

AQUINAS DIOCESAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL



ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2008 - 2009

Board of Governors of Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School

Name	Category
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Art & Design

Exhibitions

GCSE and A2-level students exhibited in May, 2009; this was closely followed by our AS-Level exhibition in June, 2009. We enjoyed excellent results at all three levels this included 100% A* to B at GCSE Level, 100% A at AS-Level and 100% A to B at A2-Level. We were pleased to welcome staff, friends and family to view the evening exhibitions and were delighted when the work of one GCSE candidate and two AS candidates was selected for possible inclusion in the 2009 CCEA 'True Colours'. The work of Aoife Rose O'Reilly (AS) was selected for the final display in the exhibition later this year. Roisin Tinneny's work (GCSE) was selected as an outstanding example of coursework and was presented at the GCSE Level Agreement Trial; Caroline McElroy's work (AS) was selected as another outstanding example of a core portfolio. It too was presented at the AS-Level agreement trial.

In February, 2009, all GCSE, AS & A2 Art & Design students visited the CCEA 'True Colours' exhibition. This exhibition profiles the best and most interesting work from GCSE, AS& A2 Levels in Art & Design across Northern Ireland. Megan Quigley (A2) and Suzannah Wilson (GCSE) both had work displayed as part of the exhibition.

In October, 2008, all year 11, 12, 13, 14 students attended the 127th RUA exhibition which was held at the Titanic Drawing Offices, Belfast; all students enjoyed the work on show.

Competitions

A total of five A-Level students studying Art & Design were selected to take part in the 'Innovation Fashionation' project that was held in conjunction with CYP, University of Ulster, Interface and the Helen Storey Foundation. The students involved included Maeve Magennis and Grainnie McGrath (A2) and Jenny Gallagher, Suzannah Wilson and Dierdre Canavan (AS). These pupils designed and produced innovative fashion garments in response to a set theme 'A Metaphor For the Disappearing World'. All garments were produced from recycled materials and later appeared on the cat-walk as part of the student show at Belfast Fashion Week in March, 2009, in the Grand Opera House.

Emma McCaugherty (A2) and Katie McCullough (A2) were Special Merit Prize winners in the 55th Texaco Children's Art Competition and were invited to Dublin Castle for the award ceremony and opening of the exhibition with their families. Their work is part of a touring exhibition that will tour Ireland for the next twelve months.

Emma Martin (Year 10) was 'Highly Commended' in the Translink Ulster in Bloom Art competition in April, 2009; this winning poster design was displayed in Central Station, Belfast and was admired by many visitors and commuters to Belfast.

The Belfast public libraries launched the Cultural Olympiad for the 2012 Olympic Games in London with a poster design competition 'What the Olympics Means to Me' this was open to all schools in the BELB area and Joni Gallagher (year 10) was awarded first prize in the secondary school category. She was awarded a gold medal in March, 2009, at Belfast Central Library.

Researcher in Residence Programme

The department hosted a PHD Research-in-Residence student, Emma McFerran, for a ten week period; Mrs McFerran is a practising artist who specialises in Lens Based Media at the University of Ulster. During her time in the department she worked with examination level pupils and worked on a photography project with a GCSE class; this project involved creative photography skills, editing of imagery using ICT software and the final display of work in the school mall which was professionally printed. Mrs McFerran also took part in mock interview sessions with A-Level pupils and gave portfolio advice to those students preparing for Art College interviews.

We also welcomed Fashion and Textile Artist Emma McClintock, from Interface at the University of Ulster. Ms McClintock worked with a number of Year Groups from years 10 -14 on various areas of Textiles and Fashion Design. Our students gained valuable experience through workshops in creative embroidery and felt-making.

Out and about

Year 14 students teamed up with Art students from Wellington College, Belfast to take part in an information and portfolio clinic with lecturers from the Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art & Design at the University of Ulster. All students gained constructive feedback and practical hints and tips on producing a portfolio for Art College interviews.

