

# PORTADOWN COLLEGE



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## NEWSLETTER

## TERM 1

2014 - 2015

As Christmas fast approaches I would like to inform you of key events to date and provide you with advance notice of important dates and events next term.

Once again I am most grateful to everyone associated with the College for their support this year. Despite the multiple challenges faced by all schools in the Province, the College has worked hard to consolidate and improve provision for our students. We continue to offer a broad and relevant curriculum and build on our very good inspection report.

As ever, it is the people connected to PC which makes it such a special place. Staff have shown considerable dedication and resilience in difficult times and they have been ably supported by our committed Board of Governors. Parental support is always forthcoming and is vitally important in securing the best provision for our young people. The students are quite remarkable in both their talents and depth of character; they remain an absolute pleasure to work with.

### LIFE AT PC

A few of the key highlights of a busy and successful term are noted below.

### AIR TRAINING CORPS

Ben McKitterick and Adam Heasty (Year 14) have each been awarded Flying Scholarships by the RAF. We wish them every success with this wonderful opportunity.

### GIRLS' SPORTS

#### Hockey

Four teams continue to train weekly and play Saturday fixtures. The 2B and 3<sup>rd</sup> XI participated in the UHU Gibson Cup. Both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2A XI have reached the Quarter Final stages of their respective Cup competitions. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI have secured impressive wins against Cambridge House and Belfast High School, with the 2A XI winning against Kilkeel High School, Slemish College and Carrick Grammar. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI will play Friends' School, Lisburn in the Quarter Final of The Belfast Telegraph Senior Schools' Cup and the 2A XI will play Ballymena Academy in the Quarter Final of the McDowell Cup. Both of these Cup matches are scheduled to be played

in January. Your support would be appreciated by the two teams.

Two players, Kerrie Burns and Emily McStea, represented Ulster at the Inter-provincial tournament in October at Lisnagarvey Hockey Club. Kerrie was part of the victorious Under 18 squad and Emily played on the Ulster Under 16s. Emily is now a member of the Irish Under 16 training squad.

#### Hockey Tour

A squad of 17 players and 3 staff are travelling to Manchester in early March on a Hockey tour. Fundraising has included bun sales and a social. A quiz night and ASDA bag pack are planned for February. Whilst in Manchester they will play 3 matches against local opposition and participate in a number of training sessions.

#### Volleyball

Volleyball players have been training on Tuesdays after school and fixtures will begin in January when both the Under 18 and 16 squads will participate in the NI league and cup competitions.

#### Cross Country

Two teams will participate in the District D Intermediate and Senior cross country competitions. These events will take place in February 2015.

### BOYS' SPORTS

#### Rugby

The 1<sup>st</sup> XV have been drawn away to Friends' School Lisburn in the Danske Bank Schools' Cup. The match is to be played on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January. The 2<sup>nd</sup> XV have drawn a home fixture against Carrick Grammar in the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV Cup. The Medallion XV have been drawn at home to Omagh Academy.

Congratulations to Ben Woods, Andrew Taylor and Ross Good who have been included in the Ulster U16 Development Training Squad.

Our Medallion have received specialised training sessions with Brian McLoughlin, ex Ulster Coach.

Morning strength and conditioning sessions have continued on Tuesday mornings for the Year 11/12 Rugby players. Turn out has been excellent with up to 30 boys attending regularly from 7.30-8.30am!! Great commitment from a group of players who show much promise.

Plans for the up-coming Rugby Tour to Belgium are well underway. Two squads, U18 and U16, will travel to Belgium on 27-31 March to play 4 fixtures with local opposition.

## Hockey

Our 1<sup>st</sup> XI qualified for the All Ireland Schools' Tournament for only the second time in the College's history. The boys travelled to Cork for this tournament in November and played against Bandon Grammar, Wallace High and Mount Temple School in the group stages. They also played Middleton College in a friendly match, winning 8-0 in the process. An excellent experience for the team and one in which the boys did the school proud both on and off the pitch!!

The 1<sup>st</sup> XI once again reached the Prior Shield Final, playing SRC Armagh in the final on Thursday 11 December at Lisnagarvey. The team were successful in securing a 7-1 victory. Congratulations to this excellent squad for their achievements to date.

