



Assumption Grammar School

Specialist School for Music and Physical Education



PROSPECTUS





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Principal



Principal's Address

A very warm welcome to Assumption Grammar School! We recognise that choosing the right school for your daughter is crucial; we are very proud of our staff and students and hope that this prospectus gives you a flavour of the educational experience on offer in this, one of the finest Catholic schools for girls in Ireland.

Since 1933, generations of students, staff and parents have been proud to be a part of this vibrant, caring and highly successful school. With a beautiful new building and state of the art facilities, we offer the advantages of a seamless education from Year 8 to Year 14.

Here we accept girls with wide-ranging talents and abilities and take great pride in our cultural diversity, welcoming students of all faiths and cultures.

Assumption is a Specialist School for Music and Physical Education and is renowned for its quality learning and teaching. An inspired curriculum, coupled with a technology rich, purpose built school, has resulted in our long history of outstanding achievement across the three curriculum strands:

- STEM
- Humanities
- Creative Arts

An extensive extra-curricular programme enriches and extends the curriculum, allowing each student to explore and develop her personal talents and interests. Wide ranging opportunities for leadership enable students to develop the skills, knowledge and qualities needed to be our leaders of the future.

We are proud of our "Fully Alive" ethos which is embedded in every aspect of school life. It is our firm belief that students thrive and achieve academic and personal success when they feel happy and safe. Whilst we expect all students to strive for academic

excellence, we also highly value students' personal development and their contribution to our school, local and international community. Students leave Assumption Grammar as mature, articulate and well-rounded young people, confident in their ability to succeed and make a significant contribution to the wider world. This is a result of over eighty years of dedication from our Trustees, the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption. Our 'Fully Alive' ethos, underpinned by Gospel values, keeps faith and moral development at the centre of everything we do.

Assumption Girls: Inspirational Women

We believe every girl is inspirational in her own way and, as such, we value each individual and work to foster her self-confidence and success. We strongly believe that our true purpose is to give individual care and attention to our students. You will meet, as you explore this Centre of Excellence, highly qualified, talented and dedicated teachers who work respectfully and thoughtfully with our 'Assumption Girls' and their parents, to ensure we can meet the everchanging needs of our students as they develop to become 'Inspirational Women'. You will encounter, too, the student voice: confident and articulate young ladies who will provide you with real-life experiences, reassurance of positive outcomes that can never be encapsulated in a glossy brochure.

There is certainly something exceptionally special about Assumption Grammar School and I am delighted to welcome you and your daughter into the heart of this unique community.

**Mr Peter Dobbin
Principal**



Our History

Assumption Grammar School has the rare distinction of having been founded from South Africa, the country where the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption were the pioneer religious Sisters since their arrival there from France in 1849.

Early in 1849, a young Belgian Sister of the Assumption, Sister Marie Gertrude de Henningsen, was so moved by the description given by an Irish Bishop, Aidan Devereux, of conditions in his Vicariate in South Africa, that she enthusiastically agreed to lead a small band of Sisters to the mission in the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope. A little community of Sisters, (later to become known as the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption), was established in Grahamstown in December 1849 and they opened their first school on 12 January 1850.

Eighty three years later, in 1933, the Assumption Convent High School was founded in Ballynahinch, the result of, the foresight and imagination of a local woman, Mother Baptist McKenny, Superior of the Congregation. Having grown up in the townland of Ballymacarn, outside Ballynahinch, she later joined the missionary congregation, which had a strong tradition of education.

Mother Baptist realised the need for her congregation to have a base in Europe as a focus for vocations and a channel for funds for the missions. Very aware too, of the need for Catholic secondary education for girls in the area, she returned to her native Co Down and founded an Assumption convent and school in Ballynahinch. Daygirls and boarders were enrolled and on 8th September 1933 Assumption Convent High School opened its doors to the first 28 pupils.

The Sisters were welcomed by the local community, though they met opposition from some quarters. Stories told about the early days were indeed colourful.

From the outset the school achieved success in public examinations, sport and music, as the early records testify. The school also nurtured the vocations of many future missionaries for generations.

The school grew and prospered and in 1937 received approval by the Ministry of Education. Pupil numbers continued to increase, the curriculum expanded and a series of extensions to the building became necessary. These included the 1960s block of language classrooms and library. Soon an upper storey was added consisting wholly of science laboratories and in 1964 a school canteen was built. The school had entered an era of unprecedented luxury!

While the school buildings were improved, the old convent, Eden House, deteriorated and was finally demolished, making way for a new convent building which included the beautiful chapel opened in 1971. This soon became a focal point in the life of the school.

Further major developments and additions included the staff room and music block built in the 1970s, and the gym hall, careers suite, library, classrooms and sixth form common room completed in the 1986. The 1990s brought ICT and Technology into the curriculum and new facilities were required. Dormitories, which had instantly been turned into classrooms with the closing of the boarding department in 1983, were transformed into fine computer suites. A new Technology suite was built and opened in 1994.



The Assumption Ethos, Badge and Motto

As numbers continued to rise throughout the decades, pressure on space had necessitated the provision of additional classrooms and over the years a virtual colony of temporary buildings had sprung up. As a result of a feasibility study undertaken by the Department of Education, approval was given for a major new building development. A design team was appointed in 1996, planning approval was granted in November 1999 and site works began at the end of June 2004.

In 2009, Assumption Grammar School became the first and only post-primary school in Northern Ireland to become a Specialist School for Music with Physical Education. This was a very important time in our history as the new building was in progress. The School used these new developments to build upon its impressive history and set about future-proofing whilst remaining a true centre of excellence for our curricular and extra-curricular and pastoral provision.

Our new school building, was officially opened by Sr. Anne Patricia Flynn, MSA (Congregational Leader of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption) on the 4th May 2012.

