



Annual Report

2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

CURRICULUM

Belfast Royal Academy aims to give its pupils a broad, balanced and relevant education. In the Junior School we seek to give equal opportunities to all pupils and the emphasis is on discovery and enjoyment. In these early years, we seek to instil in pupils good study skills and habits which will equip them for GCSE level and beyond. It is the School's aim that the timetable should be constructed to meet the needs of its pupils. To that end, as much freedom of choice as possible is offered to pupils at KS3, GCSE, AS and A2 levels. We endeavour to continually evaluate the curriculum, introducing new subjects that, in our view, serve the needs and aspiration of our pupils.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum

2024-25

Pupils in **Key Stage 3 (Forms 1-3)** follow a broad common curriculum, developing knowledge and skill across a wide range of subjects.

In **Forms 1 and 2** classes are not streamed. Pupils are divided into seven classes and are taught in this arrangement for non-practical subjects.

The practical subjects, Art and Design, Home Economics, Computer Science, Music, Science and Technology and Design, are taught in smaller groups. At all Key Stage 3 years, the three Science subjects, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, are taught separately, each for two sixty-five minute periods per fortnight.

In **Form 3** pupils are partially streamed in Mathematics, but all other classes remain mixed. Pupils choose to study three subjects from the following choice of eight: Business Studies, Computer Science, Drama, German, Home Economics, Latin, Spanish and Technology. Each of these option subjects is studied for three periods per fortnight.

At all **Key Stage 3** years, pupils follow a course in Learning for Life and Work which involves the three strands: Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability. In Form 3 pupils have one dedicated Careers period per fortnight. RSE is delivered in line with statutory guidance and makes use of CCEA resources. Pupils in **Form 1** have one LORIC (Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communication) period per fortnight.

KS3 Subject	Number of periods (per fortnight)		
	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3
Art	2	1	2
Biology	2	2	2
Business Studies	-	-	3*
Careers	-	-	1
Chemistry	2	2	2
Computer Science	-	-	3*
Drama	-	1	3*
English	5	5	5
French	5	3	3
Geography	3	3	3
German	-	1	3*
History	3	3	3
Home Economics	1	1	3*
IT	1	1	-
Latin	2	2	3*
Learning for Life and Work	2	2	-
LORIC	1	-	-
Mathematics	5	5	6
Music	2	2	2
PE	2	2	2
Physics	2	2	2
RE	2	2	3
Spanish	-	1	3*
Technology	2	3	3*
Total	44	44	44

All pupils have 4 periods of games per fortnight and a tutorial period one a week.

*Option subject, 3 periods per fortnight.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum - 2024-25

Pupils in **Key Stage 4 (Forms 4 and 5)** follow a common core curriculum and then choose from a range of subject options. Pupils take a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 subjects at GCSE. Option block subjects are studied for five periods per fortnight. All pupils take GCSEs in English, Mathematics and Religious Education. Approximately 85% of pupils take English Literature and approximately 30% take Further Mathematics.

Most pupils take at least one Science subject at Triple Award standard. A small number of pupils follow a Single Award Science option.

All pupils study at least one modern or classical language chosen from: French, German, Latin and Spanish.

In addition, pupils have three other GCSE choices.

Non-GCSE subjects taken by all pupils are PE and Games (Form 4) and Games (Form 5), and LLW, which includes the three strands: Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability. Pupils in Form 5 have a dedicated Careers period, and a dedicated Study Skills period. RSE is delivered in line with statutory guidance and makes use of CCEA resources.

The table below gives the full list of the twenty-five subjects *currently* offered at GCSE.

Subject Title (Awarding Body)	Subject Title (Awarding Body)
Art and Design (CCEA)	Further Mathematics (CCEA)
Biology (CCEA)	Geography (CCEA)
Business Studies (CCEA)	German (CCEA)
Chemistry (CCEA)	History (CCEA)
Computer Science (OCR)	Latin (OCR)
Design and Technology ((CCEA)	Mathematics (CCEA)
Digital Technology (CCEA)	Music (CCEA)
Drama (CCEA)	Physical Education (CCEA)
Economics (CCEA)	Physics (CCEA)
English Language (CCEA)	Religious Education (AQA)
English Literature (CCEA)	Single Award Science (CCEA)
Food and Nutrition (CCEA)	Spanish (CCEA)
French (CCEA)	

Sixth Form Curriculum – 2024-25

All pupils in **Lower Sixth** study three or four subjects to AS level and most continue with three subjects in Middle Sixth to the full A Level qualification. A number of pupils continue with four subjects to A2 Level. About 15 pupils complete their GCE Mathematics in one year, and a small number of these pupils may complete five A Levels by the end of the Sixth Form. In their Lower Sixth Year, pupils have the option of some enrichment courses including choir, and work experience in local primary schools. In addition, all pupils have a tutorial period once each week which includes elements of Religious Education and UCAS preparation as well as a devoted programme for our Oxbridge candidates. Games are optional for pupils in the Sixth Form. Pupils who do not participate in games have a Study period instead.

The table below gives the full list of the 30 subjects currently offered at AS and A2.

Subject Title (Awarding Body)	Subject Title (Awarding Body)
Art and Design	Health and Social Care (CCEA)
Biology (CCEA)	History (CCEA)
Business Studies (CCEA)	Latin (OCR)
Chemistry (CCEA)	Mathematics (CCEA)
Computer Science (Pearson)	Moving Image Arts (CCEA)
Digital Technology (CCEA)	Music (CCEA)
Drama and Theatre Studies (AQA)	Nutrition and Food Science (CCEA)
Economics (WJEC)	Physical Education (Pearson)
English Language (AQA)	Physics (CCEA)
English Literature (CCEA)	Psychology (WJEC)
French (CCEA)	Religious Studies (CCEA)
Further Mathematics (CCEA)	Sociology (WJEC)
Geography (CCEA)	Software Systems Development (CCEA)
German (CCEA)	Spanish (CCEA)
Government and Politics (CCEA)	Technology and Design (CCEA)

DEPARTMENTS

ART AND DESIGN

Subject numbers have stayed stable, and last year we had 14 AS students who chose Art and Design for A-level. This year, the Form 5 class has continued with 30 pupils.

Our senior pupils had the opportunity to attend the Royal Ulster Academy of Arts Annual Exhibition at the Ulster Museum. These trips helped enhance their course as they viewed a range of work and were given a detailed tour by Maggie Bowen. The pupils also enjoyed a talk from Alison Lowry, who discussed her glass installation work and career journey.

The Art and Design Department continued with its many highly successful Art Clubs: the After-school Fantasy Art Club, Comic Creators Club, Game Makers Club, Staff Art Club, and the Inktober drawing challenge month. All these clubs are run by Art Technician Laura Atkins.

The Art Department and school were very excited to have been given the opportunity to work with Translink and Seedhead Arts to co-create a Street Art Mural on the themes of connection and belonging. This mural was developed as part of Translink's engagement work with young people in North Belfast in relation to the underpass transformation and construction of the new York Street Station, of which BRA pupils are the largest daily users. A group of 15 pupils from B.R.A. worked with Translink and Seedhead Arts over three workshops to establish an understanding and appreciation for Street Art. During these workshops, the pupils' ideas and information were incorporated with Translink and Seedhead Arts' message into a brief for the artist, Eoin/Emic (Instagram: Emicartist). From this brief, he then developed the design and created the mural on the side of the Sixth Form Centre during the Easter break.

The North Belfast Area Learning Community Schools' Art Exhibition took place in October, hosted by Ulster University. Ten of our outstanding Art and Design pupils, along with their family and friends, were invited to celebrate their successes over the last year. It was a wonderful evening where they were able to view their creative work in the Belfast Campus' School of Art alongside that of pupils from several other North Belfast schools.

The school was gifted several tabletop easels by former pupil and artist, Francis McCrory. We are hoping to build future links with Francis and have him visit the school for a talk and a workshop.

The Art Department ran a ceramics Christmas wreath-making workshop in November for the Friends of the Academy to help raise much-needed funds.

Two pupils from B.R.A., Ines Scott and Jai Beattie, were selected to be part of the first children's art exhibition run by Frame of Mind, a gallery on the Ormeau Road.

The Annual Art and Design Exhibition in the Art and Design Department took place this year in June. Work was on display from the GCSE and A-Level cohorts, as well as the

junior classes and extracurricular Art Clubs, in our dedicated exhibition space and art classrooms. We also had the Staff Preview Art and Design Exhibition event, where school staff viewed the artwork and raised money for Save the Children.

Mr Simon covered Mrs Hare's maternity leave from September to December, with Mrs Hare returning to work in January.

Mrs Patterson and Mrs McDevitt attended agreement trials for Art and Design, run by CCEA.

The Owl Cover for 2023-24 was designed by Iona Navarro-McIntosh.

BIOLOGY

The 2024-2025 academic year was an exceptional one. We saw numerous achievements, events and milestones that contributed to an overall enriching experience for both students and staff.

This academic year began with Dr Shiels welcoming a beautiful baby girl. During her maternity leave, Mrs MacPherson stepped into cover her responsibilities, quickly becoming a valuable asset to the Biology team. We wish Mrs MacPherson every success in her new role in Grosvenor Grammar school.

Our students entered two different competitions. Firstly, a total of eleven pupils entered the Biology Olympiad, organised and facilitated by Dr Anderson. The pupils attained a range of commendable results, including one silver, three bronze and one highly commended. Secondly, four pupils participated in the Cambridge Biology Challenge organised by Dr Currie, a rigorous competition which required candidates to respond to a series of complex questions through a medium of their choosing. Our pupils performed exceptionally well and the term secured 17th place out of 914 teams - an outstanding achievement.

In conjunction with the GCE AS Biology course, candidates are expected to understand elements of fieldwork as part of their studies in the areas of Ecology and Biodiversity. The Biology staff organised for all LVI Biologists to travel to Crawfordsburn Country Park, County Down, in March to take part in a series of activities specifically designed to help them fully grasp the specification content. This was facilitated by the Biology staff and provided our pupils with an interactive experience. We won't lie - the weather really helped this day be a great success!

Not to be left out, in March the A2 Biologists spent the day at W5, where they had an amazing experience attending "DNA in a Day". This was invaluable for our pupils to get authentic live laboratory experience, where they had the opportunity to study their own DNA sample. All pupils gained invaluable knowledge from course director, Shaun, who displayed a real passion for DNA.

In May, the Biology department welcomed a number of local primary school children for 'The Big Day of Science', with pupils getting to use a microscope to make plant cell slides and learn about the building blocks of life. The primary schools contacted our school afterwards to thank us for such a wonderful experience.

Several Biology staff completed CCEA marking during the summer term, with some even continuing their work over the summer break. This invaluable contribution supports the teaching of our GCSE and GCE courses and provides essential insight for future assessments.

We were thrilled by the results our pupils achieved in August 2025. We extend our gratitude to each of our pupils for their dedication and perseverance, reflected in a brilliant set of results. We commend our pupils for their hard work.

