

# Ballakermeen High School



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Dear Parents and Carers

It is great to be back for the start of a new term and a new school year. 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 and we wish them all great success. A massive well done to all these students and a thanks to families for the support that you provided.

The start of the year is important in setting the high expectations that we determine to maintain throughout the year. We have made a particularly positive start this year, dedicating the entire first day to important information including safeguarding, careers, options and a re-focus on our values and attitude to learning. One of our fundamental messages is that we are all part of the same team, and we need to pull together, support each other and celebrate each other. This applies very much in school but also in our relationship with families. We want you to understand what we are working on in school so that you can support us and your children.

For those families and students who have been part of Ballakermeen over the past couple of years, you will be aware of our enduring focus. We believe that every second of learning counts which means that during lesson time students need to be focused. We use the acronym SLANT as a call to attention, basically a signal to track the teacher and give full attention. We also continue to embed a warm, welcoming and friendly feel at Ballakermeen. The trigger STEPS helps us here. STEPS reminds us of the Ballakermeen style and the importance of thank you, excuse me and please. We know that you will have taught this at home, but we think it is useful to make manners a high priority here too. Ultimately, we want our youngsters to be confident and impressive as they prepare for the world beyond school. We therefore use SHAPE to remind ourselves to practice confident and full answers when responding in class, practicing keeping hands away from mouths and projecting so that our voices and ideas can be fully heard and appreciated. Please follow this link to see the posters that act as prompts around school.  
[https://bhs.sch.im/site/uploads/pages/43/media/20240906\\_740a39dd/SSS.pdf](https://bhs.sch.im/site/uploads/pages/43/media/20240906_740a39dd/SSS.pdf)

We have also introduced six key areas to organise our daily routines. We call these the 'Balla Basic 6' and they are as follows:



If we establish routines and habits to get these things right, there is no doubt that the whole school will feel calmer, more purposeful and ultimately a better place for us all to work and learn.

At Ballakermeen we are also passionate about improving literacy across the curriculum. We strongly believe that reading is the cornerstone of not only academic progress here at school but lifelong learning and well-being for the many years to follow. We're pleased to inform you that a new feature for tutor time this year is class reading. This term our Key Stage 3 students will read 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' and our Key Stage 4 students, 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. The latter will also be studied by KS4 students taking GCSE English Literature and so we're delighted to expose the whole year group to such an iconic work of literature. We hope all students will find the reading beneficial but perhaps more importantly an enjoyable and calming start to their school day. Who knows, it might even inspire them to put that phone away and pick up a book!

We set unapologetically high standards with regards to uniform and we have previously [communicated](#) our expectations to all parents and carers. In addition, information relating to school uniform is detailed on Page 12 of the student planner and on the school website. I am delighted to report that the overwhelming majority of students have returned to school looking incredibly smart and I would like to thank you all for supporting our high expectations. Sadly, some students are choosing to wear items that fall outside our expectations. These include skirts that are not suitable for school and footwear that is not plain black. We want to work with parents and carers and will communicate any issues over the coming days in order that they be resolved promptly. We ask that you respond to our communication and that all uniform related issues are resolved by **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September**. Any students that arrive at school wearing inappropriate items after this date will unfortunately have to be sent home to change.

It is also important that if students are to be ready to learn then they need to be correctly equipped. This will ensure that there is no distraction when searching for a pen, pencil or ruler. All students should have pens, pencil, ruler, rubber and ideally a scientific calculator.

To support an orderly start to the day we have introduced 'line-ups' for years 7 and 8 in the first instance. This gathering at the start of each day allows tutors to register and check students uniform and equipment so that they are set up positively for the day. It is also an opportunity for important messages to be shared.

As we come to the end of the first week, it is nice to see most students settled happily back into school life and a delight to have a wonderful cohort of year 7 students who will be a great addition to our school.

As always we thank you for your support.

With warm regards



Graeme Corrin  
Headteacher