



NEWSLETTER

Ashfield Girls' High School



September/October 2025

YEAR 8 INDUCTION

Ready, Steady, Go!

We welcomed out fantastic Year 8 pupils in August for their three days of induction. Pupils completed ice breaker activities, toured the school, met with the pastoral teams, got photographs taken, learnt about the school House System, were trained on MS Teams, wrote their letter to Mrs Hanvey about their aspirations for their time at Ashfield Girls' High School and completed their team building physical activities provided by Pathways.

The Year 8 pupils settled well into their new routines regarding their timetable, the canteen, homework, extra-curricular activities and have been champions at making each other feel included and part of the Ashfield Family.

We were also delighted at the parent / carer participation at the Year 8 'Meet the Form Teacher' evening and the Literacy and Numeracy @ HOME workshops. With such great parent / carer engagement support our Year 8s are off to a great start...



"Each Different. Each talented. All valued."





Prize Day 2025



FOCUS ON SUCCESS

Celebrating Success

Prize Day is always a highlight in the school calendar, as it provides an opportunity to celebrate academic success across KS3, KS4 and KS5. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors, Mr Crooks, made his first speech as Chairperson (although with 11 years of service on the board, he is no stranger to Prize Day celebrations). Mr Crooks welcomed Mrs Godfrey, the Permanent Secretary for the Department of the Environment, Agriculture and Regional Affairs (DEARA) as she congratulated our prize winners and shared insightful reflections. Head Girl, Ruby's speech was inspirational and provided a motivational message to all other students in attendance. The Deputy Heads Girls, Gracie, Madison and Anna assisted in the leadership of the event. Singing Club provided a beautiful musical accompaniment and we were treated with a early performance of 'Practically Perfect' from our upcoming production – Mary Poppins. The highlight of the celebration was the distribution of prizes and the recognition to each individual pupil for their commitment and dedication to their studies and subsequent achievement. Refreshments at the conclusion provided the perfect end to a heartwarming and inspirational Prize Day.



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Prize Day 2025



FOCUS ON SUCCESS



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YEAR 8 TRANSLINK ROAD SAFETY BUS

Translink Road Safety Bus Visit – A Valuable Experience for Pupils

On Monday 13th October, our school had the pleasure of hosting the Translink Road Safety Bus, which provided an engaging and educational experience for pupils. The bus offered 30-minute sessions focused on promoting safe travel habits and raising awareness about road safety. Staff and pupils alike found the sessions informative and thought-provoking. We look forward to welcoming similar initiatives in the future that support our commitment to pupil safety and wellbeing.



SONGWRITING WORKSHOP

This term the Music Department welcomed the wonderful Cally Rhodes into school, to give us her best tips and advice on songwriting skills. Cally is a singer/songwriter originally from Wales, but currently living in Northern Ireland. Her own original compositions have now been streamed over 150 million times online and she has had viral success in mainland China with two songs! Closer to home, her music has been played on BBC radio 1, BBC radio 2, BBC radio Wales, Kiss FM, Capitol radio and also used on Strictly Come Dancing, Love Island, Made in Chelsea and Love is Blind. Cally brought all her industry knowledge to the table when she talked to our pupils about how to approach the idea of songwriting and gave us some sneaky insights into her own methods. She then guided the pupils through the process of getting started with some lyrics and chords, so by the end of our sessions we were enjoying some live performances of new compositions by our own pupils! Cally was so encouraging and helpful to us and we really enjoyed our experience of being songwriters for the day!





ADA LOVELACE DAY 2025 - CELEBRATING WOMEN IN STEM

To celebrate Ada Lovelace Day this year, we hosted a mix of activities that aimed to spark curiosity, build confidence and celebrate student talent. The day began with a special video assembly created and delivered by our IT Prefects and senior IT students. Focusing on the benefits of a career in technology, the assembly encouraged pupils to imagine themselves as the next generation of innovators, leaders and problem-solvers in the tech industry.

Our Year 11 IT students also enjoyed a careers talk from Nikkala, a Senior Software Engineer at Kainos. She shared her personal journey into the world of software engineering, provided real insight into what a career in tech looks like, and highlighted the exciting opportunities available for women entering this field.