BUSINESS STUDIES

The Business Studies Department had another successful year with results at GCSE and A Level being in line with, or above, the NIGSA. The Department continued to strive to support pupils achieve their full potential.

A significant transition for the department was the retirement of long-standing member and Subject Leader, Mrs McQuiston, in June 2025, after many years of dedicated service.

Looking ahead, the department is committed to raising pupil attainment further. To better bridge the gap between academic theory and professional practice, we will be significantly enhancing our engagement outside of the classroom. This includes the introduction of industry visits for pupils. In the new year, we intend to launch 'The Business Breakfast', which will regularly feature guest speakers drawn from a range of businesses and industries.

CHEMISTRY

The Chemistry Department had a 98 % A*-C pass rate at A2 level, 85 % A-C at AS level and 99 % A*-C at GCSE level.

An excellent total of 12 pupils achieved an A* at A level (24 %) and 54 % of the cohort achieved an A* - A grade.

Anna O'Dowd achieved the incredible achievement of full marks (600 UMS) in her A level examinations.

46 % of the cohort achieved an A grade at AS level.

An unbelievable total of 42 pupils (almost 36 % of the cohort) achieved an A* at GCSE level and almost 79 % of the cohort achieved an A* - A grade.

The results obtained by the Chemistry department were considerably above the NIGSA at all levels.

4 pupils competed in the regional heat of the 'Top of the Bench' Competition, finishing in second place.

30 Form IV pupils attended the 'Chemistry at Work' exhibition, run by Queen's University Belfast in the Whitla Hall.

COMPUTER SCIENCE/DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

The department has continued to demonstrate strong academic performance across all examination levels. At GCSE, 58% of Computer Science students achieved A*/A grades, reflecting sustained high standards and strong pupil engagement with the subject. GCSE Digital Technology achieved a 100% A–C pass rate, highlighting the effectiveness of classroom delivery, assessment preparation, and curriculum sequencing. At A Level, Software Systems Development results were significantly above the NIGSA average for A*/A achievement, reflecting the high standard of pupil performance and engagement. A Level Digital Technology also performed strongly, with four pupils achieving an A* grade and overall results again significantly above the NIGSA average for A*/A attainment. These outcomes collectively reflect the dedication of staff, the analytical and creative abilities of our pupils, and the growing appeal of digital pathways within the school.

Looking ahead, the department is committed to enriching learning experiences through meaningful industry-linked opportunities. In the new year, pupils will participate in a STEAM Studio programme hosted by Liberty IT, where they will have the chance to design, code, and build their own arcade game—developing teamwork, problem-solving, and real-world programming skills. We are also preparing for participation in the Igloo Code competition, where pupils collaborate to solve timed programming challenges, encouraging resilience, computational thinking, and competitive enthusiasm. Across the department, there continues to be a high level of student interest, with pupils keen to take part in clubs, competitions, enrichment workshops, and wider digital learning experiences. This positive momentum supports the department's ongoing commitment to fostering digital literacy for all learners.

DRAMA

11 pupils studied Drama and Theatre at GCE A-Level: 100% obtained grades A-C.

12 pupils studied GCSE Drama: 100% obtained A*-B with an impressive 75% obtaining an A*-A grade.

Over three consecutive nights in November, the Senior School musical *Legally Blonde* was performed to packed out audiences. An enthusiastic cast and crew helped ensure a very successful and enjoyable production.

The Drama department was once again selected to be a part of the Schools' Affiliation scheme with the Lyric Theatre, Belfast. The aim of the scheme is to develop relationships and strengthen communication with the Lyric. We are delighted that the department has been selected to be part of the programme for the 2025/26 academic year.

GCSE and A Level students took part in a series of workshops with local theatre companies:

- In October, after attending a performance of *Richard III* at the Lyric Theatre, Sixth Form students took part in a workshop with the producers of the show;
- In January, Lower VI students attended a theatre workshop with Bruiser Theatre Company at the Mac, Belfast. Led by artistic director Lisa May, students attended four ninety-minute workshops with industry experts which proved invaluable in helping them prepare for their practical examination, as well as showcasing a variety of careers in the Creative Arts industry;
- In March, GCSE Drama students from Form IV took part in a devising workshop with the Lyric Theatre to help them with the construction of their practical controlled assessment.
- In June, Form IV Drama students attended a pre-show discussion with the costume team at the Lyric Theatre before they watched a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

GCSE and A Level students attended a series of locally produced live theatre performances including *Richard III*, *Yerma* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Lyric and *Wasted* and *Murder for Two* at the Mac.

In the Spring term, GCSE Drama students showcased their practical work to a packed-out audience of friends and family.

MVI student Aoife Riddell was cast in a featured role in a new film commissioned by Film 4. Filming took place in England between October-November 2024 with a release date pencilled in for next year.

Junior Drama Club continued to be a very successful and popular extra-curricular activity, attracting up to thirty Form I and II pupils on Wednesday afternoons.

ECONOMICS

A change of government in the UK and the return of Donald Trump as US President meant that 2024-25 was another exciting year to be studying Economics, as pupils had the opportunity to analyse and discuss such topics as changes in National Insurance contributions and the potential effects of Trump's tariffs.

During the year pupils attended a LVI Conference organised by Ulster University.

I have continued to amend my teaching notes on an annual basis to take account of the changes in the economy and where I feel that the layout could be improved to prepare pupils as well as possible for the WJEC examination.

I have continued to send an “Economics Briefing” by email to the parents of Sixth Form pupils on a regular basis, to provide details of upcoming class assessments, the range of marks on completed assessments and other information which I thought might be of interest. This was well received by parents.

The Economics results at all levels were very encouraging this year: A level 94.1% A*-C, AS 82.3% A-C and GCSE 100%.

We finished the MVI year as usual with a Pizza and Hot Dog Evening which most pupils chose to attend.

Around half of A2 pupils have chosen to study Economics or a closely related subject at university in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and England.

ENGLISH

This year, 37 pupils studied English Literature at GCE A Level, while a further 21 opted for GCE A Level English Language. 100% of A2 Literature students obtained A*- C while 80% of A2 Language students achieved A*- C.

211 pupils studied GCSE English Language with 196 pupils also completing GCSE English Literature. 100% of Language students obtained A*- C and 100% of English Literature students achieved A*- C.

With the support of Miss Herron and in co-ordination with Translink Poetry Workshop, BRA students took part in a special creative writing workshop at Belfast's Grand Central Station in February 2025. Students were inspired to craft poems on the themes of journeys and connections during a 90-minute session hosted by Translink writer-in-residence, Niamh McNally. These poems were then published in 'Poetry in Motion'.

The Department created a shared education schools' poetry anthology entitled *Future Voices*. The anthology launch and poetry reading took place at St Malachy's College where representatives from schools in the NBALC were in attendance. Representatives from Ulster University and the John Hewitt Society gave speeches at the event and applauded the work of the students. It was also a highlight of the *Look North!* literary festival.

Facilitated by Dr Dunlop, senior students enjoyed a visit by local author Kelly McCaughrain, who gave pupils an overview as to how she came up with story ideas and the research she conducted to write her novel, 'Little Bang'. The author also treated the pupils to a reading from her novel and stayed behind afterwards to sign copies.

B.R.A. students, with the support of Ms McBeth and Mr Spence, worked with Habitat for Humanity. The students raised money and awareness through a range of activities including events for St Valentine's Day and Easter. The group were also involved in presentations by Habitat for Humanity and helped in their Lisburn 'Re-store' shop sorting, pricing and organising items for resale.

In co-operation with the School Library, Accelerated Reader proceeded for Forms I and II. Our pupils managed to read 48,808,119 words and passed 1,018 quizzes. Pupils were awarded House points for becoming 'Millionaires' and/or members of the '100% Club' - winners having read over one million words or achieving 100% in their reading quizzes.

Other pupil-focused activities included Read-On week as Form I and II pupils, co-ordinated by Ms McBeth and Dr Mort, raised £1255.56 for Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children.

Staff development activities included a trip to Seamus Heaney HomePlace alongside English Literature students from St Malachy's College, and Dr Mort leading the English department in an introduction to AI and Notebook LM. Colleagues also attended a Shared Education day with St Malachy's, Belfast, as well as hosting a student from QUB, Micheal McCann.

GEOGRAPHY

The Geography Department had another successful year both inside and outside the classroom. Examination results for the department were extremely positive and are above the NIGSA with 100% of students attaining A*-C at A level and 98% at GCSE.

We were delighted that one of our Geography A Level pupils, Emily Warnock, was accepted to read Law at Cambridge, whilst Anna McWilliams and Emily Anderson chose to study Geography at Queen's University Belfast and Durham respectively.

Geography continues to be a popular choice at GCSE and A Level with numbers continuing to grow. The current Form 4 cohort has 65 students which is showing demand in that area with a third class at GCSE for the first time in over a decade. This is very pleasing for the department as the subject links to a wide range of university choices and careers including Medicine, Law, Environmental Science and Business.

During the year, the department had two students attend the British Council Mock COP 28 event at Belfast City Hall. Anna McWilliams and Zoe Piddington, represented the UK and, whilst developing their political skills, secured deals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We held a successful careers event at W5, with local companies promoting their businesses and how they link to sustainability. The pupils had the opportunity to ask questions of the CEOs and discuss their aspirations in the global markets.

In October, we were able to take our Lower 6th pupils to the North Coast for a Sand Dune Study. This linked well to their Unit 1 and 3 examinations. The pupils went to Magilligan Field Centre and were able to take advantage of the expertise of the field centre staff to complete their study. The pupils visited Magilligan Point and went through the Umbra Sand Dunes, studying the local wildlife, soil pH, temperature, and soil water content. This was a great experience and allowed our pupils to apply classwork learning to the real-world environment.

Additionally, Form 5 pupils visited Limavady for their river study. This involved getting their feet wet in the River Roe whilst studying the changing river characteristics as we moved downstream.

The department led a very successful trip to Naples in Italy, with 60 pupils embracing the chance to study coasts and volcanic activity around the island of Capri and Mount Vesuvius. This was an excellent opportunity for the pupils to explore their curriculum in real life and hopefully we can continue with similar trips in the future.

In addition to this, F5-M6 students also had the opportunity to visit New York, taking in the sights, sounds and character of the Big Apple. An amazing opportunity we hope to replicate again with senior pupils.

The department saw 'Geography Club' start for junior school pupils, involving games, discussions and useless facts on Monday lunchtimes. This is an extremely popular club, with over 40 pupils regularly attending. Additionally, the department has started an Eco Society called the 'Green Goblins', who meet once a fortnight. They will work towards the Green Flag award and ensure B.R.A. becomes a more sustainable school going forward.

