

THE ASHFIELD BOYS' INFORM



ONLINE
EDITION



Y8 ALTON TOWERS TRIP

INTERVIEW: MR MCCOLGAN'S FINAL INTERVIEW
BELFAST CUP GLORY FOR U18 FOOTBALL TEAM
TRIP TO STORMONT FOR POLITICS STUDENTS

NEWS
INTERVIEWS
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ALL THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022/23

THE ASHFIELD BOYS' INFORM

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MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

THE ASHFIELD NEWSROOM

Do you know what you are reading?

We'll tell you.

This is the online issue of *The Ashfield Boys' Inform* for 2022/23. But this isn't any old school newspaper. This is one of the few school newspapers in the country that is run by the students, full of student writing, reviews and reports! Under the leadership of Editor Charles Munn (Year 14) and Deputy Editor Jonah Simon (Year 13), a team of nearly twenty boys have gathered each week to produce the three editions of the *Inform* for this school year.

In September 2022 we set out on a very special mission – to make *The Ashfield Boys' Inform* the very best school newspaper in the country. After a year spent researching, writing, designing and editing, we think we can safely say: mission accomplished.



We have interviewed authors, community leaders, our own boys and, in this edition, our Principal of eleven years, Mr McColgan. We have written articles and reviews about things that matter to us, and, we hope, to you, our readers.

We are very proud of what we have made and we are looking forward to bringing you more high quality news, reviews and updates next year.

Thank you,

The Ashfield Newsroom.

Ashfield News

A quick round-up of just some of the stories from the Ashfield family in the summer term 2023..

Planting for the Future



Our new OS horticulture boys planted a total of 18 fruit trees for our new school orchard. The soil was very dry and hard to work with, but that didn't stop them, hard work and perseverance paid off! Thank you to Artsektea for volunteering their time and donating some of the fruit trees it was great to collaborate with you and we look forward to more projects in the future. A massive well done boys! What a legacy for our school.



Spelling Bee Creates a 'Buzz'!

On Monday 19th June, Mrs Browne hosted a very competitive Spelling Bee in Room 30! A massive well done to the Key Stage 3 pupils who participated and competed so brilliantly. Well done to Kentyn, Jack and Ethan who are the Year 8, 9 and 10 winners.

Representing with Robots



Last year, Ashfield Boys' were represented at a major STEM event in Belfast. Thank you to Year 10 students, Caleb, Alex, Andrew, Max and Lukas, who competed well for Ashfield Boys' High School at the Vex Robotics Competition. Well done boys!

PSNI Taster Day

The Year 14 boys were invited to attend a Careers Day at Newforge with different sections of the PSNI in April as a taster to see if they could see themselves in the PSNI. As well as interesting talks from different sections of the PSNI, they also got to see the dog handlers and dogs in action sniffing out drugs and apprehending criminals! They were able to get a close look at the equipment onboard a police helicopter and to get in and get a feel of the actual size. A great day for our Year 14s!



Can we 'top' 1000?



Mr Reid is leading the charge on Ashfield's Recycling Project, and is looking to collect over 1000 bottle tops. The current number collected is 756 - can we make it to the target?

Talent Competition!

To round up a successful year of Drama Club, Mrs Brown held a talent show to showcase the talent the pupils of Ashfield had to offer. And boy did they deliver! On the 27th of April, Ashfield's Got Talent was held. A bunch of brilliant boys took to the stage. From WWE re-enactments to comedy sketches, Shakespeare to the National Anthem-the Drama Club had it all! A close competition but in the end Lucas McClean from 8JY took home the prize with his pitch-perfect rendition of God Save the King on the flute. A fitting song that coincided perfectly with the lead up to the King's Coronation. All the boys impressed the judges with their fantastic talents but talent doesn't have to be showcased on stage....behind the scenes help and student judges also impressed with their dedication, helpfulness and being up for a laugh! Well done, boys!



MR MCCOLGAN: AN INTERVIEW



Mr McColgan gives his final interview for The Ashfield Boys' Inform after eleven years as Principal.

Let's go back to the start. What do you remember about your first days and weeks of Ashfield Boys' High School?

Firstly, I was very impressed with the boys in the school. The warmth and the welcome that I received was wonderful. I started in 2012, officially appointed on 20th April 2012, and visited the school in May and June 2012. The Euros were on in Ukraine and Poland that year, so there was a lot of excitement about the place for that. I came over to the sports day, to the end of year assembly and met the staff. The thing that really stood out for me, which is the absolute strength of our school, was the strong relationships that existed right across the school. The respect, humour, the banter. I knew then this was one hundred percent the right place for me.

