



Easter Greetings from the Alumni Association

Dear friends

We hope this newsletter finds you well. As we move towards the Easter break I wish to take this opportunity to update you on the busy and positive term we have just had.

Our very talented **Music Department**, under the guidance of our amazing Director of Music, Mary McMullan, once again excelled themselves in our annual **Spring Concert** at the Ulster Hall. A wonderful evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended and the months of practice, hard work and dedication of both pupils and staff definitely paid off. Events like this remind us about the importance of music to lift our spirits and it was an absolute pleasure to be in the audience and see our pupils shine on stage.

Spring term is traditionally a very busy term for sport, and this year has been no exception. We celebrate and praise the performances of our rugby, hockey and netball teams, many of whom progressed to the semi-final or final stage of their relevant inter-school competitions. Special mention must go to the girls' 4th XI hockey team who were winners of the 4th XI Cup in a hard-fought match against Royal School Armagh, and the Intermediate Netball Team who were winners in the NI Intermediate final against St Paul's, Bessbrook. Our swimming and life-saving teams also enjoyed success at the Swim Ulster Schools' Gala. We are so very proud of all our sporting achievements and also very grateful to our dedicated **PE Department** and all the staff who put in additional hours of coaching and training and work tirelessly to support our pupils. We must also highlight the successes of our fantastic show jumping team, who continue to excel at the highest level and have recently finished runners-up in the TRI Interschools Show Jumping League. Our Dance Team is also going from strength to strength and this term they secured gold or silver medals across five different events at the Northern Ireland Creative Movement and Aerobic Championships.

Pupils continue to enjoy an exciting and varied programme of trips and tours, providing them with unforgettable experiences and enriching their lives and interests. We recognise the immense value of these excursions and are delighted that many of our pupils have had the opportunity to experience the world outside Northern Ireland already this year on recent ski trips to Austria, Geography and History trips to Iceland and Italy, and a Modern Languages visit to an event in London. There are more trips scheduled for

the summer term, including a Physics trip to CERN in Switzerland, language trips to France and Spain, and a walking trip to visit part of the Camino de Santiago in Spain! None of these would be possible without the extra time and effort put in by so many of our staff and we very much appreciate this.

Our **Scripture Union** is very proactive and this term senior pupils have enjoyed their annual Big SU Weekend in Castlewellan, where over 60 pupils and staff enjoyed a wonderful stay in the Kingdom of Mourne. In February they undertook a hugely worthwhile trip to Poland where a team of pupils and staff assisted in a local shelter, making up food parcels and visiting a Ukrainian Refugee camp. Closer to home our very successful **Duke of Edinburgh** scheme continues to thrive and it has been a very busy few months for pupils and leaders, with training expedition weekends in the Mournes and Antrim hills in addition to all the preparation sessions in school. We are sure many of you have very fond memories of your Duke of Edinburgh experiences and we are delighted that former teacher, Mr John Reilly has returned to provide assistance and guidance to the School.

The academic highlights this term are many, and five of our pupils qualified for the final of the all-Ireland Linguistics Olympiad in Dublin, demonstrating their prowess in languages. An extensive range of fabulous activities were organised for pupils in the Library to celebrate **World Book Day** and we also enjoyed pupil successes in the Irish Federation of Women Public Speaking Competition and in the North Belfast Short Story competition. A group of 15 Form 3 pupils participated in the Young Citizens' Mock Magistrates Trial at the end of March and we are indebted to one of our parents who has utilised his legal expertise to prepare the team. As we draw to the end of term, pupils and staff are putting in final preparations for the forthcoming exams and there is still a great deal of work to be done by everyone in the Summer Term.

This term we have also seen the very successful role out of our alumni **#Rolemodel** initiative, where we have highlighted the further education, careers and lives of former pupils, which is so very beneficial in inspiring our current pupils and showcasing the wealth of career opportunities available to them after they leave the Academy. If you are interested in participating as a **#Rolemodel** please do let us know, as it is always lovely to hear positive feedback from our wonderful alumni and how their experiences and education here at Belfast Royal Academy have shaped their lives.

We were delighted to see so many former pupils at our annual **London Dinner** in early March in the Royal Air Force Club. Many thanks to Dr Louis Campbell and David Haslett for organising the event and it was a wonderful opportunity for alumni, old and new, to reconnect and reminisce. Special thanks to alumna Lynne Forster for proposing the Toast to the School. Our London, Edinburgh and Belfast Annual Dinners are always thoroughly enjoyable events and we would encourage you to consider joining us at one of them in the future. We also very much look forward to the opportunity of meeting many Academy alumni at our forthcoming series of class reunions coming up in May and June, and would encourage any of you from these year groups to confirm your attendance and

spread the news about them.