The U16 Team have started their campaign in the Taylor Cup and are hoping to reach the latter stages of this competition which continues after Christmas.

Zach McClelland continues to star both at Ulster Level and on the Irish Schools stage. He is currently involved in Irish trials and is hoping to make the full Irish Schools Squad in the New Year. We wish him every success.

## Football

### U15 Boys

The U15 boys began their campaign this year with an emphatic 5-0 victory over Markethill High School and are currently developing into a reliable, cohesive unit on the pitch. Most recently the lads showed great character to come back from a 1-0 half-time deficit to gain a well-deserved 2-1 victory over a strong Craigavon Senior High School side. The talent available in Year 11 has resulted in five team members being called up to represent the U16s, not only in local competition, but also in the NI Youth U16 cup.

### U16 Boys

Despite a disappointing Mid-Ulster cup exit on a wet and windy Friday afternoon in November in Dromore, the U16 side bounced back to defeat St. Pius X 4-2 in the third round of the NI Senior Cup in Magherafelt in mid-November. They now progress to the last 16 and face a difficult tie away to De La Salle in Belfast in early January. League form has been good with two recent victories over Drumglass High School and Integrated College Dungannon.

### U18 Boys

An unfortunate first round 3-2 defeat to Aquinas Grammar School in the NI Youth Cup in October paved the way for an enjoyable campaign in the Plate competition. The team have progressed to the quarter-final after Christmas following first and second round away wins over Omagh High School (2-1) and Ballymena Academy (6-0). The squad will play in the quarter finals early in the New Year.

All the best to everyone who represents the College in football and best wishes for continued success in 2015.

## Volleyball

Fixtures have just been released, with PC entering two boys' teams at U16 level and one team at U18 level in the NI leagues. Matches will begin in the New Year.

## Tennis

Congratulations to Caleb Ralston (Year 11) who has recently moved to Number 1 ranked player in Ulster at U16 level. Caleb won the Ulster Provincial title and now moves on to the full Irish tournament in the New Year, where the four semi-finalists from each Province play off against each other. Hopefully we will see Caleb being crowned All Ireland Champion!!

## Cross Country

The District Cross Country will again be held at Lurgan Park on 30 January. The PE staff will be busy over the first few weeks in January finalising teams for the above event.

## MANCHESTER TRIP

On Saturday 13 December a party of 40 boys (representing all four Year groups) and 5 teachers set off for Lancashire to enjoy the latest PC Premiership football weekend. This annual trip has been very successful over recent years and allows the students to experience the occasion of top-flight football in the Barclays Premier League. This year we had the privilege of visiting Turf Moor, home of Burnley FC, to enjoy their fine 1-0 success over a resurgent Southampton side. This game was very enjoyable but served only to whet the appetite for our visit to Old Trafford the following day to witness Manchester United's 3-0 victory over arch rivals Liverpool in an exciting and noisy encounter. Our two night stay in Manchester ended with a stadium tour of Old Trafford just prior to making our journey back home.

## MATHS SUCCESS

### Senior Maths Challenge – November 2014

A group of 42 Year 13 and 14 students entered the UKMT Senior Maths Challenge. Andrew Carrick, Josh Ruddell and Jordan Montgomery were awarded Gold certificates, with Andrew and Josh also completing the follow-on round. A further 8 students were awarded Silver certificates and 17 were awarded Bronze.

### Senior Mathematics Team Challenge - November 2014

Andrew Carrick, Josh Ruddell, Ryan Davison and Matthew Haugh competed in the Regional Heat of the UKMT Senior Team Challenge and although no prizes were won the team experienced a very challenging, but enjoyable, afternoon at Rockport School.

### QUB Mathematics Team Challenge – December 2014

Holly Millar, Jordon Montgomery, Charlotte McClelland and Jacob Bleakley were entered for the QUB Maths Team Competition and enjoyed a challenging day in the Great Hall at QUB. They were rewarded by achieving 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

## SCHOOL PLAY

The College production this year was Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, set in Donegal. A core cast of 8 students helped to re-create the world of Ballybeg and the lives of the Mundy sisters in the summer of 1936, just before their lives would change irrevocably. Some very talented Art students were able to recreate the world of the Donegal cottage and the landscape beyond, and the production team were praised for their attention to detail. The Irish theme allowed other students to show off their talents and there was traditional music and dancing both before and during the performances. The College was delighted to welcome staff and a large contingent of Year 10 students from Clounagh Junior High School, plus over 300 students from other schools around Northern Ireland, including Belfast and Magherafelt.

