



BALLYMENA ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

CARING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL,
INSPIRING LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT



WELCOME

Welcome to the Ballymena Academy Newsletter, a publication designed to share good news and celebrate some of the many successes of our pupils and staff. In this edition, we reflect on some of the major sporting events that have taken place in school this term, look back on the Spanish Trip to Madrid and the much loved Annual Spring Concert.

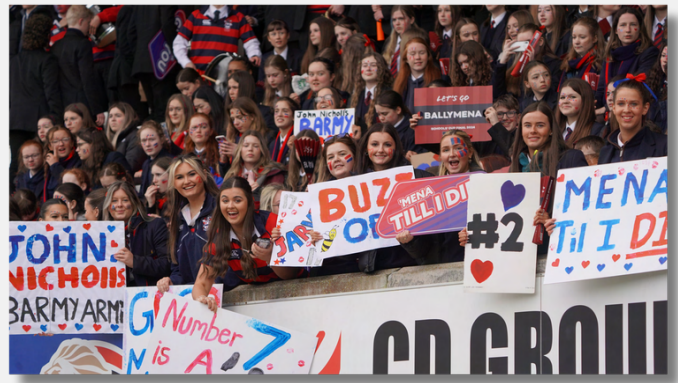
In all that we do, our aim is to care for the individual and inspire learning and achievement.

SCHOOLS' CUP FINAL 2024

On Monday 18th March the whole school community made their way to Kingspan Stadium to cheer on our 1stXV in what was the team's first appearance in the Final of the competition since 2010. Past pupils from across a range of year groups had travelled from far afield for the occasion, making their voices heard amongst the 1000 Ballymena Academy school pupils who travelled to the stadium in convoy.

The standard of play in the game was of the highest quality, demonstrated by an elusive linebreak and exquisite finish by Daniel Vercoe Rogers for Ballymena's first try of the day. The match finished 21 - 14 to RBAI and we congratulate them on their win and the part they played in making this such an enjoyable Final to watch.

Whilst the result did not go our way on the day, the atmosphere our fans created and the determined efforts of the players on the pitch made us all proud to be part of Ballymena Academy. Mr Nicholl, along with the rest of his coaching staff, have fostered a positive atmosphere across the entire rugby programme at Ballymena Academy and we are all excited for what next seasons brings.



SPANISH TRIP TO MADRID

In February, 48 senior pupils took part in the Spanish trip to Madrid. For four days, they explored the streets of Madrid and took in the Spanish culture, taking the opportunity to practise their Spanish skills with the locals. Among the many visits, a favourite for everyone was a tour of the prestigious "Las Ventas" bullring, where our pupils learned about the tradition of bull fighting. Another highlight of the trip was the flamenco show at the "Tablao Flamenco" and the tapas selection which they sampled during the show. They also enjoyed their visits to the famous Bernabéu Stadium, the Royal Palace, the Prado Museum and the Retiro Park.

Some were adventurous at San Miguel market, where they tried the local cuisine and even ordered in Spanish. Among the most daring choices were bulls' tail croquettes, ox cheeks and a typical "madrileño" dish, a calamari sandwich. The famous Chocolatería San Ginés was a favourite spot for many "churro" lovers - well worth the wait!

The trip was hugely enjoyed by everyone, and proof of this are Gavin Kerr's words "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't absolutely itching to get back. Only this time, for longer."



SPRING CONCERT 2024

Our Spring Concerts are very, very special events, for everyone concerned. Behind the scenes there is a huge amount of work for months beforehand; sourcing music which will be a good fit for the ensemble, adapting and arranging the music, rehearsing...and rehearsing... and rehearsing - before school, afterschool and in the evening. Not just for the Spring Concert, but also the massive Christmas Programme, Open Nights, and other outside events. Come to the Music Department at any given time and you will always find some rehearsing going on.

