

August 2021

Start of Term 2021/22

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope that you and your family enjoyed the lovely weather at the start of the summer and managed to enjoy the break despite these unprecedented times. I hope this letter does not dampen your spirits too much as I write to welcome your son/daughter to the start of the new school year in Banbridge Academy. We wish all of our pupils well as they commence the new academic year.

As a school, I assure you that we will continue to follow the guidance issued by the Department of Education and the relevant Governmental Agencies. **It is essential that all pupils and their parents/guardians follow the Government advice and guidance, therefore parents should not congregate at the school gate and/or enter the school site, either in person or in a vehicle, without an appointment. If you have any queries, please contact the school via telephone or email at any stage. I will obviously keep you informed when we receive further information regarding any future decisions made by the NI Executive, please note the arrangements in relation to face-coverings still apply i.e. they must be worn in class, communal areas and on school transport.**

The new term begins as follows:

Induction Day (Yrs 13 & 14)	9.15am – 1.00pm on Friday 27 August
Bank Holiday (school closed)	Monday 30 August
Induction Day (Yr 8)	9.15am – 12.00 noon on Tuesday 31 August
All Year Groups must attend	Wednesday 1 September

Please note, school uniform must be worn by pupils on the Induction Days. School transport and the Dining Hall will only be available from Wednesday 1 September.

Our priority is to ensure that our pupils and colleagues are safe. This letter outlines our provisional plans, however, please note these are subject to change based on evolving Government advice and guidance.

Protocols that will remain in the academic year 2021/22 – as noted above we await specific guidance from the Department of Education.

In order to reduce circulation and contact:

- the school timetable will be adjusted, which may include staggered break and meal times;
- pupils will adopt a one-way system within corridors and stairs;
- there will be staggered use of the Dining Hall (we hope that all Year Groups will be able to use the Dining Hall in the new academic year);
- classroom layouts will be configured to ensure appropriate social distancing.

Pupils will be required to wash their hands on arrival at school and will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly throughout the school day. Hand sanitisers will be available in the school, however, the scientific advice is clear - washing your hands with soap and water is the most effective way of minimising any potential risk. Pupils are permitted to carry their own personal hand sanitiser and should follow the Government Guidance regarding respiratory hygiene.

If your child, or anyone else in your household, shows COVID-19 symptoms, you should not send them to school, but should instead follow Government guidance in relation to testing and isolation and notify the school. If your child develops symptoms at school, they will be sent home immediately and Government Guidance should be followed.

To minimise potential transmission of COVID-19, parents and other visitors will not be allowed on the school premises without an appointment. Please contact the school via telephone or email, (info@banbridgeacademy.banbridge.ni.sch.uk) if you have any questions or queries at any stage. In addition, **NO pupil cars will be allowed on site in order to facilitate the safety of pedestrians.** Please note that pupils should use the car park facilities in the town. If your child requires First Aid whilst at school, then the member of staff concerned will have to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment as per Government guidance.

To ensure your child's progression it is crucial that your son/daughter attends school and is punctual. **All pupils MUST follow the one-way system,** use the sanitising facilities provided and adhere to the protocols in place throughout the school day. Pupils MUST proceed to their designated room and MUST NOT congregate in corridors or toilets. Whilst the school will have sanitiser available, pupils are encouraged to carry their own and also have a supply of tissues for respiratory hygiene. **Parents are reminded that they must not drive up to the front of the school to drop off or collect pupils at the start or at the end of the school day.** Apart from causing congestion at busy times, this also creates a considerable Health and Safety risk.

Finance

We are extremely grateful to all parents who **annually assist us by contributing to our School Fund** which helps to offset the cost of the many activities and opportunities which we provide for our pupils. **Please note that the School Fund is used for the benefit of all pupils throughout the school. The School Fund helps to facilitate music, drama, sport and other clubs and societies across the school, as well as subsidising educational visits, field trips, entry fees for competitions, the hire of buses and the costs associated with the supervision of pupils participating in such activities; all of which contribute significantly to a child's education as well as to the ethos of Banbridge Academy.** In addition, it provides a small lost property compensation scheme which provides half the replacement value of items lost on school premises.

The Board of Governors has decided that the parental voluntary contribution for the academic year 2021/22 will be - £100 for a child enrolled, £150 for two children currently enrolled from the same family, and a maximum of £175 per family if there are three or more children currently enrolled from the same family. I should like to highlight that this compares very favourably to the parental contribution/fees requested by other schools. If you have a child in Years 8 – 10 and have already signed a direct debit form this will continue and will take into account all children that are attending Banbridge Academy. If you have not signed a direct debit form, we ask that payment be made, if possible, by cheque (payable to Banbridge Academy). Please enclose the cheque in an envelope, labelled "School Fund", with the pupil's name and Form Class clearly marked on the outside. **Please send the payment to your son/daughter's Form Teacher on the first full day of school in September.** Should you prefer to send cash, you may of course do so, enclosing the correct amount and following the instructions above. Where there is more than one child in the family, the total amount may be given to the Form Teacher of the oldest child.

