

Ballakermeen High School



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Dear Parents and Carers

You will be aware that we have recently taken action in order to minimise issues relating to the use of the toilets at the school. These include damage to the facilities, anti-social behaviour and loss of learning time. I am writing to you today to outline the next steps of our plan.

I would like to make it clear that we have no desire to maintain such an intensive schedule of monitoring and supervision. It is not the best use of our staff resources and, more fundamentally, should not be necessary in a school that is built on a foundation of genuine mutual respect. Unfortunately, we have work to do to attain this and as a result, have had to take action. It would be wrong not to do so.

The recent action we have initiated, has had some noticeable impact. There has been a remarkable reduction in the number of toilet based behaviour issues and the instances of truancy have plummeted as have the number of Duty Teacher call outs. There have been two recorded incidents of multiple occupancy of toilet cubicles in the last two weeks and no reported instances of bullying or intimidation. Damage to the toilets has been recorded on only one occasion.

I appreciate the support and discussion stimulated by the changes and the general recognition of our positive intent. The main query has been around students being allowed to leave lessons. Clearly a key reason for us making toilets more comfortably accessible at break and lunch is to reduce the need for students to miss lessons and learning because they don't feel that they can use the toilets at these times.

Although discouraged, students have still had access to the toilets during lessons when needed and we have had over 1900 toilet visits during lesson time in the last two weeks. With the average time of a toilet visit being approximately 5 minutes from leaving lesson to returning, that gives us 158 hours of 'lost' learning time in two weeks. Students who make repeated visits from lessons during the day will be the focus of our revised approach to discouraging absence and ensuring that students are in lessons and learning.

After Easter we will be making the following changes:

- Students will continue to be encouraged to use toilets before school, at break and at lunchtime rather than during lessons. Students should avoid routinely leaving lessons unless the matter is urgent to ensure learning is not missed.
- If there is a need to leave, student planners will be presented for signing by the class teacher with the time added
- In a return to previous practice, the class teacher will also record toilet requests on SIMS behaviour log. This will not register any behaviour points but will allow monitoring of individuals so we can identify potential medical concerns, avoidance of lessons and incidences of vandalism
- The Year 7/8 toilets will be available during lessons but students will not be required to sign in. Planners will be time stamped to avoid excessive time out of lesson

- Class teachers will check planners are stamped upon students return to lessons to confirm they have been to the toilets
- Additional toilets (H Block girls and Science boys) will be opened and supervised at break time in addition to M Block boys and 'Pink' toilets
- Single occupancy toilets will continue to be available for disabled students and pass holders

A number of positives have come from our discussion around toilets usage including two initiatives that are being driven by our fabulous Sixth Form students. Firstly, the issue of period poverty and menstrual awareness is being addressed with support from an external sponsor. Although plans are at an early stage, a group of our students are planning to support the school's current provision of sanitary products with their own drop-in shop that will provide both products and information, free of charge. A second initiative being developed relates to awareness raising of hidden disabilities.

Again, this is a wonderful opportunity to enrich and empower our school community. I am very grateful to the Sixth Form students for take such a mature and proactive approach to these sensitive issues. We are extremely happy to work together, staff and students, as one team in support of these initiatives.

I thank you for your continued support and wish you a wonderful break.

Yours faithfully



Graeme Corrin
Headteacher