

# SOLAS



Sixteenth Edition  
2022



Year 8 2022

# WELCOME YEAR 8

It was a day of firsts! Excited, nervous, full of anticipation of what might lie ahead. And that was just Dr Donnelly on his first day as principal!

It was lovely to meet our new intake of Year 8 pupils, together with their parents. The warm welcome of our Sixth Form Buddies and the Year 8 tutors helped to settle any nerves. It wasn't long before each tutor group had their turn in the courtyard to play some games to get to know the pupils who would be in their Tutor Group each morning.

A quick tour of the school, a new timetable, and our first morning was complete! It wouldn't take long to get into a new routine and the excitement of getting to try new subjects and meet all our new teachers.



# Year 8 Art Competition Winners

## First Prize



Ben Jeffrey

Lorcan Fitzsimmons

## Second Prize



Patrick Reyes

## Third Prize



Ava Higgins & Amelie Higgins

Year 8 pupils were asked to create a self-portrait that represents their individuality, culture and heritage and their belonging to the Rathmore Community. They have been learning creative techniques using collage and mosaic in Art. The responses are superb and demonstrate a real celebration of our Year 8 pupils.

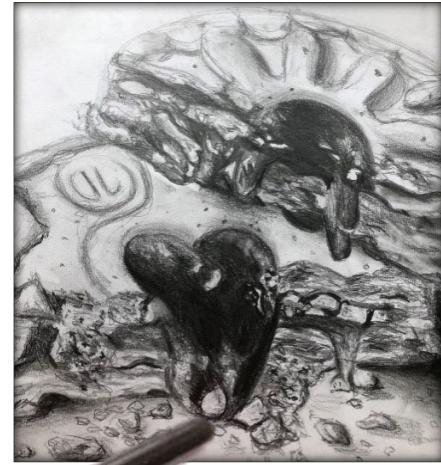
Year 8 2022



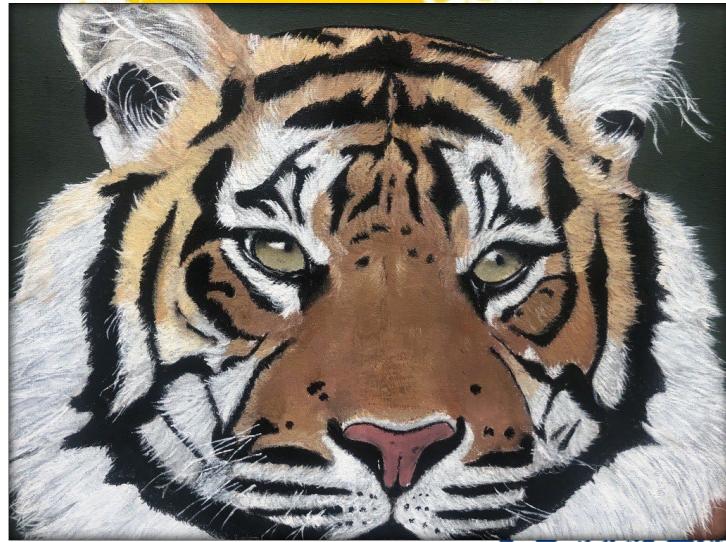
Rachel Gribbon



Luke Guy



Lara Hanly



Laura Wilkinson



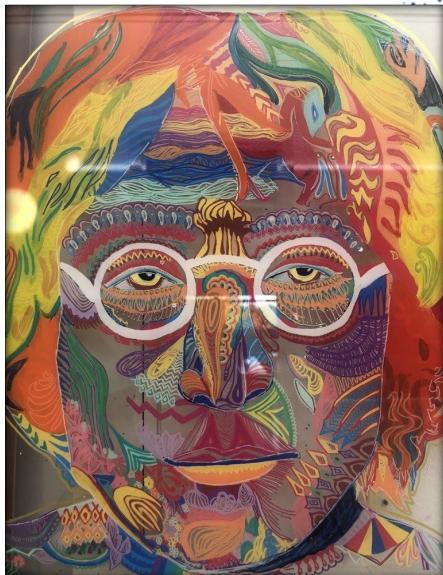
Eva Kearney



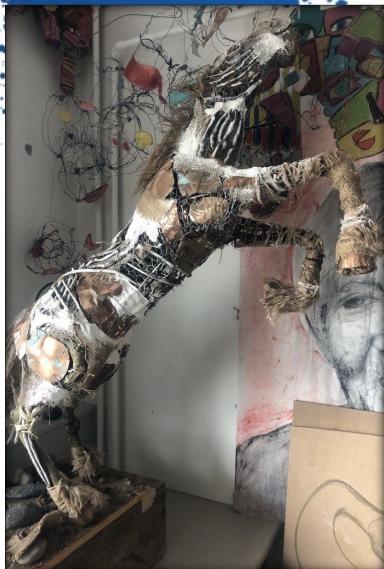
Luke Guy



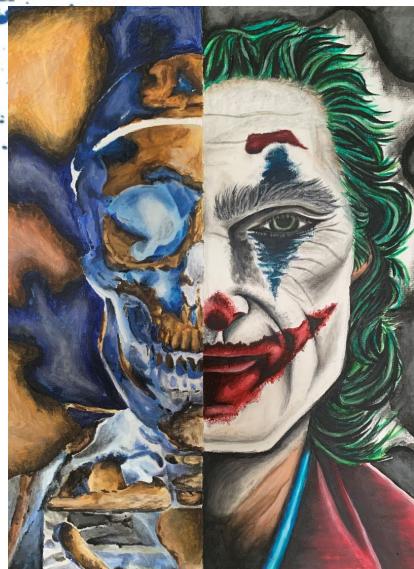
Evan Keating



Erin Kerr



Fay Powell



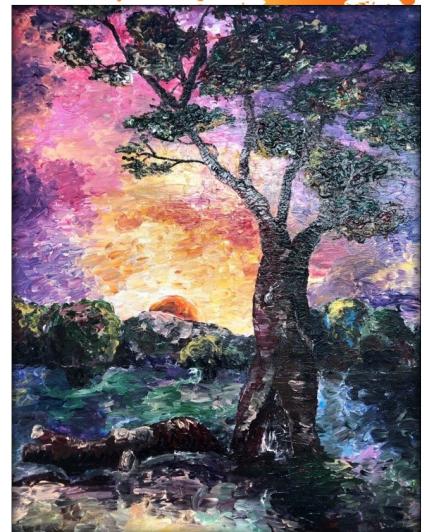
Charlie Donnelly



Charlie Breen

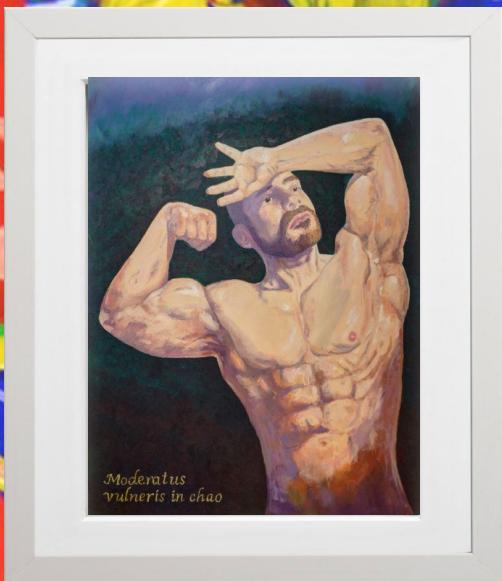


Charlie Breen



Lara Hanly

# True Colours Exhibition



# JUNK KOUTURE



Junk Kouture is a student-centric platform for creativity and sustainability that enriches the world's youth through a recycled fashion competition. They challenge the world's emerging designers, engineers, and artists to create and model high end couture from everyday junk. The Junk Kouture programme is a great enrichment opportunity for students, adding experience to portfolios, CVs or UCAS applications for university.

Through this event, Junk Kouture hope to inspire young people and provide them with the opportunity to learn about the importance of creativity and how fashion can be used to tackle environmental issues.

"We were invited to take part in an online seminar to raise awareness about sustainability in the Fashion Industry. Guest speakers included Niamh Porter - Fashion and Digital Media intern. Niamh is a former contestant of Junk Kouture, who starred in the Junk Kouture documentary on RTE, and has worked in New York as a design intern making clothes for Michelle Obama. She was so interesting to listen to and it was amazing to hear the experience of a person, only a few years older than us, out working in the industry."

- Niamh Patterson, Year 12

Two artists from Rathmore have been selected for the CCEA "True Colours" exhibition. AS work by Lara Hanly, along with Jude Newnham's GCSE portfolio, are on display in the exhibition.

70 young artists were selected by CCEA to showcase their GCSE and GCE Art & Design work from the summer 2021 examination period. From intricate paintings to innovative sculptures and daring fashion design, the True Colours exhibition reveals the high calibre of creative work produced by our young artists from all over Northern Ireland.

# Lisburn Quilt Project 2022



# Year 13 Print Workshop

"We really enjoyed the workshop with textile artist, Davina Callen. We were asked to produce textile pieces that will contribute to a collaborative quilt being put together for Lisburn's Centenary Year. Some of the techniques were really interesting and it was so good to be able to see an artist at work again. Thank you to Emma Bredon from the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum for organising."

- Caragh Toner, Year 12



# Oh the Drama of it all!

## MOJO MICKYBO

Last September, I accompanied the GCSE and A level Drama students to watch Bruiser Theatre Company's production of "Mojo Mickybo" written by Owen McCafferty. This play tells the story of two boys growing up in Belfast in 1970 during The Troubles. Using a dynamic physicality and a limited set, two actors had the ability to bring the story to life, capturing both the comical and emotional moments throughout the performance. When watching it, I was able to appreciate how unique and engaging the physical style truly was.

Unlike the naturalistic style with complex sets and costumes, the actors relied on their movements to tell the story, which I found to be both impressive and inspiring. To add to the experience, we also had the chance to participate in a workshop afterwards, which provided us with a better understanding of the preparation involved when it comes to the physical style of theatre.

The activities forced us to think on our feet and step out of our comfort zone to embrace a different approach when acting. Overall, this experience was lots of fun as well as being educational for Drama students. As I am currently studying Bruiser's style for my exam, I found that the play and workshop were particularly helpful when thinking of ideas and techniques to use in my own performance. Therefore, I am grateful to have had this opportunity and would encourage others to see this fascinating production too.