The year 13 & 14 students involved in the 'Innovaton Fashionation' fashion project were invited to the launch of Creative Youth Partnerships booklet 'Inspiring Creativity' at Stormont Buildings in March, 2009; in attendance was the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Mr Edwin Poots and representatives from ELB across Northern Ireland. At this launch the pupils showcased their fashion garments and talked openly about the project in which they were involved. These garments were also displayed at W5, Odyssey Arena, Belfast as part of the Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) Annual Conference, 2009.

A selection of year 8 pupils had their Hundertwasser inspired self-portrait selected for display in the Education Resource Centre at Ulidia.

Professional Development

Mr N. McClean attended the GCSE Agreement Trial for Art and Design in October; he also attended the Agreement Trial for A2-Level Art and Design in November. As part of his continued professional development, Mr N. McClean attended life-drawing courses at the University of Ulster with artist, Sharon Kelly; he also attended workshops for 'Textiles in Schools' at the University of Ulster with Textile lecturers Hazel Bruce and Helen O'Hare in March, 2009. Mr N. McClean continues to participate in Cluster Meetings in conjunction with the Art and Design Advisor at BELB, working with other teachers of Art and Design across Belfast.

Ms M Davison attended the AS-Level Art and Design (New Specification) Agreement Trial in November.

The department continues to offer after-school tuition and support for examination level pupils on a weekly basis. We are delighted that Art and Design remains a popular and successful choice in Aquinas and that many of our students pursue Art and Design-related courses in Further and Higher Education.

Business Studies

Throughout the academic year 2008-2009 Business Studies students enjoyed a variety of guest speakers and practical activities as part of their studies. All Year 12, 13 and 14 Business Studies students are to be commended for their excellent achievements. Congratulations go especially to Lucie McLaughlin who achieved first place in Northern Ireland at GCSE level.

All advanced level Business Studies students travelled to Disneyland Resort, Paris, in February on an educational visit. This was an extremely valuable and fun-filled trip in support of their studies and they found it beneficial to see subject theory in action in a real business.

Eight 'A2' students participated in the IFS ProShare Student Investor Challenge which involved investing a virtual £100,000 in a set of stocks. Students were encouraged to make good investment decisions. All stock market data was genuine live data. The students developed important skills, such as working as a team, planning, budgeting and taking responsibility.

A group of eighteen Year 13 students participated in the Young Enterprise Company Programme, a programme which aims to inspire young people to develop attitudes and skills for personal success, life-long learning and employability. Students gain practical experience of business and enterprise through setting up and running their own real company. The students were extremely successful,

winning the 'Best Customer Service' award *and* the Michelin award for 'Most Environmentally Friendly Product' at the Ballymena Trade Fair. They achieved 'Best Company' in the Belfast & Castlereagh Area and secured a place in the NI Final which took place in the Culloden Hotel in May. Laura Cahill also won the 'Best Company Secretary' award in her region, going through to the NI Final and came second in the NI competition. Our thanks go to our superb business advisors. Congratulations go especially to Christina McCloskey who achieved first place in Northern Ireland in the OCR Level 2 Certificate in Enterprise examination in conjunction with this programme. Overall the students achieved thirteen distinctions, four credits and one pass in this examination.

As part of National Enterprise Week, AS level students participated in the Young Enterprise Entrepreneurship Masterclass which was held in the Holiday Inn, Belfast. This included a 'Business Plan' competition which was extremely good fun. These experiences proved to be both fruitful and enjoyable. Also, in conjunction with Hunterhouse Grammar School, four AS level students attended the ISBC Small Business Conference in the Europa Hotel, Belfast. This was a unique opportunity for the students, allowing them to meet many small business owners.

Year 12 GCSE Business Studies pupils enjoyed a field trip to Tayto Castle which provided much relevant information regarding their coursework. They observed the production process and got great pleasure from tasting various types and flavours of Tayto crisps and corn snacks.

Year 11 GCSE Business Studies students participated in a number of programmes including a 'Success Skills' seminar and the 'Moneysense' programme which were delivered in conjunction with Young Enterprise NI and Ulster Bank. These were extremely enjoyable group based activities which developed many employability skills.