The staff continue to work hard to develop resources, materials and revision for pupils, providing extra support during the week and on Tuesday afternoons to pupils who require some additional assistance.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Once again, 2024-25 proved to be a successful year for the Politics department, despite having just one class of each LVI and MVI pupils. At AS, all 18 pupils achieved A-C grade, with Vadym Skochelyas-Mizerak scoring 154 UMS out of 160 and achieving full UMS in AS2, showing promising signs for his grade at A2.

At A2, Amandine Chesnel was awarded an A*, much deserved with her innate ability and hard work. She achieved full UMS marks in A22 to add to her full UMS at AS2. Lucy Moran also achieved A*. This was achieved through her own dogged determination to succeed. At AS, she was only just awarded an A grade having misread an essay question in AS1. It is also worth noting that she joined Politics a few weeks after the start of LVI after an unsuccessful foray into Physics A Level, showing the importance of getting subject choice right and allowing pupils to switch if the timetable allows. Both Amandine and Lucy took part in politics-related extra-curricular activities organised over their two years,

demonstrating once again the importance of experiencing politics outside of the classroom.

The 'Booklet Reduction Programme' was successful. In the AS course, there was a saving of around 100 pages of notes and over 30,000 words across both modules, while at A2 there were 58 fewer pages than 2023-2024 and 17,000 words fewer, with all of this decrease in A21. Across both AS and A2 levels, it came from removing older examples, streamlining explanations and putting background material on PPT instead. All of this had come at no consequence to the grades which pupils achieved and indeed helped weaker students in streamlining what they need to know for their examinations.

Politics in Action

Sadly, Politics in Action suffered from a loss of funding early in the academic year, but they were able to run a skeleton programme through Education Authority funding. Nine LVI pupils took part in three afterschool sessions with students from Dominican College for the North Belfast cluster. The theme was 'Democracy: Threats and Opportunities'. As a group they focused on two issues, political education and integration. Firstly, in political education, they wanted:

- Citizenship to be a relevant subject which has more value in schools.
- GCSE Politics to be more widely available across schools.
- More access to politicians.

Their second issue was on integration where they highlighted a desire for:

- More integrated education.
- More understanding of each other's culture.
- More cross-community schemes.

As ever, Ulster University's Dr. David McCann facilitated the discussion to ensure their ideas were realistic and achievable and helped produced the report based on their discussions.

The finale took place in Girdwood Community Hub, with all the clusters there for a day with local politicians and a varied programme of workshops on issues such as racism, violence against women and girls and votes at 16. I was glad to be able to offer spaces to Form 5 pupils interested in studying A Level Politics and note that nine students who attended that day have begun AS Politics.

As a Politics in Action school, we were also invited to attend 'Passing the Torch' at QUB to hear from Senator George Mitchell. While this event took place during the Easter holidays, there was still a good representation of pupils from B.R.A.. It was also good to see former pupil (and one-time Politics student), Zara Meadows, who had been invited to read her poetry at the event.

Politics Trips

In September, nine LVI and MVI pupils attended the one-day conference at QUB, 'Our Voices Matter – Faiths Together for Climate Justice and Peace'. This included an opportunity to engage with South Belfast MP, Claire Hanna, and Green Party Deputy

Leader, Lesley Veronica. They participated in a workshop led by theologian, Sinologist, and author in international faith and religion Professor Martin Palmer, and John Barry, Professor of Green Political Economy at QUB.

In January, LVI pupils visited Stormont for a visit to the NI Assembly. We were able to see Members' Statements with topics raised including the power cuts from Storm Éowyn, the funding of the sports pitch at Lisneal College and mental health provision. During the visit, we met MLAs Gerry Carroll, Nuala McAllister and Phillip Brett. As it was one year to the day that the Assembly was restored, we got to experience the buzz of walking the corridors, seeing press conferences in action and pupils met journalists from nearly every media outlet. It is a worthwhile visit.

In February, 35 FV-MVI students visited New York City on a joint Politics and History trip. There they got to visit iconic sites, such as the Empire State Building, Central Park and the Rockefeller Centre. We took time at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum to consider the impact of 9/11 on the USA and on global politics, as well as visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island immigration museum, highlighting issues of freedom and migration. There is no doubt, the trip was a great success!

As ever, I enjoy being able to take pupils out of the classroom to experience and to meet politicians, decision-makers and key players, and this year was no exception. I am indebted to current and retired staff for accompanying us on Politics trips through the year, making them possible for the pupils.

Law and Politics Society

Law and Politics Society got off to a slow start this year, but we were able to have two very valuable sessions with pupils interested in following this career path. Pupils were given a wide choice of journal and newspaper articles to read and then review. They presented their reading to the group with discussion on its issue following.

Mock Presidential Election

In November, the School took to the polls again for the B.R.A. Mock Presidential Election. As in 2016 and 2020, each Tutor Group was given a state to represent and so we were able to follow the Electoral College system that the real presidential election uses (the election is not decided on popular vote).

Voting took place via Google Classroom, with pupils looking to exercise their (mock) democratic right digitally. With just Donald Trump and Kamala Harris on the ballot, pupils could opt to spoil their ballot and still help their House win the House competition based on turnout.

The result was a clear win for the Democratic candidate, Kamala Harris, winning 366 electoral college votes to Donald Trump's 122, meaning that Donald Trump has never won a B.R.A. Mock Presidential Election. Furthermore, 2024 proved no different to 2016 and 2020 in that Donald Trump is not electorally popular with girls' registration classes; he picked up no electoral college votes when girls were the sole electors. The tutor group/state breakdown was also particularly interesting as it demonstrated, as was also

the case in both 2016 and 2020, that Form V boys are Trump supporters. Despite doing it online, the results information sent out to tutor groups presented the opportunity for discussion on whether the electoral college vote was fair, as Trump received just 12% of the electoral college votes compared to 18% of the popular vote.

In the associated House competition, which was based on turnout, Pottinger again took the glory with 33% turnout. Currie beat Cairns to second place, with Shaw bringing up the rear. However, it is concerning to note the voter apathy that seems to have become a trend, as voter turnout has declined by around 10% in each election from 2016 until 2024. However, this will not deter the Department from running this event again as it serves to illustrate to students of the responsibility we have as citizens and that decisions are made by those who show up - even in this mock election.

Staff Professional Development

In December, I was part of the group from B.R.A. that travelled to the Bristol area to visit Will Smith and the Greenshaw Learning Trust. This was a very beneficial trip in allowing us to see different strategies and consider tweaks and changes that we could make in B.R.A., particularly around reading, retrieval practice and whole year assemblies. Since our return, we have met, along with others as the Teaching and Learning group, honing our classroom practice.

Although two of the schools we visited did not have Sixth Form, I was challenged in one History A Level class seeing the pupils copy notes from the board. Clearly, their lessons were not simply this, but it did highlight to me that 'old-fashioned' teaching methods can still have a place in education today, with the obvious benefits of pupils getting used to writing in examinations and improving legibility.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Health and Social Care continues to be a popular choice, with 23 pupils enrolled for the 2024-2025 academic year. The high enrolment led to a request to the Board of Governors to acquire five Chromebooks, ensuring every student has access to a computer for the substantial coursework component. To accommodate future growth, we anticipate the need for a second Health and Social Care class and hope to secure an additional teacher.

In October 2024, all Lower VI pupils completed a self-organised work placement as part of their first coursework unit. A number of students participated in a primary school experience led by Ms Graham, while others arranged placements at their former primary schools or other settings. Pupils who were unable to secure a placement conducted an interview with a health professional, though a placement would have provided a more robust learning experience.

To support teaching and learning for the pre-release paper on hospice care, Middle VI students had the opportunity to hear from guest speaker Joanne Ballentine, a former employee of Hospice NI, in April 2025.

Subject Leader Mrs McNally maintains a strong and beneficial relationship with the Careers department. This collaboration is key to organising the October work placements for Lower VI students. Additionally, Mr Murphy provides valuable support with charter applications, which are excellent placement opportunities within the hospital. Mrs McNally is also involved in supporting students with practice interviews for students who have applied to teaching via UCAS and was also involved the medical interviews which was run this year in Dominican College Fortwilliam.

Targets for the Next Academic Year

- **A-Level:** 100% of students to achieve A*-C grades at the A2 and AS Levels.
- **A-Level:** 10% of students to achieve A*-A grades at the A2 Level.

HISTORY

Staffing

The 2024-25 academic year began with Mr Andrew Cave temporarily covering Mrs Robyn Chambers' maternity leave. However, Mr Cave was appointed to a permanent teaching post in Sullivan Upper in November 2024 and was temporarily replaced by Mr Gareth Ney, who completed Mrs Chambers' maternity leave. Mrs Chambers returned from her maternity leave in April 2025. Mr Alan Campbell has been appointed to a one year temporary post for the academic year 2024-25 created by Mrs Tate and Mrs Chamber's job-share arrangement.

Dr Charlene Adair was appointed as a CCEA Principal Examiner for A21 Option 4: The American presidency, 1901-2000 and Ms Katrina Barnett was appointed as a CCEA Principal Examiner for A Level Politics.

Curriculum

At Key Stage 3 we continued to work according to our existing schemes of work, refining booklets, super summaries and common assessments. The Form I summer 10% task was changed to look solely at the Black Death and to no longer compare this to Covid-19. Form II and Form III both completed their 10% written tasks in class rather than at home to reduce the use of AI to generate content. At Key Stage 4, we started the GCSE course with Unit 2 (40%) to help us manage the 40:60 ratio between the two units and to allow us to start Unit 1 (60%) at the end of Form IV. Form V, the first cohort to have sat a module in Form IV, benefitted from having a whole year to study Unit 2. A new pupil booklet was created for this module, along with new examination guidance and past paper questions and A3 super summaries. A-Level pupils continued to study the same modules as in previous years but resources were refined and notes updated for all four modules. The chrome books have been firmly embedded into the department's teaching and learning at all levels.

Enrichment

We had a strong desire this year to continue and expand the variety of enrichment activities on offer to our pupils within the department and as a result, pupils across the year groups were offered a range of historical experiences.

In November 2024, the Belfast Buildings Trust came into the History Department to speak to some of our Form I pupils about their work at Carlisle Memorial Church. The pupils also made Christmas decorations for one of the pillars in the church as a way of bridging the gap between the history of the church and opportunities for its re-use in the future.

In November, Mr Steven Kitchen attended a two-day conference, 'Teaching controversial issues: The Holocaust and The Troubles in Northern Ireland', at Crumlin Road Gaol, led by a French charity, Shoa Foundation. Day one focused on the Holocaust with experts presenting on the difference between antisemitism and anti-Judaism. They also presented on the history of antisemitism and when it 'began'. Finally, the use of photographs to teach the past was exemplified through a workshop on the photos of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This was based on how a photo should be over analysed to provide a whole story rather than glancing at it and making assumptions. Day two focused on teaching The Troubles. This was centralised on the BBC documentary "Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland". Experts led workshops on how to use images of the Troubles to spark debate, in particular through 'silent conversations'. Clips of the documentary were also shown and discussed as to how they could be used in the classroom.