PRINCIPALS

Sister Joachim Baker	
1933-1940	
Sister Pauline Mawson	
1940-1960	
Sister Jarlath McKenna	
1960-1983	
Sister Eileen Bogues	
1983-1994	
Sister Maureen Carville	
1994-2000	
Mrs Sheila Crea	
2000-2008	
Mr Paul McBride	
2008 - 2014	
Mr Peter Dobbin	
2014 - Present	

ETHOS

Our aim is to ensure that Assumption is a centre of true learning, providing a holistic education which nurtures body, mind and spirit. In the words of our vision statement “Fully Alive”, it draws inspiration from the Gospel values on which it is founded. It is a place where staff and pupils share the same values, ideals, beliefs and dreams and where they work in close harmony for the good of each other and of society.

The Assumption crest which is worn by all pupils is symbolic of the ethos of the school.



SYMBOLS

The Cross:

Symbol of the love of God, which is above everything, in everything, and holding everything together.

The Anchor

Symbol of steadfastness, of hope and security.

The Southern Cross (the five stars):

Symbol of God's guidance and direction in our lives.

MOTTO

Assumption schools share the motto

“Ex Sola Virtute Honor”

(From Virtue alone comes Honour).

The Latin word ‘virtus’ stood for one of the prized qualities of the good Roman; it included the qualities of strength, loyalty and self-discipline.

Today we would say it means caring: caring about the realities of the spirit, caring about other people, caring about the meaning of human life, about the earth and all that is on it, and above all, caring about its Creator.

This is the only kind of ‘honour’ in which the Assumption school is really interested: that which is based on Christian principles and values and will last long after academic knowledge has faded.

Our overall aim:

“To develop the Whole Person through a Christian Education”

We hope you will enjoy a more indepth understanding of our aims as you read through this prospectus.

“...to nurture a sense of self worth, dignity and confidence in each individual.”



Pastoral Care and Structure



Pupils at an Anti-Bullying Event

The pastoral care of our pupils is of paramount importance. It permeates every aspect of the school's life. Every member of staff shares responsibility for the moral, social and spiritual development of pupils as well as for their academic profiles. That pupils are treated as unique individuals is apparent in the good relationships and mutual respect between pupils and staff and in the close working relationships we have with parents. The school's commitment to its long held philosophy of developing the whole person was reflected in the comments of the Inspectorate in its 2015 report;

The pastoral care of the pupils is outstanding. The school's ethos is characterised by high levels of support, inclusion and a practical commitment to the welfare of pupils and staff. The school motto, 'Fully Alive', is realised through the moral, social, spiritual and academic development of the pupils.

Concern for the welfare of each pupil underpins the positive atmosphere of classrooms, the high quality of teaching and learning and the assessment and monitoring of pupils' work. The pastoral care of pupils is supported by a well-planned PSHE Programme, by an independent Counselling Service and by the specific pastoral structure of the school. The school is divided into 3 sections – Junior, Middle and Senior. The collaborative nature and structure of the school, and its resultant benefits, was also noted by the Inspectorate;

The strong sense of community throughout the school promotes successfully a culture of mutual respect and

encourages pupils to look out for each other. Pupils at all stages benefit from extensive opportunities to support the less-privileged, locally and globally, through which they develop good cultural awareness and leadership skills. The school promotes very effectively healthy eating, emotional well-being and physical activity.

Leading each section is an Assistant Principal who has overall responsibility for the pastoral and academic welfare of pupils under his/her care. They are supported by their Year Heads who lead a team of four/five Form Teachers. Year Heads and Form Teachers are central to the personal and social development of each girl, providing advice, support and guidance when required. Final year students are assigned as prefects, a system which mirrors the management structure of the school. They help make pupils feel welcome and at ease and, in turn, these young adults develop a sense of leadership and responsibility.

Special Educational Needs

We remain committed to the tradition of ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. Support is provided both within the ordinary classroom setting and, if required, in conjunction with external agencies to suit individual needs. In addition, where pupils have special educational needs, the school liaises closely with the Education and Library Board and ensures that the needs of the particular pupils are addressed and that provision is made for on-going support in their studies. The SENCO works with other members of staff to create and maintain an environment that promotes and secures effective learning and high standards of achievement.

Supportive working relationships with parents, and close involvement with pupils in all aspects of their learning, help us to deliver the best opportunities and prepare pupils for life after school. The Mathematics and English Departments provide additional numeracy and literacy support outside the regular school timetable for pupils with particular difficulties. The Ballynahinch Learning Community also provides additional support, allowing the school to devote further resources to support pupils with SEN. The school has a member of staff who is qualified in diagnostic training, assisting the SENCO to evaluate how pupils are progressing during their academic career.

“...to provide each pupil with the necessary framework for a suitable career path.”



School Life

Positive Behaviour

Assumption Grammar School strives to establish a positive ethos and to promote self-discipline and personal responsibility.

Discipline is based on the premise of tolerance and mutual respect. The school is committed to creating an environment which is friendly, orderly and conducive to learning where each pupil feels valued and encouraged to contribute positively to her own personal development and to the life of the school. Our School Council, which meets monthly, gives a voice to the student population and an opportunity for pupils to discuss pertinent issues with staff and to influence decision making. A Positive Reward Scheme, which incorporates our House System, instils a healthy competition between the pupils. Pupils are rewarded for areas such as attendance, achievement and contribution to school life.

Parent/Teacher Relationships

Recognising the importance of close communication between school and home, we take every opportunity to establish and maintain good relationships with parents. In addition to parent/teacher meetings held annually, parents are welcome to contact the school to discuss their concerns with staff in a spirit of trust and mutual confidence. Furthermore, parents can keep abreast of general school news through departmental twitter accounts and our school Facebook page. All our policies and procedures are on our school website at www.assumptiongrammar.org.uk.

We are delighted to be one of only a few schools in Northern Ireland to give access to pupil information to parents through the unique online portal, the Sims Learning Gateway. Here, parents can view reports, see daily attendance and monitor their daughter's achievements and behaviour.

