**BALLYMENA ACADEMY – THURSDAY, 17th AUGUST, 2023**

**PRESS RELEASE RE. G.C.E. ‘A’ and ‘AS’ LEVEL RESULTS**

Ballymena Academy is delighted to report upon the success of our young people following the publication of ‘AS’ and ‘A’ Level results today.

The Principal, Stephen Black, congratulated all of the pupils on their achievements which he stated are particularly impressive given the challenges which COVID-19 presented to their education in their GCSE and ‘AS’ Level years. With Examination Boards seeking to return to pre-pandemic standards, results across N.I. and across G.B. are considerably lower than in 2022 but results in the Academy have remained high and the overall outcomes are higher than prior to the pandemic. The excellent grades attained bear witness to the resilience, hard-work and ability of our pupils and the commitment of our staff to bring the best out of our young people.

Despite the reduction in A\* and A grades nationally, well over 50% of the grades obtained at ‘A’ Level were A\* or A grades and a third of the year group achieved a minimum of 3 A\* or A grades, with a number gaining A\* in all their subjects. Notably, over three-quarters of the year group achieved at least one A grade with the number of A\* grades being well above national averages. These levels of achievement consolidate the Academy’s reputation for academic excellence as one of Northern Ireland’s top performing schools.

Mr. Black added that above all else this was a day for celebration for pupils and parents. He congratulated all the young people on their achievements; thanked parents for the considerable part which they had played in supporting such success over the past seven years and applauded the school’s teaching and support staff, without whose expertise, commitment and willingness to go the extra mile, these excellent outcomes could not have been achieved. He praised the staff who have worked incredibly hard to ensure that students receive high quality education which prepares them for higher education and for life beyond school.

While much of the focus will be on ‘A’ level results, the excellent results obtained at ‘AS’ level also bode well for future achievement. From a whole-school perspective it is very encouraging to note the levels of achievement across the school curriculum with almost all subjects in excess of N.I. Grammar School averages at both ‘A’ level and ‘AS’ level.

A great deal of hard work and planning has been invested in such success and the results demonstrate that the school continues to promote very high standards of learning and achievement across the curriculum.

While the results are pleasing in themselves, more importantly they are permitting the young people to gain entry to their chosen pathways on the next stage of their education. It is pleasing that, once again, despite the increased demand for university places, young people have gained access to a wide range of courses with many attaining much sought after places at the U.K.’s leading universities. On ‘results day’, our careers staff are available to provide expert guidance on any issues which may arise, advice which is much appreciated by pupils and their parents. Our focus at this time is always on helping young people, through our post-results service, and the exceptional circumstances of this year in relation to university applications makes that approach even more valuable at this time.

It is especially pleasing in this digital age, when they can access results and check university applications on-line, that our young people still come into school to be with their friends and teachers. It is a real privilege to share that experience with our inspiring and talented young people and to sense the strength of this learning community, particularly the culture of achievement and support which is characteristic of every good school.

Top achievers at ‘A’ level were as follows:-

Two pupils attained 4 A\* grades – Jacob Bradley and Katie McCullough.

One pupil attained 4 A\*/A grades – Alex Buchanan

One pupil attained 4 A grades – Beth Taylor

Seven pupils attained 3 A\* grades – Adam Gardiner, Maisie Gibbs, David Gordon, Sydney McCurdy, Erin Moore, Lauren Ramsey and Erin Weir.

A further 41 pupils obtained a minimum of 3 A\*/A grades – Joshua Ballantine, Danni Blair, Lewis Booth, Matthew Boyd, Sarah Brown, Rachel Cochrane, Caron Cooke, Naomi Gordon, Caitlin Graham, Tom Guild, Hanna Gunning, Isobel Henderson, Jo Henry-McCool, Rebecca Hilditch, Amber Hoey, George Kenneway, Emma Kinney, Katie Lackermeier, Oonagh Lamont, Zara Love, Erin McCartney, Ellen McDonald, Cerys McFetridge, Ethan McKillen, Natalie Mills, Anna Patterson, Olivia Reid, Rebekah Robinson, Penny Sheridan, Aimee Stevenson, Sarah Stirling, Louise Surgenor, Samuel Thomas, Ella L. Thompson, Amy Weir, Emma Whyte, Emma Wilson, Matthew Wilson, Niamh Wilson, Alexandra Workman, Kate Wylie.

(S.W. Black – Principal)