All Form I pupils visited Carrickfergus Castle in late January 2025 to see what life was like in a medieval castle and to learn how it was attacked and defended. This was thoroughly enjoyed all.

In January 2025, a group of LVI historians went on a trip to Clifton Street Cemetery and Clifton House, home of the Belfast Charitable Society and Poor House, founded in 1752. The trip was organised by The Shared Heritage of Clifton Street Project and funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Firstly, the pupils were taken on an hour-long tour of Clifton Street Cemetery. This gave a fascinating insight into the social and political history of Belfast in the 18th and 19th centuries. We saw and heard about graves belonging to rich and important figures such as the social activist and campaigner, Mary Ann McCracken, United Irishman, William Drennan, and Marcus Ward, a 19th century businessman whose company was the first to produce Christmas cards. We also listened to horrific tales of "body snatchers" and in contrast saw a mass grave where 8,000 victims of the Irish Famine were buried. Following the tour, we participated in a workshop back in Clifton House where the historical value of such cemeteries was discussed, and historical sources on our local history were presented. It was so interesting to find out about the amazing wealth of history which is so close to our school.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, and the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. MVI pupil, Grace Rogan, represented Belfast Royal Academy in the Regional Northern Ireland Ceremony at City Hall to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 23rd January 2025 where she spoke about the life experiences of Ivor Pearl, a Hungarian Jew. Ivor was 12 years old when he was taken to Auschwitz. He survived with the help of his older brother, but the rest of his family did not survive. In Ivor's words, 'All I can do is talk about my experiences and to tell whoever wants to listen what happened. Even if there's only one person who has heard either me or somebody

else's story, it makes a difference.' At 8pm on 27th January 2025, the Holocaust Memorial candle was lit in the Crombie as part of the 'Light the Darkness national moment for Holocaust Memorial Day to remember those who were murdered for who they were and stands against prejudice and hatred today.

In February and March, two Form III classes took part in the Nerve Centre's project 'Friday's Future'. Pupils received digital skills training and engaged with archive collections to look at and respond to the history of the Good Friday Agreement. One class also became involved in a Shared Education project with St Malachy's College about the Good Friday Agreement. This involved three separate sessions. In January, 25 students from each school met in the Jackson Suite at B.R.A. for a workshop delivered on 'The Conflict from 1969-1998'. In February, the same students attended the Troubles Exhibition at the Ulster Museum in a joint trip. Staff from the Ulster Museum and Nerve Centre also showed some unique footage from the Good Friday Agreement discussions and discussed it with the students. In March, the final session was held in St Malachy's College where students worked in mixed groups to create a digital project. This was stop-motion animations using iPads, and the final videos were then shared with the group to see how the students had told the story of Northern Ireland's 'shared past' from 1970 to the present day. The project was invaluable in helping students understand such a vital time in Irish history and allowed them to work collaboratively with the boys from St Malachy's College with a positive outcome.

In February MVI pupils travelled to Dublin to see first-hand where events of the Easter Rising and Civil War, studied as part of the A22 module on the partition of Ireland, took place. Their guided tour brought to life key aspects of the course and was enjoyed by all.

In March 2025, some Form V History students enjoyed the screening of the National Theatre Live West End hit play 'Dr Strangelove' starring Steve Coogan at the Theatre at the Mill. The play, an adaptation from Stanley Kubrick's 1964 satire about Cold War brinkmanship, fitted in perfectly with the GCSE History course in International Relations 1945-2003. The students really enjoyed the clever production as Steve Coogan took on four different roles and with classic lines like, "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room", there was much laughter in the audience.

In June 2025, 31 Form I pupils travelled to London on a History trip where they visited the Tower of London, National Portrait Gallery, Imperial War Museum, London Dungeons, Houses of Parliament and went on a boat cruise of the River Thames. It was an excellent opportunity for our young historians to experience History in such an engaging way.

Vision and Visibility

Our Open Nights in January were very successful. C6 again served as our WWI room with an opportunity to enlist and suffer the humiliation of being given a white feather if you did not sign up. Prospective pupils and parents alike really enjoyed the opportunity to sample medieval food and drink at 'Come Dine With Me' and our new code breaker activity.

We have updated our noticeboards in the History foyer to showcase the university courses and career pathways chosen by our alumni.

HOME ECONOMICS

The large number of non-specialist teachers delivering the courses to Forms I-III presented a challenge, especially in terms of consistency. However, the 13 additional staff managed exceptionally well, and these year groups have been producing successful practical and written work.

Form V began their controlled assessment task in September, producing impressive research. Students also excelled in the practical element of the task; their menus were well planned and expertly executed after a lot of practising. The majority of this cohort managed to hand in their coursework more than a week before the final deadline as the result of some new motivational techniques.

MVI students each completed a research project based on a title of their choosing, along with completing theory content for A2 1: Option B.

No longer having to teach LVI and MVI in composite classes meant that pupils in both years could be more closely monitored when completing research, leading to better coursework grades and improved exam results.

Pupils also had many opportunities to take part in some of the extra-curricular Home Economics competitions including the Christmas Yule log decorating competitions for Form I, the edible Christmas wreath competition for Form III, the gingerbread competition for Form IV and the Easter 'B.R.A. Bake Off'.

I was very grateful to have been appointed a part-time technician. Mrs Christine Cusick has been invaluable to the department and has excelled in her role. She has been an excellent support in terms of upkeep in the department and she has also been an excellent support to teaching staff and pupils in practical lessons.

LIBRARY

13 pupils became millionaire readers during the 2024/25 academic year. The Library successfully hosted two Scholastic book fairs throughout the academic year. We earned £835 in total at our fairs and earned £288 worth of free books for our library.

Facilitated by Dr Dunlop, senior students enjoyed a visit by author Kelly McCaughrain. McCaughrain gave an overview as to how she came up with her ideas and the research she conducted to write her novel, 'Little Bang'. The author also treated the pupils to a reading from her novel and stayed behind afterwards to sign copies.

The Library hosted many events throughout the year, including a series of successful reunions for former pupils.

MATHEMATICS

This was another good year for the department in terms of examination results, with specimen changes settling in. We once again had a good uptake for UKMT contests. The department continues to provide a high level of support in person and with resources that are prepared for our students.

Benchmarking GCSE 2025						
CCEA	%A*	%A	%B	%C*	%C	%D
B.R.A.	21.6	73.7	97.7	99.1	100	100
NI Grammar	15.2	53.1	79.3	89.0	100	100

Benchmarking AS 2025					
CCEA	%A	%B	%C	%D	%E
B.R.A.	74.1	86.4	93.8	96.3	100
NI Grammar	48.4	72.7	87.3	95.1	98.7

Benchmarking A2 2025						
CCEA	%A*	%A	%B	%C	%D	%E
B.R.A.	31.3	65.7	88.6	95.7	100	100
NI Grammar	18.7	53.7	76.8	91.7	98.1	99.5

The school representatives continue to perform impressively in competitive, extracurricular Mathematics. The senior UKMT team competitions did not run but the Queen's competition did take place. The senior team of Keshav Raghuram (FV), Vincent McCullough (FV), Ian Dandurand (LVI), and Ben Nemeth (MVI) competed at the Queen's competition, coming third amongst the teams from across NI. The junior team of Edjike Alinonu (FII), Jack Martin (FIII), Ryan Teague (FIII) and Mochsa Weerawardhana (FII) came second in the UKMT team challenge.

Individual competitions continued to produce a large number of awards for B.R.A. pupils and success in the further rounds.

At Senior level, pupils achieved 2 Gold, 13 Silver and 22 Bronze awards. Keshav Raghuram (FV) and Wiktorja Januszka qualified for the next round (the Senior Kangaroo) with Keshav earning a merit certificate.

At Intermediate level, pupils achieved: 7 Gold, 9 Silver and 17 Bronze awards. Vincent McCullough (FV) and Keshav Raghuram (FV) both qualified for the Maclaurin Olympiad and both got merits. UKMT later announced that Vincent had achieved the highest score in Northern Ireland.

At Junior level, pupils achieved: 1 Gold, 7 Silver and 19 Bronze awards. In addition to earning Gold awards, Ejike Alinonu (FII) and Timothy Lee (FI) qualified for the next round (the Junior Kangaroo) with Timothy achieving a gold certificate for his participation.

MOVING IMAGE ARTS

Moving Image Arts uptake in September 2024 was high. Due to this, we had to set a summer task and test. One class of 10 is a manageable amount for this level.

This was the second year of Moving Image Arts and the first year of A2 level.

Mrs Patterson and Mrs McDevitt attended several events throughout the year run by CCEA on marking and teaching Moving Image Arts. They also liaised with St Malachy's College for the moderation and marking process.

Megan Flood (MVI) came in first place in the MIA showcase for her AS-level films. The Moving Image Arts pupils attended the MIA showcase in Cineworld and supported Megan as she received her award. The pupils had the opportunity to view films from the top young filmmakers in Northern Ireland and to meet some of the films' actors and directors in person.

MODERN & CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

The Department once again facilitated several school trips for pupils at Belfast Royal Academy. Pupils studying German visited Munich to discover this Bavarian city and learn about Sophie Scholl who resisted against the Nazis. There was another successful trip to Sorrento for Form III Classics and Geography pupils, whilst Miss Robinson brought forty Form II pupils to Paris. The academic year ended with the penultimate leg of the Camino de Santiago undertaken by LVI pupils.

Moses Hui represented Belfast Royal Academy in the All-Ireland Linguistics Olympiad after reaching the top 100 in all of Ireland.

The German Department welcomed German teachers through the UK German Connections in June. During their time here, they shared good practice in Teaching and Learning.

We were delighted that we had two Oxbridge pupils this year: Clara Walsh will read Classics in St Hilda's at the University of Oxford and Megan Flood will read History and German in St Clare's College at the University of Cambridge.

The Department worked with Queen's University Belfast and welcomed PGCE student Grace McCrea to the French and Spanish Departments. Miss McCrea was an excellent part of the team during her twelve week placement.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

100% of Form V achieved an A*-C in CCEA GCSE Music, 89% achieved A*-C at AS and 100% achieved A*-C at A2

Beth Stewart (M6), Katie Horkan (M6), Rachael Anderson (M6), Niall Blaskett (M6), Aidan Murphy (M6), Jessie McAuley (M6) and Thomas Gillam (M6), gained a place in the National

Youth Choir of NI and 4 pupils gained a place in the Ulster Youth Orchestra; Alex McQueen (L6 cello), Maria Watters (M6 Violin), Jamie Wilson (M6 violin), Edward Nethercott (L6 trumpet). These pupils performed with these groups at various concerts throughout the summer months. Thomas Gillam, Maria Watters, Olivier Staworyzynski, Ed Nethercott and Alex McQueen performed with CBYO on their tour to Italy in July 2025.

