



Balfour Newsletter Easter 2020



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

It is in very different circumstances that I am writing the first page to our Newsletter this time around. However, even in these very worrying times, there is still much to celebrate and take joy from, and we are giving you a taste of that in the pages to follow. Before you get there, could I please just share a few things with you:

GCSE and A Level exams

As I write, we have still not received final guidance from the Government and Exam Boards over how our Year 11 and 13 GCSE and A Level grades will be awarded. Please be reassured that we will be doing everything in our power to make sure none of our students is in any way disadvantaged. As soon as we know for sure how grades will be awarded, I will write to you again.

Entry to sixth form

Following on from the previous note, please again be reassured that we are really looking forward to welcoming back all the students who have demonstrated the aptitude and desire to come back into our Sixth Form in September. We are currently designing units of work which will help them make the transition to the demands of A Level work, and will be in touch after Easter with more details.

Parents Evening Booking System

We have been very pleased with the feedback you gave us on our move to an online booking system for Parents' Evening. You will be happy to know that this will remain in place from now on.

Consultation on new build

Although it may seem of lesser importance at this moment in time, we hope that you have had a chance to have a look at the consultation paperwork we sent out, covering the proposed new block which would be built near to the Sports Hall, and which would allow us to take in an

additional 30 students in the years 2021 and 2022. The consultation document is available to view on the school website which is www.sirgrahambalfour.co.uk Please send the school your views by 4pm on Friday 24th April 2020, by sending an email to consult@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk

Consultation on change to lunchtime

You will also have seen the letter I have sent out to consult with you over the proposal to shorten our lunchtime by 10 minutes from September. Again, the consultation letter is available to see on the school website www.sirgrahambalfour.co.uk and your questions or views can be sent to us via email to : lunchtime@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk at any point from Monday 20th April to Monday 4th May inclusive.

Goodbyes...

We would like to express our thanks and best wishes to Mrs Stocks, who leaves us at Easter. Mrs Stocks has been standing in for Mrs March, who returns to us following her maternity leave. Mrs Stocks has been a wonderful addition to our team and we will all miss her. We wish her all the very best for the future, and who knows, maybe we will see her again.

And finally

You will be aware that I am writing to parents/carers and students at the end of every week, trying our best to keep in close touch with each other through this time when we cannot be together in school. May I say a huge thank you to parents and carers who are doing an absolutely brilliant job of overseeing children's work at home, whilst no doubt juggling a whole range of other responsibilities.

And similarly, huge congratulations to our fabulous students who are making this transition to working from home. I have been thrilled to see many, many dozens of examples of outstanding work; I have been equally impressed with the wide range of new hobbies and interests that our students are engaging in. We really do have a huge bunch of superstars.

With all best wishes to every one of you,

Lesley Beck
Extremely Proud Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School

SGB Home Schooling News

Weekly Student Bulletin

Don't forget to read the weekly Student Bulletin – It can be found on the School Website in the Student Section.

If you have any good stories, jokes, or photos of your new skills that you would like to share with everyone then please email them to fhartley@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk and we will include them in our next bulletin.

House Time Quiz

The House Time news quiz, which previously took place weekly during period 3, continues remotely.

Links to the quiz are sent to students via e-mail. Now students can continue to earn House points for themselves as well as contributing to their House total.

So far this week (Tuesday) 60 students have already tested their knowledge of current affairs. Well done!

The news quiz will take a break over Easter but will be back!

Miss Bayliffe - The DAC



Science Department Weekly Work Leader Board – Week 1 Results

“Every day we are collecting in all of the submissions of work from students for Science and giving out points based on the quality of the work. Each week I will be putting together a leader board for that week's work and for the work overall. The students on this list are the top 10 for this week.

Each student on the list has earned a head teacher's award and those students who keep sending in great quality work will be in the running for vouchers and even specially run trips later in the year. Good luck to all!”

Mr Lewin

Top 10: (Actually 15 as 6 tied for 10th), they get Headteacher's Awards.

