 April – Friday 25 May	(30 School Days)
May Day:	Monday 7 May	1 Day
Holiday:	Monday 28 May – Friday 1 June	5 Days
Students:	Monday 4 June – Friday 20 July	(35 School Days)
Holiday:	Monday 23 July – Friday 31 August	35 Days