Music Scholarships for 2024/25 were awarded to:

Form 1:	Vanessa Morwood & Grace Zhong
Form 2:	Eve McIlmurray & Maelin Nicholl
Form IV:	Odhran McAteer
Form V:	Jacob Gordon & Roisin McCrathy
L6:	Gail Payot & Abigail McKinty
M6:	Jamie Wilson

2024/25 was a very busy year for the Music Department with the pupils performing at a number of events:

- The Chamber Choir and Senior Trad performed at the HMC conference on 30th September and 1st October 2024.
- The Senior Orchestra and Chamber Choir performed at Prize Day in the Spires Centre on 18th October 2024.
- The Chamber Choir participated in a workshop with Andrew Nunn from NYCNI on 24th October 2024.
- The Chamber Choir sang at the 174 Trust's Annual Carol Service in Duncairn Arts Centre on 2nd December 2024 and for the residents in Clifton House on 17th December 2024.
- The Carol Service took place in St Anne's Cathedral with performances from the Senior Choir, Chamber Choir, Junior Choir and Senior Orchestra on 18th December 2024.
- The Boys' Choir entertained everyone on the last day of term before the Christmas Holidays with their lively rendition of well-known Christmas carols.
- The Big Band, Senior and Junior Trad and various string quartets entertained prospective pupils at the School's annual Open Evenings in January 2025.
- Over 350 pupils participated in the annual Spring Concert in the Ulster Hall. There were performances from the Orchestra, Senior Choir, Big Band, Senior Strings, Wind Band, Junior Trad, Senior Trad, Boys' Choir, Junior Choir and Junior Strings. The Senior Choir and Orchestra performed Karl Jenkins' Requiem in the second half of the concert. Maria Watters was the M6 soloist.
- Members of the school Big Band performed with UYJO in the Ulster Hall before the Ulster Orchestra concert on 4th April 2025.

The GCSE Practical took place on 10th April.

Battle of the Bands took place over a number of lunch-times just before the Easter holidays. 'IV', consisting of Gail Payot, Katie Horkan, Jake Coulter and Jack Dowey, took home the award after a fiercely fought competition.

The A2 practical took place on 13th May 2025.

The AS practical took place 19th May 2025.

The Junior Battle of the Bands took place on 14th May with 'Core' taking home the accolade with their rendition of 'Master of Puppets' by Metallica. The band consisted of Form III boys - William Sedgewick, Presley Herdman, Owen Chesnel & Noah Braithwaite.

The junior pupils performed solos in a 'Summer Serenade' concert on 12th June 2025 in the school Assembly Hall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Physical Education department had an excellent year of success within curriculum PE, Examination PE and extracurricular sport.

We received outstanding results in August 2025 for both the GCSE PE and BTEC sport courses. GCSE achieved 100% A*-C grades and BTEC sport an impressive 100% A*-A. The combination of quality teaching and commitment from pupils enabled this to be achieved and shows a positive pattern of results over the past five year.

Within our department over the 2024/25 academic year, staff completed various CPD training to enhance our PE programme and delivery and ensure all pupils received and enjoyed a quality experience. This training included the integration of the community of lifesavers programme for Form III with staff trained in the delivery of lifesaving measures and protocols. Pupils gained valuable knowledge and experience of how they could/should respond if they were to ever find themselves in an emergency situation. Annual first aid training was also completed by staff to ensure that any updates in policies or procedures were shared and understood.

In June 2025 we had our annual sports day at Mary Peters' Track where pupils were able to compete for their House in a variety of athletic events. Some promising talent was on display making it a tight competition, but ultimately Shaw House was victorious.

The Department has a large and successful extra-curricular programme competing in sports beyond Rugby and Hockey to include Cross Country, Athletics, Cricket, Swimming, Tennis, Football and Netball, amongst others. We have a proud sporting history and take joy in carrying on that tradition with our current and future pupils. To honour our past successes, we hold annual 'Old Boys and Old Girls' matches, when current pupils compete against our sporting alumni. This allows our alumni to stay connected with our school as well as share in the success of our current pupils and their hard work and dedication to their sport.

The success of this Department is directly linked to the passionate and experienced staff within the B.R.A. PE Department. At the end of the 2024-25 academic year, we said farewell to two long-standing members of staff, Mr Ian McGonigle (Subject Leader) and Mrs Nadine Nicholl (Head of Hockey) as they start their journey into retirement. Our sincere thanks to these two remarkable educators for the many years they dedicated to the school and the countless achievements during their time with us, and we send well wishes to them for all that their futures have in store.

PHYSICS

17 GCSE and A2 pupils entered the British Physics Olympiad competitions. A total of two Gold, seven silver and eight Bronze Awards were achieved.

At GCSE level, 99.1% of students attained a grade A*-C, with 91.2% awarded a grade A*-B.

Grade A performance at AS level was 28.1% above the Northern Ireland grammar school average, with 60% of students reaching this standard. The A-B and A-C percentages were 90% and 95% respectively.

At A2 level, 70.5% of pupils attained grades A*-B, and 93.5% achieved grades A*-C, 7.5% and 10.5% above the Northern Ireland grammar school average, respectively.

Louis Adams, a former pupil and current undergraduate at Imperial College London, visited the school to give a talk to AS and A2 students on the everyday applications of electromagnetism and PCB design.

Twenty-two Sixth Form students visited CERN in Geneva, along with twenty-three students from St Malachy's College, Belfast. The visit included a lecture by Matthew McCullough – a former pupil and theoretical physicist based at CERN – and a tour of the site.

PSYCHOLOGY

The Psychology department celebrated the results of its first AS cohort, with 87% of students achieving A*-C grades and 33% earning an A grade. Enrolment for the 2024-2025 academic year was high, with a class size of 22 students.

In October 2024, Mrs McNally completed an online professional development course with WJEC Psychology, which was highly beneficial for preparing to teach the A2 course for the first time. She also attended a best practice course for Psychology teachers at Queen's University Belfast in June 2024. This has been instrumental in building a support network with other local teachers. The department plans to use the loan-out resources available from Queen's University's Psychology department during the next academic year.

Mrs. McNally has a strong working relationship with the Careers department. A dedicated Careers notice board for Psychology in J11 keeps students informed about developments and opportunities in the field.

Targets for the Next Academic Year

- **A-Level:** 100% of students to achieve A*-C grades at the A2 and AS Levels.
- **A-Level:** 20% of students to achieve A*-A grades at the A2 Level.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Having switched back to the Church History Module at AS level, we were delighted to see 100% of pupils scored Grades A-C in their AS examinations, although we were disappointed at the lower number of 'A' grades.

We were delighted with 94% of pupils scoring Grade A-C at GCSE, especially as there were 209 students sitting the examination.

In light of only getting 1 hour per week of Form IV RE teaching time, we continued to use the space in the KS3 curriculum to teach the first unit of Form IV GCSE from January of Form III. We felt that this was a very positive decision, and we are in the process of updating the current GCSE notes.

Having completed our third year teaching the new Philosophy unit in place of Mark's gospel at GCSE, we are delighted with the results. We have also further updated the booklets and PowerPoints, making what we believe to be significant adjustments that will further benefit our students. Mr Rowntree and Mr Tice both marked for CCEA (unit 7 Philosophy course).

We carried out five monthly revision sessions (Jan – May) with the GCSE Form IV repeaters.

We produced 'Super Summaries', that simplified and focussed on Key terms / facts for Form IV and Form V GCSE examination use.

We updated and produced new notes for the AS/A2 Philosophy course.

Mr Dorman has built the indispensable Religious Education webpage, which gives all pupils of any year group access to all notes, PowerPoints and extra resources. This is an invaluable tool for them.

We further developed and updated booklets having already embedded the six world faiths into the KS3 syllabus for 2024-25.

SOCIOLOGY

Sociology continues to be a very popular choice at A'Level, especially with new Sixth Form pupils entering the school. Grades remain strong with 43% of pupils achieving A*–

A grades and 100% of pupils achieving A* - C grades in the A2 examinations. 87 % of pupils achieved A – C grades in the AS examinations.

The Department also hosted a QUB student who proved very helpful.

TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN

Mrs Graydon and Mrs McIlwaine continued to run the GETSET programme for girls in Form 3, who designed and manufactured several small projects as a group to encourage their awareness of girls in engineering and STEM subjects. Further, they accompanied a group of Form 3 girls to the annual Girls in Engineering conference at W5 in June. Mrs McIlwaine brought a small group of girls to W5 to attend a 'Women in Motorsport' information day in October.

Throughout the year, Mrs McIlwaine took part in a multi-school Technology teacher CPD opportunity called 'Enthuse' which gave her the opportunity to avail of several training days in 3D printing and CAD/CAM.

This year, the Technology Department took a big step into the unknown, becoming involved in the Advanced Manufacturing Schools' Pathways Programme: 8 schools (4 from Northern Ireland and 4 from the Republic of Ireland) were involved in a cross-curricular programme in the area of advanced manufacturing opportunities and strategies that cumulated in a project development by Form 4 pupils. The process started in September, with an application process open to all Form 4 Technologists, in which 20 were selected. Around 12 L6 and M6 pupils were also selected as mentors to help and guide the F4 pupils. Four groups were created to work on designing and creating a new product within the areas of Mental Health and Disabilities, Health and Sports, Environment or Technology. They worked each week towards a final presentation and awards day in May at Portview Trade Centre to produce a 3d printed prototype product to solve a problem within the themes and presentation boards to display their work. The Programme provided opportunities for both pupils and teachers to develop a range of skills, including:

- Teacher's CPD training in CAD/CAM 3d printed skills
- Pupil visits to Dundalk Centre for Innovation and Queen's University Belfast Centre for Innovation
- Cross community school visits to our partner school Scoil Ui Mhuiri in Dunlerr, Co Louth and local school Belfast Boys' Model
- Industry visit / talks from Power NI and ESO, cyber security and FIT (FastTrack into Information Technology)

Participation in the Programme turned out to be a massive commitment for both teachers and pupils involved - more than expected – but it is hoped that the long term benefits were worth it – pupils had to show commitment and resilience in their work, to work as a team, to meet deadlines and presentation skills, as well as the technological skills in CAD / CAM / 3D printing, which hopefully we will see through their GCSE project in Form 5. The microcosm of a small project scenario showed the same issues that a GCSE project

raises – we had pupils drop out, become apprehensive about the work required under pressure, but also pupils who rose to the challenge and displayed great leadership and technical skills as well as developing relationships with pupils from different schools and backgrounds.

The project was extremely well funded, with support from Dunleer Council, Belfast Unemployment Resource Centre, FIT and The International Fund for Ireland; we were able to have a high quality 3D printer on loan throughout the year, which was extremely beneficial to all pupils in Sixth Form.