Year 10 pupils again experienced a 'taster' Business Studies course. They participated in the 'Young Enterprise Project Business' programme. This encourages links with local industry and pupils became involved in a wide range of topics and activities. It is hoped that these links with local industry will continue in future years.

Careers

The Careers Department has excellent accommodation in the form of an office and spacious resource area for class work and research. We have access to the internet which is vital for relevant careers information, university application systems and choice of courses.

Learning for Life and Work is well established and includes an eight week module entitled Employability for all Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 students. Employability is an integral part of GCSE Learning for Life and Work and of the minimum entitlement for all Year 11 students.

Year 10 students received a training day leading up to their choices for GCSE in March. The day was entitled *Options for the Future*. Class tutors, Year Head and Careers teachers delivered the day. This training helped the students to reflect on where they are now in relation to their studies and encouraged them to think about the choices they will need to make for their future.

A training day was held for all Year 12 students entitled *Key Decisions Day*. The day was delivered by the tutors, Year Head and Careers teachers. Students were introduced to the UCAS website, various careers software packages and taught how to market themselves to potential employers and universities in the future.

Heads of Department contributed to an Options Booklet. This contained relevant information about all GCSE specifications and the format under which options would be organised. Coursework

implications and requirements were outlined. A joint Options Evening for GCSE and GCE was held in March when parents and pupils were able to seek clarification on matters of concern.

An Advanced Level Booklet was produced with contributions from Heads of Department. This outlined comprehensively the nature and content of Advanced Level Specifications. All students made provisional choices in April.

Each Lower Sixth student participated in a one-week work experience placement from 23 to 27 February. The rationale behind the programme is to help students see what a chosen career could offer, to gain self awareness, confidence and the sense of responsibility needed in work and to provide greater incentive and motivation to work in school. The experience was preceded by classes which prepared students for the experience. The work experience programme was very successful and helped students in developing their personal career plan (PCP). Year 13 students also attended a UCAS conference at the King's Hall, Belfast in February to prepare them for imminent university applications.

The bulk of work with Yr14 students comprised the arranging of applications through UCAS (University and Colleges Admission Service), CAO, (Central Applications Office) and admissions to Further Education and Higher Education colleges. The enormous administrative task was accomplished successfully by a team effort from careers staff, tutors, senior management and the office staff. All UCAS and CAO applications were completed on-line and on time.

Individual guidance was on offer for all who made requests. Mock interviews were held for a number of students who were applying for courses which had an interview element for admittance.

We also had successful trips for all Upper Sixth students to the open days at Queens University and the University of Ulster. The careers department was on hand to deal with individuals when results were published in August and important decisions had to be made.

Drama

During the year the department hosted several of our feeder primary schools and provided them with an insight into the type of interactive Drama they might experience as future pupils of Aquinas. The session was confidently lead by three Year 8 pupils who put on a scene from 'Macbeth'. Four Year 11 pupils also staged a scripted performance as part of the Open Morning in January 2009. Parents were suitably impressed by the enthusiasm, imagination and talent of our pupils who introduced themselves, explained their focus and then took full responsibility for the performances.

We are continuing to expand the number of pupils who are being trained in the use of the computerised lighting and sound equipment in the assembly hall. This training is being delivered by two of our current year 14 pupils. The new trainees were given opportunities to demonstrate their skills as part of the Carol Service, the Shakespeare Festival and the Spring Concert.

Preparations continued during the year to revise schemes of work based upon the new A2 Theatre Studies specification. Support meetings were attended throughout the year. Similar preparations began for the new GCSE specification which will be taught from September 2009. The summer 2009 examination results at both GCSE and A level were very pleasing.

The decision was taken to stage 'Calamity Jane' as our next musical production. Auditions were held in March/April 2009 and the number of pupils who signed up for the show was staggering. We were extremely pleased with the outcome of the auditions and are confident that the production will showcase the outstanding talent of our pupils. The show will be staged on Tuesday 13 October 2009 (Matinee Performance) followed by three evening performances running from Wednesday 14 October to Friday 16 October 2009.

English

The English Department's results continue to reflect the excellent standards of learning and teaching across all exam year groups and in both subjects: English and English Literature. One of our GCSE students achieved 2nd place in Northern Ireland in GCSE English; another student achieved 2nd place in Northern Ireland in A2 English Literature.

