

PRINCIPAL: S.W. BLACK, M.Sc.



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5th June, 2020.

To: Parents/Guardians of P.6 pupils

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I trust that this communication finds you safe and well at this challenging time.

In "normal" circumstances, we would have hosted an Information Evening for parents of P.6 pupils in early May, in which we would have provided details for Transfer 2021. In the absence of such a meeting, I felt it was important to update you on our current thinking in this regard.

There has been much speculation in the media in recent weeks in respect of Transfer 2021 and in particular the conduct of the AQE Common Entrance Assessments. We understand fully that the assessments this year may take place in difficult circumstances but it is evident from the high levels of application to AQE this year that parental support remains strong across N.I. for the use of an academic criteria as part of the selection process.

In that context, as things presently stand, it would still remain our intention to use the outcomes of the AQE Common Entrance Assessments, which are scheduled to take place on **Saturday, 21st November, Saturday, 28th November and Saturday, 12th December**, as part of our Year 8 Admissions Criteria for September, 2021 and to accommodate the same number of children for assessments as normal, even if this requires minor changes to our procedures. However, it remains uncertain as to what will be possible in the months ahead. In the event that it is not possible to hold the assessments, we note that the Minister of Education has indicated his wish that schools should have the right to determine their own Admissions Criteria. Ballymena Academy will continue to keep the Admissions Criteria and Transfer procedures under review and will inform you, at the earliest opportunity, of any changes which are required in the event of evolving circumstances.

Ballymena Academy is a successful and popular Grammar School with a well-earned reputation in this community and further afield. The school remains committed to ensuring that it carries out all tasks associated with the Transfer Procedure efficiently and effectively.

It is important that parents and children should be reassured by the experience of previous years. For our part, we will ensure that the same attention to detail, irrespective of circumstances, will be taken to prioritise the health and well-being of all those involved.

Registration for the AQE assessments has opened, using an on-line application process. Further details are available on the AQE website www.aqe.org.uk and, in addition, any updates from AQE will also be posted on our website, www.ballymenaacademy.org.uk

It is our intention to hold an Information Session for P.6 parents, most likely at the start of the 2020/2021 academic year, in which we can outline details of our Admissions Criteria and our arrangements for conducting the assessments.

I thank you for your interest in Ballymena Academy and trust that this letter provides you with clarity at this time. If you have any particular queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

S.W. Black (Principal)