SPORT

Rugby

Rugby continued to flourish in school during the 2024/25 season. The 1st XV reached the semi-final of the Schools' Cup losing to eventual winners Wallace High School. Victories were secured over Portadown College and Friends' School Lisburn in the group stage. In the knock-out rounds the squad recorded two excellent wins over Methodist College and Sullivan Upper School, both away from home. The semi-final at the Kingspan was a closely contested match and although the result did not go the way of BRA it was a great occasion for the whole school community. The senior rugby squad enjoyed a very successful tour to Valencia in December. Junior teams continued to play fixtures at both A and B levels on the majority of Saturday mornings. Many players represented Ulster at underage levels. Special mention to Connor McVicker who was selected to represent Ireland Schools in their spring fixtures and their summer tour to South Africa.

Girls' Hockey

Representative Honours:

Ulster U16 Interpro Team: Leah Callaghan

Ireland U16 National Team: Leah Callaghan

The 2024-25 season was successful in many respects. From our enthusiastic Form I players to our triumphant senior teams, every player contributed to a season filled with memorable moments and competitive success.

Our Form I players embraced the season with remarkable dedication, attending three training sessions each week. Their enthusiasm was evident in every drill, match, and tournament. The team participated in several exciting fixtures, including the Methody 8-a-side tournament and the Grosvenor 11-a-side tournament, which provided fantastic opportunities for development and teamwork. The season ended on a high note, with players showing great promise and readiness to begin competing in fixtures every Saturday the following season.

The U13 squad had a highly encouraging season, consistently fielding both A and B teams every weekend. With impressive attendance at training sessions, the players demonstrated a strong commitment to learning and improving. Their performances on the pitch reflected their hard work, with many matches showcasing skilful play and tactical awareness.

The U14 team had a great season, competing in the Junior Stevenson Cup where they successfully qualified out of the group stages. Their journey continued with a strong showing in the Junior Cup, reaching the Quarter Finals. The team displayed exceptional determination, strategic play, and knowledge of the game.

The 5XI team competed in frequent midweek matches, a testament to the strength in numbers that our Senior Hockey programme has. The 4XI team had a commendable run, reaching the Quarter Finals of the 4XI Cup. Their season was marked by solid performances, teamwork, and a fighting spirit that made every match exciting to watch. Another team to reach the Quarter Finals was the 3XI, who competed in the Gibson Cup. Their journey through the competition was a testament to their resilience and tactical discipline.

The 2XI squad had a phenomenal season, crowned Champions of the McDowell Shield. Their success was built on strong leadership, cohesive play, and relentless effort, making them a force to be reckoned with. The pinnacle of the season came with the 1XI team being named Champions of the Senior Shield. Their campaign was nothing short of extraordinary, showcasing elite skill, strategic brilliance, and unwavering determination. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of both players and coaching staff.

As we reflect on a season filled with joy, achievement, and development, we look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year. With such a strong foundation and a passionate community of players, coaches, and supporters, Belfast Royal Academy Hockey is poised for even greater success.

Boys' Hockey

The 1st XI Boys' Hockey team was confidently led by captain Bradley Coburn, whose leadership from the goalkeeper position provided a solid foundation for the team throughout the season. Bradley's calm presence and vocal direction from the back ensured the team remained organised and focused, even during challenging matches. While the season presented its fair share of difficulties, the boys consistently demonstrated high levels of effort, commitment, and sportsmanship. Their attitude never wavered, and they always gave their best—something that was evident in both training and match play.

There were several notable results across the different age groups that highlighted the talent and potential within the Boys' Hockey Programme.

The U16 Taylor Cup team delivered an outstanding performance with a 5-0 victory over Ballycastle, showcasing their attacking flair and defensive discipline. The 1st XI secured a well-earned 2-0 win against Ballycastle in the group stage of the McCullough Cup, a result that reflected their tactical growth and determination. The U13 team impressed with a dominant 7-0 win over Belfast Boys' Model, demonstrating excellent teamwork and skill development at a young age.

It is particularly encouraging to see players of varying experience and ability come together in a school environment to form strong bonds and lasting camaraderie. These relationships, built through shared effort and team spirit, are among the most valuable

outcomes of school sport. The boys will now look forward to a new season of representing B.R.A. in Hockey, gaining opportunities to develop skill and play in competitive fixtures.

Netball

B.R.A. netball had a successful season overall with the highlight including our Senior A team reaching the Semi-final of the Northern Ireland Schools' Cup Competition, losing narrowly to Dominican College. Eight teams played competitive matches in the Northern Ireland League Competitions - the format included blitz days at the initial stages followed by knockout rounds. The Senior squad reached the quarter finals of their league against St Dominic's, unfortunately missing out on advancing to the next round. The Intermediate team reached the semi-final of the Plate competition finishing runners up to Aquinas. We had several house competitions involving both boys and girls. There are a number of non-specialist PE teachers volunteering to coach and support the development of the club. I would like to thank all the players and coaches for their hard work this season.

Representative Honours

U15 Regional Academy- Jessica Smyth

U17 Northern Ireland Squad –Emilia Gordon, Keri Gray, Ema Jones

U19 Northern Ireland Squad- Erin Gray

Athletics (Girls)

The athletics season got underway in mid-March with the traditional Inter-Schools' Meet at Mary Peters Track against Methody, Wallace and Grosvenor. As always, a large number of enthusiastic athletes turned out to train during Games periods, after school and on Saturday mornings, splitting time between Roughfort and Mary Peters Track.

A total of 55 girls proudly represented B.R.A. at the District Championships, many of them competing for the first time. The girls performed brilliantly, securing 3 Gold, 13 Silver and 8 Bronze medals. Standout performances came from Lucie Thomas, Leila Jones, Esther Lawrence, Amelie McKeown, Maja Jones, Molly Adams, Keri Gray, Niamh Cunningham, Eve Manson, Ema Jones, Phoebe Bradley, Hope Daniels and Emma Campbell.

The Ulster Schools' Championships, also held at Mary Peters Track again this year, saw further impressive performances, with one of our senior girls, Phoebe Bradley qualifying for the Irish Schools' Championships in Tullamore in Javelin. Although Phoebe was unfortunately unable to travel to Tullamore due to exam commitments, congratulations are in order, as reaching this level is a superb achievement.

Our annual Sports Day took place on Monday 16th June at Mary Peters Track. Around 530 pupils from Forms 1-4 took part in this fun-filled day. Shaw House claimed the overall trophy-well done to all involved.

Thank you to all staff who helped coach and support our athletes at Athletics this season. A special thanks to Ms Ritchie, whose commitment during the winter months, delivering indoor training in the Sports Hall, has been second to none. Her knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication have been invaluable once again this year.

Below are the key highlights from what has been a memorable and successful 2025 athletics season.

DISTRICT ATHLETICS RESULTS

Mary Peters Track, Thursday 1st May

TOP 3 IN EACH EVENT QUALIFY FOR ULSTER SCHOOLS

Mini Girls

Ivy McCarey - 4th high jump

Emily Calvin - 5th shot

Relay = 2nd

Minor Girls

Lucie Thomas - 3rd in 100m & 3rd long jump

Isabella McBurney - 5th 75mH

Relay = 2nd

Junior Girls

Leila Jones – 1st 1500m & 2nd 75mH

Matilda McAllister – 3rd javelin

Lily Walker – 3rd shot

Olivia McAllister – 4th 75mH

Isabella McCarey – 5th high jump & 5th hammer

Eva Lavery – 5th long jump

Josie Walker – 6th hammer

Relay = 3rd

Intermediate Girls

Esther Lawrence – 1st 300m

Maja Jones – 2nd 300m

Keri Gray – 2nd 80mH & 6th shot

Amelie McKeown – 2nd 300mH & 2nd 1500m

Eve Manson – 2nd 200m & 3rd 100m

Niamh Cunningham – 2nd hammer & 4th shot

Molly Adams – 3rd triple jump & 4th long jump

Sophia Morwood – 4th 800m & 5th long jump

Evie Lewis – 4th discus

Holly Johnston – 5th 80mH & 6th high jump

Olivia McCall – 6th triple jump

Relay = 2nd

Senior Girls

Hope Daniels – 1st 100mH & 4th high jump
Ema Jones – 2nd high jump & 3rd triple jump
Emma Campbell – 2nd triple jump
Phoebe Bradley – 2nd javelin

ULSTER SCHOOLS ATHLETICS RESULTS 2025**Mary Peters Track****Wednesday 14th May****Minor and Junior****Minor Girls**

Lucie Thomas – 7th long jump, 6th in 100m heat

Relay = 5th in heat (Lucie Thomas, Chidinma Anyakudo, Erin McNevison, Marley Hamill)

Junior Girls

Leila Jones – 4th 1500m & 6th 75mH

Matilda McAllister – 8th javelin

Lily Walker – 5th shot

Relay = 6th in heat (Isabella McCarey, Vismithaa Pandiaraj, Olivia McAllister, Daisy Lewis)

ULSTER SCHOOLS ATHLETICS RESULTS 2025**Mary Peters Track****Saturday 17th May****Mini, Intermediate & Senior****Mini Girls**

Relay = 6th (Mela McManus, Tilly Sales, Jessica Tamim, Isla Murphy)

Intermediate Girls

Eve Manson – 4th 100 & 4th 200m

Esther Lawrence – 2nd 300m heat, 4th final

Maja Jones – 3rd 300m heat, 8th final

Keri Gray – 4th 80mH heat

Amelie McKeown – 5th 300mH

Niamh Cunningham – 5th hammer

Molly Adams – 10th triple jump

Relay = 3rd (Eve Manson, Sophia Morwood, Keri Gray, Molly Adams)

Senior Girls

Phoebe Bradley – 2nd javelin *Qualified for Irish Schools'*
Hope Daniels – 3rd 100mH
Ema Jones – Did not compete
Emma Campbell – Did not compete

IRISH SCHOOLS ATHLETICS**Friday 30th May & Saturday 31st May****Tullamore**

Phoebe Bradley – Senior girls javelin – Did not compete

Sports Day**Monday 16th June, Mary Peter's Track**

Sports day was held on Monday 16th June at The Mary Peters Track with approximately 530 pupils from Forms 1-4 taking part. A very enjoyable day was had by all with Shaw House winning the overall trophy. Well done to everyone who took part in this event.

Athletics (Boys)

Athletics continues to be a popular option for pupils during the summer term. There was much success both collectively and individually throughout the season. Special congratulations to who all became Ulster Champions in their respective events. Congratulations to the Minor Boys team who won the Minor Boys' Cup for the most points won at the Irish Schools' Championships. Zac Fox deserves a special mention for winning a gold medal in the Minor Boys Long Jump at the Irish Schools Championships.