Assessment is a key priority in our School Development Plan and ensures we meet the needs of our pupils, enabling all to achieve their potential and to continue raising standards in Assumption. Full written school reports are sent to parents yearly, after the mid-year and end of year examinations. Interim statistical reports are also sent to parents to inform them of their daughter's progress.

According to the admissions criteria for Assumption Grammar School, the Board of Governors "wishes to accept pupils whose parents are in agreement with the philosophy and aims of the school". We expect, therefore, that parents will continue to give support and loyalty and ensure adherence to the school Code of Conduct which has been drawn up in the best interests of the school. The success of our school is due to committed staff, supportive parents and motivated pupils. The continued support of the parents will ensure that the efforts of staff on behalf of our pupils will enable them to derive maximum benefit from their time spent here. The Student Planner contains all the necessary information regarding uniform, discipline and the expectations of our pupils. We feel it is important that parents study this booklet with their daughters. This will familiarise them with school organisation, as well as the general expectations of positive behaviour which is the key to personal development and success.

Homework

The school considers homework to be an essential part of education. It consolidates learning, and helps the pupil develop study skills and self-discipline. The Student Planner specifies the recommended time allocation for homework.

Uniform

Details of uniform are also included in the Student Planner. The school uniform identifies the girls as pupils of Assumption Grammar School. While wearing it, they represent their school, its values and traditions. Pupils are therefore encouraged to wear their uniform with dignity and pride.

Careers Education and Guidance

The importance of Careers Education and Guidance is fully acknowledged within the school curriculum. Careers Education is embedded in the teaching of every curriculum subject. The Careers Department aims to provide all students with the information and support necessary to help them make informed decisions about their future career choices. Careers education is delivered through the Education for Employability Programme in Years 8-10 and in Years 11 and 12. Dedicated Careers classes form an integral part of the Sixth Form Leadership programme and continue in Year 14 with increasing emphasis on preparation for transition. Within the careers programme, emphasis is placed on the development of personal awareness and on the acquisition of skills needed to make sound educational and career choices. Guidance is provided by specialist teachers and outside agencies who give pupils opportunities to discuss their aptitudes and interests and obtain advice on possible career paths. Pupils are encouraged to undertake extensive personal research of their chosen occupational areas, using available computer packages and relevant literature.

The school organises a number of events to complement the taught careers programme. The highlight of this is the biennial Careers Convention which hosts over one hundred agencies and universities who offer information and expertise to all year groups. This event allows our students and parents to ask questions from professionals in various fields.

In conjunction with Young Enterprise, a number of one day programmes are delivered to all pupils in Years 8 -10. These programmes are based on the principle of learning by doing. Students are encouraged to work together to run their own companies. Volunteers from business are brought into the classroom to work with teachers and pupils.

Our senior pupils are offered the opportunity to explore and develop their knowledge of Higher Education and the world of work. All Year 13 pupils participate in one week's work experience. Year 14 pupils avail of the opportunities to attend the annual Open Days in the local universities and take part in a Mock Interview evening with experienced interviewers who assess and discuss their individual performances. The school also takes part in the Cambridge Shadowing Scheme and has links with Pembroke and Corpus Christi Colleges where pupils spend a number of days shadowing students and assimilate the atmosphere of student life in these notable seats of learning.

Curriculum Provision



Through the planning and implementation of the curriculum, each pupil is encouraged to reach her potential and nurture her own particular talents and abilities. The school's consistently excellent academic results reflect the high standards of teaching and learning in Assumption. Teaching is organised through academic areas managed by Curriculum Leaders. Schemes of work, which comply with current statutory regulations, are also designed to ensure a breadth and depth of knowledge, a zest for learning and the development of skills and values necessary for life. There is a culture of self-evaluation within all departments, which ensures that they remain open to changes in education and responsive to the individual needs of pupils. Additionally, we have a Psychology for Learning Centre, offering one-to-one tutorial support for identified pupils. The core aim of our school is, 'To develop the whole person through a Christian Education' and as a specialist school in Music with PE we have been able to foster our 'Fully Alive' ethos, maintain our exceptional academic standards and share our excellence in all areas.

Transition from Primary School

We aim to make the transition from Primary School as smooth as possible by familiarising the pupils with the school and their classes in June. Induction Day involves the girls meeting their Form Teachers and prefects who play a vital role in ensuring the girls settle in quickly. There is an effective Pastoral System, which supports the pupils in their first few months, helping them cope with the many new experiences including bus routes and dining in the Windmill Restaurant. Year 8 pupils adapt quickly to the new environment, enjoying the challenge of a variety of subjects and teachers.

Key Stage 3

At this stage, we aim to foster an early interest in a wide range of subjects and begin the process of preparing the girls for the challenges of a modern world. All pupils are given an introduction to Computing and the school Virtual Learning Environment. The creative and expressive areas of Music, Drama, Art and PE form a significant part of the curriculum. The pastoral dimension includes Relationships and Sexuality Education, Education for Employability and Local and Global Citizenship. In Year 8 we offer 3 modern languages from which pupils choose 2 to follow in Year 9 and 10. The cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT are developed across the curriculum. Schemes of work clearly signpost opportunities for their development, along with thinking skills and personal capabilities.

Our curriculum is designed to develop each of our pupils as:
individuals;
contributors to society;
contributors to the economy and the environment.

Each area of learning will develop the necessary skills and capabilities, which allow the 3 main curricular objectives to be met.



“...to challenge, guide and lead each pupil to develop her full potential.”

Key Stage 4

In their final year of Key Stage 3, pupils choose an individual package of subjects, which enables them to develop their particular strengths, and opens to them a wide range of career options. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework (24 GCSE subjects) and allows pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils study the following GCSE core subjects: English Language and Literature, Religious Studies, Mathematics, at least ONE Modern Language and at least ONE Science. Pupils then select a further 4 subjects from the Options list. An increasing number of Key Stage 4 pupils are taking 11 or 12 GCSEs by availing of Fast Track classes in Music, Statistics and Performing Arts. We also offer Music GCSE to local post primary schools. All pupils follow non-examination courses through the pastoral Form Period in Relationships and Sexuality Education, Citizenship and Education for Employability. All pupils follow a non-examination course in Physical Education.