"The respect, humour, the banter. I knew then this was one hundred percent the right place for me."

How would you describe your first year in the school?

I came here having taught for twenty-three years already. I had been a vice-principal for eleven years in a very successful school before coming here and had been taught by Mr McMorran, who was the principal of ABHS before me, when I was a pupil in Boys' Model. I have a life-long friendship and complete respect for Mr McMorran. I was well aware of the strengths of the school before coming here, and I desperately wanted to build upon those strengths and take the school even further in its development journey. With all of that in mind, and with an absolute determination to drive the school further forward, I would say that my first year I learned quickly that I needed to be patient. I need to be strategic and to build relationships, to earn the trust and the respect of all the boys, the staff, the parents, and the wider East Belfast community. While I had this vision of where the school should go, I spent most of the first year developing the most important thing: relationships, so we could work together to drive the school forward. That included community groups, primary schools, staff, boys, and their families, all working together.... The Ashfield Family.

In what ways have you seen the school change during your time?

First and foremost: population. We have grown from 600 boys to almost 950 in that period of time. Similarly, our staff have increased from approximately 75 to 130. Year on year, we are oversubscribed on first preference. This is unheard of for a non-selective all boys school.

In terms of academic attainment, we have surpassed what many thought even possible. For example, in 2012, 63% of the boys achieved 5 or more GCSE grades at A* to C, whereas over 90% of the boys now achieve 5 or more GCSE grades at A* to C. At Sixth Form, in 2012, only 40% of the boys would return to study A-levels. We now have over 66-70% return to study in Sixth Form. In 2012 only 16% of our Y14 achieved 3 or more A*-C grades at A-level, whereas now, approximately 76% of our boys achieve 3 or more A-C grades at A-level.

Other changes: firstly, the aesthetics of the place. The entire school has been upgraded... for example, new electrics, new floors, the entire school has been painted, we have a new Sixth Form study area, a new flourishing community garden as well as several teaching areas completely refurbished. We have smart boards in every classroom. ICT suites have been upgraded, new computers, ICT trolleys are available for every department, we have new MacBooks for the Arts. The school also has a new 3G intermediate status-level pitch. Furthermore, we have a new state-of-the-art canteen, which the boys and staff absolutely love.

One of my favourite developments over the last eleven years, is our new, completely revamped Learning Support Department. Our Nurture classroom, our ASC rooms, our Literacy and Numeracy intervention rooms are genuinely the envy of many teachers. I am immensely proud of the supports we now provide for all our boys.

Other areas of progress: we are completely embedded in our community with 96% of our 950 boys living within two and half to three miles of the school. We also have several staff who are past pupils and were students here when I first came to the school as principal. The enthusiasm with which these past pupils have chosen us as their place of work is testament to our community links and the value they bring. Truth be told, there are so many positive, progressive changes... far too many to mention them all individually..... but I have to say that I am incredibly proud of them all....we really have a fantastic school that should be celebrated.

What are you most proud of in your time at Ashfield Boys' High School?

I think it is very important to acknowledge not just the eleven years that I've been principal of our great school, but also our past, and the excellent foundations that we are building upon. I'd like to pay respect and acknowledge Mr Rab Dunn who was the principal who started the journey of development and growth some 30 years ago with only 250 boys in the school. Rab had the initial vision and determination to initiate the changes that were necessary for the school to develop. Mr Andy McMorran, who then picked up the mantle of principalship, built on the strong foundations laid by Mr Dunn and took the school even further in its growth. Andy led the school to uncharted – at that time – academic successes.

Consequently, the school population began to grow, reaching 600 boys by the time Mr McMorran retired. As I mentioned earlier, we have built on these foundations and taken the school to where it is today.... unquestionably the best all-boys non-selective school in Northern Ireland.

There is an old Greek proverb that I love. *"A society grows great when the older generations plant trees whose shade, they know they shall never sit in."* I appreciate that I will never get to sit in the shade of the trees that I have helped to plant in Ashfield Boys' High School. However, I am truly honoured, immensely proud, and humbled to know that I have played my part.

Have you got some advice for boys coming to the school who will become the next generation of Ashfield Boys?

