

Summer 2018 Newsletter

Summer is here!



Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you are looking forward to a sunny and relaxing summer. We have had another exciting and busy year and I hope you have enjoyed seeing our postings on social media. We know that we have an active following and I'm very grateful to the many parents who contact us to provide news and photos, enabling us to celebrate the varied and impressive achievements of our students.

The information in this newsletter includes a summary of a recent school visit from a validation team to determine how well we know ourselves. It should also provide you with some helpful information about key dates over the summer and the start of the new school year. Overleaf are the details about our mobile devices consultation, which took place earlier this term.

Thank you for continuing to work so positively with us, united as we are in our intention to do the very best for your children.

Have a lovely few weeks – and here's hoping the good weather continues!

Adrienne Burnett

Mrs P. A. Burnett,
Head Teacher

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| • Tuesday 14 th August | iGCSE and Cambridge A results issued |
| • Thursday 16 th August | A Level results issued |
| • Thursday 23 rd August | GCSE results issued |
| • Wednesday 5 th September | School open to students |

How well do we know ourselves?

We recently took part in an external validation of our self-review and evaluation process (SSRE). The validation covered the full range of the school's judgments, but focused on three specific aspects. These were:

- Achievement against prior attainment
- Teaching for Learning
- Keeping Safe

Achievement against prior attainment

The validation team agreed with the school's judgment that achievement against prior attainment is 'effective' overall. In five of the six measures used by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture (DESC), English and mathematics achievement is above the island's average. The DESC's analysis indicates that in one of the six measures used: average levels of progress in mathematics, the judgment is 'not yet effective'. Progress between Key Stage 2 and 4 is 'effective' in both English and mathematics.

The progress that pupils make in Key Stage 5 is impressive, with the team noting that the school has correctly judged this area as 'very effective'.

Evidence from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and surveys, supported by professional judgments, confirmed that pupils have developed a 'love of learning'. The school's data analysis shows that progress is very good in the majority of other subjects. Overall, pupils make very good progress in their learning.

Teaching for Learning

The school fosters and instils a 'can do' attitude in pupils and this motivates them to believe that they can be successful in their learning. In the lessons visited during the validation, pupil engagement with their learning was very good. The school has considerable evidence that this is usually the case. In some cases the learning objectives in lessons are not sufficiently focused on learning.

The validation team agreed with the school's view that Teaching for Learning should be judged as 'effective' overall.

Keeping Safe

'Keeping Safe' is an area of high priority within the school. In the validation team's discussions with pupils, teachers and parents, all spoke highly of the procedures for safeguarding and child protection.

The validation team agreed with the school's judgment that 'Keeping Safe' is 'very effective' overall.

Other Areas Considered

As well as the three specific aspects of the SSRE on which it focused, the validation team also considered other judgments and statements set out in the SSRE. It noted that:

- Pupils are happy and proud of their school
- Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good

- Parents hold the school in high regard
- Positive relationships with parents is a strength of the school
- The Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition programme is highly regarded by stakeholders
- Leadership of the school is 'very effective'
- Key Stage 5 attainment is 'very effective' and above the island averages
- Lesson observations and pupil feedback confirms that behaviour is generally very good
- The curriculum enables pupils to access learning opportunities that are varied, engaging and challenging
- Extra-curricular clubs and activities enable pupils to showcase their talents, skills and aspirations

Conclusion

The validation team agreed with the school about all judgments that it tested. The school knows itself well and is therefore in a good position to continue planning for future improvement. However, the school knows itself far better than the current SSRE documentation captures and the SSRE requires improvement.

Mobile Devices

(phones, ipods, ipads, tablets and similar devices)

The Benefits:

- Communication is quick and easy
- Peace of mind
- They can be used as research tools in lessons
- Entertainment

The Changing Picture:

- In 2001, no school operated restrictions on mobile devices
- The majority of secondary schools in the UK now operate a restricted use policy
- UK research indicates that a quarter of school children spend at least 6 hours a day online
- The NSPCC and Childline have each reported a worrying increase in cyber bullying
- The Royal College of Paediatrics are concerned about the rise in addictive behaviours

Issues in School:

- The filming or taking of photos without permission
- Social media feuds brought into school
- Disruption to lessons
- Detrimental impact on lessons

How We Consulted:

- Debated at School Council meetings and after school
- Form Tutors asked to discuss the issue with their students
- An on-line survey and three after school consultation evenings with parents

The Results:

Unsurprisingly, our students, who are all 'digital natives' cannot imagine a life without instant access to technology. Parental feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive of our concerns.

The Decision:

Students will be able to use mobile devices in lessons as a learning device, under the direction of a member of staff. Where necessary, a device will be provided for students who do not have one, for classroom use.

Mobile devices are not to be used at any other time during the school day.

I hope the **'Frequently Asked Questions'** from our recent consultation evenings will provide you with answers to typical questions:

My child travels to school by bus. What happens if the bus doesn't turn up? She needs a mobile to get in contact with me.

We are not banning mobiles. Students can use them on the way to school and on the way home – just not on the school grounds.

What happens if I need to get in touch with my child?

Please ring reception and we will get a message to your child. We have student runners on duty.

My child may want to ring me during the school day.

If it's urgent, your child can ask reception to ring home, or your child can visit a Head of Year, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team and can ring from an office.

My Child is in the Sixth Form – isn't this new system a bit harsh?

Sixth Formers will be allowed to use mobiles in the Sixth Form building, but nowhere else.

Mobiles are part and parcel of life.

We agree, but schools are places of learning and over the years mobile devices have proven to be a big distraction. We are mindful that we are preparing our students for the world of work and many universities and workplaces ban mobiles during working hours.

What will happen if my child is caught with a mobile?

During the first three days of school in September, we will tell students what the sanction will be, but will not apply it; we will give them this time to get used to the new system.

From Monday 10th September, students who do not follow the rules will have their mobile confiscated and will have to collect it at the end of the day. On subsequent occasions, parents will be asked to collect the mobile.

Finally, we have not taken this decision lightly; we were the first school on the Isle of Man to allow mobiles on the premises because we could see the many advantages of them. As technology has advanced, the mounting disadvantages and dangers of their inappropriate use have convinced us to review our policy.

We believe we are taking the right steps to ensure that Ballakermeen High School is a place where our young people can engage with learning and with each other in a positive way.

Stop press: we have been advised that the price of a main school meal will be £2.85 in September.