**Sarah Morrison**

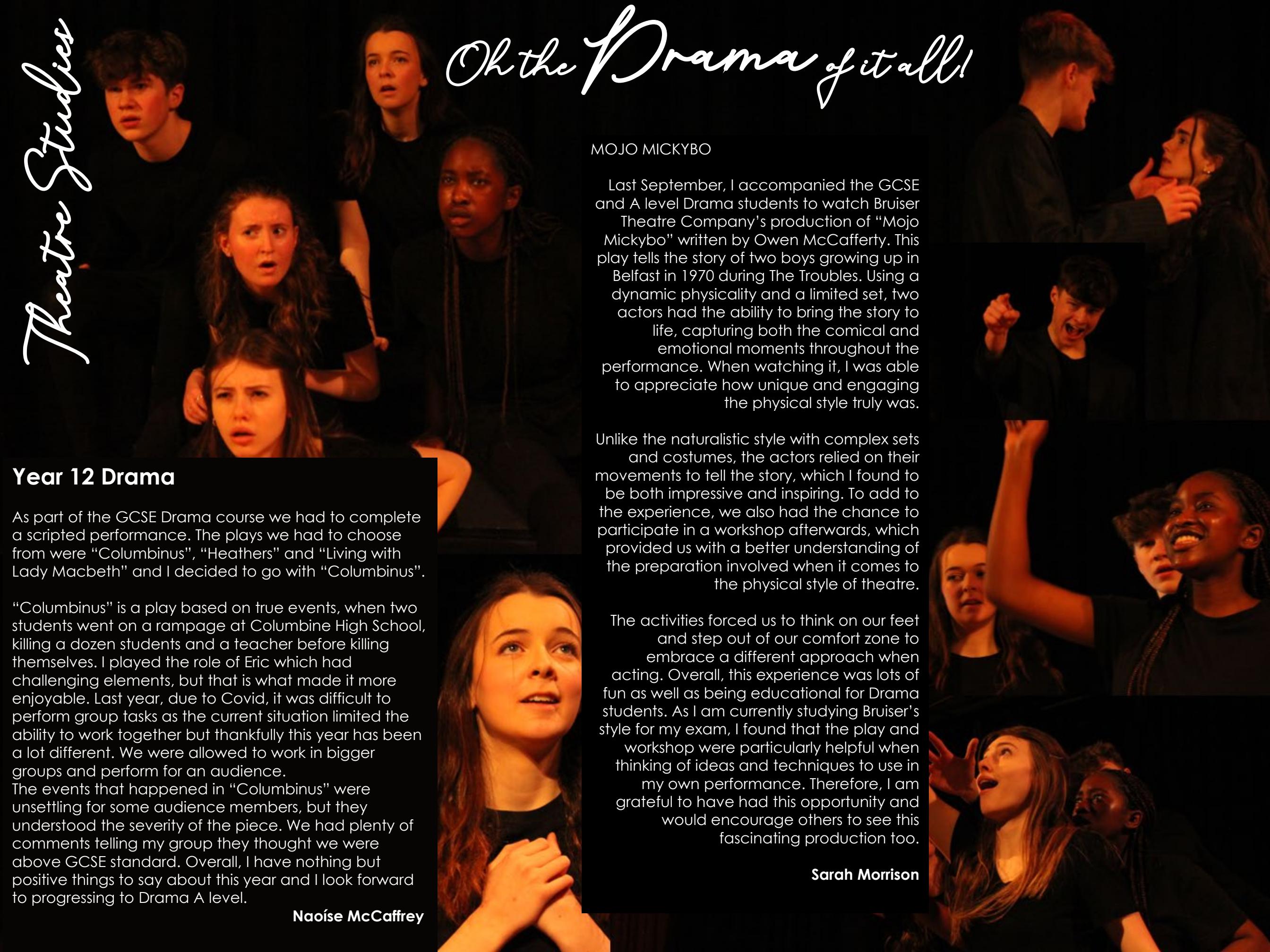
## Year 12 Drama

As part of the GCSE Drama course we had to complete a scripted performance. The plays we had to choose from were "Columbinus", "Heathers" and "Living with Lady Macbeth" and I decided to go with "Columbinus".

"Columbinus" is a play based on true events, when two students went on a rampage at Columbine High School, killing a dozen students and a teacher before killing themselves. I played the role of Eric which had challenging elements, but that is what made it more enjoyable. Last year, due to Covid, it was difficult to perform group tasks as the current situation limited the ability to work together but thankfully this year has been a lot different. We were allowed to work in bigger groups and perform for an audience.

The events that happened in "Columbinus" were unsettling for some audience members, but they understood the severity of the piece. We had plenty of comments telling my group they thought we were above GCSE standard. Overall, I have nothing but positive things to say about this year and I look forward to progressing to Drama A level.

**Naoise McCaffrey**



# Moving Image Arts

MOVING IMAGE ARTS

## ScreenWorks NI

In October I was accepted to attend a three day work experience course with Northern Ireland Screen and Screenworks. It was a course on story development and was hosted by screenwriter and film producer, Amanda Verlaque, who has worked on things such as a new play which was released in 2021, called "Distortion", which she wrote and directed.

The course was extremely interesting and engaging to take part in and I think it was really helpful for studying Moving Image Arts, particularly when it comes to coursework, writing a script and synopsis for our end of year film.

Over the course of this work experience I learned how to structure a narrative, whether that be in a novel or a screenplay, how to create and have your audience connect with original characters and how to work as a team to create and develop a story and fictional world. Additionally, Amanda Verlaque talked to us and answered questions as to how to make your way into the film industry and how she was able to get to the position she is in with her career. We were also shown how to use an application called "Celtxt" which has become very useful in my Moving Image Arts coursework.

Overall, this was a very fun and informative work experience course to take part in and I gained useful knowledge for my schoolwork, while also making some new friends and finding out more about a possible career path I am considering!

Molly Cross - Year 13



Krizzah Pollicarpio is a production assistant at the beginning of her career. She is from East Belfast and studied Moving Image Arts for GCSE followed by Photography at A level. Her Photography A level final pieces were heavily influenced and included moving image product and, as a result, propelled her into the film making industry. Krizzah received her first break working as a runner on a short film production in Belfast, with producer and writer Muireann McGinty (Sunday Morning Live, 4Thought.tv, Points of View), three years ago.

Krizzah was awarded a place on the Queen's University Film Studies and Production BA (Hons) degree; however she decided to take a year to pursue assistant producer work, with a view to returning to study later down the line. Krizzah has still to return to that degree at Queen's. She has been employed consistently since her first break, growing her network of contacts, building relationships across the film industry professionals in Northern Ireland.





# Lights, Camera, Action

The course for the BFI Film Academy had us do all sorts of tasks that delve into the intricacies of film. Divided into two groups of ten people, with one singular goal. To make a five-minute short film. There were many different roles to choose from, whether it be Director, Assistant Director, Writer, Director of Photography, Editor, Sound and Actors. We had absolute creative freedom from pre-production, production to post-production. For pre-production, we had artists, writers and a producer working together to draft the general outline of our short film, named "Heaven", a drama about two siblings who were separated during childhood and the sister performs her plan of revenge upon her privileged, out of touch brother.

For production, we were stationed at Lorne House, Cultra; we had to be there by 7am to make the most of our three filming days. We were readily equipped in the technical department. This included working with expensive digital cameras and lenses, boom mics and lighting. The BFI brought in multiple people who had years of experience in film, each with their own specialty in certain departments, such as lighting or camera technique and with their experience; this taught valuable knowledge on how the film set runs in the modern filming industry, even with certain terms that are used on set such as "cameraspeed", which means that the camera is ready and likewise "soundspeed".

I had the privilege of working as the editor of "Heaven" in post-production, chosen to do due to my technical knowledge of editing software. This was my first time editing something in a cinematic form, and this included many hours of work, discussing with the director how each sequence should flow, what shots contained the best acting and how I could help the director fully replicate their creative vision for our film. Since I had no experience in film beforehand, this was a great opportunity to learn editing, with the BFI giving weekly masterclasses from people in each department of post-production. After the filming of our film, we were personally invited to a film festival where multiple people from the industry held Q&A questions for budding filmmakers in Northern Ireland. Later on in the year, we have our own virtual screening at the BFI and in the summer, "Heaven" will be screened at an actual theatre in Belfast. It was a highly valuable experience that I would recommend to anyone who is looking to work in the film industry.

**Karlo Gallegos Lower VI**

# A Christmas Carol

A worker, who quietly and diligently honoured God with his understated and even routine efforts, St Joseph was entrusted with a role that would serve to change history in a way that he could never have understood or imagined.

This was the theme woven through our Carol Service, dramatised by our Year 8 pupils, reflected beautifully in the spoken words of our Sixth Form and lifted by the voices of our school choirs.

Very few things sharpen the mind toward Advent and Christmas quite like the rousing sound of "Gaudete". Whether in person or virtual, taking time to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas as a school community continues to be a tradition that every pupil has the opportunity to share in.

Thank you to the RE, Music, Drama and Moving Image Arts departments for this beautiful reflection.



Watch our virtual Carol Service



# Catholic Caring Campaign

Nothing captures our sense of community better than the efforts of every pupil and tutor group to buy toys and Christmas gifts for children in our local community and to provide hampers with festive treats for local families.

This year, our pupils were able to provide gifts for 65 children to open on Christmas morning and our pupils created a hamper for everyone on our list, with enough treats to make up 15 extra hampers!

This year our campaign was supported by the social workers in the Beech Hall Centre, who were so taken with the level of generosity that they came back to express the gratitude on behalf of the families who had received these gifts.



In 2021 I won the Northern Ireland BBC Young Reporter of the Year. I was very surprised when I got the Zoom call from Thomas Niblock BBC Sports Commentator and Down GAA Legend Marty Clarke. The BBC had pretended they were just contacting me to give feedback on my entry! The Covid Lockdown meant the usual London ceremony was off but I attended a brilliant virtual one instead and received a nice trophy and other gifts.

The BBC plan to make a production based on my story

was delayed by the Covid restrictions. My story outline was really just about not letting illness or medical conditions get in the way of loving sport no matter what level you are at. I will always remember Marty Clarke's advice to me. He is my favourite Down player and to get a really good talk with him and hear his story was just brilliant! His example inspired me to complete the Young Whistler Referee Training for Gaelic Football and Hurling and I am now a young referee. I want to give back something to all the sports that have given me so much. The following were my thoughts regarding some of the questions Thomas Niblock asked me during our Zoom meeting with Marty Clarke and are similar to the theme of my winning story line for production.

**Q: What advice would you give to young people hearing your story?**

*Just enjoy sport and don't be afraid of it. Don't be afraid that you won't be the best or that you will get hurt because of your illness or lack of experience/skill. Your parents / coaches/ doctors will give you good safe advice. Coaches love to see anyone taking up their sport at any level, they will be delighted to see you. It is a brilliant way to make friends and have a laugh as well as keeping fit. I play Gaelic with the same boys I started primary school with, and my other sports have allowed me to make new friends from lots of different backgrounds. Sport teaches you to set yourself targets, work towards them and achieve. It teaches you teamwork and how to listen and respect other players, referees and coaches. All these skills help you at school and one day getting a job.*

*I found Lockdown tough in staying focused and motivated sometimes, but just kicking a ball at the side of the house or in the garden really helped my mood. Sometimes illness or injury can get you down but if you can visualise yourself playing sport or doing something active your mental and physical health will work together and help you feel better.*



# Fighting Words

In October 2021, I got selected to take part in "Fighting Words" NI's Young Playwright project: "Writing Theatre for Alternative Spaces". It was a ten-week project that lasted from October to January. Seven other young people and I took part in the workshop. I learnt so much about playwriting; how to create a narrative, the journey of planning and executing a story, the many factors that go into staging a play, the differences with writing for stage and screen.

We focused a lot on writing immersive theatre and ways to create stories to be performed outside of a traditional theatre. We also had the opportunity to write our own ten minute plays throughout the course of the workshop, working with professional actors, directors, and sound designers (as well as our dramaturgs Emily and Karis) to have our pieces performed in front of a live audience in the Ulster Museum. As someone whose only "real" experience of playwriting beforehand was through GCSE and A level devised work, it was such a fun experience filled with a lot of educational moments and memories I'll carry with me forever.

Being able to not only finish a script with the help of professionals, but to also see your work being performed by professional actors gives you a great feeling of pride and achievement and it certainly boosted my confidence as a writer. We had to get inspiration from the museum to influence our plays as they were going to be performed in the exhibits. My play was inspired by the painting "the Peace Talks" in the Troubles section of the Ulster Museum, as well as the "Silent Testimony" art exhibition by Colin Davidson.