Free School Meals/School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowance

Parents/Guardians who are currently in receipt of support for the 2020/21 school year will **not** be sent a pre-populated form for the 2021/22 school year. All parents/guardians (including new applicants) are required to apply on-line via the EA website www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals

Contact Details

Please ensure that you review and amend accordingly, via the Parent App, the current data held on the SIMS system. Please note that this review is **not** required for Year 8 and new pupils entering other year groups.

Banbridge Academy exists to serve the needs of our pupils. We work in partnership with both pupils and their parents/guardians. **If an issue arises and there is a need to contact school, parents should, in the first instance, contact the class teacher for academic matters or the Form Teacher/Year Head for pastoral matters. To avoid disruption to learning, phone calls will not be put through to classrooms during teaching time, but a message will be sent and the teacher will respond as soon as possible.** For obvious reasons email addresses and mobile phone numbers will not be given out by the office staff. If parents need to speak to a member of staff in person, they should make an appointment via the School Office for a mutually convenient time.

Text Alert Emergency Contact

Our **Text Alert** emergency contact system is a very useful way to issue alerts to parents e.g. in the case of an emergency closure or when issuing reminders of forthcoming events such as Parents' Meetings. As in previous years, **a text message will ONLY be sent to the Emergency Contact 1 mobile number to convey the necessary information.** I would like to reassure parents that **no other contact details** held in school will be shared with the company who will transmit such text messages, neither will the service be used by the school to make contact with individual families.

Mobile phones

We recognise the usefulness of mobile phones but school policy is clear. While pupils may bring mobile phones to school, we cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage and it is for parents to assess any health risk. **If a mobile phone is brought to school, it must not be used or produced during the school day without the explicit permission of a member of the teaching staff. Phones which are produced in school, during class or at break or lunchtime, will be confiscated and will only be available for collection by the pupil on the following Friday afternoon or will be returned to a parent who must collect it in person from the School Office. In addition, an appropriate sanction will be applied.**

Photographs

Photographs must not be taken by pupils in school, either using a conventional camera or one combined with a mobile phone. We are concerned at the use of the camera function in school and indeed outside school, to record and transmit images which have been taken without the permission of the other party and which, in some cases, have been used to intimidate and bully other pupils. **This is strictly prohibited** and pupils who engage in such activities or who send messages and/or images which cause offence to members of the school community, whether initiated inside or outside school, will be dealt with very seriously. **This also applies to any messages or images posted anywhere online.**

Health & Safety

Should you wish to speak to Mrs H Singer, our Pupil Welfare Auxiliary, about any aspect of your son/daughter's health, please do not hesitate to contact her at the school. I should like to assure you that we respect the confidentiality of such information. Mrs Singer is primarily there for those pupils who become ill or who are injured during the school day, as well as providing support for pupils with ongoing medical conditions. **Parents are asked not to send pupils to school who are unwell before leaving home and pupils should NOT attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid-19.** This will also avoid the risk of spreading illness and infection among others. In relation to the matter of pupil health and wellbeing, I should like to ask for your assistance in ensuring that we receive written notification of medical conditions which arise during the course of the school year. **Please note that pupils who become ill during the school day and who need to go home must first report to the Pupil Welfare Auxiliary, who will make contact with a parent/guardian. Under no circumstances should pupils make their own transport arrangements.**

A number of our pupils **suffer from a very serious nut and/or egg allergy** and although our staff are trained to give appropriate First Aid should that be required, I appeal to all parents **not to send products containing nuts to school**, either for snacks or in packed lunches, as such items may pose serious health risks for these young people.

I should also like to remind you that **pupils must not bring aerosol sprays to school.** Some of our pupils have medical conditions which can be triggered or aggravated by inhaling the spray from such aerosols and we do not want to put any of our pupils at risk, especially when acceptable, safer alternatives are available. Please give attention to this matter and assist us in ensuring strict adherence to this important safety message.

Please note it is the responsibility of parents to inform the Pupil Welfare Auxiliary of any changes to the current medical information held while their child is a pupil of the school – for your convenience a Medical Consent Form can be downloaded from the school website and it is also available in hard copy from the School Office. New pupils have already completed this form as part of their Induction.