Last year's results are appended to this prospectus.

KEY STAGE 3 AREAS OF LEARNING

- The Arts
 - Art & Design
 - Music
 - Drama (through English)
- Language and Literacy
 - English
- Mathematics and Numeracy
 - Mathematics
- Modern Languages 3 in Year 8, 2 in Year 9/10
 - French
 - Irish
 - Spanish
- Environment & Society
 - History
 - Geography
- Science & Technology
 - Science
 - Technology & Design
- Learning for Life & Work
 - Home Economics
 - Relationships & Sexuality Education
 - Personal Development
 - Local & Global Citizenship
 - Education for Employability
- Physical Education
 - Physical Education
- Religious Education
 - Religious Education
- Additional Subjects
 - Computing
 - Chorale Singing
 - Young Enterprise Module
 - Library Class

KEY STAGE 4

GCSE subjects offered
Every pupil studies the following subjects at GCSE:

- Mathematics
English Language
English Literature
Religious Studies

Students select ONE language from French, Irish or Spanish

Students select their preferred Science compulsory option from either a single Science subject or Double Award Science (equivalent to TWO GCSEs)

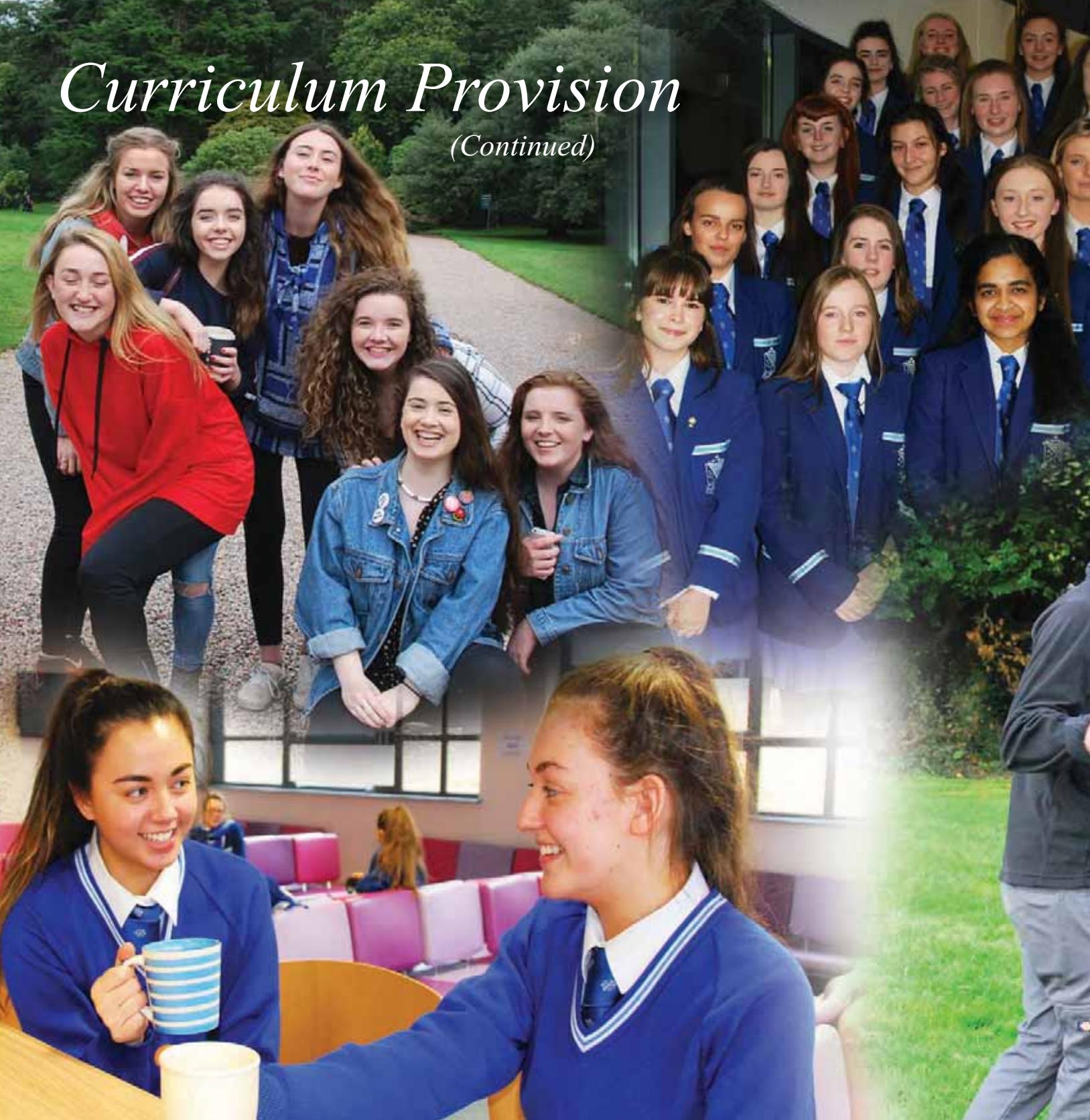
Pupils are then required to choose an additional 4 subjects from the Options list (or 3 if they choose to follow Double Award Science):

- Biology
Chemistry
Physics
Double Award Science
Art
Business Studies
Drama
French
Further Mathematics
Geography
History
Home Economics
Health and Social Care
ICT
Irish
Journalism
Music
PE
Spanish
Technology

Fast Track options for Music, Statistics and Performing Arts are facilitated outside the normal timetable.