At the end of Key Stage 3, 71% of year 10 pupils were teacher assessed as having attained levels 7 and above in English. At GSCE, 97.75% of all of year 12 students achieved Grades A* - C in English; 95% achieved grades A* - C in English Literature. The subject continues to attract a big number of sixth form students for AS and A2 and this year, the department secured 100% grades A-C at both levels - 88% Grades A/B at A2; 95% Grades A/B with the new AS specification.

The English Department's calendar for the year was varied and abundant with key annual events: National Poetry Day, in October, was celebrated by staff and pupils with poetry readings across the school, including one from an outside poet. This was the second year of the English Department - run -poetry competition on the theme of Work. The Shakespeare Festival created the usual buzz and variety of rousing performances among the Year 8 and 9 classes in December. In January, The English Department was pivotal in the school's commemoration of Holocaust Day; contributing to assemblies, organising readings of related literature, and securing a visit to the school from a Holocaust survivor who carried out a series of workshops with pupils of all year groups. World Book Day in March saw the English Department promote the value of reading by co-ordinating class visits to the annual Book Fair, organised by the librarian. To bolster departmental resources another second hand book fair was arranged by the department in June.

This year Aquinas, led by the English and Careers Departments entered the prestigious Bar Mock Trial Competition for the first time; a team of Year 13 students assumed the roles of barristers, witnesses, usher, clerk and reporter. With a lot of assistance from professional barristers the team went on to win not only the Northern Ireland regional final in November, but to win its league in the UK final in The Old Bailey, in March.

The pupils had opportunities to extend their writing experiences beyond the classroom through a range of external competitions; most notably was the success of two of our Year 11 pupils who came first, second - with another being highly commended - in World Concern's persuasive writing competition. The winners will enjoy an award ceremony in October in Dublin. The sixth form celebrated their life in Aquinas in the Year Book with the help of a vigorous editing team headed by the English Department.

Theatre visits linked to set texts, visiting speakers and Lecture Days at UJJ, enhanced the literary experiences of students at A-Level. A touring theatre company put on a performance and workshop of 'Of Mice and Men' for GCSE students, and the year 10 pupils availed of the expertise of a professional animator for their work on the cross-curricular animation projects.

The Department continues to forge links with our partner secondary/grammar schools, sharing ideas and resources, and always extending to our partners an invitation to our events. This year we hope to strengthen reading in our feeder primaries via the school's Community Link Programme, and assist our own Year 8 pupils through the school mentoring system.

Geography

The Aquinas Geography Department had another successful year in giving pupils a good breadth of experience both within the classroom and outside. Pupils received quality teaching and learning of geographical content whilst at the same time acquiring the personal skills and capabilities and core skills as outlined in the N. Ireland Curriculum.

A Level

The Year 13s embarked on the new Revised AS/A2 Geography Specification by CCEA. The two papers have similar content to the legacy exam of three papers although some new content required further teacher research and prior preparation. However we were able to continue with the Belvoir Park field study as preparation for the new AS1 paper and this seems to work well.

The Year 14 students, the last year of the legacy paper, also embarked on 'out-of-classroom learning' by attending the Housing Executive's tour of the Belfast Peacelines and visiting Murlough Nature Reserve. Both visits add a lot to pupil understanding of the course.

Both year groups attended the Geography Association's evening lectures at QUB to enhance their knowledge and understanding of certain aspects of the course.

GCSE

The Year 11s are the last pupils embarking on the current GCSE course. The Year 12s completed excellent projects based on their visit to the River Shimna. CCEA commented very favourably on the standard of work we submitted and the quality of the marking and internal standardisation.

Curriculum and Schemes of Work at KS 3

The topics at Key Stage 3 are relevant and thought provoking. More emphasis is now on experiential learning. For example:

Year 8s conduct the investigation around the school grounds. This is a good Using Mathematics activity because it involves measurement, perimeter and area

Year 9s had a good range of learning experiences including the use of LNI to collaborate with other Year 9 Geographers in OLSPCK, this culminated with a video conference lesson between the two classes. The Year group also embarked on a fieldwork opportunity to the Glens of Antrim. The pupils really enjoyed this experience.

