

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

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26<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

To: Parent/Guardian of P.7 pupils

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope that this finds you and your family well in these uncertain times.

Since the cancellation of the AQE Common Entrance Assessment, the Board of Governors of Ballymena Academy has met on three separate occasions to consider how best to provide fair and appropriate means to select children for admission in September 2021. In developing the Admissions Criteria, Governors considered correspondence received from parents, legal advice, reports from meetings held with other schools, locally and nationally, and analysis of previous Year 8 intakes. In meetings with Governors and with colleagues from the primary and post-primary sectors, it is evident that each one of us wants the best outcomes for this cohort of P.7 pupils who have been through so much and who deserve to transfer to the school they would have been most likely to go to had the assessments gone ahead.

The Board of Governors continues to support the principle of academic selection but in this exceptional year, following careful consideration of the evidence available and taking cognisance of the decisions being made by other local post-primary schools, it concluded that our Admissions Criteria for this year will contain only non-academic criteria, together with evidence of registration for the AQE Common Entrance Assessment. We fully realise that the children have worked hard in preparing for the assessments and this is not how any of us would have wanted the transfer process to have worked this year. However, in the circumstances, we believe that the Admissions Criteria will provide a robust means to ensure that the vast majority of, if not all, children who would most likely have secured a place in Ballymena Academy, and for whom the Academy is their first preference, will be admitted.

A copy of our Admission Criteria, which I outlined to Principals of feeder Primary Schools yesterday, is available on our website and you will note that preference will be given to children who had registered to sit the AQE Common Entrance Assessment (or those for whom a valid claim for Special Provision has been made). If, after consideration of this there are more applications than places available then precedence shall be given, in the following order for a child

- 2.1 who has sibling(s)\* currently enrolled in the School, or has sibling(s) already approved for acceptance by the School in the current admissions process.  
(**N.B.** Preference shall be given on the basis of the greatest or greater number of siblings).
- 2.2 who is the eldest\*\* or only child of the family to be eligible to apply for admission to the school (further information on this can be obtained from your Primary School Principal or from Department of Education Circular 2016/15).
- 2.3 (a) who at the time of application is registered either as a pupil who is educated at home or as a pupil at a Primary School from which pupils have been admitted to Ballymena Academy within the past five years (a list is available from the School Office or on the school website).  
  
(b) In the event that there remain more applications than there are places available, preference will be given to those children who at the time of application are registered either as a pupil who is educated at home or as a pupil at a Primary School from which 3 or more pupils have been admitted to Ballymena Academy over the past five years. A list of these Primary Schools is provided in the following table.

Antrim P.S.	Clough P.S.	Longstone P.S.
Ballykeel P.S.	Cloughmills P.S.	Maine I.P.S.
Ballymena P.S.	Creavery P.S.	Moorfields P.S.
Braidside I.P.S.	Duneane P.S.	Portglenone P.S.
Broughshane P.S.	Fourtowns P.S.	Randalstown Central P.S.
Buick Memorial P.S.	Gracehill P.S.	Rasharkin P.S.
Camphill P.S.	Groggan P.S.	St. Colmcille's P.S.
Carnaghts P.S.	Hazelbank P.S.	St. Mary's P.S. (Portglenone)
Carnalbanagh P.S.	Kells & Connor P.S.	St. Paul's P.S. (Ahoghill)
Carniny P.S.	Kilrea P.S.	Templepatrick P.S.
Carnlough I.P.S.	Kirkinriola P.S.	The Diamond P.S.

2.4 In order of preference with first preference applications being selected before second preference applications and so on.

\* Where applicable "sibling" is defined as another child of the family (Article 2(2) of the Domestic Proceedings (NI) Order 1980) to include, for example, half-brothers and sisters, together with children who are adopted or fostered.

\*\* Twins and other multiples who are eldest in the family are treated as joint eldest children.

2.5 If, after the implementation of each of 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 there remain more applications than there are places available, then the following random selection process as determined by the Board of Governors and overseen by the Admissions Panel shall be applied to determine the remaining applications to be accepted:

- each application to be considered at this stage is allocated a random number electronically generated within 'Microsoft Excel';
- the applications are then ranked in order of the random number, with higher numbers having precedence.

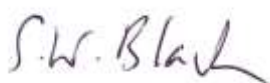
Should any places remain after all applications which include registration for the AQE Common Entrance Assessment or are made on the basis of a valid claim for Special Provision have been accepted, then other applications will be considered for the remaining place(s).

We do not offer a perfect solution, as no such solution exists in the current circumstances. In the event that the school is oversubscribed with first preference applications which would most likely have gained a place under "normal" circumstances, we will consider how best we can address this, within the legislative processes with which we operate, both in the short and medium terms.

Across Northern Ireland, and in our locality, there are many very good schools, all of which offer opportunities for young people to develop and learn. We recognise that you will be deciding which school is best suited for your child, based on their aptitude, personality, interests and needs. The current health situation makes it impossible to hold "Open Nights" as we have done previously and on-line material, including a series of videos, has begun to be placed on our school website and our social media platforms. A virtual open event will be launched on the school website in early February. We hope that you may find this information helpful as you consider your choice of school but if you have any specific queries, either about Ballymena Academy or the Admissions Criteria, please do get in touch and I will be more than happy to help.

I thank you for your interest in Ballymena Academy and offer our best wishes to you and your family for the future.

Yours faithfully,



S.W. Black (Principal)