Curriculum Provision

(Continued)



Post 16/Sixth Form

Girls enter Sixth Form after successful completion of GCSE. An extensive range of 31 subjects (including both general and applied) is available and pupils choose 3 or 4 of these to AS and A2 level. The Sixth Form curriculum is designed to give pupils maximum academic opportunities in subject choice and careers options, complying fully with the Entitlement Framework (27 A Level subjects). While there is a strong emphasis on the academic side of the pupil's life, we also aim to develop the skills and personal competencies necessary for the vocational/applied dimension. Over and above these, we look for the

emergence of a mature, well-balanced and happy individual. Pupils are encouraged to maintain breadth of interests through the curriculum Enrichment Programme that we provide. This offers a range of courses including: Survival Cookery; First Aid; Leadership Training (ASPIRE); Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE); Young Enterprise; GCSE Further Maths; Volunteering; Primary and Special School Community Links; Mandarin and Yoga.

All Year 13 and 14 pupils follow two compulsory periods of Religious Education and Careers.



POST 16

GCE A Level subjects offered within Assumption:

Art
History of Art
Biology
Business Studies
Chemistry
Computer Science
English Literature
French
Further Mathematics
Geography
History
Nutrition and Food Science (HE)
Health and Social Care
ICT (Digital Technology)
Irish
Journalism
Mathematics
Music
PE
Government & Politics
Physics
Psychology
Religious Education
Sociology
Spanish
Technology & Design
Theatre Studies
Moving Image Arts

GCE A Level subjects offered through the Ballynahinch Learning Community (BLC):

Media Studies (GCE A Level)
ICT (Cambridge Technical)
Business (Cambridge Technical)
Hospitality (BTEC Level 3)
Travel and Tourism (BTEC Level 3)

Pupils are prepared for entry into universities and colleges of Further Education. Over 90% of our leavers proceed to higher education. A number of Sixth Form pupils are accepted for Oxbridge Universities. The school has an excellent academic record of pupil success in examinations and in additional competitions.

In addition to GCSE and A Levels, pupils are prepared for various other external qualifications such as Associated Board Examinations of the Royal Schools of Music and accredited courses in Personal Effectiveness.





*“...to develop in our pupils
the skills necessary to function
as independent adults.”*





*“...to stimulate in pupils
a creative and appreciative
response to the arts.”*

Creative Expression

The Creative and Expressive Area of Study helps to facilitate the learning experiences embedded in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Moreover, it plays an invaluable part in stimulating the creative thinking and imagination of young learners, as well as their skills and all-round development. There is commitment to this important dimension of children's learning at Assumption Grammar School through Art, Music, PE and Drama.

Art

All junior pupils follow a varied art course and Art is a popular choice for GCSE, AS and A2 level. Post GCSE courses are enhanced for many by the study of History and Appreciation of Art which is also available to students with no practical artistic skills. Interest in specialised skills is developed at this stage, e.g. ceramics, textiles, pottery, painting and drawing technique. The school has an active Art Historical Society that regularly presents talks on the work of major Art practitioners. Trips are frequently arranged to galleries and students also benefit from visits by practising artists, designers and sculptors.

We are also now offering Moving Image Art which offers our students a wide range of skills that will allow them to develop visual literacy. The 'creative industries' are becoming increasingly accessible and attractive to young people and this is mainly due to the rapid growth of digital media technologies. The impact is being felt within the classroom where students are seeking opportunities to learn technical skills as well as to express themselves creatively. The Art Department also joins with the Drama and Music Departments to help produce school musicals and plays. Art students frequently paint the backdrops for local primary school productions. You only need to walk around our corridors to witness the superb art pieces produced by our own pupils.

By Nicola Casement
Year 13



Music

In the Junior School students follow a varied curriculum which develops listening, composing and performing skills. As a Specialist School for Music with PE, the subject is a popular choice for students at GCSE, AS and A2 level and prepares pupils for a wide choice of careers. Tuition is available for a full range of orchestral instruments as well as piano and traditional instruments. Pupils are entered for practical and theory examinations through the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and for various festivals. Extra-curricular activities include Senior and Training orchestras, Senior, Junior and Chamber choirs, Jazz, Traditional and Barbershop groups as well as numerous other ensembles which girls may join as they reach the required standards. Each year the Music Department undertakes a full and challenging programme of concerts and recitals as well as taking advantage of many other performing opportunities including Open days, liturgical functions and other events. Singers and musicians regularly appear at community and charitable events and have performed on television and radio.

Physical Education and Leisure

Sport plays a major role in the life of Assumption Grammar School both as an integral part of the curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity. Presently our facilities include a Sports Hall accommodating 4 badminton courts, an international size netball and basketball court, a modern fitness suite and dance studio. Our outdoor facilities also include a camogie/gaelic pitch, a 3rd generation floodlit pitch and 2 full sized netball courts/tennis courts. Activities offered at KS3 are: dance, gymnastics, netball, camogie, gaelic, swimming, athletics, cross-country, health related PE, minor games and tennis. Activities offered at KS4 are: badminton, volley ball, dance, and health-related PE which includes the use of the fitness suite.

The Year 13 pupils have the opportunity to participate in Leisure Studies as part of the Enrichment Programme, enjoying such activities such as Yoga and Pilates. One of the aims of this module is to give the pupils the opportunity to experience a range of activities in which they can participate outside of school and after they leave school.

Physical Education is also offered at GCSE and A-level. Our results to date have been outstanding.





Creative Expression (continued)

Drama

Drama plays an integral part in the life of the school as part of the Junior English curriculum, at GCSE and A level and as an extracurricular activity. Pupils grow in confidence and ability through drama workshops and they enjoy the opportunity to develop and experience a range of theatrical and performance skills. These include acting, stage management, set and costume design and proficiency in technical areas such as lighting and sound.

Our facilities include a state of the art Drama Suite which boasts a cyclorama to display scenic backdrops, a Strand lighting board to create mood and atmosphere and high quality audio equipment.

The Drama Suite is fitted with tiered seating, giving students the opportunity to perform in a proper auditorium which has the additional benefit of enhancing the theatrical experience for members of the audience. The many theatre trips organised by the Department cultivates in our students an appreciation of drama as an art form and often inspires them to pursue a career in Performing Arts. The Drama Department regularly hosts performances from touring professional theatre companies and Theatre in Education groups, giving students the opportunity to work with directors and actors to develop their skills.