Francesca Year 08	16
Poppy Year 08	16
Sean Year 07	12
Ava Year 08	12
Megan Year 10	12
Dyna Year 10	12
Aine Year 08	11
Chloe Year 07	10
Thomas Year 11	10
Ryan Year 10	9
Rory Year 09	9
Phoebe Year 08	9
Paul Year 09	9
Lola Year 08	9
Jasmine Year 11	9



Well done to all our students for being so positive during these uncertain times. The pictures of the work and activities you have been doing are absolutely brilliant. Too many to include, so here is a small selection. Keep sending them in to your teachers.



Hello this is Marcus making Choux pastry is it 2 or 3 eggs can't see it on ingredients list?



Year 8 – Displays of Kindness and Gratitude

Appreciation of the National Health Service and their employees.



Spring Book Fair

From January 31st to Wednesday 5th February 2020, SGB hosted the Scholastic Book Fair once again in the DAC. Under the direction of Miss McConnachie, the fair was organised and run by students from a range of year groups including our Sixth Form. They advertised the fair and created competitions and were also on hand to help students choose their books. This year there seemed more excitement than usual as students browsed the books on offer and by the end of the Book Fair we had sold over 269 items, totalling over £728.16! This is the highest number of books and related merchandise we have ever sold in a book fair.

This is a phenomenal amount of money and shows what a great job our English department are doing to encourage students to have a love of reading. In a day and age where digital media seems to be taking over, it is fantastic to see that our students still love a good book!



The picture below shows the student helpers and the books they chose.

Thank you to all of those students who helped out and also to Miss Bayliffe, who supervised the student helpers and encouraged all of our students to get involved.



Cambodia Visit 2020



Phoebe H (Year 13) - The Cambodia trip is so difficult to describe. The best way I've found so far, is showing people the clip of us going into the school, where all the kids were lined up on the sides of the path singing as we walked through, and reading them pieces of what I had frantically typed out on my phone when we were on the minibus between places. Here's what I wrote on our first day after we went to S21 and the Killing Fields:

'After we arrived we went to S21 and the Killing Fields, which were both harrowing. S21 was a high school that was turned into one of the most prolific torture houses of the Khmer Rouge era around 18,000 were killed and only 12 left alive. The Killing Fields are the mass grave and slaughter site of thousands of Cambodians, the most upsetting part was 'The Killing Tree' where people were killed by being thrown against it and having their heads crushed before being thrown into the mass pit. Bones are still resurfacing, I saw some. We saw the recovered skulls at both sites as well as pictures of the last 14 victims of S21 (killed as the Vietnamese invaded and the Khmer Rouge leaders fled) in the rooms they were killed, with the same equipment. As weird as it sounds, what made me cry was a note on the bottom of the picture description saying 'note the wallpaper'- there was an odd gap in the pattern, and it was the same in both the room I was standing in and the picture of a man that was brutally killed.

It's so easy to distance yourself from what happened in Cambodia, it almost feels like fiction when you see it written down, but at that moment it became so real to me. This was mass-genocide, and it happened just over 40 years ago; it happened when my mum and dad were alive. Obviously, the situation was very complex, but I think the Khmer Rouge took hold because of ignorance; their middle leaders were mostly low-class children and they wanted to restore Cambodia to a country of farmers and peasants. What we do for the school is so important, education is absolutely key to stopping this from happening again. 'When we know better, we do better'

We started off our trip with such a deep understanding of the impact we have on Sir Graham Balfour Cambodia, that when we got to the school most of us couldn't stop crying. It's amazing to know that even in such a small way, we are a part of what that school is doing, especially having supported it through the fundraising we've done in school since Year 7.

We're all so thankful to the whole school community for supporting us and our fundraising, without you, we wouldn't have had such an incredible experience. We all managed to fundraise £1500 to get to Cambodia, and without support from our family and friends that never would've happened, so from the bottom of all of our hearts, thank you so much.



Careers

SGB Careers Fair and Business Enterprise Event

Our annual Careers Fair and Business Enterprise Event took place on PSHE Day – Thursday 23rd January. In total, 46 exhibitors attended and students from Year 7 through to Year 13, had the opportunity to visit the fair to meet the exhibitors and ask questions regarding their career opportunities. Thank you to everyone who supported the school and took time out of their busy schedules to attend.