It was definitely an unforgettable experience and I'm extremely grateful for Emily, Karis and all the Fighting Words people who helped, as well as my drama teachers for encouraging me to do the workshop in the first place.

Stephanie Abogunrin (Lower VI)

*Everyone will be a bit worried about getting back to sport after the Lockdown but if we follow the guidelines, we can really enjoy being outside again and feeling good while staying safe.*

*My main message is sport is for everyone at every level, it is really important to believe that you can do anything you put your mind to if you want it enough. See your illness/ medical condition/injury as an extra challenge that you plan around. It is just part of you. Taking your medicine/following your medical advice is just like getting your kit ready, it's just part of the preparation. I have found that if you can go easy on yourself when you can't do something at first and have a laugh at yourself too then watch and learn from others, you can and will do it! Just give yourself time. It's all about having the right mindset, believing in yourself and wanting to be the best you can be for yourself. You are really only competing with your last best effort, not other people, there is always going to be better or worse than you. Just don't give up, just keep trying and you will amaze yourself!*

**Fíonn McCann**

# GEOGRAPHY IN ACTION

Our Year 8-10 students learnt a wide range of Physical and Human topics that gives them a better understanding of our world. These topics included Environmental Issues, Physical Landscapes, Biomes, Plate Tectonics and Urban Issues Weather, Development and Coastal Environments.

Sustainability is encouraged in all the topics learnt as the world faces its greatest challenge in climate change. Our students learn about the causes and impacts of climate change and the simple changes they can make to their lives to help reduce its potential impact.



# NI BUSINESS CHALLENGE

**“The challenge was a fantastic experience which allowed us to analyse a real-life case study and put our studies into practice.”**

Jack Conlon, Year 14

## *Bank of England Talk*

In March 2022, our Year 14 Business Studies classes had a visit from Gillian Anderson, the Bank of England's Deputy Agent in NI. The pupils got to hear about the role of the Bank of England in setting interest rates and monetary policy in the UK. The wide-ranging talk with a Q&A was very engaging and we discussed how the economy works, the impact of COVID, Brexit, the NI Protocol and the uncertainty this has brought to the local business community.

Of particular interest to the pupils was hearing about Gillian's conversations with businesses and community organisations and how the impact of skills shortages in a number of sectors has affected production and productivity.

Pupils certainly got a real insight into the work of the Bank and prospects for the wider macroeconomic environment. We look forward to future visits from Gillian to take our discussions further.



In February 2022, a team of five A Level Business Studies students took part in the NI Business Challenge hosted by the Henderson Group, BDO NI and Queen's Management School. After weeks of preparation, collaboration, teamworking and practice, we travelled to the Riddel Hall in Stranmillis to present our findings on different challenges facing businesses today, such as COVID-19 and Brexit.

Our initial presentation went fabulously and we were one of just four schools to be selected for the final. We then presented again in front of a huge audience and were awarded second place. It was an amazing experience and gave us great insight into the different courses available at the Management School, such as economics and accounting.



# MICROSOFT SHOWCASE SCHOOL



We were delighted to receive the news that Rathmore Grammar School has been recognised by Microsoft as a "Showcase School". This global recognition serves to highlight our school as a leading institution that continuously develops and embraces new opportunities to support every pupil in their learning.

The school first learned of this recognition in an email from Anthony Salcito, Microsoft Vice President - Worldwide Education, that stated:

"Microsoft has recognised Rathmore Grammar School as a Showcase School, an elite group of schools that exemplify the best of teaching and learning in the world today. Only a few institutions earn this designation, and you can take pride in knowing that Microsoft recognises your impact on the future of education.

Microsoft Showcase Schools are pioneers in education. You are part of an exclusive global community, recognised and celebrated for educational transformation that includes vision and innovation in teaching, learning, and preparing students for the future".

This recognition serves to acknowledge the hard work, commitment and talent of all staff who embrace, through ongoing professional development, new ways to enhance learning and teaching. We are looking forward to continuing to share and learn from other leading schools in this elite global educational community.

*Photos depicting two visits (October 2019 and January 2020) from a team of Principal Managers responsible for Microsoft Teams and OneNote*



Pupil  
Voice



Hi, my name is Beth Kerr and I am the Year 8 Communication Officer on the Student Council. This role entails weekly meetings with the Communication Officers for Years 9-14 and monthly meetings with the Year 8 reps. In these meetings we discuss different issues that their tutor groups have raised. I then share this information with the other Communication Officers and we discuss how we will deal with these issues.

We also have a meeting with Dr Donnelly at the end of Term 1 when a rep from each year group has the opportunity to tell him about some of the ideas and opinions of pupils in their year group. Dr Donnelly was very impressed by some of the suggestions made to improve school life for example, extra benches outside and a map of the school displayed on corridors to help new pupils and visitors locate where they are. We look forward to seeing these initiatives being implemented.

The main goal of the Student Council is to allow pupils to use their voice to bring about change in our school for the benefit of all pupils. For example, the Inclusion survey which we completed last year allowed everyone to raise issues or challenges they have faced in school. The Student Council has focused on some of these issues and has contributed to the Inclusion Policy.

I really enjoy being a Communication Officer as it allows me to contribute to great change in our school. It gives me the opportunity to speak to younger pupils and hear their opinions of school life whilst also allowing me to bring forward some of my own opinions.

## Period Dignity Initiative

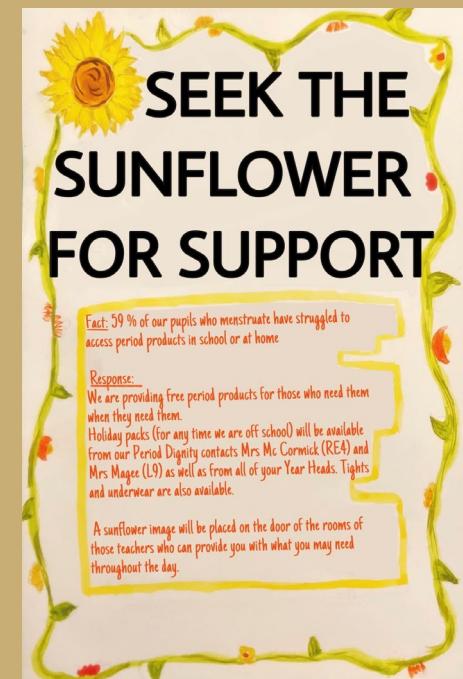
Within our local community, some people have to make a difficult choice between food, warmth and period products. There are pupils in our society who cannot afford period products and this is having an impact on their well-being. As well as this challenge, there are many pupils who experience an unexpected period and may not have period products with them in school.

We wanted to know more about our own pupil experience around this important issue. In response to pupil feedback from the Inclusion Survey carried out in June and the School Development Plan survey, we have implemented a trial **scheme to provide free period products for all pupils who need them when they need them.**

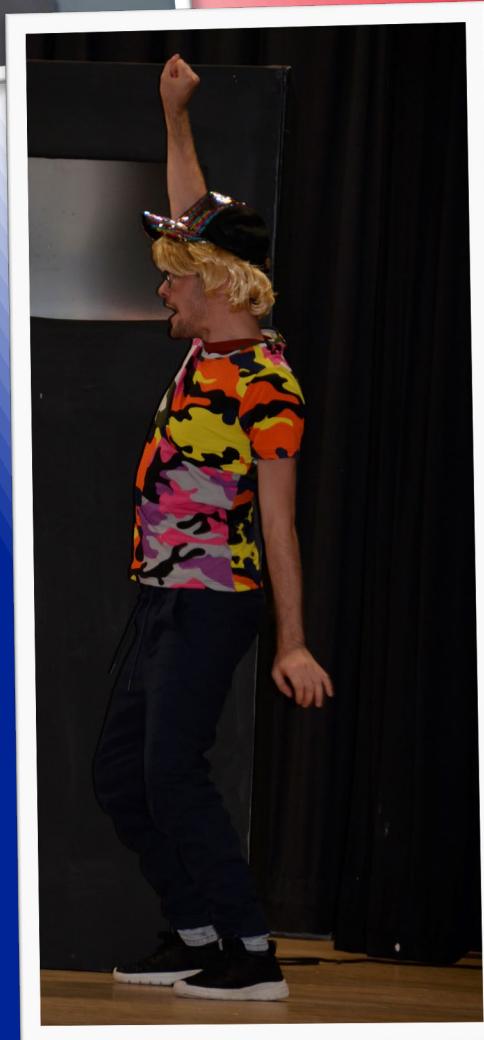
The feedback and responses from our base line pupil survey will inform the effective delivery of this scheme and has helped us to provide the right products for our school. From this survey, a number of pupils from across all year groups requested to be part of the Period Dignity Steering group.

This group has met on a number of occasions and prioritised the following:

- Supply period products in the bathrooms
- Posters to be made and displayed in the bathrooms
- Stock take
- Restock products when needed
- Provide Holiday period packs for those who need them
- Educate the whole school community on this important issue



# Mon père ne me comprend pas



In October 2021, Rathmore was visited by Onatti Theatre Company who performed their touring production of "Mon père ne me comprend pas" to our students studying French in Year 11.

What teenager has not wished for different parents? The relatable plot of this play focuses on Héléne, who is horrified with the gifts her father gives her for her birthday...a pencil case and a magic wand are really not what a 15-year-old girl wants for her birthday! However, with this wand she discovers she can re-invent her father. Héléne decides to wish for a cooler, younger father who buys her the TV, computer and new mobile phone she really wants. What ensues are three hilarious transformations of her father, with Héléne realising that none of these characters can replace her kind-hearted, rather old-fashioned father.

The plot highlighted many similarities to teenage life in a humorous and exaggerated manner, allowing the audience to empathise with the characters and storylines.

The play was performed completely in French, by native speakers, enabling students to immerse themselves in the language whilst at the same time enjoying a highly entertaining piece of drama with a message for all of us...Be careful what you wish for and appreciate what you have!

**Senan Connolly, Year 11**

# French Assistant - Noélie

**Prénom:** Noélie.

**Anniversaire:** Le 7 septembre 1997.

**Ville natale:** Cahors.

**Pays:** France.

**Animal:** Je n'ai pas d'animal.

**Passe-temps:** J'aime lire et écouter de la musique.

**Nourriture favorite:** J'adore les pains au chocolat.

**Chanson préférée:** Le Chant Des Sirènes des Fréro-Delaverga.

**Film préféré:** Mamma Mia.



*Le Pont Valentré – a famous bridge in Noélie's home town of Cahors*

## 1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your home town/city.

My name is Noélie, I am 24 years old and I am from a small town in the south of France called Cahors.

## 2. How do you find living in Belfast?

I really like it, I have met lots of wonderful people and there are lots of things to do.

## 3. Tell us about your studies to date.

I did my A-levels and then took a gap year. After that I attended university in Toulouse to study Linguistics, Literature and Civilisation of English-speaking countries.

## 4. Which languages do you speak? Do you think that it is important to learn another language? If so, why (not)? Is English a difficult language to learn?

I speak French, English and a little bit of Spanish. I think it is very important to learn a new language as it allows us to share different cultures around the world and meet new people. English was quite easy to learn because there are fewer rules and easier grammar!

## 5. What advice would you give to our young people?

Be curious and open to the world, and don't be afraid to change your mind.