Year 10s continued making models displaying selected hazards, such as earthquakes and volcanoes, tornadoes or tsunamis. Each group has to present to their colleagues details of their model. Pupils enjoy this activity.

At the end of the year, we conducted an on-line evaluation of the pupils in Key Stage 3 about their Geography learning experience in general. The feedback was very illuminating and was disseminated to colleagues. One outcome from the evaluation was to invest in new text books for Key Stage 3, the Geography Pathways series, which is a local textbook.

Government & Politics

This has been another successful academic year for the two Government & Politics classes. A high standard of student enthusiasm and learning has been maintained.

The two main highlights of the academic year were:

1. Our annual trip to Parliament Buildings at Stormont.
We organised a question and answer session for all Politics students, with MLAs from Alliance, Sinn Fein, DUP, UUP, SDLP and the Green Party. The students posed an array of questions to the political representatives and gained a lot from the experience. The students were also given a tour of Stormont and an educational talk on the mechanics and politics of the Northern Ireland Executive & Assembly.
2. An educational tour of Washington DC & New York at the end of March 2009.

This was the second such visit in three years. The students had the opportunity to visit the US government institutions and actually witness the House of Representatives & the US Senate in session. The tour was very much enhanced by our visit to Massachusetts Congressman, Richard Neal's office where he gave us all a terrific lesson in US politics!

In New York we toured the United Nations' Building and the NY City Hall. On the whole, this was another very successful Aquinas educational visit to the USA.

In the classroom, a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies have been employed to ensure that political information is accessible and enjoyable for a broad range of academic abilities. The use of video & audio podcasts are examples of this type of approach.

Exam results achieved are as follows:

At A-level we scored 100% A-B (NI Grammar School average of 71.2%)

This breaks down into 50% A grade (NI Grammar average of 25.8%)

At AS we also achieved 92% A-C (NI Grammar school average of 83.8%)

Again, Aquinas has achieved a higher average than the NI Grammar School average for this subject at AS & A-level.

History

Throughout the academic year 2008-2009, History students enjoyed a range of activities inside and outside of class as part of their studies.

The examination results at GCSE, AS and A2 were superb and all Year 12, 13 and 14 History students are to be praised for their hard work. At GCSE, AS and A2 level, all pupils gained grades above the N.I Grammar school averages. At GCSE level 100% gained grades A*-C, with 76.9% gaining A or above. At AS level 97% gained grades A-C and at A2 level 93.3% gained grades A-C. All advanced level History students attended AS and A2 level History conferences at the Somme Heritage Centre in Newtownards, Co. Down in November 2008. These were addressed by guest speakers, including Russell Rees, the author of the two main texts at 'A' Level. The conferences as always were very relevant and beneficial.

Our Year 12 pupils took part in the Lessons from the Holocaust Project organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust in London. They produced a fabulous PowerPoint presentation which they delivered to the Junior School Assembly to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. These were followed by a minute's silence. The pupils worked extremely hard and were excellent role models for our younger pupils. The music and poetry that they selected so carefully were extremely moving. This is something we want to build on next year.

All in all, 2008-2009 was a busy and productive year for the History Department.

Home Economics

In January, 106 Year 10 pupils passed the Royal Society of Health Food Hygiene exam. 8 pupils were awarded 100%. Year 13 students went to St George's Market locally at local produce and the changes in consumer buying behaviour. The department was involved in research conducted by the DELNI into 'Attitudes towards Careers in the Food and Drinks Industry'. Visits were made by the professional Home Economist of the Dairy Council, Sea Fish and Livestock and Meat Commission to give cookery demonstrations to GCSE students. Mary McKeown from the Trading Standards Department in Belfast City Council visited A Level students. 40 GCSE students took part in the 'Feed your Mind' course in Loughry College in June. The Home Economics Culinary Cup was

presented to Caoimhe Quinn for excellence in GCSE practical skills. The Junior School Cup was presented to Christine Hagan.

