



Easter Greetings from the Alumni Association



Dear Friends

As another busy term draws to a close, we have passed the two-year anniversary of the first Covid lockdown, are slowly returning to the new form of “normality” and are moving forward as a school community. When we returned to School in January 2022, the Omicron variant was very active, with national cases at an all-time high. Pupils and staff, like every other school in the country, were required to test weekly at home, there were still restrictions around school such as our one-way system and pupils were required to wear masks in both classrooms and corridors. During this time we were impacted by large numbers of staff and pupil absences and additional pressure was put on staff to assist with class cover during this time. All that has changed: as we know the government has gradually lifted national restrictions and whilst we are still challenged by absenteeism, we are delighted that our senior pupils are preparing to sit the first set of public examinations since Summer 2019!

It has been a very productive term and this is certainly reflected in the sheer range of activities in which our pupils have been involved since Christmas. The **Spring Concert** was a welcome return to the School calendar and parents, pupils, staff and friends were delighted to return to the Ulster Hall to enjoy fabulous performances and a wonderful evening of musical entertainment from our talented students. The **PE Department** is also grateful to have had a very fruitful term of sporting achievements, with successes in Rugby, Hockey, Netball, Swimming, Water polo, Cross-Country, Show jumping and Fencing! Given all the barriers and challenges that our pupils and staff have faced through the pandemic, we are so proud of all that has been achieved by all our sporting teams and musical groups this term. During the periods of school closure, pupils were hugely disadvantaged by the lack of social contact and camaraderie that is usually generated through extra-curricular activities so both their physical and mental wellbeing have been boosted by the resumption of the various enrichment activities that are such an important part of the Academy culture.

We are also delighted that the **Duke of Edinburgh Award** scheme is fully operational again and groups of pupils have already enjoyed several weekends in the Mourne's already, with many set to complete their Bronze and Silver Awards in the Summer Term.

In the coming months, we shall be embarking on a range of **essential maintenance projects** across the main School site, in addition to investment in the Roughfort sports site and also at Ben Madigan. This will include roof replacements on both the Bruce Building and Swimming Pool plant room. There is no denying that this remains a difficult time financially for all schools. Following the challenges of austerity and cuts in Government funding, Covid has restricted our fundraising activities, with donors finding themselves in uncertain financial circumstances, leading to reductions in voluntary funding compared to previous years. We are therefore hugely grateful to all the former students, parents and friends who have been able to support the school, both this year and in previous years. Your generosity has enabled us to continue to invest in what we provide for our pupils today and in the future.

It is always a pleasure to meet and hear news and updates from our alumni from all over the world and we do hope that everyone can find some way of being involved in the life at the Academy. Perhaps you are able to join us for an alumni or school event, can offer careers support or guidance to pupils or other alumni, attend a reunion, or are able to make a donation, at any level, to allow us to keep BRA the same, outstanding institution moving forwards. We look forward to hearing from you, sharing your stories, and keeping you updated on life at BRA. Thank you for your continued support.

Wishing you all an enjoyable Easter and Spring break on behalf of everyone at Belfast Royal Academy.

Hilary Woods

Principal

1785 Foundation Update

Our **1785 Foundation** continues to grow and is the ideal opportunity for alumni to reconnect with the Academy and to share some of the pride and ambition that we have for our pupils. As you are aware, BRA was founded to provide an exceptional education for young people from all walks of life. The School has always demonstrated a strong social purpose and an ethos of caring for pupils from diverse backgrounds. While we strive to provide a secure and supportive environment for all pupils, we recognise that, from time to time, some pupils need additional care and support. We are therefore delighted to announce that the **1785 Foundation** has recently allocated funds to provide additional counselling and professional guidance for such students in need. Money from the Foundation is also being used to purchase fruit and cereal bars, now available daily outside the General Office, for those pupils who have been unable to bring a snack with them to school. Providing pastoral care and essential nutrition are examples of how the financial assistance provided by the **1785 Foundation** benefits and improves the daily lives of Academy pupils where most needed. We are most grateful to **Foundation** members for their ongoing support.

For further information on the 1785 Foundation and details of how to join please click [here](#) to visit [The 1785 Foundation](#) section of our website.

Forthcoming Events

Please let our Development office know if there is any event you can suggest or would like to become involved with.

Dates for your diary:

Hockey - OGA vs 1st XV - Tuesday 2th April, 7pm at Roughfort

OGA/OBA Quiz Night – Friday 13th May, 7.30pm in the Academy Club

Class of '71 – 50 Year Reunion – Friday 13th May

Class of '72 – 50 Year Reunion – Friday 20th May

Class of '82 – 40 Year Reunion – Friday 27th May

Class of '92 – 30 Year Reunion – Friday 10th June

OGA – Summer hanging basket / planters sale – Saturday 21st May

(Orders to be placed prior to this - email braoldgirls@outlook.com for further information)

Alumni Networking Business Breakfast – rescheduled to Wednesday 8th June, 8am in Ten Square Hotel

OBA – Memorial Cricket Match – Friday 24th June, pm at Ben Madigan

OGA - Afternoon Tea - Saturday 8th October, Venue TBC

For further information on any of these events please

contact alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net

Generous Donation

The School was very honoured to have recently received the kind donation of a beautiful Colin Gibson painting of the Crombie Building from the family of former pupil, the late **Mr Fred Buick**. Fred was a pupil at the school from 1944-1951 and his family contacted us to confirm it was his wish to donate the painting to the School as a gesture of appreciation for the value he placed upon the education he received at Belfast Royal Academy. Over the years, many generous alumni and friends of the School have chosen to remember Belfast Royal Academy in their wills, be it financially or in the form of gifts. The impact of past bequests has been huge and we would not be the school we are today without this tradition of generosity. We are always privileged to receive donations from former pupils and should you wish to consider such a gift please contact the **Development Office** on **028 9074 0423** or email developmentoffice@belfastroyalacademy.net should you require any further information.