# German Assistant Niels



*"Wer nicht wagt,  
der nicht gewinnt."*

*"Nothing ventured,  
nothing gained!"*

**Name:** Niels Okuniek.

**Geburtstag:** 11. April 1990.

**Heimatstadt:** Berlin.

**Land:** Deutschland.

**Hausiere:** Als ich jünger war, hatte ich zwei Katzen.

**Hobbies und Interessen:** Radfahren, Klettern, Fotografie.

**Lieblingsessen:** Lasagne oder Falafel.

**Lieblingslied:** Tiny Dancer cover by Florence + the Machine.

**Lieblingfilm:** Laurence Anyways by Xavier Dolan.

## 1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your home town/city.

I grew up, went to school and studied in Berlin. There are so many things to do there that it is sometimes hard to catch up. The city changes so rapidly. Sometimes I feel like I don't need to travel because the world comes to Berlin.

## 2. How do you find living in Belfast?

Belfast has been treating me very well. I really enjoy the rich cultural life. There are plenty of cool venues, museums, galleries as well as restaurants and pubs. If I don't feel like being in the city, I go on a day trip to the Mourne or to the North Coast. I think my favourite place in Belfast is Cave Hill.

## 3. Tell us about your studies to date.

I studied Chemistry, Teaching English as a Foreign Language and General Education at Freie Universität in Berlin. Last summer I finished my studies with the degree of Master of Education.

## 4. Which languages do you speak? Do you think that it is important to learn another language? If so, why (not)? Is English a difficult language to learn?

If you want to go to uni in Germany, you have to learn at least two foreign languages at school. I started learning French when I was 10 and started English when I was 12. In Year 12, I spent one year abroad in North Carolina and then six months in Lyon in France on an Erasmus grant during my studies.

## A FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF THE **GERMAN PARLIAMENT**



The German Department was delighted to welcome Johanna McAlister this term. Johanna is a policy writer for the Green Party, based in the Bundestag (the German parliament). The Year 12 and 13 were given a great insight into Johanna's work in parliament. Moreover, Johanna impressed upon our pupils how speaking modern European languages plays a vital role in her career.

"Johanna talked to us about how languages played a large role in her life. She spoke to us about doing a year of Law in England while learning Arabic. She showed me and my other class members how much of a vital part learning a foreign language, such as German, can play in later life. I saw how learning a foreign language can be both enjoyable and practical. Johanna made a great impact on me!"

**- Tabitha Shephard, Year 13**

If I had not studied English and French at school, living in a foreign country would have been a lot harder and less interesting. In the beginning, English can be easier than French. However, once you reach a certain level in English, it becomes harder to improve it.

## 5. What are your ambitions for the future?

I am planning to cycle back to Germany in June. This will maybe take me 3-4 weeks. In August I am going to start working at a school in Berlin. I am really looking forward to sharing my experiences with my future pupils.

## 6. What advice would you give to our young people?

Education is not a sprint but a marathon. Take your time. Take a gap year or take a year off to travel and work abroad. Try to interact with as many locals as possible when you are in a foreign country. If you get the opportunity to study abroad for six or twelve months while at Uni, I highly recommend that you do!



# It's Berlin Calling

## VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

“Well, they won't be able to go to Berlin, but we could still organise an online exchange, right?” That is basically how it all started...

While this year's German assistant, Niels, decided to spend a year abroad in Belfast after finishing his studies, Jonas, one of his former classmates from uni started working right away as an English teacher in Berlin. They came up with the idea to organise a virtual exchange and give their students the unique opportunity to interact and communicate with real native speakers. At first, their classes exchanged collages from which the pupils talked about themselves and their hobbies. Then, each class asked questions on school and cultural life. Currently, the pupils from Berlin are planning to make a video. We are excited to see what happens next.

Well done, Year 9 and thank you to Niels and Mr Newell!

**“It was great fun. How it worked was very simple. There were about ten schools competing and the point was just to translate and spell as many words in German as possible. I feel lucky to have represented Rathmore and overall, German is a great language to learn.”**  
**Ethan Craig, Year 8**



**Our Year 8 German pupils took part in the NICILT KS3 German Spelling Bee. This activity aimed to help engage learners in building their target language vocabulary. Pupils were given a list of vocabulary selected from the KS3 curriculum to learn and took part in a competition in their school to correctly translate and spell as many words as possible in one minute. The best speller from each school was invited to compete in the grand finale. Ethan Craig did a fantastic job in representing Rathmore!**

**Congratulations to all the pupils who took part!**

# Spanish Assistant Paloma

**Nombre:** Paloma Navas Padilla.  
**Fecha de nacimiento:** 24/07/1997.  
**Ciudad natal:** La Caleta de Vélez (Málaga).  
**País:** España.

**Mascota:** De pequeña tuve una tortuga llamada Manuelita.

**Aficiones e intereses:** Levantamiento de pesas, senderismo, jugar al tenis y viajar. Me encanta pasar tiempo con mis amigos y mi familia.

**Comida favorita:** Croquetas (de cualquier tipo).

**Canción favorita:** Soy aficionada de Manuel Carrasco.

**Película favorita:** Titanic.

## 1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your home town/city.

My name is Paloma, I'm 24 years old and I'm from a little city in Spain called La Caleta de Velez. It's a fishing village where everyone seems to know each other. In my town I love going to the beach where I can listen to the sound of the waves, enjoy the sunshine and read. In "La Caleta" we're famous for our delicious fish and our "tortas de Algarrado" which are traditional sweet treats. What's more, there are many avocado plantations!

## 2. How do you find living in Belfast?

I really love living in Belfast as the people are just so welcoming. In Rathmore everyone is friendly and shows such an interest in my culture. My favourite thing would have to be the beautiful landscapes such as the stunning cliffs and green fields - something you don't really see in my home town. The only thing I would change is probably the weather!

## 3. Tell us about your studies to date.

I went to school in Cádiz and got a degree in English and French philology. I've wanted to be a language teacher ever since I was young and always loved learning about other cultures and travelling abroad. In Granada I did my degree in education and now I'm here in Belfast where I'm learning so much about the lifestyle and trying to improve my accent.

## 4. Which languages do you speak? Do you think that it is important to learn another language? If so, why (not)? Is English a difficult language to learn?

I speak three languages – English, French and Spanish. Four if you count Andaluz! I think that learning a language allows you to be more open-minded and connect with the native speakers. Whether it's watching an international T.V. show or listening to a song in another language, languages open countless opportunities and experiences that you would miss out on otherwise.

## 5. What are your ambitions for the future?

I hope to become a teacher soon, in fact, next year I will begin studying for my "oposiciones" exams which are going to require a lot of work and preparation. That being said, I think coming to Belfast has made me realise how much of a homebody I am and so I would really love to work near my family in our little corner of Spain.

## 6. What advice would you give to our young people?

Be brave. It's not easy doing something that's out of your comfort zone but in life you only regret the things you don't do. In going abroad, I've become more flexible, adapting to new and exciting situations. Even though I'm a big family person, coming to Belfast has helped me improve my understanding of the language and the warmth of those here have truly made me feel at home.

**Ainm:** Jane Nic Uilliam.

**Dáta bréithe:** 29ú Méan Fomhair 1999.

**Baile Dúchais:** Béal Feirste.

**Tír:** Éire.

**Peataí:** Tá madadh agam darb ainm Ruby, is Labrador dubh í agus tá sí dhá bhliain déag d'aois!

**Caitheamh aimsire:** Is breá liom an ghrianghrafadóireacht agus thosaigh mé ag déanamh Judo an bhliain seo cháite-tá mé ag baint an-sult as!

**Bia is fearr liom:** Is breá liom gach sort bia ach tá áit spéisiúil i mo chroí don stobhach Gaelach mo mhamó.

**Amhrán is fearr liom:** The Less I Know The Better le Tame Impala.

**Scannán is fearr liom:** Pitch Perfect.



### 1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your home town/city.

Well, my name is Jane. I'm a Belfast local. I attended Rathmore and I studied Irish, Media Studies and English for my A levels. I really enjoyed my A Levels and I had a huge interest in Irish, but I knew I would keep on speaking in Irish so I went to university to learn broadcasting.

### 2. How do you find living in Belfast?

I was lucky enough to attend Rathmore as a student, so the school isn't new to me. However, I must say how strange it is to sit on the other side of the desk with students of my own! Being an Irish teacher wasn't part of my plan, but I'm happy to be here teaching at Rathmore.

### 3. Tell us about your studies to date.

I started learning Irish from scratch in my first year at Rathmore and I completely fell in love. I never went to a bunscoil when I was little, but it didn't hinder me at all.

Although it was difficult, it just didn't feel like school to me! I continued my studies over the summer, attending Gaeltacht colleges in Donegal to surround myself with the language as well as to make new friends through Irish – it was scary at first because I went alone, but you're not alone for long at a Gaeltacht college and I quickly made so many lifelong friends.

I remember crying on my last day! Although I did my degree in broadcasting, I've worked loads of jobs through Irish, including editing, and even working with TV programmes. Right now I'm working at "Meon Eile" as well as in Rathmore. It goes to show that if you love something it will make itself a part of your life.

### 4. Which languages do you speak? Do you think that it is important to learn another language? If so, why (not)? Is English a difficult language to learn?

I don't speak any other languages right now, but I'd love to learn Spanish and French. I tried picking up French in lockdown but I didn't get very far.

I definitely think it's important to learn other languages. Language is a really great developmental tool. It's a great way to discover culture and make connections with people across the world and in your own country. It's not just about words!

### 5. What are your ambitions for the future?

In short, I plan to carry out the rest of my life through Irish. If I have children they'll be going to Irish medium schools. I think it's really important for each of us Irish speakers to do our part to keep the Irish language alive, so even though I'm not sure where my life or career will take me, I know I'll keep Irish with me.

### 6. What advice would you give to our young people?

My best piece of advice is to find a way to immerse yourself in the language and culture. Find your interests (for me it was media) and learn the language through it, on your own terms. There are loads of great resources these days to help Irish learners, use them! You can look at articles and social media in Irish, especially Twitter, and there are even YouTubers who vlog in Irish! Most importantly; practise, practise, practise!

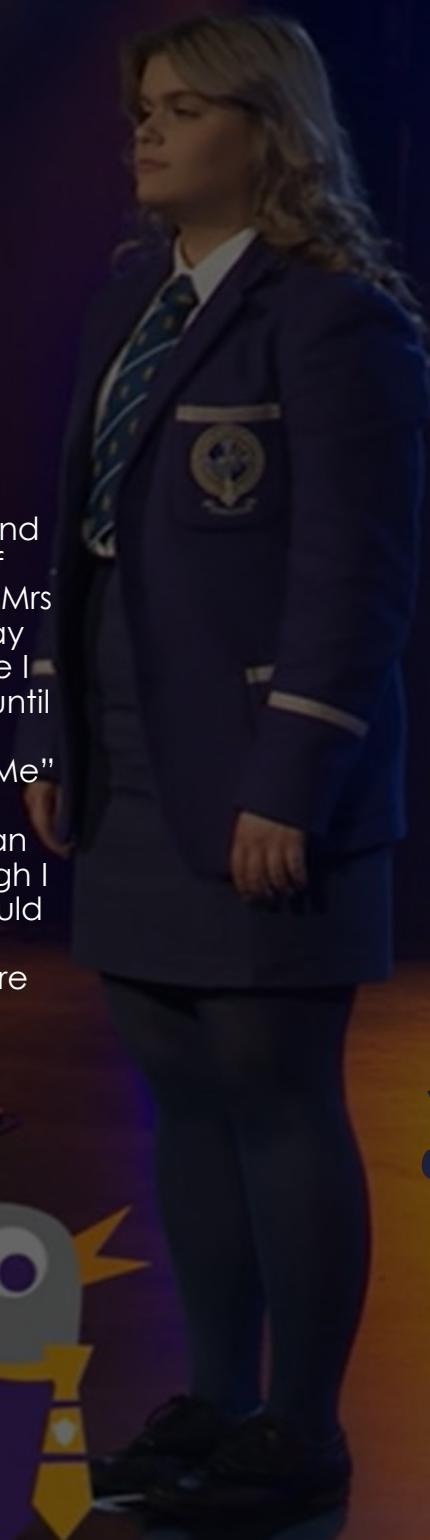


Taking part in BBC's School Soloist of the Year was a great experience for me and a fun day overall.

