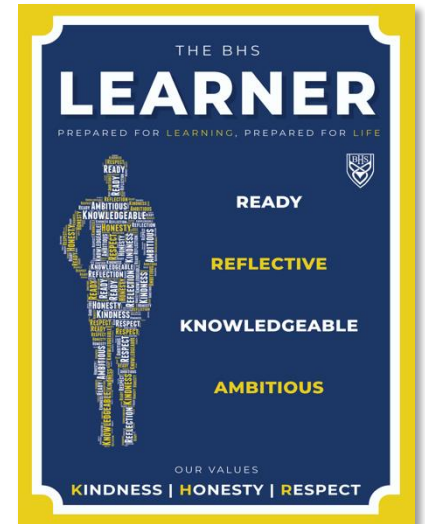


# Ballakermeen High School Newsletter

## September 2020



## On the right track for success

It has been wonderful to welcome everybody back for the new school year, especially when so many other parts of the world are in a less fortunate position. We are following government advice, encouraging our school community to 'stay responsible', and doing our very best to keep our students and staff safe. Schools are working closely with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture and with Public Health to ensure that everyone is safe. Just to be absolutely clear, young people showing any symptoms of Covid 19 must not attend school. Please follow the guidelines set out at <https://covid19.gov.im/general-guidance> We will also publish guidelines on our website in due course.

### Online learning

Thank you to those of you who took the time to engage with our online learning survey last term; there was a very high response rate. I appreciate the positive comments about our provision and I also take on board the suggestions about the need for a more consistent and better communicated approach. Please be assured that we have listened. Significant work has gone into our contingency planning for any future closure, which we dearly hope will not be needed. So far, we have taken the following actions:

- From now on, we will use a single dedicated platform: Google Classroom.
- It will be used for all year groups and in all subjects, alongside classroom teaching. For example, homework assignments will be posted online
- Key Stage 3 classes will take a short course in their IT lessons on how to use Google Classroom. Classes in Key Stage 4 and 5 will be inducted in their subject classes. This should address problems with password access.
- We have also standardised the naming conventions for the different online classrooms.

All of this underlines the importance of ensuring our students have access to devices and an internet connection at home. During lockdown, we were able to loan iPads to families who needed them. I know that the Department of Education, Sport and Culture is actively looking at this issue. Please contact the school if you do not have internet access or enough devices at home. I cannot promise that we will have enough devices, but at the very least we will have a register of those who need help and we can ensure that hard copies of work are made available to those who need them. I will be very happy if none of our contingency plans are required!

### **Examination Results**

We all endured a very worrying time while examination results were sorted out in August, but we hope that most students are happy they received the grades they should, without having a 'bad day' in the exam room. 81 of our A level students were able to go to their first choice of university, with 7 going to their second choice, while others are beginning their careers on the Island. We wish all our former students well, and look forward to their future successes.

### **Uniform**

Thank you for ensuring our students look smart. In these financially challenging times, we are aware of what a struggle it can be to send a child to school properly dressed and equipped. We are always ready to help families who are having particular difficulty in meeting the requirements: just send an e-mail to [bhsenquiries@sch.im](mailto:bhsenquiries@sch.im), or a note or phone call to your usual contact, such as the form tutor or Head of Year if you prefer, in complete confidence. Guidance on our uniform requirements can be found on our website: [www.ballakermeen.com](http://www.ballakermeen.com) Please click on the 'Information' tab and a drop down menu appears with a section on uniform.

### **'The Ballakermeen Learner'**

Over the last year, our students and staff have been working hard to develop the concept of the Ballakermeen Learner, a young person who is ready for learning and ready for life. We want our students to be knowledgeable, reflective and ambitious learners. The values we hold dear are kindness, honesty and respect. We will be working hard to embed these attributes and values across the school, because we believe they are essential to develop a real culture of aspiration, where young people aim high, and work hard to achieve their goals. Please visit our website to access a copy of our "Ballakermeen Expectations", which may answer any questions that you have. Hard copies are also available in the foyer.

### **Epraise**

After consultation with staff and students, we are changing our system of rewarding students. In every lesson, students will have the opportunity to receive praise points for demonstrating the attributes of the Ballakermeen Learner, such as making positive contributions in a lesson, responding well to instructions and activities, or being kind to others. Students will be able to track their praise points on an app. We hope to be able to roll this out to parents later this year. Although success can be its own reward, we will also be offering prizes that students have suggested, including exclusive use of the sports hall, front of the queue lunch prizes and items of stationery.

### **Ballakermeen High School Association (our 'PTA')**

We know our parents are busy and have many demands on their time, but you will be most welcome to join us at our first meeting of the year, on **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30 pm**. We will be reviewing our last two events – a cinema screening of 'Kinky Boots' and the annual Parents versus Teachers Quiz, won for the first time by the teachers! We will also plan our new Christmas Family Quiz. Tea and coffee will be available and you will be able to chat informally with me and other teachers, as well as meeting other parents. Everyone is most welcome and the meetings will be over by 7.30 pm at the latest!

Finally, I have been very impressed with the way all of our students have quickly settled to work and our Year 7 students are an absolute delight. Thank you for your support.

With best wishes,

P. A. Burnett,  
Head Teacher