



Victoria College Belfast Summer Newsletter June 2014

June 2014

Dear Parent

We have once again come to the end of what has been an eventful year. The public examinations are nearly over and I would like to wish every success to all our girls.

We were delighted to receive the news during the summer term that Victoria College has won the Investors in People Bronze Award. The College was also awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark, with this award recognising both the diversity of the pupil population and that the academic, pastoral and curriculum needs of all pupils are being met. These awards reflect the Senior staff and the Board of Governors' commitment to its pupils and staff and will ensure that the College's place at the forefront of education is maintained going into the future.

The range of activities and achievements which our pupils participated in similarly reflect the diverse talents of our pupils, which staff strive to encourage through their commitment to teaching and extra-curricular activities. Following the submission of a demanding and collaborative essay, a group of nine Year 13 pupils was selected to compete in the Northern Ireland Regional European Youth Parliament forum, during which students from schools across NI joined to debate topical European Resolutions. In continuation of 2013 as the European Year of Citizens two

Year 13 pupils from the College were invited to Stormont to participate in an Active Citizenship Youth Volunteering event during which they presented the challenging motion "*This house believes that young people do not have the opportunity to learn and develop through volunteering at home and abroad.*" The girls were commended on a very scholarly approach to an extremely controversial motion. The Year 13 European Studies class visited the Office of the European Commission in Belfast and in March seven Year 10 pupils attended the "Inspiring Change" Conference to celebrate International Women's Day at Titanic, Belfast. The



final address was given by former VCB pupil Maria Doran (now studying law at QUB) who was the finalist in the 2013 BBC television programme "Young Apprentice." In Business Studies, Year 13 students attended a Young Enterprise Competition in February and in March Year 14 students attended an Inter-School Business Quiz and five Year 11 pupils participated in a Stock Market Competition. Year 14 Geography students attended a fracking decision making event at Stranmillis University College in March.

Year 9 pupils attended a SEMTA workshop at Stormont aiming to increase their awareness of STEM careers. In February forty pupils from Year 11 took part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge, during which eight silver certificates and nine bronze certificates awarded. A

team of four pupils from Years 9 and 10 also took part in the regional final of the Junior Team Mathematics Challenge. In March three GCSE and AS students attended a unique event at Queen's University Belfast entitled 'Engineering Imagination' and which further engaged and motivated pupils interested in careers in the field of STEM.

In March and April Year 13 Health and Social Care students teamed up with the Year 13 Voluntary Services Group to provide a dance class to 16-18 year olds with moderate learning difficulties at Glenveagh school.



This project was promoted by the Health and Social Care Double Award pupils who got involved in the 'Get Set to Make a Change' initiative inspired by the Olympic and Paralympic games in London 2012. Pupils also participated in a Multi-Cultural Celebration – 'Wake up to Culture' – organised by three Year 14 pupils and this provided an enjoyable and informative experience for Year 8 and 9 pupils.

Pupils participated in a number of trips throughout the year. In February sixty-three girls from Years 11 to



14 and six staff spent an enjoyable week skiing in New Hampshire in U.S. In February the Scripture Union spent a retreat day in Windsor Baptist in "The Cabin" during which the theme was "Made in the image of God". In April twelve Year 10 pupils visited our partner school, IES "La Rábida", as well as other interesting places such as Seville, the Nature Reserve of Doñana and Rocío Village.



In June two groups of our Year 8 pupils participated in trips to London during which their itinerary included a ride on the London Eye, a Thames River Cruise, a visit to The Natural History Museum and a walking tour of popular attractions, including Buckingham Palace and Downing Street.



This has been a very busy term in school for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. At the beginning of June 115 Year 10 pupils hit the Mourne for their Bronze training. The training is a steep learning curve



but the girls coped really well and later in June the girls successfully completed their Bronze Expeditions, using all the skills and knowledge

that they picked up during training. Twenty-three pupils from Year 12 and Year 13, accompanied by four members of staff, will travel to Morocco at the end of July to complete their Gold Expedition as well as carrying out a conservation project with the local Berber population. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Caroline Hart for her work as DofE Award Co-ordinator and for the many staff who give up their free time to support this work.