In addition to the Careers Fair the school also co-ordinated a Business Enterprise Event throughout the day with students attending various workshops, which introduced them to many aspects of working within a business. This year we also hosted a new activity called Challenging Stereotypes, which encouraged students to consider a range of different careers that they may not have thought about previously.



Visit to Oxford University

On Wednesday 15th January 2020, 15 of our year 11 students had the opportunity to attend a visit day to Oxford University based at University College.

The students were given key information about the university, about the application process and also, the steps they should be taking now to improve and enhance their subject knowledge.

The students were given a tour of the College and received academic taster sessions from current Oxford University students.

It was truly amazing to see our students so engaged and to hear them discussing high level concepts with the undergraduates.

It was a great day all round and hopefully it has inspired them to push themselves even further, as there are no limits to what our students can achieve.



Competitions

Debate Club Success – Written by Ben L , Year 10

Our school debate club has recently competed in another debate competition, this time against the debate club of Weston Road Academy.

This comes as part of an interschool competition involving the rest of the schools in Stafford, a project run by Youthnet. Schools will hold debates with each other in front of a panel of judges, who will then assign points to a team based on their performance – this might include eye contact with the audience, hand gestures to emphasise points, a clear voice, content of the speech, etc.

Recently, just before the school was temporarily closed for most students, following the coronavirus outbreak, our debate team went to Weston Road Academy to compete with their debate team. The group of 3 students debating were Lola F as 1st speaker, Ava H as 2nd speaker, and I as summariser.

In the past, our debate club has gone to events that use a formal method of debating: a speaker will introduce the topic, a main speaker will expand on it and give a team's argument in detail, the floor will then be open to questions, and finally the summariser will recap the points made and questions asked.



This year however, Youthnet has introduced a new, different debating style called the 'Noisy Classroom' format. Although the basic structure of the debate is more or less the same, it is far less formal, and the speakers have a far smaller timeframe to present their arguments. This is because the teams do not know what the topic is beforehand and have a mere 20 minutes to create their speeches – quite a tough time constraint to get a fully-fledged, flowing argument.

Although we did manage to win the round, Weston Road's debate team were certainly good debaters in their own right, presenting a compelling, clear argument for their side of the debate. This is even more impressive given the fact that they had the harder point to argue - that the internet is a bad thing. Overall, it was a fun debate, and I, and the rest of the debate team are looking forward to the next one.

The Law Competition - Written by Rhona M, Year 9

After an amazing and completely astonishing win last year, I signed up again for the Law Competition this year. Every Friday we could manage, from October till March, we would meet in Miss McConnachie's room for an hour. In the first few sessions we were given the case and learnt a bit of a background to Law. The complexity of the court system itself is so much more than you can imagine, from the Magistrates Court to the final court of appeal; The Supreme Court.

Our Mock trial took place at Cannock Magistrates Court, I remember visiting it last year for the first time. There are multiple different roles in a magistrate's court, all of them are essential to ensure the trial goes according to plan. There are magistrates that listen to the whole trial and decide the verdict. Defence and prosecution lawyers that must convince the magistrates that the defendant (suspect) is either guilty or not guilty. The prosecution and defence witnesses that give their evidence and account in court, the usher who essentially makes sure the trial runs smoothly.

Finally, the legal advisor, whose job is to state legal reasons, practice and procedure. Court artists and court reporters are also included in a real trial, but we didn't use them in our mock trial.

On Saturday 14th March, after months of practising, hard work and dedication, the day had finally come. It was an early start as we were to make it to Cannock before 10am and everyone was feeling the nerves. In the local heat, there were three schools; Sandbach High School, The Excel Academy and Sir Graham Balfour. The whole day is split into three sections, Round 1, Round 2 and Round 3. There are two schools in each round, one school would act as prosecution and the other school as defence. SGB was in both Round 1 and 2. On our break, we had the opportunity to look around the cells in the court, where people who had been arrested were kept. Prisoners are usually kept in a cell overnight to make sure they make it to their trial. There is a flight of stairs that leads to a glass box called a dock, where these people are kept during their trials. The cells thoroughly interested us because it was fascinating the precautions that courts must put in place. After both the prosecution and defence had gone, we had given it all we got, all that was left were the results. The winning school would go through another heat before progressing in the final, held in London. Had we won?