## THEATRE TRIPS

In the first term, the Drama students have been busy going to see plays in their free time. A group of Year 12 and 13 students went to see the Newpoint Players' production of *Juno and the Paycock* in Newry. A new development in theatre-going has been the opportunity to see London productions through the NT Live innovation. A group of more than 50 students were mesmerised by the acting and production values of the National Theatre's *Frankenstein*. Both Drama and A Level English Literature students benefited from seeing Gillian Anderson in the Young Vic's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for which the actress won the prestigious London Critics' Award. More trips are planned for the rest of the year and the College is in the process of setting up access, both at home and school, to the much-acclaimed Digital Theatre which allows students to access a range of internationally successful productions electronically. This will be available imminently and all students will be informed when it is in place.

## CAROL SERVICE

The Annual School Carol Service will take place on Thursday 18 December at 7pm, featuring the choirs, orchestra and musicians of Portadown College. All students and their families are encouraged to attend this celebration of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Mince pies and refreshments will be served afterwards.

## SPEECH DAY

This event, set in the magnificent setting of St Mark's Church, celebrated our students' academic and extra-curricular activities. It was a great pleasure to welcome Mr William Montgomery as our guest speaker. His insightful and well-chosen words were most appropriate and an inspiration to our current students. The musical talents of our students too added much to this superb event.

## EXAMINATION PREPARATION

Once again the College will not be setting homeworks for the days in January leading up to the examinations. This should facilitate planning and secure full engagement in examination preparation.

ALL examinations remain important as they:

- measure progress,
- identify areas for improvements and
- help secure success in the future.

I must also urge care in relation to part-time work. Such work brings many potential benefits but must not impinge adversely on medium to long term career plans. A balanced, and common sense approach, is needed in the current climate with examination grades being more important than ever before.

## TERM 2

**Term 2 begins** Monday 5 January 2015.

### Internal Exams

Monday 12 January - Friday 23 January 2015.

### Exceptional Closure Day

Friday 13 February 2015.

### Half Term

Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 February 2015.

### Year 12 Parent/Teacher Interviews

Thursday 19 February 2015 - 7 pm.

### Year 11 Parent/Teacher Interviews

Monday 23 February 2015 - 4:30 pm.

### Years 13/14 Parent/Teacher Interviews

Tuesday 3 March 2015 - 4:30 pm.

### St Patrick's Day Holidays

Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 March 2015.

### Exceptional Closure Day

Tuesday 31 March 2015.

### Easter Holidays

Wednesday 1 April - Friday 10 April 2015 (incl).

## TERM 3

**Term 3 begins** Monday 13 April 2015.

### May Bank Holidays

Monday 4 May and Monday 25 May 2015.

### Exceptional Closure Day

Friday 15 May 2015.

### Internal Exams Year 11

Monday 1 June – Tuesday 9 June 2015.

### End of Term

Tuesday 30 June 2015.

## EMERGENCY CLOSURES

As you should now be aware the College uses a text sending service to facilitate the speedy distribution of important information. The College website and provincial media (BBC website, Radio Ulster and Cool FM) will also carry such arrangements in an attempt to secure 100% delivery.

Should early closure during a school day be required, Translink buses are unable to pick students up until the normal time and even then services are not guaranteed. Families should make contingency plans in advance to assist with travel arrangements in the event of transport and communication breakdown. Such measures could include agreeing a friend/relative's house to go to whilst waiting for a lift to arrive. The safety and well-being of students remains as our foremost concern throughout.

## CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT

Completion of Controlled Assessment Tasks for GCSE has caused some issues largely as a result of student absence. I would ask all parents/guardians to assist us by ensuring full attendance and avoiding appointments etc during the school day.

## NEW TERM

Students return to the College on Monday 5 January 2015.

On behalf of Governors and staff, may I wish everyone associated with Portadown College a happy, restful and peaceful Christmas and every best wish for the New Year.

