

In terms of last year's results, our GCSE students celebrated the highest GCSE results in the history of the school. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C reached an incredible 81%. This reflects an exceptional rise of 14% compared with the previous year's results and an unprecedented jump of 27% compared with two years ago.

This was a fantastic achievement and special mention must go to our top achieving students; Louise Craig, Kirsty McIlmoyle, Richard McNabney, Laura Moorhead, Brooke Heggarty, Charles McCready, Calum Neeson, Leah Speers, Becky McDowell and Matthew Kirk.

Our outgoing Year 14 pupils also achieved considerable success with a superb 100% of them attaining at least 2 A-Level passes in their exams and 89% received at least 2 A-Level grades at C level or above.

There were a number of impressive performances across the student body. Tommy Moffett achieved an outstanding A\*AA grades, Andrew Milligan A\*AB, David Calderwood and Callum Patterson A\*BB, and Lucy Coulter and Alice Kennedy ABB.

### **Extra-curricular: Sport**

This year our Girls' Hockey teams returned to the local Ballymena league to compete against arch rivals Dunclug College, Slemish College and Ballymena Academy.

The Year 8 Hockey team played consistently well during the season, with the highlight undoubtedly being a whopping 5 goals to 1 defeat of Slemish College.

Levels of interest in Hockey in Year 9 were such that a 'B' team was started up. The Year 9 'A' team had a year of draws coupled with flourishes of excellent team-work, skill and potential. The Year 9 'B' team trained tirelessly and we look forward to getting matches for them in the coming months.

The indoor athletics was a very popular event with Cullybackey pupils attending the team selection day at St Patrick's College. In the Years 8 and 9 events Chardonnay Caulfield did really well to be selected to represent the County Antrim team at the Finals.

NEBSSA Athletics took place at the end of April. Of the 16 girls participating, our biggest success was undoubtedly Anna Maternaghan of Year 8 who proved to be a very capable high jumper.

Netball retained its popularity with over 40 girls from Years 8 to 10 turning out every Tuesday for Netball practice. The Year 8 team's highlight of the season was undoubtedly a must win over arch rivals Dunclug College by 13 points to 10.

The mighty Year 9 team defeated St Patricks College and Slemish College 9-3 and 7-5 respectively before battling out a hard-fought 9 all draw with Dunclug College. Unfortunately, the Academy proved to be a

match too far, with all their super game-play tactics going out the window. They ended up losing the game.

The Year 10 team unfortunately did not get a lot of game time due to two schools not able to field a team. Their highlight was probably a 14 all draw against Slemish College – this was a tough game right to the final whistle with each team trying to edge one more goal to win.

The show jumpers worked hard throughout the year. It was a very tough season for them competing in classes with over 70 competitors from all over Ulster, aiming for a place in the top 6! The girls have been very dedicated in their training and competing on Saturdays.

Hannah Thompson had a very busy year in Pony Club games and represented Northern Ireland on two occasions at Windsor Horse Show. Last September she received the fantastic accolade of representing Team GB and attended the World Equestrian mounted Games in Australia.

The Female Sports' Personality of the Year – or rather 'personalities' went to Jade Millar and Jade Higgins, two reliable, supportive girls who were one hundred percent committed to sport throughout the year.

In relation to boys' sport, football last year at Cullybackey had two massive success stories with both the Year 8 and 9 teams completing historic League and Cup doubles under the leadership of Jurgen Surgenor! Both teams wrapped up the leagues in convincing fashion winning all of their games, with Dunclug providing the only test before succumbing to the superior fitness and finishing of the tough Cullybackey men.

The cups were much tighter and tenser affairs. The Year 8's faced a Dunclug side gunning for revenge after their league defeat but our boys showed great courage and guts to run out 2-1 winners with Cammy McMullan's long range thunderbolt sealing victory late on.

The Year 9s overcame a tough St Killians' team to win a very physical battle 1-0 with the winner coming from a moment of brilliance from Robbie Gilchrist who shot his team to victory. The atmosphere at both finals was electric with the travelling Cullybackey College support acting like a twelfth man for their teams.