I was guided by Mrs Agnew through the audition process and felt immensely proud that I was selected out of hundreds of auditionees. I rehearsed with my singing teacher as well as Mrs Agnew and was extremely excited to perform when the day came. I got to go to the BBC Studio in the city centre where I was brought to my own dressing room where I would wait until it was my time to perform. After a quick interview, it was eventually my time to perform. I sang two songs, "Think Of Me" from Phantom of The Opera and "At Last" by Etta James. I received great feedback from the judges, who said I had an excellent voice, and I felt I performed very well and although I didn't get through to the heats, I had a great time and would love to compete again! One of my favourite moments was experiencing the audience's reaction after I sang, they were incredibly supportive and very encouraging!

- Hannah McCann

Watch It Again



"Politics in Action" is a cross community programme between our school and Methodist College. We meet online for an hour to discuss a range of political topics and issues. Together with Methody, we have worked on a manifesto that is presented at the end of the programme.

The discussions are open, engaging, and have helped immensely in furthering my passion for and knowledge of politics. We've had the privilege to have talks with numerous politicians (as well as someone from Fact Check NI) such as Robbie Butler, Claire Hanna and Naomi Long. This programme has opened my eyes to the way manifestos are written, how the behind the scenes of politics looks like, and has given me the opportunity to speak to a range of politicians who have offered great insight into the political sphere. I recommend that anyone who studies Government and Politics A level joins the programme. You won't regret it.

- **Stephanie Abogunrin, Year 13**

Politics affects everyone's life in one way or another. Young people should try to be involved in politics as much as possible in order to play a role in their future. There are several ways young people can become involved in politics. For example, you can join the youth branch of a political party. You can make a difference in your area by becoming a political activist. You can also join pressure groups such as Black Lives Matter and Friends of the Earth to fight for causes that matter to you!

- **Odhran Mc Cleave, Year 13**



# A Stronge Showing for Politics

Our local and national political scene has witnessed its fair share of change over the years, but one political constant has been the Rathmore Politics Department run by Ms Stronge who will enjoy retirement at the end of the academic year.

As Head of Politics, Ms Stronge set about establishing the Politics Society to encourage greater engagement and understanding of the importance of political activism and engagement for our young people.

Inviting local MLAs, MPs and Executive Ministers to speak to pupils, Ms Stronge will perhaps look back most fondly at the numbers of pupils she has encouraged to take an active interest in local politics, especially the number of our girls who have joined the society over the years.

We wish Ms Stronge health and happiness in her retirement and who knows, maybe now she has the time to run for political office.



Claire Hanna MP



Christopher Stalford MLA



Justice Minister David Forde



Justice Minister Naomi Long

# YOUNG ENGINEERS

## AMBASSADOR

### PROGRAMME

Five of our Lower Sixth Technology and Design students have been developing an "Engineering kit in a box". These kits are designed to be used by Primary 7 pupils and contain a full set of resources, materials and lesson plans. The activities were designed to promote STEM, and in particular Engineering where pupils solve problems in an interactive and fun environment. Our team focused on levers and how they can be used to gain mechanical advantage culminating in pupils designing and building desktop catapults to compete against

each other at the end of the activity. The team had to consider budget constraints and ensure that materials were easily accessible for primary schools. We were hosted by Aquinas Grammar to present our kit and budget planning to a panel of engineers from industry and Queen's University, Belfast. We received positive feedback and have been given permission to plan for the delivery of this unit to primary schools in September. In addition to this, each team member is eligible to apply for their silver crest award.

TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN

## Young Translator Success

Congratulations to French student Leia Phenix in Year 12 who has won the Northern Ireland section of the Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators, run by the Queen's College, Oxford.

Entries to the competition were judged by team of Oxford undergraduates and professional translators and the judges were very impressed by the standard of entries.

The organisers commented on Leia's fantastic achievement as they received over 3,200 submissions from more than 260 schools in the UK. Over 14,000 pupils took part in the competition task alone in 2022. Leia will be taking French for A level next year and we are very proud of her.



## YEAR 8

### TECHNOLOGY

Technology and Design is brilliant! I have learned how to make various products using different tools and machines. We study theory and have completed lots of design work using various drawing techniques. In the workshop we have used different types of wood and plastic to produce our desk tidy, Christmas decoration and torch products.



I enjoy the practical nature of Technology & Design and have also enjoyed learning new skills such as soldering electronic components. My teacher, Mr Donnelly, is a friendly, patient and kind teacher. He really wants the best and more for his students. I am really enjoying Rathmore Grammar School and the teachers here are amazing.

- Meabh Conlon, Year 8





**PLANDU**

This year, a team of sixteen Lower Sixth students came together to create Plandù, our school's Young Enterprise company 2021/22. Plandù, which is Irish for plant, is a company focused on sustainability and caring for the environment. Our mission is to help you to help the planet. Each member of the team was assigned a role in different departments of the business, such as our Managing Director, finance, marketing and operations.

Together we designed and produced sustainable tote bags and biodegradable cards with a wide range of designs and patterns to suit everyone in our school community and beyond. It's safe to say our products were a hit, with the first batch of bags selling out in just two days!

"Young Enterprise was an incredible opportunity which I would recommend to all lower sixth students. I've really enjoyed the whole process and it helped develop my skills and gave me an insight into the world of work."

- Sarah McCrory, Year 13



Many congratulations to Joshua Abogunrin in 9/9.

Joshua won the Grade 5 Piano section at Belfast Music Festival.

## Physics Olympiad



This year students in Y12, 13 and 14 have participated in online and paper based Physics Olympiad Competitions. Olympiad papers require problem solving skills that both demonstrate and develop our students' determination, application and imagination in using their physics knowledge in new situations. The competitions are targeted at students who are working at the highest level and who can cope with challenging questions beyond the usual scope of the GCSE and A level syllabi.

Preparing for and taking part in competitions requires commitment both in class and at home and our students rose to the challenge. Their efforts were rewarded and they achieved commendations, bronze, silver and gold awards.

Special congratulations to Emel Melville, Aleena Rahman, Molly McCartan, Oscar Conlon, Dylan Moran, James Reel and Matthew Jordan who all achieved gold awards.





## Forensic science workshop

In February, Year 10 classes took part in a Forensic Science workshop to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963. During the three periods of activities, classes ventured into the world of forensic science, including fingerprint analysis, virtual reality, evidence classification, gun residue experimentation and microbiology investigation.

As a year group we learned about the conspiracy theories surrounding the murder and how many controversies could have led to the historical event on that fateful day in Dallas. These were explained in a video shown during Biology classes before the workshop took place, one of the most notable, in my opinion, being Lyndon B. Johnson's fraud trial and how the killing brushed that under the rug. Aside from that, the most weirdly wonderful area of information we uncovered was the arrest of "assassin" Lee Harvey Oswald, and how the timeline leading to his arrest, subsequent imprisonment and ultimately murder, had many twists and fatal turns, only adding to the confusion felt by all pupils participating and leaving many of us with more questions than answers.

My personal favourite area of the workshop had to be the "Photo Station" where everyone had the opportunity to take photos of themselves or their friends against a backdrop, using props to recreate the iconic and conspiracy shrouded "Backyard Photo". All pupils enjoyed this activity, with some even getting teachers to join in too!

This forensic science workshop conclusively revealed to all year 10 pupils how little was conveyed by the authorities to the general public at the time of the assassination and for years to come, and the workshop was extremely enjoyable and engaging. It also encouraged us to expand our thoughts in a practical manner. In all, I felt that the workshop was a unique experience for Year 10, even those who wouldn't have originally been enthusiastic about a science-based seminar got something from taking part.

By **Róise Stevenson 10-1/G**

## CAMBRIDGE CHEMISTRY COMPETITION

During the summer term some very keen A level Chemistry students gave up their June holidays to enter a gruelling Chemistry competition run by St Catherine's College, Cambridge. The competition took the form of a ninety minute paper that combined A level type questions with unfamiliar Chemistry problems. This was Rathmore's first foray into such a prestigious challenge and our students performed superbly.

It was clear that they had sacrificed a substantial amount of their summer down time to prepare for the competition. Their achievements are even more impressive when we consider that many of the topics tested were studied during lockdown. Particular congratulations must go to Patrick Devlin who received a Gold Award and Oisín Conlon who received a Silver Award.



# English Careers Talk



Poetry Competition Winners



## National Poetry Day

The English Department organised its annual poetry competition to coincide with National Poetry Day. We wanted to capture the enthusiasm felt by the school community as it started a new academic year with a positive mindset. Therefore, we chose the theme of Connections, as we wanted to focus on the people and things that connect us, despite the most testing of recent circumstances. The competition was open to Years 8-11 and Year 13, and as always, the standard was very high. Winners were chosen from each class and then Dr Donnelly chose the overall winner from each Year group. Well done to David Donaghy (8L), Finn Taggart (9M), Aidan Mckenna (10M), Eve Wilson (11C) and Joey Ho (13/5).

Mr Tierney is no stranger to the Solas magazine, as he was Editor for over fifteen issues. Now an Associate Consultant with Microsoft, Mr Tierney gave our current Sixth Form English students an inspiring talk on career options. The English Department is very grateful to Mr Tierney for taking the time to speak to our pupils and look forward to many return visits in the future.



Advanced Reading Group

The Advanced Reading Group has been enjoying getting together again and sharing their views on a variety of novels. In the first term they read "The Great Gatsby". Everyone enjoyed the story of Jay Gatsby trying to repeat the past in his efforts to win back Daisy Buchanan. The group especially loved Fitzgerald's language and the memorable quotations, such as: "there was something gorgeous about him", "her voice sounds like money", and the haunting last lines, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." The second novel read by the group was "Longbourn" by Jo Baker. It is set in the Bennet home of Pride and Prejudice, but from the servants' perspective. Hence, the wry observation made by Sarah, "If Elizabeth Bennet had the washing of her own petticoats, she would be more careful not to tramp through muddy fields." Mrs McCullagh's enthusiasm for this novel was not shared by all members of the group! The group was very keen to read "Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe" by Benjamin Alire Saenz. This novel made a big impression on the group. Jack Thompson said that he, "Thoroughly enjoyed reading the novel and adored the manifestation of Dante's and Aristotle's relationship." Molly Cross wrote how the character of Ari was very compelling and relatable. She loved the exploration of Ari's relationship with his father and how they were able to heal each other. The group is looking forward to reading some of the latest novels published in 2022!

## Static

Static is an infection  
A blockade that leaves the mind under siege  
A plague upon connection  
A war against the need to breathe.

All too often, it seems eldritch, beyond immense  
And I've watched as it devolved into exhaustion, blinded  
By the ringing in my ears getting so intense  
That I prayed for radio silence.

There's a grief that comes with isolation  
A longing for the time before the harrowing noise  
But connecting could lead to more devastation  
So escape is simply more comfortable to avoid.

But this escape isn't external.  
It's found in the web of nerves under my skin  
Grass underneath my feet, sunlight no longer infernal,  
But warm, connecting me to feeling again.