What we have in Ballymena Academy Co-curricular Music is incredibly valuable and amazing in both the quantity and quality of all those involved and the high level and breadth of repertoire. Vibrant school music is not something that can be taken for granted these days and many schools have seen significant decline, further eroded by the consequences of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. (By the way, if anyone reading this would wish to become a sponsor of Music in the Academy we'd be delighted to chat).

The continuing culture we have of high-level participation and enjoyment at all levels, across girls and boys, is most certainly not the norm. Just taking a moment to look at the standard and scope of the Concert programme and pupil lists (over 300 in the Spring Concert) gives pause for thought.

It is hard for Music Staff to see the wood for the trees sometimes. Our lives are a constant drive of creative and physical planning, preparation, organising, rehearsing, performing and an awful lot of admin. that must go into events logistics (around all our other roles in teaching). Sometimes it takes the observations and conversations from inside and outside our school community to remind us of what we have. Then we realise and remember again that the excitement and chat we have with pupils, the 'craic' on and off stage, the relationships, responsibilities, resilience, and discipline developed, and the responses of the many who come to our events are at the core of the very special, unique nature of the Music, as are the irreplaceable values, skills, experiences, and memories generated along the way.

In a world which tends to focus on the many problems in society and the world, this remains an enduringly bright beacon. Music is a language of the full spectrum of human experience and possibility - emotional and spiritual expression, creativity, hope, life, and beauty. It is good beyond measure that in our school these things still flourish.

Mrs Church - Head of Music





BA FOUNDATION

The BA Foundation has been established to help Ballymena Academy to continue to offer the educational experience that previous generations benefited from and accepted as a given. We know that many former pupils of our school and their parents have fond memories of their time here and we hope our friends and alumni will support our efforts to keep providing an enriched education that is still free for everyone, regardless of background.

WAYS TO GIVE...

- ✓ Give Your Year initiative
- ✓ Team playing kit
- ✓ Team warm-up kit
- ✓ Pitch-side advertising boards
- ✓ Drama/Music programmes
- ✓ Work Shadowing

WAYS TO CONNECT...

- 1 To find out more about the BA Foundation and how you can become involved click [here](#).
- 2 To find out how you or your business could support the school please email amckay847@ballymenaacademy.org.uk
- 3 You can also keep up to date with upcoming events on our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



BA Foundation
Help Us Maintain Excellence

FOOTBALL SCHOOLS' CUP SEMI FINALISTS

WILLIAM FRANCEY YEAR 14

The 2023/24 proved to be one to remember for our footballers in school with our U18 side reaching the semi final stage of the Danske Bank U18 Schools Cup and creating history in doing so. First up to kick off the competitive campaign for the boys was a tough away tie to Regent House in which they battled hard and came out victorious after an entertaining game which ended in a penalty shootout. The second round saw the boys face an away tie to a strong Grosvenor side who are renowned for their football success.

This game saw the team run out 4-1 winners after a tight first half followed by a convincing performance in the second half to seal a place in the next round. The last 16 tie at home turned out to be an enjoyable one for the team as they ran out 6-0 winners against Impact Training Academy in a game which saw plenty of goals. The boys were quietly growing in confidence by this stage of the tournament having remained underdogs throughout. This remained the case into the Quarter Final where they looked forward to a tough test against an impressive Holy Cross team from Strabane. After going 1-0 up, Holy Cross equalised on the stroke of half time. However, the team showed character in the second half to regain their lead and run out 2-1 winners to book their place in a huge Semi-Final against Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock.



The team prepared thoroughly in training for the last four showpiece as the big game approached. The game itself proved to be a cagey one with the team going 1-0 down mid way through the first half. The boys kept fighting and their resilience paid off mid way through the second half when they equalised. As the game progressed, both sides had their chances and it was unfortunately Our Lady and St Patrick's College, who went on to win the competition, took a 2-1 lead which turned out to be enough to book their place in the final. A disappointing end for the team but a campaign to be proud and putting Ballymena Academy on the football map along the way.

William Francey – Year 14