



14 January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

As you may be aware, after careful deliberation the Board of Governors of Banbridge Academy has been working with colleagues in the Education Authority regarding a Development Proposal to increase our Year 8 admissions from 184 to 192, while retaining the school's approved enrolment at 1320 pupils, with effect from 1 September 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter.

**Every year to ensure the enrolment number is reached, the school has to admit a significant number of pupils into Years 9 and 10 from pupils who sought entry into Year 8 in the school. In other words,  $184 \text{ (our current Admissions Number)} \times 7 = 1288$  which is not the school's enrolment number. These pupils enrol in Year 8 in other schools and then transfer to Banbridge Academy one or two years later than their peers. This proposal, to increase the Admissions Number from 184 to 192, will ensure that pupils start their post-primary education in Banbridge Academy from the start of Year 8, rather than being subjected to the significant disruption of moving school at the end of one or two years of post-primary education.**

Our case for change is evidenced by the sustainability of the pupil numbers over the coming years within the school catchment areas. Our main partner primary schools also evidence significant pupil demand for entry into Banbridge Academy in recent years, leading to a seven-year average of 232 first preference applications for 184 available places in Year 8. In recognition of this steady growth in demand for places, the Education Authority is seeking the views/comments from the Governors, Staff and Parents/Guardians of the school on the Development Proposal.

This modest increase in the Admissions number will not have an adverse effect on our neighbouring schools, with whom we enjoy a close working relationship through the Banbridge Area Learning Community. Maintaining the total enrolment of 1320 pupils will not therefore change the numbers attending the school and as such these numbers can be accommodated within the school's current buildings, classrooms and staffing resources, without recourse to additional recruitment, investment or costs. In addition, the Board of Governors strongly believes that this Development Proposal fulfils the Education Authority's Strategic Plan by offering an area based solution which meets the increase in pupil and parent demand for academic, pastoral, extra and co-curricular excellence.

**The Education Authority has published the Development Proposal for Banbridge Academy, the details can be accessed via the link included within the attached letter. The Board of Governors would strongly encourage all within our community to take the time to review the consultation document and the rationale for taking forward the Development Proposal and would encourage you to make a response via the online response form. Please note, all responses must be received no later than Thursday 18 March 2021.**

Should you feel you would like any further details of the Development Proposal/Case for Change, please feel free to contact our Principal, Mr R McLoughlin, who will be happy to help you.

Yours faithfully

D Livingstone  
Chairman of the Board of Governors

R S McLoughlin  
Principal