We also wanted to share the exciting news on **developments at our Roughfort site**. Work is to start shortly on the resurfacing of our existing synthetic hockey pitch, which is currently programmed for completion by July. Our ultimate goal is the installation of a second Astro hockey pitch and practice area and we will keep you posted of plans for that project as it develops. The summer will also see other developments at Roughfort, including the start of the installation of a new free-standing hosting pavilion adjacent to the existing changing pavilion. The new pavilion will be a fantastic indoor space that comprises of additional changing facilities, all-access toilets and a flexible much needed social space suitable for use as a classroom, pre and post-match briefings, analytics and hospitality. This will enable us to offer our visiting teams the same standard of facilities and refreshments that our pupils and staff experience at away games. The addition of these new facilities at the pavilion will significantly increase the quality of provision for our pupils, our visitors and our supporters. This is all part of an ongoing enhancement programme over the past three years to develop Roughfort into a Centre for Sporting Excellence. This has included new spectator steps at Pitch 1, new improved security fencing and new gates to secure the site, the re-surfacing of the existing car park and construction of a new temporary overflow car park as well as the purchase of a new standalone mobile catering van which now enables light refreshments to be offered to players, parents and visitors and enhances the experience we can offer to those attending matches at Roughfort.

As you read about the School's and pupil accomplishments and our plans, keep in mind that our successes would not be possible without you, our supportive alumni and friends of the Academy. Thank you all for your continued support which is essential to the future and success of Belfast Royal Academy. I hope you take some time to relax and enjoy time with family and friends over the upcoming holiday break and we look forward to welcoming you back to the Cliftonville Road in the near future.

Hilary Woods
Principal

The 1785 Foundation

A huge thank you to all of our alumni who support the School via the 1785 Foundation. The donations we receive via the Foundation from our alumni community are essential as they allow us to continue to provide exceptional educational experiences and opportunities to all of our pupils. The 1785 Foundation plays an increasingly important role in school life. In only the first year since its inception many pupils have already benefited from its funds through initiatives such as our complimentary breakfast

fruit and snack bars, pastoral counselling and through the provision of new equipment for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

The support provided by the Foundation this term alone has provided funding to assist with a grant to the Dance Team for participation in a regional competition, the purchase of new kit for the first Cricket Team and financial assistance for pupils competing in the all-Ireland Linguistics Olympiad in Dublin.

If you would like to find out more about the Foundation or how you can join or give a one-off gift donation, please visit our website at

<https://www.belfastroyalacademy.com/support-us/the-1785-foundation>

Keep in touch and support our future

We are always delighted to hear updates from alumni around the world, so please do send us any interesting stories or news that you would like to share with the School community. We also encourage you to stay connected via our social media channels - link to Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to hear about all of the new and exciting things happening in the School.

To help us strengthen and grow the Belfast Royal Academy community, please do share this email with other former school friends you are still in touch with and encourage others to update their contact details with the School's Alumni Association online at

<https://www.belfastroyalacademy.com/alumni/the-academy-alumni-association>

Dates for your Diary

Alumni Annual Dinners

Edinburgh Dinner - Friday 21st April 2023

Belfast Dinner – Saturday 25th November 2023

London Dinner - Friday 8th March 2024

Old Boys' AGM – Tuesday 25th April, 6.30pm at School

Alumni Networking Breakfast – Wednesday 17th May, 8.00am at Ten Square Hotel, Belfast

FOTA - A Night at the Races & Hog Roast - Saturday 20th May, 7.00pm at The Academy Club, Mallusk

Old Girls' Afternoon Tea – Saturday 3rd June, 2.30pm at The Reform Club, Belfast

Old Boys' Cricket Match vs the School – Friday 23rd June, 2pm at Castle Grounds, Ben Madigan.

Alumni Reunions

Class of 1973	- 50 year Reunion -	Friday 19th May
Class of 1983	- 40 year Reunion -	Friday 26th May
Class of 1993	- 30 year Reunion -	Friday 9th June
Class of 2003	- 20 year Reunion -	Friday 16th June

Enquiries about any of the above events should be directed to the Alumni Office at **028 9074 0423** or by emailing alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net