Unfortunately, Sandbach High School took the win this time, everyone was gutted after partaking in such a stressful and challenging day. Even though, that was my last time entering a Magistrates court (I hope!) it's one of the most amazing experiences. To think that people do this in their everyday life is astonishing, but it gave a proper insight into how demanding and sometimes extremely rewarding a career in Law can be. There were real magistrates in the competition, in which we discovered that being a magistrate is voluntary and they don't get paid for such an important job. I will always be extremely grateful for my time in The Law Competition, and I hope that from reading this, it inspires you to go out and get stuck into something that you've never done before.

The Great Balfour 'Cook Off' and Rotary Young Chef Competition

On Wednesday 18th December we hosted The Great Balfour 'Cook Off' Competition. Six students took to the kitchen to produce a two course meal within an hour and a half timescale. Judging included how the students used their workspace and equipment, techniques used, menu choice plus ingredients used, and of course the taste of the dishes.

The competition was the internal preliminary stage of the Rotary Young Chef competition in preparation for the District heat, which was due to take place in February at Stafford College. All of the competitors were brilliant and the standard of the meals they produced would not look amiss in a restaurant setting. The judging panel consisted of Mrs Beck – Headteacher, Mrs Hill and Mrs Thompson from Perry’s of Eccleshall (Perrys Field to Fork Artisan Butchery and Cookery School). Selecting a winner was not an easy task. Eventually, the overall winner was announced as Sidney from Year 8, who would represent the school and the Rotary Club of Stafford Knot in the next stage of the competition.



Pictured left to right: Kayla, Ashleigh, Mrs Beck, Jay, Ian, Sidney and Caitlin.

The District Final

The District Final of Rotary Young Chef took place on Wednesday 12th February at Stafford College, with two of our students participating. Sidney, Year 8 was sponsored by The Rotary Club of Stafford Knot and Ian, Year 12 represented Stone Rotary Club. This time, students were tasked with producing 3 courses in two hours. In total there were 12 entrants and after a very nervous wait the winners were announced with the first and second place going through to the Regional Final at Stratford upon Avon College on Saturday 7th March. Absolutely fantastic, Sidney won 1st place!





The Regional Final

Mrs Hales and Mrs Gannon attended the Regional Final at Stratford upon Avon College in support of Sidney. 9 students competed with the winner being entered into the National Final in May. Sidney was brilliant and very obviously the youngest competitor; the competition winner and runner up were both 15 years of age, but Sidney still produced a menu that matched everyone else in the competition. The judges' feedback was exceptional, especially taking into consideration the variation in age versus experience, they wished him well and hoped to see him enter the competition again in the future. Well



done Sidney, an exceptional young chef.



Department News

English Department

Harry Potter Week

In February the English Department celebrated the second annual Harry Potter week at Sir Graham Balfour School. Year 7 and 8 students completed Harry Potter themed lessons in English classes. At lunchtime, Harry fans met to celebrate all things Harry Potter (programme below) and the week ended with the students showing off their amazing knowledge in a very challenging Harry Potter Quiz.



Monday 3rd February

Come along and create your own dragon or mythical creature. Bring your creative skills – you can either draw or write a description of your ferocious creature!

Tuesday 4th February

There is a new magical school in the making – which country/continent it comes from is up to you! Design your own school, with its own houses, its own uniforms and even its own brooms!

Wednesday 5th February

The Triwizard tournament is starting next term and they are looking for challenging new tasks. Should the contestants spend the night in the Forbidden Forest? Of escape from Gringotts? You decide!

Thursday 6th February

Bring your own favourite extracts, share your stories in preparation for the Ultimate Harry Potter Quiz tomorrow.

Friday 7th February

It's Quiz Day – what house will you be placed in? Will you be crowned Harry Potter Champion 2020?

Well done to all the students who took part and the English Department for organizing a fun filled week.

World Book Day

Once again the school came together to celebrate World Book Day 2020. As usual, lots of fun things took place in English lessons that week to celebrate the wonders of reading.

At lunchtime, students took part in themed activities including making characters from books out of potatoes, decorating biscuits to look like book characters. At the end of the week, students also took part in the famous Balfour World Book Day Quiz.