Grab every opportunity that comes your way. Carpe Diem. Work hard, always give your best. Nobody can ask more of you than your best. Never be embarrassed about asking for help. We are all in this together. You will never face a problem alone. As a school we will always face it together, and we will always find a way above it, around it, through it or under it..... we will always face it together. Finally, enjoy it! Be involved and be immensely proud that you are an Ashfield Boy.

I thank each and every single one of the current and past staff, past and present boys, past and present governors, parents and the East Belfast community for making these past eleven years the best job in the world, for me.

Thank you and good luck for the future.





SPORTS



SUNRISE SOCCER SUCCESS

At Ashfield Boys' High School, there are so many ways boys can get involved in games, sports and clubs beyond just the classroom.

There is only one club at our school that meets before the first bell – Sunrise Soccer. On a Wednesday, you will see a steady stream of boys getting out of cars at 8am, making their way to play football before Registration each week.



This year, Sunrise Soccer has been one of the best attended clubs at Ashfield, with over thirty boys in attendance each week. This is brilliant for the coaches to see.

The club helps boys get up and ready for school, and most of the boys have said it has been really helpful for getting them up and motivated for the school day ahead.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

At Ashfield Boys' we have four current NI Football Internationals - a remarkable number!

George Feeney is off to Poland with the Under 16 team to take on South Africa, Luxembourg and Poland.

Casey Smyth and Lorcan Donnelly are at the Under 17 UEFA Euro qualifiers taking on Denmark, England and Netherlands.

Callan Farely is with the U18 NI schoolboy team. Well done lads on your impressive success!



BELFAST CUP GLORY! ABHS FOOTBALL UPDATE

It has been a very successful season at Ashfield and it will be hard to fit everything in to a report!

Our Sixth Form Academy Team had a brilliant cup run this year, leading to a final in the Belfast Cup against Rathmore. Played under a blazing sun and under the watchful eyes of over one hundred screaming, cheering and drum-beating Year Eights from Ashfield Boys' High School, the cup was won by Ashfield Boys'. The final score of 4-0 reflects the dominant and commanding performance of our boys. This is a brilliant achievement!

Seven of our boys have been selected to play in the Super Cup, one of the biggest youth tournaments in the world.

The run down is as follows:

County Down: Zach Cowan, Zac Dickson, Alfie Anderson.

Glentoran: Noah Doak, Cameron Hayes, Mason Ayre.

Linfield: Riley Gilmore.

The boys will be competing against Manchester United, West Ham, Rangers and Newcastle United. What a brilliant opportunity!

The Year 8 A Team were the Irish Cup Plate semi finalists in 2023.

The Year 9A Team were the Gold Cup play off winners v Our Lady and St. Patrick's College. It was a 2-2 score, with our boys managing to win on penalties. Christian Ennis won the day with 3 penalty saves!

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Three Ashfield Boys tell us about their best moments from 2022/23.

THOMAS MARJORAM, Y8

You have finished your first year in ABHS! How was it?

It has been really good and a lot of fun. We have learned so much in lots of different ways. Lessons are enjoyable and there are always plenty of activities to do.

Favourite subject this year?

PE, because we have been able to play lots of football which was great. Also I have enjoyed English because the topics are really fun to learn about.

What will you remember most about your first year?

Definitely the Reward Trip to Let's Go Hydro in June. It was amazing!

What advice do you have for boys about to have their first year?

Try to enjoy it as much as you can. Make sure and pay attention to the teachers in class. Try to get involved in some afterschool clubs or play sports for the school teams!



GEORGE GRIFFIN, Y9

You have finished your second year in ABHS! How was it?

It has been a good year overall! Year 9 is a step up from Year 8, and the work gets a little tougher, but it has been fun.

Favourite subject this year?

Technology, for sure! I really like working with my hands and creating new things. A close second would be Home Economics.

What will you remember most about your second year?

Making friends with the new people in our class.

What advice do you have for boys about to have their first year?

Work hard and try to enjoy as much of it as possible. Things get more serious as you get older, so have lots of fun and make plenty of friends!



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

ZAK COATES, Y9

You have finished your second year in ABHS! How was it?

It was a very good year. My results have been pretty good this year which I am happy about.

Favourite subject this year?

HE has been my favourite. I really like cooking and it is great practice for me as I want to be a chef when I leave school!

What will you remember most about your second year?

I think I will remember getting an A in English the most! English was never my strongest subject until the last term. I was really surprised!

What advice do you have for boys about to have their first year?

Don't get into trouble in your first year! Make sure you enjoy the first few terms as much as you can. It'll be over so soon, so have fun!