Students are also encouraged to participate in a wide variety of dramatic projects with external agencies and have won many competitions. These include BBC Blast One To Watch, BBC Lights, Camera, Action, Equality Commission's International Women's Day, Spring Chickens International Theatre and Shakespeare for Schools, to name but a few. Drama is regularly exploited as a means for students to explore and examine the world in which they live and to make a positive contribution to their community. Some of our students have won prizes for their appointments as Cultural Ambassadors for their work in bringing drama to the local community. Other students have received recognition for their roles in a SPIRAL outreach project in which drama was used as a medium through which they could reflect on our collective responsibility as citizens of the world.

Practical examination pieces, project showcase events and performances in the Junior Drama Festival all offer parents the opportunity to witness for themselves the wealth of dramatic talent within the school. A particular highlight was the recent dramatisation of 'Mamma Mia' at the Ulster Hall. School productions, such as 'The Sound of Music' and 'Oklahoma', are always a sell-out.

The school is delighted to see the success of some of our recent past pupils such as Eileen O'Higgins who starred in the Oscar-nominated, 'Brooklyn' and also Niamh McGrady who is pursuing a stage career as well as playing a role in 'The Fall'. Whether students pursue a career in acting or they simply wish to develop their dramatic skills, Drama continues to be a very popular choice with many of our students.

A photograph of three schoolgirls in blue uniforms with white collars and ties, working together to make slime in a classroom setting. They are standing behind a counter covered with various supplies, including a bag of Prince marshmallows and several containers of red slime. One girl in the foreground is wearing glasses and smiling at the camera. The other two girls are also smiling. The background shows a classroom environment with a bust of a historical figure and a window.

*“...to develop an awareness
of one’s responsibility for the
environment.”*

Extra-Curricular Provision

Science Club

The Science Club, which meets after school one day a week, provides pupils in Years 8-10 with the opportunity to further develop their skills in and experience of Science. The girls, supervised by two teachers and three Science Prefects, carry out dissections and practical investigations. They even grow their own fruit and vegetables which are used in the Windmill Restaurant to make healthy meals. The girls enter a wide range of competitions and take part annually in the Salters' Festival of Chemistry competition which is held in Queen's University, Belfast. This gives the members a chance to work in a real laboratory with pupils from other schools. There are outings to recycling plants and a visit to the BT Young Scientist exhibition in Dublin. At present, the Science Club is actively involved in the eco-schools project, working towards renewing our green flag status.

Technology Club

The Technology Club is an after school club that offers pupils the opportunity to design and make products such as personalised key rings, clocks, T-lights, trinket boxes, as well as learning how to use the laser cutter to create their own designs.

Public Speaking

There are significant opportunities for students to develop valuable skills in debating and public speaking across all the key stages. Public speaking and Debating have been enjoyable, challenging and successful extra-curricular activities in our school, for many years. The pupils enjoy entering a variety of competitions throughout the year including The Soroptimist International and The Irish Federation of University Women Graduates' Competition.

Spanish Club

The Spanish Department organise an after school club on Mondays for Year 9 and 10 pupils. The Spanish Assistant aims to improve the girls' use of the Spanish language, pronunciation, spoken Spanish and cultural understanding in a fun and creative way. The types of activities organised are Spanish games, songs, competitions, sampling Spanish food, Spanish and Latin-American culture and ICT projects.

French Club

For pupils in Years 8-10 who want to improve their understanding of the French language and culture, there is the weekly lunchtime meeting of "le Club de Français". Our French Assistant shares her unique experience of her native language and culture through photos, presentations, music, games, songs and conversation.

Irish Society

The Irish Department have a range of extra-curricular activities that pupils may become involved in including the Assumption Irish Society who meet at various times throughout the year. Annual trips to the Gaeltacht are organised by the Department.

Politics Society

The Politics Society is for students in the Senior School. A team of pupils participate in a number of initiatives, for example, the British Council's European Youth Parliament at Stormont.

The Junior Book Club

The Junior Book Club meets weekly at Monday lunchtime in the Library from 1.10-1.40pm. All junior pupils are free to attend. Pupils discuss all kinds of books, newly published fiction and nonfiction, good reads, classical fiction, humorous and entertaining books. The girls are encouraged to recommend books that they have enjoyed. We are involved in reviewing the titles for the Northern Ireland Children's Book Award each year and posting reviews on their website. The Book Club is very popular and well attended.

Ski Trip

The Ski Trip is offered to all pupils and approximately 40 to 50 girls travel to various destinations throughout Europe and the USA.



Science Club



Technology Club



*"There are so many opportunities
to take part in music at Assumption.
You can learn an instrument or join
choirs, orchestras and bands.
The choices are endless!"*

Year 9 pupil

Extra-Curricular (continued)

Music

Senior Orchestra

This comprises around 60 girls who have reached Grade 4-8 on their instruments. They rehearse for an hour each Tuesday afternoon playing pieces from the standard classical repertoire and lighter music. They usually perform in school at Christmas and at the Annual Concert in one of the Belfast concert halls.

Senior Choir

This award-winning choir consists of around 60 singers from Years 11-14. Meeting on a Thursday afternoon, they cover a wide range of religious and secular repertoire including art music and arrangements of popular material. They perform several times each year culminating in the Annual Concert during the second term.

Junior Choir

This award-winning choir comprises 70 singers from Years 8-10. They rehearse on Wednesday afternoons and perform a wide range of light music. They perform several times during the year including at the Junior Concert in June.

Chamber Choir

This is a smaller choir drawn mainly from senior students who take vocal training as a core musical activity. They meet on Monday afternoons to rehearse a range of religious material and art songs, performing several times during the Christmas period and at the Annual Concert at the end of the Easter term.