Well done all students who took part in the quiz and attended the lunchtime activities!



PE Department

Handball Competition

Well done to the Balfour U15 Handball Squad who recently had a very convincing win in the District Handball Competition seeing off the local schools with ease. Progression to the County Finals are at present on hold, but hopefully after a 4th place result in the National Championships last year, let's hope the competition will recommence in the near future, so we can surpass our previous record.

PE Instagram Page

Our new Instagram Page - @sgb_pe has taken off over the past week with a range of students, parents and staff all following and engaging with us.



Science Department

Congratulations to Sarah R – Year 13 who achieved Silver, in this year's Chemistry Olympiad. Out of the 9182 total entrants from 782 schools, she was in the top 31% of entrants. The Chemistry Olympiad is a challenging written exam that aims to stretch and challenge entrants on A-level and above chemistry knowledge and skills.



Fundraising

Sport Relief and Dodgathon

Our annual school fundraiser has yet again surpassed any expectations, in raising over £3500.00

Coordinated by Miss Chapman, Head of PE and Expressive Arts, this is the third year the school has hosted a Dodgathon fundraiser. Every student in the school was set the challenge of raising a minimum of £2.00 in sponsorship and in return spent an hour of their school day playing Dodgeball in the Sports Hall. Teams were decided by House groups with each hour being played in year groups. A huge Thank you to Spar, Westway who donated £50 worth of Easter Eggs as prizes for the students who raised the most sponsorship.



All proceeds from the event will be split to benefit the following charities: Sport Relief, SGB Cambodia and Katharine House Hospice.

Peace Advocacy

Peace Advocacy Training

On the Tuesday and Wednesday of February Half Term, Mrs Gannon and Mrs Hedges along with 18 students and 4 Rotarians, undertook the Rotary Peace Project Training Course. Sponsored by The Rotary Club of Stafford Knot, this two day course (8 hours in total) developed skills, such as leadership, listening and collaborative communication. The aim of the programme was to enable attendees to advocate Peace within their own and school environment in the future. Both days were very much 'hands on' and involved 'role-playing' and fun team activities. All of the attendees enjoyed the learning experience and were very impressed with the course. The future aim is for the Peace Advocates to develop their own project to put their skills into practice, Mrs Gannon is looking into the possibility of producing a Peace Garden in the school grounds as part of the project.

Course Programme

Day 1

- Leadership and communication skills
- Applying these skills to scenarios (role-play involving lots of fun)
- How and when to use these skills
- Conquering conflict in oneself

Day 2

- Review of previous material
- Why conflict happens
- In school playground
- In education. Emphasis on learning how to learn (one model does not suit all)
- Conflict in the home, in community
- Prejudice; stereotypes etc
- Lots more role-play, discussion and feedback



Presentation of Peace Advocate Certificates.



Student Achievements

Inspirational Disability Sports Event

On Tuesday 3rd March, Ben B in Year 7 attended an Inspirational Disability Sports talk hosted by the comedian Adam Hill.

He had an amazing time with Warrington Wolves Disability Rugby team. Ben has been invited to return to the rugby club and take part in some fitness training with them.

He is an inspiration to young people, not allowing disabilities to stop them becoming involved with sports.

Ben plays for Stoke City Cerebral Palsy team and gives his all in every PE lesson.

Well Done Ben and we hope you enjoy your future sessions with the rugby team.



Boxing Success – Written by Erin O, Year 8

In early February, I took part in an international boxing tournament. My boxing club invited me to compete in Sweden in a multi age tournament. While I was there, I fought in one major fight against a girl my age from Sweden. After 3 one and a half minute rounds, I managed a strong victory to claim the title of under 48 Kg champion. I was accompanied by some other girls from local schools, they also competed in the tournament.

I have been working really hard at training for this tournament and being involved in Boxing Club in school has helped build my confidence and strength. I am so honoured to have been offered this opportunity to represent, not only my club, but also my school. I never thought I would ever be able to be involved in this type of activity and I am so proud of what I have accomplished so far. I can't wait to see what boxing has in store for me next.



**Have a safe and restful
Easter break . We finish with
some inspirational quotes from
our Year 8 students.**