District Championships**Mini Boys- 4th Team Competition**

Jaoquin Ang 2nd 100m
Kasper Ostrowski 3rd 100m
4 x 100m 3rd
Eli Hawthorne 5th High Jump
Max McCotter 6th High Jump

Minor Boys- 2nd Team Competition

Zac Fox 1st 100m (District Record), 1st Long Jump (District Record)
Chukwuweta Okonkwo 3rd High Jump
Finn Crichton 4th 800m
Finn Harland 4th 75m Hurdles, 4th Long Jump
4 x 100m Relay 5th

Junior Boys- 5th Team Competition

Jacob Picking 1st 100m
Finn Johnston 1st High Jump
Ollie Trueieck 3rd 80m Hurdles, 6th 1500m
Matthew Craig 4th Hammer
Josh Canavan 5th High Jump
Harrison Orr 6th 200m
Dominik Syzanski 6th Triple Jump
Boye Li 6th Hammer
4 x 100m relay 5th

Inter Boys- 1st Team Competition

Jac McNabb 1st 100m, 1st 400m
Evan Tosh 1st 3000m, 1st 1500 Steeple Chase
Josh Fletcher 1st High Jump
Daniel Ogilby 1st Triple Jump
Joseph Donnelly 2nd Triple Jump
Adam Young 3rd High Jump
Brynn Hewitt 3rd Hammer
Nicolas Vitrio 4th Long Jump
Lucas Bunting 5th 200m
Oliver Veronica 6th Shot Putt
Devaughn Comrie 6th Javelin
4 x 100m relay 4th

Senior Boys- 1st Team competition

Lorcan Bell 1st 400m Hurdles
Robbie Tosh 1st 1500m Steeple Chase
Yasha Peters 1st Shot Putt
Chris O'Hara 2nd 200m, 3rd Long Jump
4 x 100m relay 1st
Finlay Baird 3rd 800m, 3rd Javelin
Jack Monroe 6th 100m

Ulster Schools Championships**Mini Boys**

Jaoquin Ang 3nd 100m
Kasper Ostrowski 3rd 100m
4 x 100m Relay 7th

Minor Boys

Zac Fox 1st 100m , 1st Long Jump
Chukwuweta Okonkwo 1st High Jump

Junior

Olly Truieck 7th 80m Hurdles

Finn Johnston 7th High Jump

Inter boys

Daniel Ogilby , 1st Triple Jump

Joseph Donnelly 2nd Triple Jump

Evan Tosh 3rd 1500m SC, 6TH 3000M

Bryn Hewitt 4th Hammer

Josh Fletcher, 10th High Jump

Adam Young, 11Th High Jump

Senior boys

Yasha Paters 2nd Shot Putt

Chris O'Hara 2nd Long Jump, 5th 200m

4x100m Relay 3rd

Robbie Tosh 4th 300m SC

Irish Schools Athletics**Minor**

Zac Fox 1st Long Jump, 4th 100m,

Chukwuweta Okonkwo 2nd High Jump

Intermediate

Daniel Ogilby , 6th Triple Jump

Joseph Donnelly 7th Triple Jump

Senior

Chris O'Hara 6th Long Jump

Golf

This was a quiet year for the Golf team, and unfortunately, we didn't win any of the events we entered.

Our two senior golfers, Ben McIlroy and Jack Moffet, were our only golfers this year in terms of entry into competitions. They competed in the Ulster Schools' Scratch Championship at Kirkistown Golf Club, but conditions were difficult and the standard of competition was high. The boys played well but unfortunately failed to make the top 3 places.

Ben McIlroy also competed in the Irish Post-Primary Schools Championship but again despite playing very well, was placed outside the top 3.

Going forward, I am filled with optimism for the future of BRA Golf, thanks to some extremely strong Junior golfers who, at different stages, have already represented our senior team and are currently all playing off single figure handicaps.

I would like to thank the parents for their support (and transport) which has been a great encouragement to me and the boys.

Football

The Academy participated in the Grammar School League and the Belfast Cup during the 2024/25 football season.

In the Grammar School League, the team played against seven grammar schools. They began strongly with a 1–1 draw against Belfast High and a 4–1 comeback victory over RBAI. However, they were narrowly defeated 5–3 by Grosvenor Grammar School after a spirited second-half performance. Further losses followed against Methody, Regent, Bangor, and CCB.

In the Belfast Cup, the Academy secured a 2–0 win over Trinity College with goals from Nathan Flattery and Patrick O’Hanlon. Despite a loss to Rathmore, they progressed to the last 16, where they faced Regent House. After leading 2–0 at half-time with goals from Nathan Flattery and Odhran Moan, the match ended in a 2–2 draw and was decided by penalties. Regent won 6–5 in sudden death.

The season concluded with the final appearances of key players: captain George Trimble, Samuel Clarke, Nathan Flattery, Joshua Kirk, and Matthew Whiteside.

Girls’ Cricket

Girls’ cricket continued to be a popular summer sport and saw pupils from Form I – Form V taking part in practice and matches. The U15 cup team had a narrow loss in the first round of the cup to Victoria College Belfast despite a strong performance. The U13 and U14 squad had good performances against Wallace and Friends in addition to their Super 8s competition. Both squads performed well in their respective events and progressed to the quarter finals, it was great to see the girls progress so well throughout the year, particularly with their batting. The Form I girls improved each week and will look to showcase their talent in more fixtures next year.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Learning Support Co-ordinator: Ms Karen Brady

Assistant Learning Support Co-ordinators: Mrs Joanne McNally & Ms Diane Keenan

SEN Governor: Dr Moyna Bill

During 2024-25, a report on Special Educational Needs was delivered to the Education Committee of the Board of Governors each term. A full report, using the EA template, was shared with the Board of Governors for the June 2025 meeting. The school SEN policy was reviewed as part of the Autumn report and is available on the School website.

The Learning Support Department conduct whole school development to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This continues to be particularly important as we move towards the Graduated Response Framework. Teaching and non-teaching staff reviewed our Whole School and Specialist Provision in preparation for the next academic year. We availed of various training opportunities including advice and training from the Autism Advisory Intervention Service, Joint Council for Qualifications and the EA Sensory Service. All members of the LS team are SEN Ambassadors and provide support with the development of resources in conjunction with the Subject leaders.

The support and interest of the Board of Governors is very much appreciated. We are also indebted to the Teaching Staff and Classroom Assistants who show great care, commitment and dedication to meet the needs of all our pupils.

STUDENT TEACHERS 2024-2025

The following students were given School Experience and Teaching Practice at the Academy in the academic year 2024/25:

Queen's University Belfast

Matthew Graham - Science (Biology)
Rachael Keaveney - Religious Studies
Rachel Maxwell - Science (Biology)
Micheal McCann - English
Grace McCrea - French and Spanish
Courtney McFarland - Social Science (Sociology)

Ulster University

Leia Cassells - Physical Education

Stranmillis University College

Nicole McGeoghegan - Business Studies

WORK EXPERIENCE 2024-2025

The following students were afforded work experience at the Academy in the academic year 2024/25:

Rhea Saunders	English and Learning Support
Ethan McCartney	Economics
Eva McIlwaine	Home Economics
Joy Wissam Moushir Riad	Learning Support

OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Creative Writing

The department created a Shared Education schools' poetry anthology entitled, *Future Voices*. A pamphlet launch and poetry reading took place at St Malachy's College, where representatives from schools in the NBALC were in attendance. Representatives from Ulster University and the John Hewitt Society gave speeches at the event and applauded the work of the students. It was also a feature of the *Look North!* Literary Festival.

B.R.A. students took part in a special creative writing workshop at Belfast's Grand Central Station on Monday 17th February. Students were inspired to craft poems on the themes of journeys and connections during a 90-minute session hosted by Translink writer-in-residence, Niamh McNally.

Scripture Union

Junior Scripture Union

Junior Scripture Union was held weekly during Wednesday lunchtime. Throughout the course of the year we looked at the promises of God. Pupils also attended the BIG Scripture Union Weekend at Castlewelling Castle and we were delighted to have Dave McConkey speaking to the pupils over the weekend. The SU also organised an end-of-year barbecue at Ben Madigan in June.

Senior Scripture Union

Senior Scripture Union was held weekly during Friday lunchtimes. Throughout the course of the year we looked at the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. The highlight of the year was the Senior Scripture Union Weekend which was held in March at Seaview House, Kilkeel. Mr Tice was the speaker over the weekend.

The Poland Scripture Union Team

The Scripture Union team, consisting of sixteen senior pupils, travelled to Warsaw, Poland in February. The team were involved in helping delivering food parcels to families in need and leading a weekend camp for over 100 Polish teenagers who were mainly from four state-run orphanages. Overall, the trip was a great success and both the Polish people and the B.R.A. pupils had an encouraging and challenging trip.

Young Einstein Club

The Young Einstein Club, on the whole, has enjoyed another good year. The Junior pupils approached experiments with enthusiasm, and it was very rewarding to watch them having fun while completing each task. Unfortunately, numbers were very low after Christmas, with only the House Event being well attended. This is an issue that we have faced in the past, but not since before the Pandemic, and hopefully will be rectified in the next academic year.

This year we had quite a large LVI Committee, which was very encouraging. They were a great help in the running of the club: setting up before the junior pupils arrived, tidying up at the end and, of course, chatting to the juniors and helping them with their experiments.

These senior pupils have also benefitted from being involved - developing their communication skills and growing in confidence. They also seemed to enjoy trying out the experiments before the junior pupils arrived!

In February we had our annual House Competition, which this year took the form of a Science Quiz. It was very closely contested with Cairns claiming the top spot, followed by Pottinger in second place, Currie in third place and Shaw in fourth place. All teams performed well and valuable House Points were awarded.

Our other experiments this year have included Mobius Strips, Amazing Rice and Paper Planes and Helicopters.

