

# Ballakermeen High School



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Dear Parents and Carers

It is with great anticipation that I welcome you to the start of a new term and a new school year. It is always a very special time with our new Year 7 students full of excitement and Year 8 taking up the responsibility for modelling the Ballakermeen way to our new students. Year 9 are starting their options year, Year 10 and 11 will be focusing on their chosen exam courses and our sixth form is swelled by a new crop of Year 12 students fresh from GCSE exam success. Year 13 students are, I know, firmly focussed on what they need to do to achieve their various goals. It would be appropriate at this point to congratulate all our students who achieved such great results over the summer. These positive outcomes have allowed them to continue their journey into the world of work, UCM, 6<sup>th</sup> Form or University. A massive well done to all these students, their fabulous staff and of course a huge thanks to families for the support that you provided.

The start of a new academic year is a good time for us to think about what matters to us. Our school values of Kindness, Honesty and Respect are fundamental to everything that we do. It is these values that we should always look to for direction. I will be speaking to students in assemblies over the next week about what our values may look like in practise and I will be clear that our school values need to be lived by all of us; staff, families and students. If each of us can show kindness, honesty and respect to our environment and those people with whom we share our school community, then we will be doing well, strengthening our community and preparing our young people for happy, successful and fulfilling futures.

I have spoken several times over the past year about the 'Reset on Respect' that we launched in September 2022. The principles of this approach, fundamentally a return to some old-fashioned expectations that we should be kind and well mannered, remain vital to us. Far from a set of restrictive rules, our Reset on Respect and the advice and guidance that sits alongside it protects two fundamental principles that matter a great deal to me and all of us at Ballakermeen; students should feel safe and they should enjoy a calm and purposeful learning environment, free from disruption, in every classroom. We have made our expectations explicitly clear to all students and will continue to reiterate them. Our Reset on Respect will continue to work in tandem with the school's behaviour policy and whilst poor choices will result in positive reinforcement and where necessary consequences, we will continue to reward the overwhelming majority of students who toe the line day in, day out. I would hope that you will continue to support us in our endeavours to ensure that Ballakermeen is a vibrant and orderly school where all students are provided with the very best opportunity to fulfil their potential.

I would like to highlight a few other expectations that we think are important.

- **Attendance** - Consistent attendance at school is vitally important. It plays a significant part in supporting student success and achievement. We understand that at times sickness can prevent attendance, however we expect students and families to recognise the importance of being in class. We would ask families to avoid taking holidays in term time and only missing school when it is unavoidable. As a school, we aim for a minimum of 95% attendance. Please let us know if you require any support in relation to attendance concerns

- **Punctuality** - We expect students to be on time to school and that includes morning registration where important messages are shared and there is also an opportunity to strengthen relationships and routines within tutor groups. Similarly, punctuality to lessons is very important. All lessons begin with a 'Do now activity' and this is a key part of looking back and recalling previous learning. If missed, students are not reinforcing or optimising their learning
- **Behaviour** - We have a large school with almost 2000 individuals sharing our site. In this context, as in any community, it is important that we all behave in a way that keeps people safe and allows them to focus on their learning. This means walking quietly and calmly when in the corridors, lining up for lessons sensibly in preparation for learning, listening and engaging in lessons by asking and answering questions whilst respecting other people's views. High expectations also extend to being aware of our community when coming and going from school either on foot or when using the school buses. It is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of every behaviour and this is why our values are important. If our behaviour is kind and respectful then we won't go far wrong!
- **Uniform** - Our uniform expectations are clear and may be found in student planners and on the school website. Students should attend in full school uniform including plain black footwear, blazer, school tie and appropriate skirt. We believe that uniform is important in creating a sense of identity and also as a statement that we are in a formal learning and working environment. We do have some good-as-new uniform available in school should you need any assistance in providing with it
- **Communication** – This remains a critical part of our home-school partnership and we will be launching a revamped Communications Policy early in the year which we hope will make things clearer and more efficient. We want to encourage you to contact us if you have a concern or a query, however we hope that the new policy will ensure that you contact the most appropriate person to get the desired response. This also applies to parents coming into school. I should ask that to prevent disappointment, please do avoid attending school without an appointment. In our experience, matters are more easily and quickly resolved if you're paired with the right member of staff who might best meet your child's needs

We have a lot to look forward to over the next 12 months. I hope that we will see a growth of enrichment opportunities for students and I look forward to getting to know our new students and seeing if the amazing e-Praise reward totals that many students collected last year, illustrating a consistently positive approach to school, can be surpassed.

I look forward to a great year and hope that we can enjoy the many positive things that we achieve and are able to work through the more difficult issues together whilst remaining focused on supporting each of our young people to do the best and be the best that they possibly can.

With warm regards



Graeme Corrin  
Headteacher