Drama students attended trips to a number of theatres throughout Northern Ireland, including the Grand Opera House to see 'The Colleen Bawn' performed by the Druid Theatre Company and to see Matthew Bourne's production of 'Swan Lake'. Year 13 and 14 pupils attended a joint workshop with Sullivan Upper and Glenlola Collegiate, during which local actor, Dan Gordon, led an exploration on how to approach devised work. GCSE students performed a total of seven plays and showcased these to parents and friends and Year 11 students performed their devised work in May and in June watched 'Henry IV, Part One' streamed live to the school from the Royal Shakespeare Company. In May Year 13 performed 'Teachers' and 'the Heiress', coupled with a series of monologues and duologues and they performed these to a very appreciative audience. At the end of May pupils participated in a trip to Dublin to see 'Twelfth Night' in the Abbey theatre in Dublin, starring Sophie Robinson, former student of the College. A group of 30 year 11-14 students participated in two dance workshops with the Academy of Professional Physical Arts during which the girls were instructed in ballet, jazz and contemporary dance. Please note that the College will host the joint VCB/RBAI musical, 'Hairspray' next year and this will be performed on the 26th, 27th and 28th of November. A very exciting date for your diary!

The Junior Chamber Choir was invited to sing at an evening called 'Movies and the Musicals' at the end of January in Fisherwick as part of a fundraising concert in the local community. The Spring concert in April ran over two nights and provided another exciting opportunity for many girls to become involved. A once in a lifetime opportunity also presented itself to a group of Year 10 and 11

pupils in March to perform live in the Odyssey Arena with Gary Barlow and this was enjoyed by all.



In September GCSE Moving Image Arts was introduced to the Art Department. This has been an exciting adventure giving students the opportunity to use their creativity by addressing a range of new technologies and concepts used within the film industry. Belfast City Council visited the Art Department and inspired Moving Image Art students with an animation workshop based on the theme of recycling.

The Art Club continued to inspire young artists throughout the year and a new Film Club was established, during which Year 10 pupils were encouraged to watch and critically analyse films. Students also got the opportunity to make a short animation which involved working with I Movie. Three sixth form students from Victoria College and three from RBAI spent three days at the Ulster Museum in February 2014 on a cross schools art project. The students familiarised themselves with the Ulster Museum both 'front of house' and behind the scenes and met an established Northern Irish artist, Anushiya Sundaralingam, to plan the art workshop. The students also mentored primary school pupils from Fane Street, Donegall Road and Blythe-field Primary Schools. During this time the primary pupils produced a felt wall hanging for display in each school.



Our sports teams continued to enjoy success throughout the Spring and Summer terms. The 2AXI and the U14A hockey teams reached the

quarter finals of the McDowell and Junior Hockey Cups respectively and the 1st XI Hockey team reached the



final of the Schools' Plate competition. In March, the U14 hockey team enjoyed a successful hockey tour to Glasgow, during which they also received expert coaching from a Scottish International player and were able to play on the pitch being used for the Commonwealth Games this summer. In Cross Country all five teams reached the Ulster finals, during which the Junior and Senior teams won silver and qualified for the Irish Cross Country Championships. The girls also competed and won the Belfast City Council's Cross Country Championships, during which the Junior team won the Ulster final, the



Year 9 team finished second and the Year 8 team was placed third. The College was awarded a cup for the best girls' school in Cross Country in Ulster. The College's Athletics teams competed in the South Antrim and the Ulster Championships and the Year 9 team won bronze medals at the South Antrim Championships. Three pupils also competed and achieved success in the Irish Athletics Finals.

The Rugby team reached the semi-finals of the Ulster Schools' Cup. The girls from Victoria College Belfast Gaelic Athletic Club were invited to participate in an event at Queen's University to promote female participation in sport as part of the historic Queen's GAA Festival. The College also welcomed a gaelic football club from a Johannesburg township to school for a joint

camogie and hurling coaching session organised by Ulster GAA. In Gaelic Football the U14 team participated in the Ulster Schools' League and the U13 team reached the final of the St. Genevieve's Shield. The U12 and U13 Camogie teams were unbeaten this year after playing over 20 matches and the U14 team played in the Ulster Schools' league and in the annual tournament at Maghera, winning 5 out of 6 matches.



The Year 8 Tennis team reached the semi-finals of the Ulster Minor Tennis Cup, the Junior tennis team reached the quarter final of the Ulster Junior Cup and the Senior Tennis team reached the final of the Ulster Senior Tennis Cup. A new Badminton Club was formed and achieved success in two tournaments.