OTHER MATTERS

Careers 2024-2025

- MVI pupils received help, advice and guidance with UCAS, CAO and HE applications.
- MVI pupils attended many in-person and virtual Open Days including QUB, UU, Stranmillis College, St Mary's, Belfast Met and Northern Regional College.
- A representative from Belfast Metropolitan College came into school and spoke to Form V pupils about Further Education pathways and to MVI about Higher Education pathways.
- Aspiring MVI medical, dentistry, veterinary, nursing and midwifery students participated in a 'Virtual Multi Mini Interview simulation event'. These were organised in-person with pupils from St Malachy's College and Dominican College Fortwilliam also taking part.
- Mock interviews were held for all those applying for Teaching.
- Six Alumni Solicitors and Barristers held a 'Careers in Law' event for interested students, via zoom and in-person. Peter Barr helped to coordinate this event
- All Apprenticeship opportunities, including the Higher-Level Apprenticeships, were advertised to our pupils. Examples included Mercedes-Benz, Stena Line, Belfast Harbour Civil Engineering Apprentice Opportunity, BT, NIE and NI Water.
- Deloitte, Citi & BT all delivered presentations to Sixth Form pupils about Higher-Level Apprenticeships
- Some pupils received a Conditional Offer from PWC, Deloitte, AIB and Farrans for their Higher-Level Apprenticeships.
- Several LVI and MVI pupils attended the Chartered Accountancy Open Day at PWC.
- LVI pupils attended many work experience opportunities through Work Inspiration.
- A number of LVI pupils took part in numerous programmes organised by Screenworks such as Prosthetics, Costume Design and Special Effects.
- Form V pupils attended an introductory session about the role of the Careers Service NI and each pupil was interviewed by the DEL Careers Adviser. Some interviews were held via zoom, others in person.
- All virtual work experience opportunities were posted on Google Classroom and emailed out to parents.
- LVI came back into school for careers guidance for two days after they had finished their AS External Examinations. Representatives from UU, QUB & Work Plus all delivered presentations about the year ahead and the importance of UCAS.
- LVI had a presentation delivered by the Careers Team in school on UCAS and Personal Statements.
- LVI pupils had the opportunity to get involved in an Assessment Day which involved Alumni past pupils helping with group and individual interviews.
- Unifrog was delivered to the whole school via careers teachers during lessons. New Chrome books helped to deliver this programme.
- Career of The Month and Subject of Month delivered at Assemblies – all year groups
- STEAM Event delivered to Form III through Eye4Education to help pupils with subject choices – 10 different employers invited in.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMME

During the academic year 2024-25, some 40 Sixth Form pupils participated in the School's long-standing Primary School Experience programme. During the Autumn and Spring terms, the senior pupils attended a primary school in north Belfast every Wednesday afternoon to gain experience of working with children while supporting the class teacher. A wide range of activities were offered to our pupils: literacy and numeracy support, PE and games classes, music and language lessons and drama productions. We are very appreciative of the support provided to our pupils by our colleagues in the primary sector. Our pupils were commended by the staff of their host schools for their enthusiasm, helpfulness and pleasant dispositions. The Sixth Form pupils thoroughly enjoyed the experience while gaining valuable skills in a professional setting.

SCHOOL AND PUPIL COUNCIL

The School and Pupil Council met regularly throughout the year to discuss issues important to them and their peers, updating the Senior Leadership Team on the thoughts of the student voice. Many important issues were discussed and debated including RSE and extra-curricular provision, lockers, catering and uniform amongst many others. The Pupil Council also held a non-uniform day during Wellbeing Week, raising money for Cancer Research, Lighthouse and the Salvation Army.

BEN MADIGAN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

The academic year 2024-2025 was one of notable change, achievement, and resilience for the Ben Madigan community. Despite several challenges, including uncertainty surrounding our development proposal, the school continued to deliver high-quality teaching, care, and support for all our pupils.

Following the departure of Mrs Dallas, who left to take up an appointment with Fettes College Preparatory Department, Mrs Chapman was appointed Head of School in August 2024, as well as becoming the Registered Person for Ben Madigan Daycare and Wraparound Care.

Academic Standards

- Senior pupils performed exceptionally well in the SEAG transfer assessments, with 12 out of 13 children securing places at their first-choice post-primary school.
- Internal assessments across all year groups indicate positive progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy, despite the small cohort sizes.

Inspection and Compliance

- The Pre-School received an excellent report from Social Services, with commendations for quality of care, leadership, and safeguarding.
- All statutory safeguarding, health and safety, and policy documentation is up-to-date and compliant with Health Trust/Social Services expectations.

Curriculum & Enrichment

Ben Madigan continues to provide a broad, balanced, and enriching curriculum, supported by an extensive programme of trips, residentials, and co-curricular activities:

- **Peace Proms:** On Sunday 9th March, the Prep 6 and 7 pupils, accompanied by Mrs Chapman and Mrs Gouk, took part in the Belfast Peace Proms. Alongside over 2,500 children from schools across Northern Ireland, pupils performed a lively programme of songs from various genres. Pupils (and staff) sang and danced with enthusiasm, representing the school with energy and pride. It was a valuable and uplifting experience that promoted musical engagement and community spirit.
- **York Residential:** In May, Prep 6 and Prep 7 pupils enjoyed a 4-day residential trip to York, accompanied by Mr Creighton and Mrs Chapman. Highlights included visits to York Chocolate Story, York Minster, Jorvik Centre, DIG, National Railway Museum, and a City Walls Walk, plus Workshops and evening activities at York YHA led by the hostel's Activity Team. Pupils averaged 12km walking per day and not one complaint was heard. Staff and children agree that memories made would last a lifetime.
- **School Camp-out:** on Thursday 19th June, pupils and staff pitched tents and stayed overnight on our pitch. Thanks to Ciaran McCauley and his scout helpers, the children enjoyed making fires, cooking s'mores and learnt how to hang a hammock. After a late-night game of hide and seek, the grounds were quiet for a few hours until a 5am game of football began. We were treated to a delicious breakfast of bacon butties to start the day by Fiona.
- Through our **Peace Aspire partnership** with Park Lodge Primary School, pupils enjoyed:
 - Foot Golf
 - A visit to Streamvale Farm
 - A visit from the Jungle Show
 - Physical activity sessions from Healthy Kids and Core Kids

Staffing

- Mrs Johnston, the school cook, was made redundant in January 2025, resulting in the school no longer being able to provide on-site hot meals.
- Mr McCleery our PE specialist was redeployed for three days to BRA in January 2025. In his absence the SDA paid for Mr Ingram (PE and Games) and Mrs Thompson (Yoga) to come in to take PE and provide PPA time for teaching staff.
- Mrs Bill took voluntary redundancy and has set up her own business teaching French and Spanish in Primary Schools.
- Mr Creighton also took voluntary redundancy and has taken up a new position in Fairview Primary School.
- We have experienced some long-term staff absences due to illness:
 - Mrs Lennon was absent from January until the week before Easter when she returned and resumed her teaching duties.

- Ms Boyd was absent from 15th January until 27th May, due to ongoing back pain.
- Miss Owens has been absent since 18th February following problems sustained in a car accident. She was unable to return to school to resume her duties.

Conclusion and Outlook

The 2024–2025 academic year has seen strong academic achievement, continued commitment to inclusion and wellbeing, and the careful management of resources during a time of change.

MEASURES FOR THE SECURITY OF PUPILS, STAFF AND PREMISES

The Board of Governors is committed to ensuring a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff during the school day. Security measures are reviewed periodically and include the following:

- A modern fire detection and alarm system is in operation throughout all the school sites and is tested on a frequent basis. A fire drill is carried out each term.
- A monitored intruder alarm system is in operation at the main school and Preparatory Department sites.
- CCTV cameras are in operation at the main school site, Ben Madigan and Roughfort.
- Buildings are secured by school janitorial staff each evening.
- Staff members are on supervisory duty at break and lunchtimes.
- Risk assessments and safe systems of work are in operation with respect to contractors working on the school site.
- School management consults with the Education Authority and the PSNI Crime Prevention Branch on a regular basis with respect to safety and security measures to be undertaken on the school site.

Insurance

The Board of Governors is responsible for ensuring that adequate insurance cover is held by the school. At present, the school insures against its Legal Liability for injury caused to members of the public, including pupils. To succeed in any action against the school, a claimant must prove that the School has been in breach of its statutory duties or has been negligent.

In some cases, injuries can befall pupils arising out of school activities, particularly in the area of sports and other extra-curricular activities, where there is no such legal liability upon the School to provide insurance cover. **The Board of Governors would therefore strongly advise parents to take out individual Personal Accident policies for their children**, in order that cover may be provided, in the event of a severe injury being sustained by a pupil, where there is no negligence on the part of the School or any other party. Further information for those interested in Personal Accident cover for rugby is available on the IRFU website. Insurance should also be taken out by parents if expensive items of equipment are being brought into school.

Buildings, Estates and Equipment

Cliftonville Road Site

- Replacement of lab chairs in two classrooms
- Replacement of flooring in BC2 and repairs to the flooring in various classrooms in the Bruce building and foyer outside the assembly hall.
- Replacement Glazing unit in the left Bruce Stairwell and replacement of broken panes throughout Bruce and Jackson buildings.
- Security and safety signage installed on the railings and gates on both sides of the road.

- Redecoration of the following areas:
 - Crombie – Heritage Room.
 - Jackson – Bottom Corridor, two classrooms J13 and J6 and entrance pillars.
 - Dining Hall, Annex and kitchen
 - Bruce – Ground floor classrooms B1 & B3
 - Louis Lord – Main Foyer, English classrooms, boys' and girls' toilets.
 - Pollin – Art corridors.
- Installation of centralised CCTV monitoring in the Building and Estates Office.
- Extension of the Louis Lord car park providing nine extra spaces
- Installation of a bin store.

Ben Madigan Site

- Relocation of the preparatory school to the kindergarten building.

Roughfort Site

- Installation of new rugby posts on Pitch 2.
- Improvements to the drainage system around pitch 3.

Health and Safety Work (all sites)

- Fixed wire testing was carried out in relevant buildings throughout the school. This is completed on a rota basis.
- Portable appliance testing was carried out on all school electrical equipment.
- A landlord's gas check was carried out, as required annually.
- Boiler servicing was carried out.
- Legionella pipe work and water tank cleaning was carried out.
- Legionella Risk Assessment was carried out.
- Fire and Security Alarm Cyclical Maintenance was carried out.

Freedom of Information Scheme

In line with legislative requirements, the School has a policy, detailing information which is accessible to parents on request. Copies of this policy may be obtained from the Bursar's Office.

GDPR

The School processes and retains records in line with the requirements of the GDPR.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

	2024/25	2023/24
Income	£	£
Department of Education Grants	10,593,170	8,264,707
Preparatory Department Fee Income	215,992	472,770
Playgroup & Childminding Fees	85,813	134,123
Miscellaneous Income	192,761	195,033
	11,087,736	9,066,633
	2024/25	2023/24
Expenditure	£	£
Teaching Staff Costs	7,575,808	6,196,351
Other Staff Costs	2,223,328	1,994,876
Other Operating Costs	1,554,571	1,642,356
	11,353,707	9,833,583
(Deficit) to Reserves	265,971	-£766,950

	2024/25	2023/24
Other Operating Costs	£	£
Class materials	60,394	80,028
Maintenance	207,753	201,212
Heat, Light & Water	271,203	268,286
Cleaning	272,599	254,407
Insurance, Bank & Audit	183,769	208,780

Examination Fees	130,687	113,850
Administration	117,210	121,965
Sports, Games & Travel	26,734	31,552
Transport	153,839	163,234
Purchase of Equipment	68,024	128,342
Miscellaneous	62,359	70,700
Total	1,554,571	1,642,356
	2024/25	2023/24
Other Staff Costs	£	£
Administrative Staff	480,197	450,223
Manual Staff	442,371	427,339
Laboratory & Other Assistants	1,300,760	1,117,314
Total Other Staff Costs	2,223,328	1,994,876

	2024/25	2023/24
Staff Costs	£	£
Teaching Staff Costs	7,575,808	6,196,351
Administrative Staff	480,197	450,223
Manual Staff	442,371	427,339
Laboratory & Other Assistants	1,300,760	1,117,314
	9,799,136	8,191,227

BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2024-2025

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Mr M Blake
Mrs K Burns
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