In the run-up to Ada Lovelace Day, the whole school took part in a series of fun and creative competitions. Students put their ICT knowledge to the test through a range of digital challenges, quizzes and design activities celebrating women in STEM. A special thank-you goes to our generous sponsors—Fujitsu, Kainos and Allstate—whose support helped us reward creativity and enthusiasm with fantastic prizes.

At junior lunch in the Atrium, our Ada Challenges proved incredibly popular. Pupils made colourful binary bracelets, tackled the Retro Tech Challenge quiz, and took part in the Inspirational Women quiz, with winners receiving well-deserved prizes. The Maths Department also joined the celebration by running an engaging Caesar Cipher code-breaking activity, giving students the chance to explore cryptography and problem-solving through a STEM lens.

Ada Lovelace Day 2025 was a wonderful celebration of creativity, curiosity and the achievements of women in technology. Thank you to all staff, students, and sponsors who helped make the day a success—we can't wait to build on this next year.





11SA2 TAKE PART IN AI, ONLINE SAFETY AND ROBOTICS WORKSHOPS

Our Year 11 class, 11SA2, recently had the exciting opportunity to participate in a brand-new outreach programme offered to post-primary schools across Belfast: Stay Safe Online, Explore Artificial Intelligence & Robotics for Fun. The three-part workshop series introduced pupils to some of the most important and fast-growing areas in the digital world—online safety, artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics. Through interactive sessions, the girls learned practical strategies for staying safe online and protecting their personal data. They also explored how AI models recognise images, faces and emotions using tools such as Google's Teachable Machine, giving them real insight into the technology behind everyday applications.

One of the highlights was the hands-on robotics activities, where students programmed small robots to complete a range of simple challenges. This not only strengthened their problem-solving and computational thinking skills but also gave them a sense of achievement as they watched their code come to life.

The programme aims to build essential digital skills and inspire students to explore future pathways in computing and technology—a perfect fit for our Information Technology curriculum.

To conclude the experience, pupils from 11SA2 will visit Ulster University's Belfast Campus, where they will attend talks on AI and Robotics, try out a variety of demonstrations including VR and Formula 1 simulators, and enjoy a guided tour of the university's cutting-edge Computing research facilities.

Overall, the workshops were a fantastic opportunity for 11SA2 to broaden their digital horizons and engage with real-world technology in a fun and meaningful way.



MEET OUR ICT PREFECTS

We are delighted to introduce this year's team of ICT Prefects, all of whom are dedicated post-16 IT students. Each Prefect brings enthusiasm, strong technical skills and a genuine passion for supporting the digital life of our school. Throughout the year, our ICT Prefects will play an important role in helping with department events, providing support during ICT activities, assisting younger pupils and promoting safe, confident use of technology across the school community. They have already shown excellent leadership and teamwork, and we are excited to see the creative ideas and initiatives they will bring to the department.

We look forward to working closely with them in the months ahead as they continue to grow their skills, act as positive role models, and inspire others to explore the opportunities that IT can offer.





Geography Trips



YEAR 12 RIVER STUDIES TRIP

Our GCSE Geography pupils braved the rain on their fieldwork trip to Crawfordsburn Country Park, where they collected data for their Unit 3 exam. Despite the wet weather, pupils showed great resilience and teamwork as they measured river velocity, depth, and width, and observed changes along the river's course. The trip provided valuable hands-on experience and helped develop their practical fieldwork and data analysis skills.



YEAR 10 GIANTS CAUSEWAY TRIP

Our Year 10 pupils enjoyed an engaging field trip to the Giant's Causeway, where they explored one of Northern Ireland's most iconic coastal landscapes. Pupils investigated how volcanic activity formed the basalt columns, identified examples of coastal erosion and deposition, and discussed how tourism is managed in this UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was a valuable opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world geography.



YEAR 9 NEWCASTLE TRIP

Year 9 pupils spent the day studying coastal environments at Murlough Nature Reserve and in nearby Newcastle. At Murlough, they explored sand dunes, investigated plant adaptations, and created imaginative beach art using natural materials found on the coastline. In Newcastle, they examined how human activity and coastal defences help shape and protect the town. The trip provided an excellent introduction to fieldwork skills in a beautiful local setting.