We are very proud of all of our pupils' achievements, big or small, and there were countless individual performances throughout the year in a wide range of activities which have been recognised in school in Form Announcements and at Assembly.

Unfortunately at this time of year we must say farewell to

members of staff. Mrs Hilary Woods, Deputy Head, who has been appointed as Principal to Antrim Grammar School. Mrs Woods has been on the staff of Victoria College for 13 years and has played a leading role within the College both in the Careers department, as a teacher of Maths and ICT and as a member of the Senior Leadership team. She has been a truly wonderful colleague in her role as Deputy Head and during



this academic year as acting Principal for the first term.

Her dedication to the College and to the pupils, not least in terms of providing pastoral care and support, has been outstanding and we shall all miss her very much.

Also leaving us are Miss Claire Lough, Temporary Teacher of P.E. and Mrs Rosemary Taylor, Pre-Pre-School Assistant. We wish them well and hope that they will maintain their links with the College in the future. We look forward to welcoming Mr Neil McAleenan, Teacher of Technology and Design, Mr Ian McCaugherty and Mr Gareth Whitehead, temporary Teachers of Biology and Chemistry and Miss Maria McLaughlin, Key Stage 2 Leader and Preparatory Teacher.

The College has developed a database of past pupils on our school website and I would like to take this opportunity to invite Year 14 pupils who are leaving Victoria College this year to go on-line and add their details. Please also feel free to invite any other past pupils you may come into contact with to do the same.

Following this year's trial period, a decision has been taken to revert to registration at the start of the school day. From the start of the 2014-2015 academic year therefore the timetable for the school day will be as outlined below, with built-in time after 3.10 pm to enable all pupils to fully participate and benefit from our wide range of extra curricular activities.

Registration:	8:40-8:55
Assembly:	8:55-9:05
Period 1:	9:10-10:10
Period 2:	10:10-11:10
BREAK	11:10-11:30
Period 3:	11:30-12.30
Period 4:	12:30-1.30
Period 5:	2:10-3.10

The College's term dates for 2014-2015 have been distributed with school reports and are also available on the College's website. **The first day of term for each of the year groups and details of the starting dates and times for your daughter(s) are listed within the "Notes" section of the 2014/2015 term dates. Please note that school buses will not operate until Monday 1 September 2014.** A number of exceptional closure days have been arranged for next year and these are

as follows: Friday 24 October (Whole School), Friday 23 January (Years 8-14 only) and Tuesday 17 March (Whole School). Please note Preparatory pupils do not attend on the January date.

May I please remind you that make-up and nail varnish are not permitted and only the following jewellery may be worn with school uniform: a watch, one plain ring, one pair of studs or small keeper earrings (one in each ear lobe). Studs, rings, retainers and jewellery associated with body piercing are not part of school culture and will not be tolerated. Any hair accessories worn with uniform must be in school colours. Any bright, dyed hair colour or extreme hair-style, hair braids or hair extensions are not permitted. Uniform will be strictly monitored at the start of the school year and girls not conforming may be sent home. Please note that shoes should be plain, flat, black leather, should be sturdy and may be either laced or strapped. Pumps or platform soles are not permitted; nor are suede, canvas, patent leather or metal bars and coloured pieces of leather. Sixth Form pupils may wear a small, sturdy heel no more than 2.5 cm maximum. Skirts should be of an appropriate length, worn to the knee and College staff reserve the right to request, at any time, that a new skirt be purchased.

As you are aware we do permit the girls to bring mobile phones into school as long as they remain switched off during school hours (8.30 am – 3.10 pm). Parents are asked to note that any pupil found using her mobile phone during these hours will have her phone confiscated and a parent or another nominated adult will be contacted to collect the phone at the end of the next working day (minimum of 24 hours from time of confiscation). If the phone is confiscated on a Friday then the phone cannot be collected until Monday. Furthermore, in view of Child Protection issues, **no pupil is permitted to take photographs or videos in school without prior permission from a member of staff**. We would appreciate your help and co-operation in the above matters. Please note that the up-to-date copy of the College's Behaviour for Learning and Child Protection Policies are available on the school website.

I very much hope that you and your family have an enjoyable and relaxing summer holiday.

Yours sincerely



P Slevin (Ms)
Headmistress