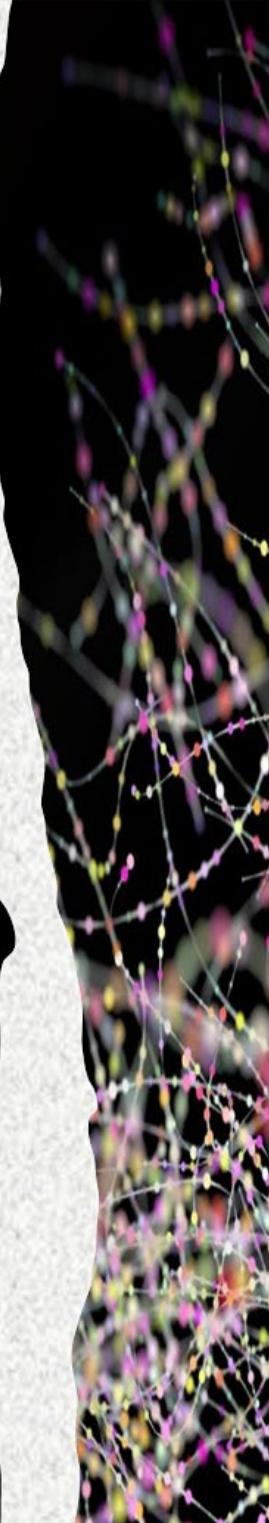
Connection isn't just a personal haven  
Even the divine stars above connect  
Into brilliant webs of constellations  
That connect consciousness to unearthly respect

for life and what she has given us all:  
A chance to let static dissipate  
To become a vessel of the sprawling spider web of the soul,  
Inherent connection to life and her string of fate.

But static isn't child's play  
And an echo remains after recovery  
But every sunset is a connection to another day  
A connection to infinite discovery.

I've lost too much time to static, that I can't say I don't regret  
But now I realise I'm not ready to give up on connection just yet.

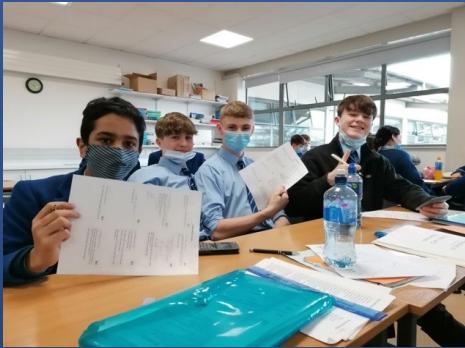
**A poem by Eve Wilson (Year 11)**



# International

## Π Day

To celebrate Pi Day junior classes were taught about Pi and its origins. They tried to memorise Pi to as many decimal places as possible and we were very impressed with how well our Year 8 classes did! They also worked on logic puzzles in groups, racing against the clock and each other to be the first to finish. Some groups got very competitive! Senior classes also got involved in the celebrations by completing various maths challenges on their own and in teams. Classes enjoyed these activities and now know a lot more about Pi!



# SENIOR MATHS CHALLENGE



The Senior Maths Challenge was an exciting and challenging experience that I found to be an exceptional way to expand my knowledge and understanding of Maths while in a fun and engaging manner, getting to compete against my peers without the usual stakes or stress of a standard test.  
Dillon Shephard



Practising in the weeks coming up to the Senior Maths Challenge helped to change how I approached problem solving when it comes to other areas of the subject. It is an excellent opportunity to out yourself to the test and solve a complex puzzle.



# INTERMEDIATE MATHS CHALLENGE

I initially wanted to take part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge to challenge myself and to do something that would broaden my options in the future. I liked that fact that it requires you to think about the questions in a unique, more creative style to typical exam questions. Although it was difficult, I feel that it is a great accomplishment - not only to take part - but to get a gold, and I believe that it has boosted my confidence in my mathematical ability.

Faolán Conlon Year 11



## Cookery Club

The Home Economics after-school Cookery Club has been held for the students in Years 8 and 9. This has been a 6-week session for each year group organised and delivered by the Home Economics Assistant, Ms Hobson. It involved students suggesting, preparing, and cooking a variety of dishes which they would not prepare in class. Some of the dishes that have been prepared this year are mini sausage rolls, pitta pizzas, chocolate cupcakes, rocky roads and toffee krispie buns.



## LIVESTOCK AND MEAT COMMISSION COOKERY DEMONSTRATIONS

The Year 9 students took part in a cookery information talk and demonstration organised by The Livestock and Meat Commission. Ms Arlene Thompson spoke to the students about various aspects of meat production and the importance of buying farm quality assured products. She also discussed the nutritional benefits of red meat and the current dietary guidelines for its consumption with the students. During the various visits a range of dishes were prepared and cooked which the students sampled and enjoyed. These included beef, including Turkish flatbread with beef red onion feta and pomegranate and Beef with mango and ginger were prepared and cooked which the students sampled and enjoyed.



## SOROPTIMIST PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has 6000 Members in 270 Clubs in 18 countries including Great Britain, Ireland and countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Malta, who work at a local, national and international level to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls.

Every year the organisation holds a competition open to all girls in years 12 & 13 that aims to encourage girls to play a more prominent part in public life, improve the art of communication and develop self-confidence and personality.

In November 2021 I had the opportunity to compete alongside eighteen competitors including five of my fellow Lower Sixth pupils in the Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition. This heat was held in the Hillsborough Village Centre. Each competitor was asked to prepare a 4-6 minute speech on one of the six topics based on planet and environment, partnership and empowerment of women, people and human rights, prosperity and health and peace and democracy.

Despite the very tough competition, I achieved first place in the Lisburn heat with my speech "When woman thrive all society benefits – Kofi Anan". I was awarded the Lisburn cup and qualified for the Northern Ireland final. My fellow competitors from Rathmore also gave outstanding performances with Juliet Hewitt achieving second place, speaking on the topic "It is easier to build strong children than broken adults" and Stephanie Abogurnrin placed third with her speech on "Has the Black Lives Matter movement made us more aware of racism?"

Upon my return to school in January after the Christmas break, I began my preparation for the upcoming final. While I would be performing the same speech as before, a new element had been introduced into the competition: an extempore speech. This time, each participant would be delivering a 1 - 2-minute-long impromptu speech on a topic which they would be given five minutes' preparation time for on the day. While this aspect of the competition certainly was unnerving, with the help of Miss Boyle and a lot of lunch time practices, the task gradually became less intimidating and I felt excited to compete again.

On Saturday 5th February my family and I travelled to Hillsborough Village centre for the final, with the winners from each district heat returning to compete. All of the participants would first give her prepared speech and then after a brief intermission, the extempore speeches would commence. Each girl was taken individually into a room to write her speech on the topic "Giving is good because..." By the time the results were being called out I began to feel slightly nervous, however much to my surprise and delight I ended up placing first in the completion, winning the Soroptimist Youth Award Salver, a bursary and was invited to deliver my speech at the annual North/South Conference on 21st May 2022.

To say that this experience was incredible would be an understatement. While I initially auditioned for team just for a bit fun, I never expected such a fantastic outcome and I am so grateful for the opportunity that I wouldn't have received otherwise. Thanks to the help of Miss Boyle I was able to be a part of an organisation that strives to educate, empower and enable young women from all over the world to inspire action around them and take control of their futures.

**Brianna Armstrong Lower VI**



### Belfast Trust Student Healthcare Debate

This year, Kayo Dobrowolski, Rahul Gopakumar, Peter Keenan, Carl Reyes and I were delighted to represent Rathmore as finalists in the Belfast Trust Student Healthcare Debate.

This competition gave us the opportunity to engage with current topics in health and social care. Entry was not automatic as Rathmore had to qualify by submitting a 2,000-word response on the topics of 'Healthcare provision is bad for the environment' and 'Minimum unit pricing for alcohol could benefit Public Health in Northern Ireland'. We were delighted to be chosen as one of four schools to go through to the semi-finals. In the semi-final, we competed against St Catherine's College, Armagh and opposed the motion, "Cannabis use should be legalised in Northern Ireland". After successfully winning this debate, we earned a place in the Northern Ireland final, competing against Thornhill College, Derry, opposing the motion "Vaccination against Covid-19 should be mandated".

This was a particularly topical issue given the COVID-19 pandemic and proved fascinating to research. Although we were disappointed not to win the final, we gained a wealth of knowledge from the whole experience. The debate taught us valuable skills such as researching current topics in society, writing persuasively and delivering speeches in a convincing, passionate manner as a team. We also learnt the art of rebuttal, which involved thinking on our feet to answer questions from the other team and the judging panel. I relished participating in the Belfast Trust Healthcare Debate, it was a thoroughly exciting experience.

### Eimear Logan 13-3



# junior debating society

The Junior Debating Society took place every Wednesday at lunchtime and was led by a group of Lower Sixth students. It was a great experience for me as it helped develop my confidence in group work as well as help me form arguments and sharpen my decision making skills. This was done through a variety of activities including walking debates, "debate offs" and the "job interview game". The "job interview game" was particularly fun as you were assigned a very peculiar job like "a dog food taster" and you had to argue passionately about the benefits this job entailed! Other debates were much more serious and required us to research political and historical events; for

example, we focused on Black History Month in October and explored accounts of many Black figures whose courageous and noble acts shaped history. The ability to conduct independent research and use it to shape arguments and support our ideas is a very valuable life skill which is essential for school but also later at university regardless of the path we choose. That aside, the various topics for the debates encouraged us to read around areas we wouldn't necessarily have looked into thus increasing our knowledge of the world around us.

I enjoyed the Junior Debating Society and would encourage others to get involved. I'm not so sure about the prospects of a job as a "dog food taster" – I think I will leave that to my canine pet!  
 Luke Kelly Year 9L



## KNIGHTS OF ST COLUMBANUS COMPETITION

In January 2021 I participated in the Knights of St Columbanus annual competition. The organisation thrives on pursuing charity and justice inspired by the bravery and courage of St Columbanus, so to continue his mission, the Order established an All-Ireland Debating Competition which seeks to familiarise young Christians with the social justice issues gripping our world today. While usually this competition is centred around public speaking, due to COVID-19 I was instead required to write a 1500–2500-word essay discussing one of the organisers' chosen topics: Social Media and the Gospel, Justice and Peace, Young Christians or Living the Christian Life.

For my essay I chose to follow the prompt of "That is why I constantly urge young people not to let themselves be robbed of hope; to each of them I repeat: Let no one despise your youth" (Pope Francis in Christus Vivit 15) under the topic of "Young Christians". I spoke largely on the concept of young people taking an active role in politics with particular reference to the influence of Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg and Sophie Cruz who are activists on the issues of Gender Equality, the Climate Crisis and Immigration Control respectively.

In the initial Division of the competition, I placed first in Ulster with Patrick Devlin placed second and Katie Sesay and Logan McMahon securing third place. I was absolutely delighted when I was named the All-Ireland Winner. To celebrate the achievement, I was given the amazing opportunity to meet the Order representative Mr Seamus McDonald and to hear first-hand about the honourable work of the organisation whilst receiving £300 as my prize. During this meeting myself and Mr McDonald took pictures representing Rathmore which were later published alongside my essay in the Irish News as an article of how Faith Matters in Young people.

This experience has given me confidence in my writing and been invaluable during my University applications. I strongly urge other members of the school to take advantage of the support you can receive from Rathmore's Debating Society and enter this competition in future years.

**Roisin Gormley Upper VI**





# 5 TIME WORLD CHAMPION

BLANAID O'NEILL  
EXPLAINS WHAT  
IT TAKES TO  
BECOME AND  
REMAIN A WORLD  
CHAMPION



Winning my fifth world title was an absolute honour, especially in my hometown of Belfast!