By contrast Year's 10 and 11 had very mixed seasons – a bit like Liverpool – promising so much but, in the end, failing to deliver.

It was also a low key season for our Senior Team following an early exit from the Mid Antrim Cup. The highlight for the boys was undoubtedly a very entertaining 3-3 draw against the Academy which contained a host of goal of the season contenders.

Sunrise Basketball continued to grow following a successful maiden season. Their first ever competitive action came at the end of the school year when they competed against Dunclug College and St Patrick's College in a tournament at St Patrick's. After beating St Patrick's 'B' team convincingly and making light

work of Dunclug in game two they were narrowly beaten 14-12 by St Patricks 'A' team. It has been great to see the development of the boys involved both socially and physically.

Rugby this year has been a huge success with growing numbers attending after school and a very intense curriculum programme in place where pupils are able to flourish as well as learn new skills.

In Athletics we had two boys qualify for the NEBSSA finals. Adam Steele and Ross Stevenson both qualified in their track events, with Ross smashing records in the 100m and 200m finals.

The male Sports' Personality of the Year was deservedly Adam Steele – a member of the County Antrim Indoor Athletics squad, a NEBSSA finalist and co-captain of the Year 10 football team.

### **Other areas of College life**

As ever the school year kicked off with the highly popular Year 8 residential to Cultra at the beginning of September, an opportunity for our newest pupils to make new friendships, have some fun, watch Mr Surgenor and Mr Boyd at their line-dancing best, and even learn a little as well in the process. They experienced first-hand life as a child in Victorian times by dressing up in old clothes and going to school for a lesson, before heading to court for a real life trial. They also participated in some craft activities, creating souvenirs to take home to their parents, as well as baking soda bread on an open fire.

In order to further raise the profile of the College as being at the very centre of the local community we continued with our now established annual Christmas Carol Service.

Following on from the success of the Carol Service, the month of March witnessed our annual Easter Service. This was a very memorable event with meaningful musical contributions together with an Easter message brought to us by our very own Mrs McDonald.

Cullybackey College is indebted to the support of School Governor and Minister of the Cuningham Memorial Church, the Rev. Murphy, together with the Eldership of the Cuningham in facilitating both these services.

The College has also hosted musical concerts and pipe band competitions. Its facilities have been made available to The Army Cadet Force, giving pupils the opportunity to train with the Irish Guards; provides training access for Cullybackey Blues FC; and has also been used by the Diamond and Buick Memorial Primary Schools respectively for their end of year performances.

Friday 20th January witnessed our fourth IN-O-V8 event, immediately preceding our 2 Open Evenings, when we welcomed the P7 students from our local area to come and take part in this special STEM event. A staggering 740 Primary 7 pupils from 31 local primary schools experienced a programme of interactive workshops and shows relating to Science and Technology. The aim for the day was to engage and enthuse

young people about these important areas. The scientific workshops included – making elephant toothpaste, walking on egg shells and making rainbows.

Not wanting P6 pupils to feel left out, the success of IN-O-V8 led to the introduction of ACTIV8, when 700 Primary 6 pupils from 25 local primary schools participated in a series of interactive workshops and shows relating to PE, Maths, Geography, ICT, History and English.

Last year also proved another busy one for our various Departments. The College celebrated European Day of Languages on Monday 26th September. Year 8 students learnt some new and interesting facts about Europe in their European themed treasure hunt, with Kathryn Millar in 8A2 winning the much coveted prize. Lunch time saw a special ‘pop up photo booth’, giving students the opportunity to have some European snaps taken with their friends. A big ‘Merci’ to the French Department for arranging these activities for the students to enjoy.

The annual Year 8 Maths ‘Fun’ Day involved all year 8 pupils completing a series of challenges and activities requiring using their mathematical knowledge and applying it to everyday situations.

STEM Club met on a monthly basis after school with pupils making everything from bridges with straws to bottle rockets. This was in conjunction with the Science Department who also performed animal dissections and created chocolate bridges.

