

August 2026

All Year Groups - Start of Term 2026/27

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope that you are enjoying the summer holidays and time with family and friends. 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 previously noted results will be published as follows:

A Level (Year 14)	9.00am on Thursday 13 August 2026
AS Level (Year 13)	10.30am on Thursday 13 August 2026
GCSE Level (Year 12)	9.00am on Thursday 20 August 2026
GCSE Level (Year 11)	2.00pm on Thursday 20 August 2026

The new term begins as follows:

Staff Training	Tuesday 18, Wednesday 19, Thursday 20, Friday 21, Monday 24 August
Teaching - Years 11 - 14	Tuesday 25, Wednesday 26 & Thursday 27 August
Staff Training & Pupil Induction (Year 8)	Friday 28 August
Bank Holiday	Monday 31 August
First Day of Term (All Pupils)	Tuesday 1 September

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

School Day

Our school day commences at **9.00am with Registration and Assembly. 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.

All pupils must enter via the Pedestrian Gates at the Main Entrance. To ensure safeguarding measures no pupil or parent is permitted to enter the school, either on foot or in a vehicle, via the vehicular entrance used by staff.

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 2026/27 will be - £120 for a child enrolled, £175 for two children currently enrolled from the same family, and a maximum of £200 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 – 13 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.

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. **Please note the invitation to sign up to the Parent App, for those not already registered, will automatically be sent from school on the first day of term. The Parent App will not be available to Year 8 before that date. The Parent App will continue to be the main method of communication from the school, therefore it is extremely important that all parents are registered.**

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.** The school telephone number and school email address can be found at the bottom of this letter. **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 when they are able to do so.** 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. Please note the **school opening hours are 9.00am – 4.30pm (Monday – Thursday) and 9.00am – 4.00pm (Friday).** Please note, school staff are not expected or required to respond to communication from parents or others outside of the school’s normal operating hours, except in the case of a critical incident.

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 stored in the School Office until the end of the school day. If a phone has been confiscated three times it will only be available for collection by a parent, who must collect it in person from the School Office.

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 online.**

Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship

In accordance with Article 21 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, RE and collective worship remain mandatory components of the curriculum for all publicly funded schools. We believe these sessions are vital to your child's holistic development, helping them build key skills such as critical analysis and communication while encouraging them to make informed judgements about moral issues in a multicultural society. Our collective worship typically involves reflections on moral stories, school values, and charity work, often including a short reading or prayer. While we encourage all pupils to participate, please be aware that under Department of Education guidance, parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE, collective worship, or both.

Should you wish to exercise this right, you may opt for full withdrawal or partial withdrawal from specific topics or rituals. It is important to note that for students in Years 11 and 12, withdrawing from RE may result in studying one less GCSE subject. Pupils who are withdrawn will be supervised and permitted to work on other subjects within the school's available resources. For a comprehensive view of the topics covered in each year group—ranging from the study of world religions to contemporary ethics—please visit the RE page on our school website:

<https://www.banbridgeacademy.org.uk/our-school/departments/religious-studies/>

For an overview of collective worship, please see the school assembly rota for last year on our school website:

<https://www.banbridgeacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Assembly-Schedule-2026.27.pdf>

If you wish to request a withdrawal, please contact the school office to discuss the necessary arrangements.

Personal Development (PD)

This is a specific curricular subject taught in Years 8, 9 and 11 and also delivered by a range of guest speakers throughout your son/daughter's time at Banbridge Academy. In PD pupils learn about self-awareness, personal health and healthy relationships. PD encourages each pupil to become personally, emotionally, socially and physically effective; to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives. The aim of the PD programme in Banbridge Academy is to develop a set of concepts, skills, attitudes and values which will promote the all-round development of the pupils. As mentioned above, PD is delivered both by teachers and external providers. More information on the content of the PD programme can be found on our school website.

Health & Safety

Should you wish to speak to Mrs C McCormick, 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 McCormick 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. **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 Medication 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. **Please note full school uniform should be worn as normal each day. The only exception will be for pupils in Years 8-10 on the days when they have timetabled PE lessons, 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. Pupils across all year groups will change into their PE kit after lunch on Games afternoons.**

Banbridge Academy Association is planning to hold 'Uniform and PE kit Swap and Sale' in school prior to the start of the new academic year. To swap an item of school uniform and/or PE kit for a similar item in a different size parents may visit the school and enter via the door down the left-hand side of Edenderry House, off the top car park. It may also be possible to purchase individual items of pre-loved uniform for a small charge. **To add to our stock, we would welcome donations of school uniform or school PE Kit that does not fit or is no longer used by your son/daughter but is clean and still in usable condition. If you have any items of uniform and/or PE kit that you would like to donate to this initiative at any stage, please leave them in the School Office.**

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 - causing 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).

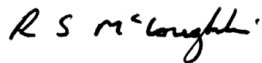
Safeguarding Arrangements

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.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish your son/daughter well in the year ahead as we continue to provide the highest possible quality of education to the young people in our care.

Yours sincerely



R S McLoughlin OBE
Principal