The lead up to the World Championships was very different than usual this year as I was suffering from a major injury that caused me to be out of training for over four months before the Worlds, leaving me with only 8 weeks to prepare for the biggest competition an Irish Dancer can ever wish to compete in.

12 weeks before the worlds I was told that I was not allowed to dance and I couldn't train with anything that required me to put weight on my foot. I then had to go into a boot and try to maintain fitness and prepare as much as I could under the restricted circumstances.

The championships were held over two days, with two dances on day one, and three dances

on day two. The main goal was to get through day one with as little pain as possible to allow me to dance my best on day two. I danced the best I possibly could and after that, it was all down to the judges. When I found out I had won it was the most amazing feeling. All the stress of the previous months felt like it had just lifted off my shoulders and all my hard work felt like it was worth it.

I plan to allow my injury to recover fully, and hopefully, compete in many competitions in the months and years to come.

# Conor Murphy continues to make waves .

I have been swimming since I was 6 years old. What originally started out as a way to learn how to swim and then stay fit has evolved into something that has given me so many opportunities and experiences that I am so thankful for. At the age of 9 I joined Lisburn City Swimming Club which is where I started to take it a bit more seriously (even though I wasn't that good) and through the years with the help of my coaches and friends around me I found a passion in swimming and began to see progression both as an individual and a team, helping my team to win the Ulster AquaSprints Championship in my 3 year at the club.

After joining Rathmore in 2015 I started seeing huge improvements in my swimming, competing in completions every year which if you do well in allows you to go on a trip as a member of the Ulster Schools Swim Team over to Tenerife for a week long training camp with some of the best swimmers and coaches in Ulster. I have kept my swimming up throughout my years at Rathmore, competing annually in both the Ulster and Irish Summer National Championships as well as the Olympic Trials for Tokyo 2020, my swimming has even allowed me to compete at a national and international level

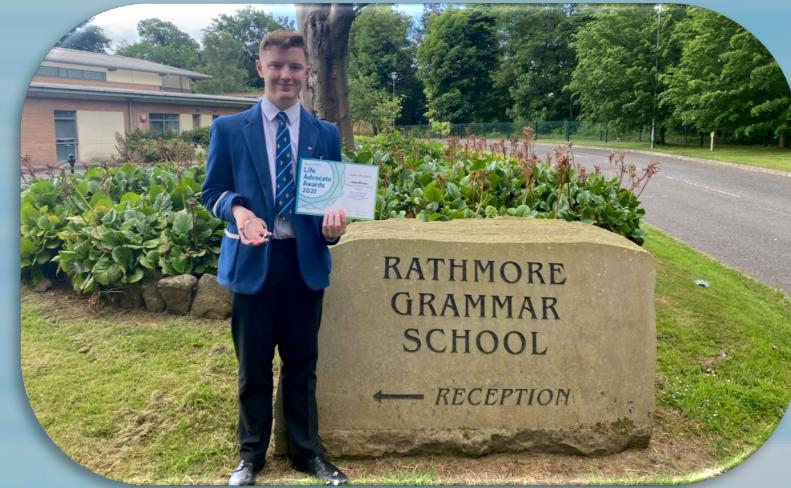
against some of the best swimmers in the world such as Adam Peaty during their preparation for the games just before Covid.

After coming back from Covid, other members of Rathmore and I have thrown ourselves straight back into our swimming. In February this year many members of Rathmore across all year groups competed in the Ulster Schools Championship and everyone had a lot of fun and swam really well with the senior boys' relay team of myself along with Patrick Ferrie (L6), Louis Ryan (U6), Lucas Morgan (U6) coming 5th place overall, missing out on a medal by just over a second which was unfortunate as for most of us it was our last year competing, however I had qualified 4th for the finals later that evening and so everyone stayed to cheer me on, and having them all there supporting me spurred me on to place 3rd in the 100BC against some of the fastest swimmers in the country in my last ever race for Rathmore which is something I am immensely proud of. Now I am looking forward to what is to come next year for me and my swimming, with swimming at a university level and the potential to break an Irish Junior Record next year.

# Youth Alpha



LifeWorks



Last year, Rathmore entered the All Ireland LifeWorks Essay competition. My essay was based on the words of the Blessed Mother Theresa, "We need to realise that poverty doesn't only consist of being hungry for bread, but rather it is a tremendous hunger for human dignity." I really enjoyed writing this essay as it gave me a chance to reflect on not only the important themes raised by the essay, but on my own morals and ethics. The message of the hunger for human dignity resonated deeply within me and challenged me to think not only of the vast effects of poverty in the world globally, but the effects closer to home. It made me realise that poverty can present a financial hardship, as well as a social hardship which can be extremely dehumanising. Poverty is a vicious cycle that can easily lead to its victims ending up in the criminal justice system. I was delighted to be awarded second place for my essay but overall this was an eye-opening experience for me that has made me realise the importance of empathy and generosity to those who desperately need it.

2<sup>nd</sup> place winner - Conor McCann- Year 14

Around 30 pupils gathered every week on a Wednesday after school to talk about our Christian faith. We discussed a range of different topics during the 7 week period, e.g. the Holy Spirit, what faith and prayer means to us, forgiveness and how faith has impacted our lives; every week there were different questions. We would watch a 20-30 minute video which introduced a new topic each week, typically with four 5-minute breaks during which, Phil (our Alpha facilitator) would ask us to speak amongst our groups to answer the questions on the board/the questions he has given us. This allowed us to interact with other like-minded students to speak about something important to us, our faith. The fact that we were able to speak to fellow students gave us a sense of confidence to speak and actually be involved which can be difficult when only speaking to the teacher/facilitator. This also gave us the opportunity to speak to those in our year that we never have spoken to so it allowed us to make some new friends through the programme. We were also provided with plenty of juice and treats at the beginning of the video. The first week I felt anxious about it as none of my friends were coming along. However, we began with a game of heads down thumbs up and I quickly realised that everyone at the programme (including the teachers and facilitators) were so welcoming and nice. We celebrated the completion of our Alpha course with a ceremony in our school chapel where we were awarded with certificates and we had time to reflect on our faith. I would highly recommend the Alpha programme to anyone who wants to make new friends through faith and those who would like to further explore their journey of faith.

Aneesha Batak – Year 13

## GROW

This year the GROW committee was founded by a group of Year 10 pupils. The group is open to anyone in Year 9 and Year 10 who wants to meet new people and enjoy new experiences in school. The group has been very busy with gardening, baking and more significantly an awareness campaign for Fairtrade. GROW is currently in the process of registering Rathmore Grammar to become a "FairAware" school, as this cause is particularly important to us. One of our great successes this year was our Fairtrade Divine chocolate sale! The committee created a video to highlight the need to support Fairtrade, this was delivered to other pupils during a Pastoral Period. With the help of Year 9 and Year 10 volunteers we set up three sales point outdoors, on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February, for years 8-12. Boxes were made available for Year 13 and 14 students in their studies. Within record time the chocolate sold out and proved very popular with the school community, including staff and the goal of raising awareness of the work of Fairtrade was achieved.

# McFARLAND CUP



What ensued after the first water break could only be described as inspirational, as Rathmore pulled back their confidence with each point scored. Each point hard won, each score lifting the shoulders of the players, who regained the stature and poise that had seen the team progress through a series of tough matches to make the final.

The half-time whistle could only serve to break the momentum gained and leave room to overthink the lead that had been extended. A trophy well within reach. To edge this close to victory yet knowing that the game could turn at any time and that their opponents were a very close match and had already enjoyed the ascendancy once in this final.

*"Go out there and enjoy yourselves, enjoy every second of playing for Rathmore in a final."*

These were the words of a past pupil who has been involved with the coaching of our school teams since he left in Upper Sixth. The words of experience from a pupil who has been in many similar games. The words that echoed what he had learnt from representing the school at every level - enjoy yourselves and the rest will come. This advice resonated with the players, and the second half was simply an exhibition from both sides of how a school hurling game should be played - skills in abundance a competitive spirit and a superb level of sportsmanship during and after the game.

Our sports teams had the opportunity to hear how self-belief, determination and persistent hard work are key elements of success and building a winning mentality.

This was the message from All-Ireland winning Tyrone Captain Pádraig Hampsey who visited the school with the hope of inspiring our teams to future success.

It has been wonderful to see our pupils involved in after-school activities and the enjoyment they bring.

This Term saw our Year 8-10 camogie team win 7-1 to 2-2 and our Under 14 ½ hurlers winning the McFarland Cup. Our McLarnon panel lost out to St Louis, Ballymena but the experience will stand our young squad in good stead for next year.

Our Under 16 and Under 19 teams both played in the Ulster Final, where the Under 19s were victorious. Both teams have qualified for the All-Ireland play-offs.

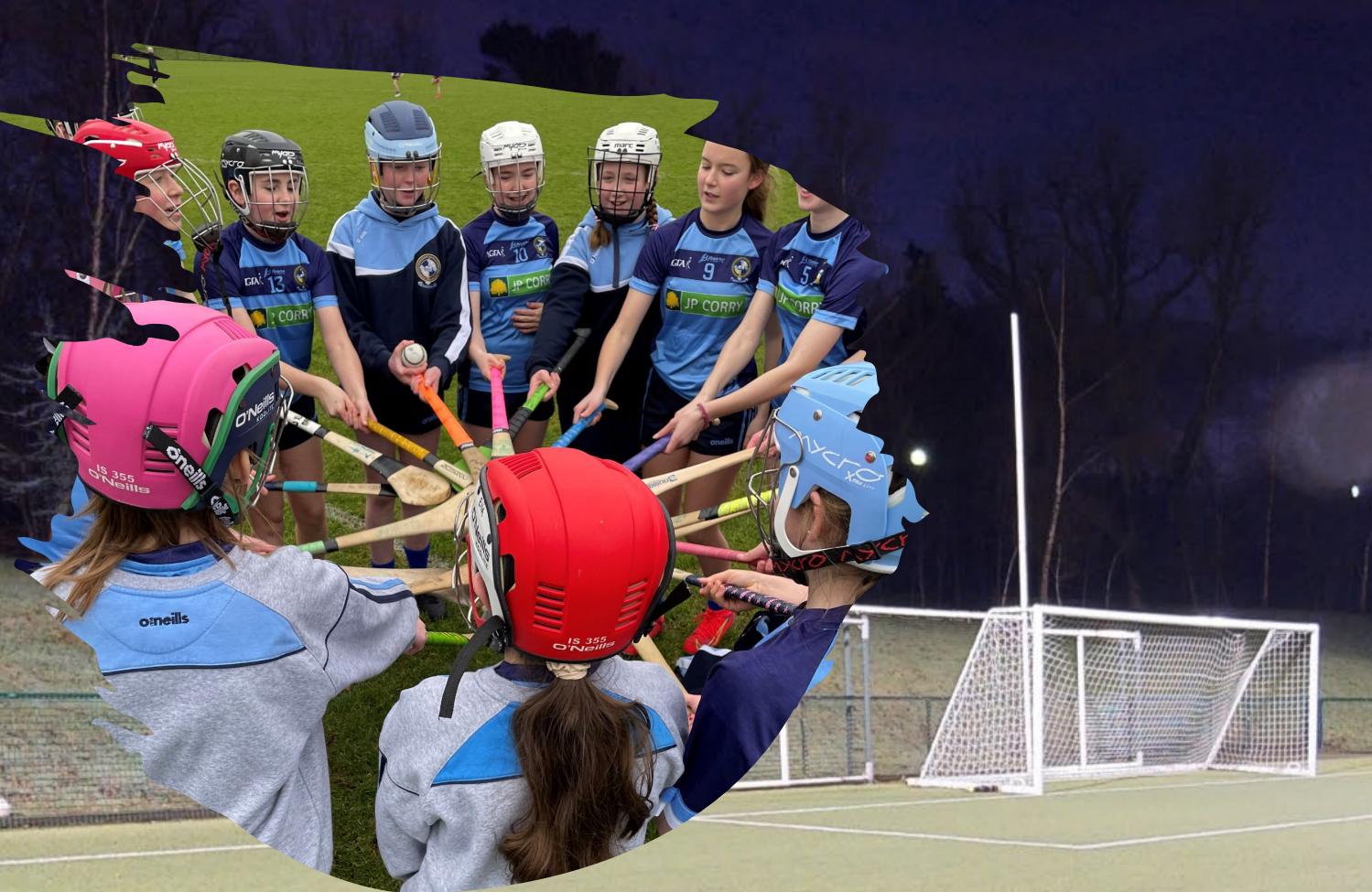
Our youngest pupils are certainly raising the bar and we look forward to a bright future.