Cullybackey College Drama Club put on an anti-bullying performance in November portraying the effects of bullying both on the victim and the bully. This thought-provoking story left the audience reflecting on their personal choices when it comes to being a victim, being part of a bullying group or witnessing bullying.

In February our GCSE History students and staff made their European visit to the First World War Battlefields of France and Belgium. The students also visited the Flanders Field Museum. They saw the memorial dedicated to this event and stood on the field where the Christmas Day football match took place between Germany and England. On a lighter note, students also had the chance to visit the Eiffel Tower lights, the Arc de Triumph and Disneyland, Paris.

In March Cullybackey College’s Romania team took to the air in partnership with the charity organisation ‘School Aid Romania’. 10 students and 2 staff spent a week in Brasov, where they worked with a variety of people suffering from deprivation. They visited hospitals, orphanages, clinics and a range of schools, encountering some very poor families to whom they delivered food and aid they had shopped for. In advance of the trip the team had raised an incredible £6,500 which went towards supporting those in most desperate need.

In April Home Economics students Emma Lennox and Alix Ross competed in the regional heat final of “The Big School Cook Off “competition. The two girls were shortlisted for the regional heats from more than 120 post primary school entries. The finalists took part in a “Ready, Steady Cook” style competition, where they had to choose ingredients from the selection on offer and then plan, prepare, cook and serve a pasta dish in 45 minutes. The girls chose to create a Mediterranean Hearty Stew. This was a great experience for Emma and Alix who did both themselves and Cullybackey College proud – “two budding chefs in the making!”.

In May, 67 pupils from the College took part in our annual walk for Tear Fund in the grounds of Shane’s Castle, Antrim. Following this, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, Mr Surgenor organised a sponsored football match where junior pupils didn’t need to be asked twice to play continuously from 11am to 3pm. This event raised a total of £700 and was thoroughly enjoyed by all the boys who took part. Then at the end of June, Gareth, our local Tear Fund representative, attended a special assembly when pupils handed over a cheque for a fantastic £4355, raised from both events, enough money to feed 435 families in Syria for 1 month.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2014, the Education Minister announced that fifteen new schools from across the north would be built as part of an investment package in the order of £170m. Cullybackey College was one of 7 post-primary schools. This was obviously very encouraging indicating that the Department of Education has long-term confidence in the future of the College. Recent months have seen the development of a Steering Group, comprising members from the Department of Education, the Education Authority and the College. We are now meeting on a monthly basis and, at present, are in the process of finalising a Business Case which will be submitted to DENI. If everything fits into place (and there are a lot of things to fit into place!) the intention is to begin building a new school in 2020 which will officially open for business in 2022.

A new school on the outskirts of the village; one with twenty-first century facilities and resources; one that meets current legislation in terms of access, health and safety; one that more readily meets the needs of our young people today is what is needed – both for us as here at the College as well as for the Cullybackey community as a whole.

In the meantime, we continue to enhance the current facilities to ensure our young people are provided with the best learning experience we can possibly offer them.

Last year saw continued refurbishment of various classrooms throughout the school and the painting of the back stairwell during the summer meant that, over the last 4 years, all internal corridors have been repainted a variety of questionable colours. We purchased a new, long overdue sound system which is getting its first formal outing tonight and our new website and Facebook page will be active within the next couple of weeks.

At Cullybackey College our priority is, and always will be, seeking to push our young people to realise their full potential, morally, socially, physically, spiritually, emotionally and, ultimately, academically. I want the school to be the best it can possibly be; I want all of us to have high expectations both for ourselves and the children under our care. Thanks to the combined efforts and professionalism of our staff, teaching and non-teaching, our Board of Governors, the invaluable outside agencies, you the parents and families and with the confidence of the Education Authority, I am positive that the young people here this morning, and indeed all the young people in Cullybackey College, are given every opportunity to succeed.

We are proud of our school - results have risen significantly; our intake is growing and we are increasingly hopeful of securing a new, modern school build. As always our aim remains to continue to create opportunities for our young people to succeed, in whatever form that takes. We won't always get it right, but we will always strive to.