Senior & Junior Chamber Ensembles

The school has both a Senior and Junior ‘String Ensemble’. These groups meet weekly before school to develop string playing and concentrate on repertoire for this instrumental discipline. They perform at the Annual Concert and the Junior Concert and quartets drawn from these groups have many opportunities to play at functions to the local and extended community.

Junior Wind Ensemble

This group meets after school on a Tuesday and plays a range of light music and arrangements designed to develop the skills of girls learning brass and woodwind instruments in school.

African Drum Group

This is a small group which plays traditional African rhythm pieces on authentic ‘djembe’ drums. They have become a popular addition to concert programmes during the year and act as an appropriate group for GCSE ensemble performances.

Jazz Ensemble

This group of 20 musicians drawn mainly from the senior students meets on Mondays before school and performs a range of Swing music and Jazz arrangements of popular tunes. They perform at various events inside and outside school during the year.

Barbershop Group

This is a group of eight elite singers who perform regularly throughout the year at music festivals, school events and in the community.

Senior and Junior Traditional Groups

These ensembles are made up from those students studying traditional instruments and rehearse on a Friday, playing a wide range of Irish music. They perform at the main school concerts and several other events during the year including the Traditional Night.



Extra-Curricular (continued)

PE

Pupils at Assumption have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities after school, and/or lunchtimes. Many of our students gain County, Regional and sometimes National recognition in a wide range of sports.

Cross-Country

Minor, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Teams are entered at District Cross-Country Championships with the opportunity to qualify and compete at Ulster and Irish Schools championships. Training for this takes place during the first term and continues throughout the second term.

Netball Club

The Netball Club caters for pupils from Year 8 - 14 with training sessions being held after school and at lunch times from Monday – Thursday. The school enters teams into the East Down League, SEA Area League, the NI League and Cup.

Each year there are approximately 60 Year 8 pupils trialing out for two Year 8 teams and train from Halloween onwards to work towards the East Down Tournament.

Camogie

There are 4 teams in total the Year 8's, the U14's, the U16s and a Senior Team. All teams are entered into the Down and Ulster Leagues.



Gaelic

Teams will be entered into competitions in 4 age groups. The U14, U16 and Senior Teams will compete in the Ulster League while the Year 8 teams are entered into the Co Down/Armagh Blitz.

Swimming

Minor, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Teams are entered for various Ulster Schools Galas throughout the year.

Soccer

Soccer is offered to Year 9 - Year 11 students. Two teams are entered into the annual soccer tournaments organised by the IFA.

Fitness Suite

This is available to GCSE PE students and those in Years 13 and 14.

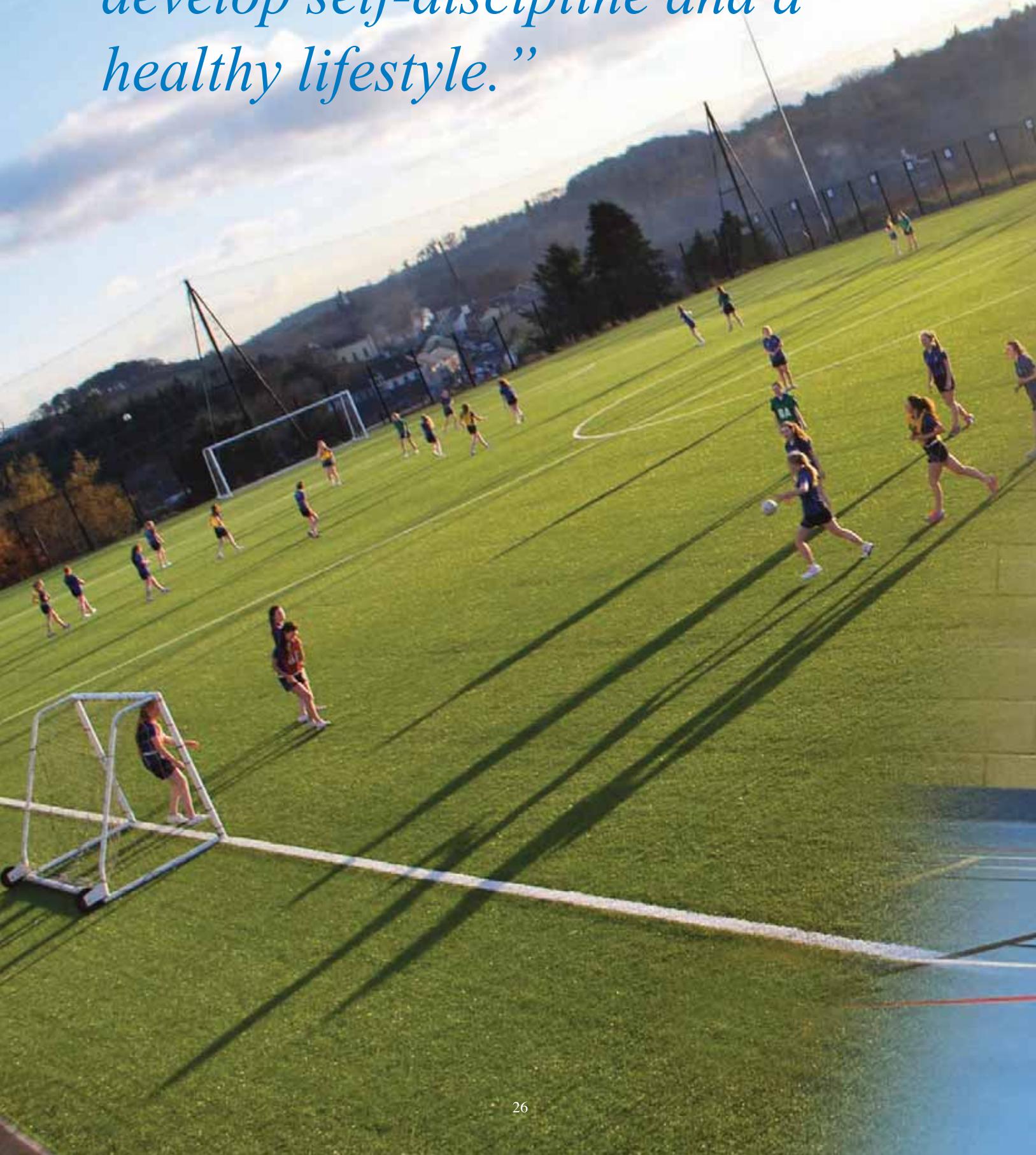
Horse Riding

The school provides pupils with the opportunity to enter various Show Jumping competitions throughout the year including the TRI Inter-schools Show Jumping League Final and the Balmoral Open Championships.