School Uniform

School uniform is a very important aspect of school life and we ask for your support in ensuring that **full and correct uniform, as highlighted in the uniform list (available on the school website), is worn by pupils at all times, including to and from school.** I should like to remind you in particular that our school rules state that no jewellery or nail varnish may be worn and there must not be extremes of hair colour and style. **We have confirmed that it is acceptable that school uniform should be worn each day during this current pandemic period. Please note full school uniform should be worn as normal each day, except for the days when your child has PE and/or Games, on these days your son/daughter should come to school already changed in their school sports kit, including tracksuit bottoms and/or crested school leggings.**

Absence and Lateness

All parents/guardians should be aware that absence notes should no longer be sent to the school for a period of absence, late arrival and/or early exits from school, instead an email should be forwarded to attendance200@c2ken.net. It is important, in the event of absence, to ensure that an email explaining the circumstances is sent on the **first day of return** to school. This is essential as **unexplained** absences are considered as **unauthorised** by the Department of Education, as are absences which arise from pupils being taken on holiday during term time. **Please do not arrange such holidays** as they disrupt education, place additional pressures on teaching staff and, apart from the most exceptional circumstances, cannot be authorised

by the school. Parents/Guardians of pupils who arrive late (i.e. after 9.05am), must send an email of explanation either on the day in question or by the following day.

Medical and Other Appointments

Parents are requested, where possible, to make such appointments outside the normal school day and, where this is unavoidable, to inform the school in advance. Occasionally parents arrive in school during the day with an expectation of having a son/daughter released from class which causes considerable disruption to classes, therefore inevitably there will be a delay in facilitating such requests.

Valuables

Please ensure that all items of equipment and clothing are clearly marked with the pupil's name. At the end of every school year we are left with many unclaimed items due to the absence of identifying marks which prevents them from being returned to the owner.

Independent Counselling Service

An Independent Counselling Service will be available in school each week. Referrals can be made by pupils themselves or by parents. To obtain further information about this important service, please contact Mrs Evans (Vice Principal, Pastoral).

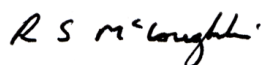
Safeguarding Arrangements

At Banbridge Academy we aim to work closely with our parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of your child's development and well-being. Any concerns that parents/guardians may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If parents/guardians have a concern regarding a safeguarding issue, they should report the matter directly to Mrs Evans (Designated Teacher for Child Protection) or the Principal.

Please regularly visit our school website, www.banbridgeacademy.org.uk in order to be kept up-to-date about news and important events in school. Please find enclosed two important policies – Safeguarding and Anti-Bullying – if you have any comments regarding these policies, please email the school as the Governors are currently reviewing them.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish your son/daughter well in the year ahead. Despite all the challenges we are determined to continue to provide the highest possible quality of education to the young people in our care. It is extremely important that we work together, accept collective responsibility to strictly adhere to the Government guidance in relation to hand and respiratory hygiene, and follow our Positive Behaviour Policy at all times.

Yours sincerely



R S McLoughlin
Principal

Due to the current COVID regulations pupils are no longer allowed to share equipment, therefore the following is required for the start of the academic year:

General

Pens - black or blue, red, green
Pencil, sharpener, rubber
30cm Ruler, calculator, protractor
Colouring pencils, scissors, glue stick
It would be beneficial if all this was kept in a pencil case.

Art and Design

Years 8 to 10 - Pencil case containing the following:

Tonal pencils 2B, HB small set of colour pencils, sharpener and rubber, small set of washable markers, Pritt stick and small scissors, A4 plastic folder (to hold sketchbook as before). A new A4 blank sketch pad and 2 paintbrushes sizes 4 & 6.

Years 11, 12, 13 and 14 - A2 Art folder (large black folder to carry work), pencil case containing the following:

Set of tonal pencils, set of colour pencils, sharpener and rubber. Small set of washable markers (Berol brand work best), Pritt stick (or double sided tape) and small scissors. 2 paintbrushes sizes 4 & 6, black fine liner pen (Stablio work best), black washable marker (Berol brand work best), white pens (fine point/gel pen). All of these items can all be purchased in craft shops, stationery shops or online.

Years 13 & 14 Chemistry - Pupils will require their own lab coat and safety glasses. The school will facilitate the purchasing of these items in September. Pupils also have the option to acquire their own white lab coat prior to the commencement of term.

Junior School Home Economics and GCSE Food and Nutrition – pupils will require their own apron.

NAME OF PUPIL: _____

FORM: _____

Checklist below is for your own use and all items listed should be returned to **your son/daughter's Form Teacher on the first day of term**

I have enclosed the contribution to the School Fund ☐

I have reviewed, via the Parent App, the current data held on the SIMS system ☐

(not required for new pupils joining the school this year)

If changes are required, I have enclosed a Medication Consent Form ☐

(A Medication Consent Form can be downloaded from the school website)

Please note it is the parent/guardians' responsibility to inform the Pupil Welfare Auxiliary of any changes to this information while your child is a pupil of the School.