

Ballakermeen High School



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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are enjoying a relaxing summer holiday and that your children have had the opportunity to rest and recharge ahead of the new academic year.

I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to our new Year 7 families who will be joining us in September. Starting secondary school is an important milestone, and I am sure many families are looking forward to this exciting new chapter in their child's education.

Over the past four years, we have worked relentlessly to make Ballakermeen a warm, welcoming and friendly school. Our aim is to create a purposeful and polite community where every young person can succeed. We believe that when students feel safe, valued and supported, they are empowered to demonstrate exceptional behaviour and attitudes which, in turn enables them to thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes. We want our students to achieve the best possible examination results, while also developing strong character, resilience and integrity. Together, these qualities will help prepare our young people for success both in school and beyond.

Learning, like life itself, can be challenging. Success rarely comes without effort, self-discipline and determination. These are qualities we should embrace rather than avoid. We have established clear routines and consistent systems of rewards and expectations to provide a safe environment in which young people can challenge themselves, take appropriate risks, persevere through difficulties and learn the value of hard work.

If students are to gain the very best from their education, it is important that they fully focus on their learning. Distractions must be kept to a minimum. Simple issues such as incorrect uniform, missing equipment or poor punctuality can consume valuable learning time. These are all matters that can be easily addressed, enabling staff and students to focus their attention on what matters most: learning.

Continuity is of vital importance. Regular attendance is one of the strongest predictors of educational success. Every day in school matters, and every lesson counts. To achieve their full potential, students need to attend consistently and engage fully in their learning.

You may have a personal view about students leaving lessons to use the toilet. While we recognise that genuine needs arise and will always support students appropriately, our expectation is that toilet visits are made during social times, before school or at break or lunchtime. We do not believe it is helpful for students to routinely leave lessons, as this disrupts their own learning, the learning of others and the flow of teaching. By managing toilet visits outside lesson time, students maximise their learning opportunities and develop the habits and routines that support success.

At Ballakermeen, our standards are unapologetically high. We do not make excuses for ourselves, and we do not make excuses for our young people. We are one team. I expect our staff to work hard every day and to continually improve through our professional development programme. Equally, we expect students to show resilience, persevere when learning becomes difficult and resist the temptation to give up. They will be supported, but they will also be challenged to work hard and achieve their very best.

As you prepare for the new term, I would ask for your support us in ensuring that all uniform and equipment meet our expectations from the first day back. Uniform items that do not comply with school expectations will result in sanctions which are entirely avoidable.

In particular, please ensure that:

- Footwear is plain black, with no visible logos
- Skirts are of an appropriate material and sensible length
- Jewellery complies with school expectations. Students may wear one plain stud in each ear and one plain nose stud. Rings, hoops and other items of jewellery are not permitted and will be confiscated
- Students should arrive at school in possession of the essential equipment required for learning, just as they will be expected to do in examinations: two pens, a pencil, a ruler (minimum 15cm) and, ideally, a scientific calculator
- Mobile phones are not allowed to be used during the school day and should be 'off and away' in student's bags once on the school site. Any phone seen or heard will be confiscated

Your support with these expectations helps us start the year positively and ensures that students can focus fully on their learning.

We look forward to welcoming all our students back for another successful academic year. Over the past four years, we have made significant strides in strengthening our school culture and improving outcomes for our young people. While we are proud of what has been achieved, we remain ambitious and recognise that there is still more to do. By continuing to work together in partnership with students, families and staff, I am confident that we can build on this success and make the coming months both rewarding and successful for every member of our school community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Graeme Corrin
Headteacher