Dance

The Dance Club takes place in the spring term and is open to all students. We compete annually in both the Northern Ireland Creative Movement and Dance Championships and the Ulster Dance Championships. We have enjoyed much success in these prestigious competitions.

“...to provide pupils with activities from which they can develop self-discipline and a healthy lifestyle.”







“...to stimulate the growth of pupils into caring, competent and responsible citizens.”

Global Links

Our School has forged special links with two fundraising organisations. Pupils and teachers take part in voluntary trips to various different countries with Habitat for Humanity to help them achieve their vision - to create a world where everyone has a safe and decent place to live through the elimination of housing poverty and homelessness. They travel to India as part of the Saphara Project. Saphara is a non-profit, non-denominational Christian organisation which welcomes young people from all backgrounds, races and religions. Our girls team up with pupils from other schools and work in India with disadvantaged children through Irish-linked charities.

Our Community

Since being awarded Specialist Status in 2009, Assumption has forged links with local primary and post-primary schools in curricular and extra-curricular areas. Primary school children are invited to taster days, the annual Drama Festival, Anti-Bullying Week Workshops, concerts, sports activities and other events. Sports facilities and resources are available to local primary and post-primary schools. We also offer Fast Track Music GCSE to post primary schools with excellent results.

At Post 16, Assumption offers a variety of subjects to Sixth Form boys and girls from post-primary schools within the Area Learning Community. Currently they avail of Mathematics, Music, Physics, Technology, French and Politics. Our pupils are actively involved in projects such as the Community Link with St. Patrick's Ballynahinch, Drumlin Integrated Primary, Ballynahinch Primary School and KnockKevin Special School, Downpatrick. Additionally, our pupils avail of work experience in the local crèche, primary schools and residential care homes. Our links with the academic community are strong, with our current involvement in 'Project 500' with QUB and bi-annual visits to Cambridge University. We have forged links with the PSNI who provide workshops on e-safety and cyber bullying. Links with the global community are vital in promoting leadership and raising cultural awareness in our pupils. In July pupils travel to India as part of the Saphara Project, a non-profit, non-denominational Christian organisation which welcomes young people from all backgrounds, races and religions. The girls team up with pupils from other schools and work in India with disadvantaged children. As part of the Year 13 Enrichment Programme, pupils fundraise with Habitat for Humanity to help them achieve their vision - to create a world where everyone has a safe and decent place to live through the elimination of housing poverty and homelessness. There are other opportunities for global education with annual trips to South Africa, France and Spain.

Assumption's commitment to community development was recognised in the 2016 'Yaftas' (Youth and Future Talent Awards) organised by Newry, Mourne and Down Council where our pupils won the individual Voice of Young People Award and the Group Community Project.



“...to give our pupils an understanding and appreciation of our Catholic Faith which will assist them to live out the Christian calling in their daily lives and to encourage understanding, respect and appreciation of the religious belief of others.”



Spiritual Education



In Assumption Grammar School we aim to nurture and develop the faith which has been handed on at home and through the community of the church. Our primary objective is to lead our students to a deeper and more active and personal faith. Our aim is to help them relate their faith to everyday life through a Christian vision of the world.

A comprehensive programme of Religious Education has been developed to meet the needs of our pupils. Throughout their faith journey, they are introduced by their teachers to Christian revelation. They are led to an understanding of the world and God's creation, of the sacredness of life, of their uniqueness and dignity, of their vocation in Christ and of how to fulfil that vocation. They are assisted in expressing their faith and nourishing it through daily assemblies, the celebration of Mass on various occasions throughout the year, Eucharistic Adoration, prayer and Scripture groups in Advent and Lent and on annual retreat for each year group.

A Parents' Prayer Group which supports the prayer and spiritual life of the school meets on a monthly basis. The school places Christ at its centre, creating an environment where individuals are valued and their dignity respected.

It seeks to promote an atmosphere of love, respect for others, compassion and forgiveness. It also endeavours to create in our students an awareness, sensitivity and respect for people with different beliefs and cultures. Our school oratory is designed as an oasis of peace and calm for our students and staff.

Educational Trips







Fully

Alive





Assumption Grammar School Ballynahinch

General Information

Classification

Assumption Grammar School is a voluntary grammar day school for girls, accountable to its Trustees, Board of Governors and to the Department of Education.

Postal Address

Assumption Grammar School
24 Belfast Road
Ballynahinch, Co. Down, BT24 8EA

Telephone Numbers

General Office - 028 9756 2250
Fax No. - 028 9756 5341
Principal's Fax No. - 028 9756 3182

Web Address

www.assumptiongrammar.org.uk

Chairman of Board of Governors

Miss M. O'Halloran

School Day

Pupils commence at 9.00a.m.
and end at 3.20p.m.
Senior Lunch Break 12.40p.m. - 1.10p.m.
Junior Lunch Break 1.10p.m. - 1.40p.m.

Email

admin@assumption.ballynahinch.ni.sch.uk



www.facebook.com/assumptionlive



@assumptionlive

Extra-Curricular Activities

8.00a.m. - 9.00a.m. on appointed days
3.30p.m. - 4.45p.m. on appointed days

Enrolment

840

This information is correct at the time of publication.
Any changes will be brought to the attention of parents.



Artist: Roisin Rice, Year 13.



**Assumption
Grammar School
Ballynahinch**

Assumption Grammar School,
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Assumption Grammar School

Specialist School for Music and Physical Education



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