



BALLAKERMEEN HIGH SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

Dear Parent,

“Lockdown2” has been much tougher on many, even though we know how fortunate we are to be living on the island and our ‘circuit-breaker’ had a known end date. Most students have returned to school eager and ready to learn, but for others, settling into a routine and following school expectations has been a challenge. We have been sympathetic, but when we return on Monday 22nd February, we will be holding a series of assemblies to remind students that they should be prepared for learning and must aim to embody our values of kindness, honesty and respect.

Remote Learning in January

Whilst we hope we will not go into lockdown again, we are always looking for feedback, regarding our remote learning revision. Over half of parents responded to our previous questionnaire and I hope all those who participated will note that we welcomed many of the suggestions and made changes to improve the provision. If you would like to participate in our latest survey, please follow this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSONLINE> The deadline for contributions is Monday 1st March.

School Uniform

I would like to ask for your active support in ensuring that your child is appropriately dressed in school. Uniform is important because it reinforces who we are as a community and promotes a student’s sense of pride in their school.

It is therefore timely to remind everyone of our expectations. It is not our intention to cause you additional expense and the school will continue to support any families experiencing financial hardship by supplying items of uniform. In recent years, we have not insisted upon black leather shoes, but do require footwear to be completely black, with no obvious logo. Please note:

- If your child wears a skirt to school, please ensure that it is not short and tight-fitting.
- Trousers should be black, tailored with a waist and ankle length (not leggings, jeggings, jeans, skinny fit or casual trousers).
- ‘Hoodies’ must not be brought into school.
- Jumpers with the BHS logo are permitted. No other jumpers are allowed.

Time spent challenging students about what they are wearing takes us away from our core purpose of teaching and learning. Happily, most students follow our expectations and wear their uniform with pride.

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Our Values: Kindness, Honesty, Respect.

Early Entry for Examinations (Current Year 10 Students)

We have had tremendous success with entering students for their English, Maths and Science GCSEs in November of Year 11. However, some universities will only allow the 'first entry' result to be counted. This would mean that if a student wanted to improve the grade in the summer of Year 11, it would not be accepted. This is not a snap decision and it has been made after weighing up the pros and cons of each system. Amongst other things, we have carefully considered the following:

- The impact that early entry examinations have on the teaching of other subjects
- Early entry can result in students 'settling' for a grade which is below what they are capable of i.e. a grade 'C' when they are capable of a 'B' or above
- If GCSE courses are started in Year 9 it can lead to a narrowing of the Key Stage 3 curriculum

It is appreciated that there may be exceptional cases whereby a very small number of students may be entered for an exam prior to Year 11 (i.e. those that are capable of achieving an A* whilst in Year 9) but it must be made clear, these instances will be rare.

I would hope that you would support the stance we have taken and you can be assured it has been made in what we believe to be the best interest of your child.

Cambridge Assessment (Year 11 Students)

We have published a letter on our website (with a link to it on Facebook) from Cambridge International, dated 11th February. The key aspect for us is:

*'We are planning for exams to go ahead in June 2021 **where it is permitted and safe.**'.... There is a small number of countries (such as Mexico and the UK) and regions within countries, where running exams may not be possible because of directives from national or regional authorities'.*

The letter does state that Cambridge Assessment are monitoring the situation, but as of today, we are preparing our students for external examinations in those subjects that we take with this exam board.

WJEC (Welsh Board)

This examination board has already declared that they will be moving to a centre-determined grades approach. Further details to follow.

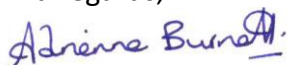
All Other Exam Boards (Year 11 Students)

The results of the Ofqual consultation (umbrella organisation of exam boards) are due to be published on February 22nd, As soon as we have analysed the contents of the report, we will let you know.

And Finally

Thank you, in anticipation of your continued support. Let's hope the snow predicted for Saturday afternoon bring funs and jollity, but not travel chaos! School will open at the usual time on Monday 22nd February.

Kind regards,



Adrienne Burnett,
Head Teacher