For it is better to give...



CHARITY EVENTS

The 2025–26 charity and fundraising calendar got off to a heart-warming start this year with a special assembly led by Rebecca from the Cancer Fund for Children. We were thrilled to hand over an incredible £1,860.06, raised through last term's Junior School ReadOn campaign. This amazing charity has been close to our school's heart for over 15 years, and together we've now raised more than £40,000 to help local children and families affected by cancer.

Not to be outdone, our staff put their baking (and eating!) skills to good use at the Macmillan Coffee Morning on Wednesday 24th September. The staff room was filled with delicious buns, cakes, and plenty of chatter — all in support of a wonderful cause. A fantastic £131.71 was raised during breaktime alone!

Meanwhile, our Sixth Form Charity Committee proudly received their badges in assembly and wasted no time getting started. They launched this year's Foodbank Appeal, encouraging friendly competition with House Points for every donation. Thanks to our generous school community, we collected an astonishing 387.7 kilos of food — that's 912 items! Just a day before our delivery, 22 families had turned to the foodbank for help, so our contribution couldn't have come at a better time.

	Top Fundraisers	Form Teacher	No. of items
1	8S	Mrs Sharpe & Mrs Stewart	159 items
2	11H	Miss Sampson-Barnes	95 items
3	11T	Mrs Walker	88 items



FOCUS ON COMMUNITY



6th form events



6TH FORM WELLBEING MORNING

On Friday 10 October, we marked World Mental Health Day in school. Every student in the school received a small gift and a positive affirmation message, thoughtfully prepared by the Sixth Form Wellbeing Team to promote kindness and self-care.

Staff were also treated to a delicious break-time snack as a gesture of appreciation for their continued dedication and support for all students.

Years 13 and 14 were invited to a special 'Tea and Talk' event during break time where they had the opportunity to relax, chat and enjoy a tasty treat prepared and served by the Sixth Form Wellbeing Team.



ANNUAL YEAR 13 UU OPEN DAY TRIP – FRIDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

We were delighted to take all Year 13 pupils to the Ulster University Open Day on Friday 5th September. This full-day event provided students with a valuable opportunity to explore university life, engage with academic staff, and gain insights into a wide range of courses and career pathways. It was a fantastic chance for pupils to begin thinking about their future and make informed decisions about their next steps after school.

YEAR 14 LECTURE SERIES AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Our Year 14 Geography pupils attended an engaging lecture at Queen's University Belfast focused on Ethnic Conflict. The talks provided valuable insights into global case studies, including the causes, impacts, and resolution of ethnic tensions around the world. Pupils also gained a taste of university-level study and were inspired by hearing from leading academics in the field of human geography.





IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Safeguarding Team

If you are unhappy or if you know someone who needs help you should report to
Designated Teacher for Child Protection



Mrs C Hoey

Deputy Designated Teachers



Mr G Patterson



Mrs P Doak



Mrs N Christie



Mrs L Hanvey
Principal



Mrs E Bush
Designated Child
Protection Governor

POLICY UPDATES

Policies re-ratified by the Board of Governors in September:

- Literacy Policy
- Numeracy Policy
- Access Arrangements Policy
- External Examinations Policy
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy

STUDENT COUNCIL

Our Student Council got off to a fantastic start this year with excellent attendance at the first meeting – every form class was represented! Students engaged enthusiastically, sharing issues that matter most to them.

To make progress efficiently, we have created two dedicated working parties:

- **School Uniform Working Party** – In light of the new School Uniform Bill in Northern Ireland, this group has already gathered initial thoughts and will soon seek input from the whole school before consulting other stakeholders.
- **School Canteen Working Party** – This team aims to gather student voice and feedback to share with the canteen, ensuring improvements reflect what matters to our students.

Both groups have shown great ideas, a positive attitude, and a mature approach to problem-solving. We look forward to hearing their updates at the next Student Council meeting.



Our policies can be found on the school website and are regularly updated in line with new legislation, guidance and good practice.



Challenging girls today; creating women of value in the future.