

Start of Term 2016/17

Dear Parent/Guardian

I should like 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.

The new term begins for **Year 13 and Year 14 pupils with a half day of induction on Tuesday 30 August starting at 9.15am and finishing around 1.00pm. All Year 14 pupils should note that school photographs will be taken on this date and full school uniform in accordance with the school rules must be worn. New Year 13 pupils** will have an opportunity to have lunch and a brief tour of the school immediately after this induction morning. There will be no school for Year 13 and Year 14 on Wednesday 31 August.

The induction day for Year 8 pupils will be held on Wednesday 31 August, commencing at 9.15am and finishing at 12 noon. School uniform must be worn by pupils on the induction days. As school transport will not be available on these days of induction, the help of parents in making appropriate transport arrangements is much appreciated.

On Thursday 1 September 2016 all pupils begin school at 9.00am and finish at 3.25pm. Please note that dining facilities and school buses will operate as normal on this day.

School Day

Our school day commences at **9.00am with Registration and Assembly**. I have enclosed a sheet entitled **Attendance and Punctuality** which explains our procedures clearly. There are **only two entrances through which pupils may enter school in the morning: the Atrium and the Lecture Theatre**. Pupils who arrive after 9.05am may only enter school at the **Lecture Theatre Entrance** from where they will be directed to the **Late Room** where lateness will be recorded. **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 parental contribution enables us to provide a wide range of extra and co-curricular activities which contribute significantly to a child's education as well as to the ethos of Banbridge Academy.** The School Fund helps to facilitate music, drama, sport and other clubs and societies across the school as well as subsidise 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. In addition, it provides insurance for injury to pupils (please note the scheme only provides limited cover and further details are available from the school office) and a 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 2016/17 is **£75 for the oldest pupil and £50 for each additional pupil up to a maximum of £125 per family**. I should like to highlight that this compares very favourably to the parental contribution/fees requested by other grammar schools. To facilitate the administration of these contributions, we ask that payment be made, if possible, by cheque only (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 sent to the Form Teacher of the oldest child.

Contact Details

I have attached a copy of the current data held on the SIMS system and request that you make any necessary amendments to this sheet and return it to the School Office via the Form Teacher as soon as possible. Please note that this 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 families. If an issue arises and there is a need to contact school, parents should, **in the first instance, contact the Form Teacher. 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 for a mutually convenient time via the School Office.

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. Nor for that matter 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 neither be used nor produced during the school day.** Phones which are produced in school will be confiscated **on the first occasion** and may be collected, by the pupil, from the school office at the end of the day. Should this happen a second time, the phone will only be returned **to the parent** who must collect it in person from the 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 text messages 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 messages posted on websites and I enclose a copy of our **ICT Acceptable Use Policy** for your careful consideration. **Please sign and return the consent form to your son/daughter's Form Teacher at the start of term to indicate your acceptance of our policy.**

Publicity

To acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of our pupils, photographs of Banbridge Academy pupils, either individually or in groups/teams, are published regularly in the local and national press and/or our School Publications, including digital media platforms such as our school website and Twitter feeds, with the names of pupils included. Good practice dictates, however, that we do not take photographs of young people without parental permission and as it is not practical to contact parents prior to each photograph being taken, we ask that parents complete the enclosed reply slip granting us permission to proceed with such photographs. **Please sign and return the consent form to your son/daughter's Form Teacher at the start of term to indicate your acceptance of our policy.**

Health & Safety

Should you wish to speak to Mrs B Davison, our School Nurse, about any aspect of your son/daughter's health, please do not hesitate to contact her at school. I should like to assure you that we respect the confidentiality of such information. Mrs Davison 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.** 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.

A number of our pupils **suffer from a very serious nut 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 that this important safety message is strictly adhered to.

Please complete and return the Medication Consent Form which we require to be reviewed annually. Please note new pupils have already completed this form as part of their induction.

Off-Site Activities during the School Day

Please find enclosed a **consent form** which records your approval for your son/daughter's participation in routine, off-site activities which take place on a regular basis throughout the school year (e.g. visits to the Leisure Centre, Havelock Park, taking part in or supporting sporting fixtures, attending courses in Southern Regional College etc.). Parental authorisation for pupil participation in other events such as field trips, overnight stays and tours further afield, will continue to be sought separately and in advance.

School Uniform

School uniform is a very important aspect of school life and once more we ask for your support in ensuring that full and correct uniform, as highlighted in the uniform list which was forwarded at the end of last term, 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 (including length).

Absence and Lateness

I have enclosed a fresh supply of absence notes for your use and I would urge you please, in the event of absence, to ensure that a note explaining the circumstances is sent to the Form Teacher 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. Pupils who arrive late (i.e. after 9.05am), must produce a note of explanation either on arrival or by the following day.

Medical and Other Appointments

Parents are requested, please, 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. This causes considerable disruption to classes and 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 without identifying marks to enable them to be returned to their owners.

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).

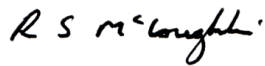
Banbridge Academy Association

I have included a letter inviting you to the AGM of the Banbridge Academy Association (BAA) and I warmly encourage you to support the activities of the Association throughout the year. In addition, please find enclosed an application to become a member of the BAA.

Please make a point of regularly visiting our school website, www.banbridgeacademy.org.uk, to be kept up-to-date about news and important events in school.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to wish your son/daughter well in the year ahead and I look forward to seeing you at Parents' Meetings and our many other activities throughout the year.

Yours sincerely



R S McLoughlin
Principal

To: The Principal, Banbridge Academy, Lurgan Road, Banbridge, BT32 4AQ

NAME OF PUPIL: _____

I have enclosed the following: (please tick)

Pupil Data Collection sheet (*excludes Year 8 and new intake pupils*) ☐

Contribution to School Fund ☐Medication Consent Form (*excludes Year 8 and new intake pupils*) ☐Dining Centre – Cashless Consent ☐

Consent Form (fully signed and dated) ☐

Includes: School Trips / Educational Visits
Publications
ICT Acceptable Use (*requires pupil's signature also*)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Parent/Guardian)