**"Go out there and enjoy every second of playing in a final."**

Those were the half-time words of encouragement that settled the nerves of a Year 10 team which was anxiously holding on to a five point lead at the interval having trailed by the same difference at the first water break.

On a cold, crisp winter's evening at Cherryvale, the Under 14 ½ hurling team faced a skilful and determined Red High side. St Patrick's Downpatrick had already enjoyed getting the better of the Rathmore team during the group stages and had immediately sparked into life, taking the game under their control and easing into a five point lead. It seemed to all that the Rathmore boys had come as far as they could in this tournament.



## Kick it like Beckham Molly Melville and Azelia Robinson

Every week, the girls' football team trains, and there is always a great atmosphere as everyone is so supportive and pushes each other to get better. We work on our fitness and technique each session, which is always made enjoyable with a little friendly competition, prizes and games. Though many of us knew each other before, we have all made more friends and have improved significantly from the beginning of the year.

Though it was the first time some of our players had played, we managed to play several matches throughout the year against other schools, getting multiple wins. Our most recent match, against Lisnagarvey, was a huge success, despite being our first match playing on a full-size pitch. The win gave us confidence so that we can hopefully go on to win many more matches. **Mollie**

My experience of being in the girls' football team has been wonderful. It is a brilliant environment to learn how to play and improve your football. Our hard work in training paid off when we played our first match against Laurel Hill. Our team was split into two, and we won one match and drew in the other. We came back to school feeling elated! Many of the girls in our football team had never played football before and have gained huge amounts of confidence through training sessions and fun football challenges. The coaches' enthusiasm is infectious and they would always encourage us to play our best as well as having fun. I would recommend to everyone to join as it is a brilliant opportunity to make and develop friendships as well as trying a new sport. **Azelia**



# All - Ireland Champions



Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to captain our Under-16 basketball all the way to an all Ireland final! We took home the victory; a testament to my coach and teammates' dedication. I think that the culture of success that had been built in Rathmore was an influential factor in our win. The P.E. department could not have been more supportive with extra training and a bus load of supporters, which combined with the win, made this a highlight of my time at Rathmore. I have no doubt that this will not be the last of our success in our basketball careers and I am very excited for the future!

Jacob Byrne

Some supporters got to travel to Dublin to support the team, others got the chance to watch the match live.

Watch the final again



On returning from lockdown, we entered the season hopeful for success in both the Ulster and All Ireland Championships. After an undefeated season we headed to Lisburn Racquets club to see Our Lady and Saint Patrick's Knock in the Ulster final. The game came down to the wire, and thankfully, we came out as the winning side. The hard work continued after Christmas; training on Mondays, Thursdays and Friday mornings in preparation for the All Ireland round of 16. We took on St Berildy's College at home and, unfortunately, fell short in a game we were capable of winning. Despite this disappointment, it was great to achieve some success in our final season playing and to see the work of our head coach Jim Martin pay off.

James McParland and Connor McAteer

# BEST SEASON OF FOOTBALL IN 25 YEARS



The 2021-2022 season was the best campaign in school football in 25 years. With Belfast Cup Finals, titles in the Lisburn League and, for the first time in over a quarter of a century, Northern Ireland success, it was a fantastic season for both the pupils and coaches. There was a real sense of occasion for all the finals this year as they were played in the new upgraded Blanchflower Stadium in East Belfast

The Year 8 boys reached the final of the Northern Ireland Plate in May. It had been a great first year for the boys in Rathmore and they improved individually and as a team under the coaching of Thomas Maguire and Mr McCormick. The path to the final included victories over Colaiste Feirste (4-0), St Colm's, Twinbrook (4-1), St Brigid's in Derry (6-0) and St Patrick's, Downpatrick (4-0).

En route to the final, the defence only conceded one goal and they continued this defensive record in the final when they faced Blessed Trinity College. What was equally impressive was the team scoring 18 goals in the previous rounds led by centre forward Aodhan O'Hanlon who along with Ronan Gallagher scored two each in the semi-final vs St Patrick's Downpatrick. The Year 8 team, led by captain Liam Burns, were victorious on the day as a Fintan O' Brien goal in the first half was enough to seal the win.

The Year 9 and 10 teams this season were victorious in the Lisburn league with great wins over Laurelhill and St Patrick's respectively and this sealed our first league title wins since the start of the pandemic. The Year 9 team also reached the Belfast Cup Final as they faced Boys' Model. En route to the final the boys had impressive wins over Caoliste Feirste (5-0), St Mary's Grammar (5-1) and Aquinas Grammar (4-2). The semi-final goals were scored by Daniel Fox, Finn Lappin and Year 8 pupils Fintan O'Brien and Aodhan O'Hanlon. However in the match against Boys' Model, defensive mistakes at set pieces were to cost the team, as we were defeated 4-2. The two best goals from the game were scored by centre midfielder Daniel Fox - one goal was an overhead kick and the other a free kick from 25 yards. Great season from both teams led by Mr Brown, Mr McKeown and Mr Mc Kenna!

The Year 12 were looking to add some silverware again this season. In 2018 they won the Belfast Cup in Year 9 and in 2020 they were still in contention for both the Northern Ireland Belfast Cups at the quarter final stage, just as the season was cut short in March due to the pandemic. This season, they added the Northern Ireland Under 16 Plate to their previous win. The campaign started where it finished, as we defeated Campbell College 2-1 in a tight game at Blanchflower. The second round was a comfortable 5-0 away win versus St Patrick's and St Brigid's, Claudy and was followed by a tight game as we defeated Slemish College 1-0. The semi-final was an epic encounter. The first game was abandoned due to an injury and in the second game the boys were 2-0 down with 20 minutes to go. Up stepped Michael Morgan with two goals to send the game into extra time and ultimately penalties. A 5-4 penalty win sent the boys to the final, and we faced local rivals Laurelhill. A professional display all round from the full squad resulted in a comfortable 6-1 win, with goals coming from Michael Morgan with four and single goals from Charlie Mickleburgh and the goal of the game from Sean McCarthy - a 25-yard curling shot into the top corner. What a fantastic way for the pupils and coaches Mr McCormick and Mr Maguire to finish just before the GCSE exams!

The Under 18 team led by Mr Graham and Mr McKenna just fell short of a Belfast Final as they were defeated at the semi-final stage by St Malachy's. The boys finished top in the group stage of the competition as they faced Colaiste Feirste, Grosvenor and Bangor Grammar. The ¼ final was a tight game as we edged out Regent House with goals from Fiontan O'Boyle and Eamonn O'Cuinneagain. The semi-final was a thrilling game but we were unfortunately defeated 3-2 after extra time at the Dub with both goals coming from Michael Morgan.

A fantastic season all round for the boys and the coaches. A special mention to Thomas Maguire who is off to continue his studies in America. He was a big part of the success this year, alongside Marc McKenna.

# A Fond Farewell

They say that the role of a saint is to provide a model for others to follow and emulate. For many, Miss Miskelly was a living saint walking amongst us. Few pupils or members of staff passed through Rathmore without being moved by the warmth, care and tenderness of Miss Miskelly. Whilst she pioneered and shaped the Special Needs and Counselling provision in school, her impact went far beyond the SENCO provision. Her radiant personality, kindness and patience were infectious and she has redefined what it means for a school to be pupil-centred.

Miss Miskelly is renowned for her humility but in equal measure she is known for the purpose with which she has worked with external agencies and partners to ensure that our pupils received the very best support and care that they are entitled to. Everyone knows that it takes a very special person to lead the Special Needs provision in a school and Rathmore is very much the better for every effort that Miss Miskelly has achieved in building up a SEN department that has become the model for all areas of school life to aspire to.

Mrs Agnew has seen it all. One of the longest serving members of the teaching staff, she has worked with three different Heads of Music and has made a tremendous contribution to the musical life of the school. As Head of Choral and Liturgical Music, Mrs Angew has enriched the life of Rathmore for generations of pupils, whether it is leading the singing for our school musicals, spring concerts, carol services or the numerous liturgies that celebrate the life of the school each year. Mrs Angew's popularity with her choir members is perhaps best witnessed as they break out into song - if you ever hear a spontaneous burst of "Gaudete!" you can be assured it is one of Rathmore's choirs recalling very fond memories.



For better or worse, pupils studying A level Politics in this area of the world have a unique perspective into local politics and how it works, or should work. For Mrs Stronge it provided a rich resource to utilise in bringing her subject to life. Mrs Stronge, who retires as Head of Politics, was always keen to make politics real and sought to utilise local politicians and the ready access to the Northern Ireland Assembly to inspire the next generation of leaders.

The Solas tribute "A Stronge Showing for Politics" gives a greater insight into how Mrs Stronge grew the numbers of pupils choosing to study Politics and how she encouraged more girls to pursue this subject at A level and beyond. We wish her every happiness in her retirement.

## The Editorial Team

And that's a wrap! We hope you enjoyed immersing yourself into the life of Rathmore with this bumper to bumper edition of Solas. It is fitting that this first edition under Mrs Sutherland's editorial leadership should be so vibrant and that the abundance of life and school-enhancing activities should be so rich and diverse. In fact, there were enough articles to produce the next edition of the school magazine at the same time. The fact that you're reading this now probably means that you've enjoyed the magazine so much that you want to find out who is responsible for putting it all together? Well, like all the activities showcased from the first page to the last, it is our pupils who shine and succeed when presented with any task or challenge and this momentous task was no different. Our talented editorial team of Lower Sixth pupils are responsible for working with the various departments to compile all the stories and articles. They have worked as a team to produce articles of the highest quality, with the focus of our magazine being the experience of our pupils. As with all the success stories presented in the magazine, our pupils are always supported by a team of teachers who motivate and direct their efforts. In this regard, we pay special recognition to the editorial and production work of Mrs Sutherland and Mr O'Callaghan. A special word of thanks goes to Mrs Jenny Meek whose expertise behind the camera has allowed for such spectacular photography that truly enhances this magazine each year. We have thoroughly enjoyed working together on this magazine and we hope you take as much pleasure in reading it as we did in producing it.

### The Editorial Team

Brianna Armstrong, Aneesha Batak, Aoife Boyle, Rose Carmichael, Molly Cross, John Devine, Lara Duffy, Cara Low, Ellie McDonald, Charlotte Mooney, Sarah Morrison, David Nolan, Emer O'Hare, Niamh Plumb, Fay Powell, Niamh Quinn, Sarah Tierney