Information and Communication Technology

The ICT department consists of two teachers and delivers AS and A Level ICT, GCSE ICT and Junior ICT.

All pupils in Year 8 received 2 periods of ICT per week, these classes were used to facilitate the acquisitions of skills in the use of word-processing, PowerPoint, desk-top publishing, video editing and the use of the Internet. The department was also involved in the Year 10 Environment Matters Animation project.

The A Level results for June 2009 were very pleasing. 16 pupils sat the exams and 100% gained grades A-E, with 50% gaining the top A grade and 93.75% gaining grades A - C. Congratulations go to Michael Coffey who achieved second place in A Level ICT in N.Ireland.

In June 2009, 14 pupils completed their AS ICT examinations. The results were excellent with 64% gaining a grade A, 15% grade B and 21% grade C.

Fourteen pupils have opted to continue with ICT at A2 Level, they will sit their A2 modules in June 2010 to receive their overall A Level grade.

Our fourth cohort of GCSE ICT students sat their exams in June 2009. The results were extremely rewarding with 46.5% of the candidates receiving an A* and 53.5% an A grade. These results put us above the NI average for grammar schools at GCSE, AS and A2 level.

Seventeen Year 13 pupils have decided to study AS ICT and will sit their modules in June 2010. Thirty six Year 11 pupils have opted to study GCSE ICT.

In May 2009 GCSE ICT pupils visited Citigroup at the Northern Ireland Science Park, Titanic Quarter, Belfast to see firsthand how ICT has an impact on society and business in N. Ireland.

Mrs O'Hare also spent two days in June shadowing Mr John Healy of Citigroup where she gained valuable insight into how ICT is used in the business and financial world.

Languages

French

As part of celebrations for European Day of Languages in September Year 9 pupils watched a special showing of 'Les Choristes'. This was a very positive experience in terms of linguistic development and cultural enrichment. A' Level French students also visited several local primary schools scheme to teach basic French. It is hoped that this experience could be repeated as it was a beneficial learning experience for both sets of pupils and an excellent first experience of foreign languages in the primary school curriculum.

Sixth Year students of French reached the semi-finals of the Northern Ireland Alliance Française French Debating competition organised by Nicilt at Queen's University. Throughout the academic year they prepared and competed in debates on topical themes in French. They were successful against Wallace School, Lisburn in the quarter finals and were beaten by Friends School Lisburn in the semi-final. Two Aquinas pupils also won individual awards for Best Speaker. The French assistant Mme. Nathalie Wilson helped Mrs Lambon and the pupils prepare for the debates. The Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School

experience was extremely beneficial and successful for all concerned, with a particular emphasis on refining oral proficiency and coherent argument at a high level.

The French department was awarded significant funding from the Lefèvre Trust at the British Council for a joint project with our partner school in Lille. A comprehensive proposal was submitted in February and following our successful application funding was released in April. The project will look at the industrial heritage of the Belfast and Nord-Pas-de-Calais regions, with a particular emphasis on shipbuilding and the linen industry in Belfast and the linen industry and mining heritage of the Lille area. Pupils will look at and contrast the regeneration of the latter areas and produce their findings in both French and English. The initial pre-visit activities took place towards the end of the school year with exchanges of information via e-mail and the creation of a website link to project activities. In March 2009 the French department hosted a group of students and teachers from the Lycée Marguerite de Flandres in Gondrecourt near Lille in France for a one day visit in preparation for the Lefèvre exchange visit planned for 2009- 2010. Aquinas pupils met their 'correspondants' and showed them around the school. The French students will arrive in September 2009 and Aquinas students will visit Lille in March 2010. We look forward to the collaborative approach of the project. We anticipate our pupils will benefit greatly from the purpose and focus of a project-based exchange.

The department was delighted with the results in external examinations which were consistently well above N.I. grammar school averages. It was also particularly commendable that some A2 level students gained full marks in the oral section of the A2 examination. Mrs Lambon attended two CEA training days for the new specifications at GCSE and A'level.

The French department is delighted to have retained Mme. Nathalie Wilson as French assistant. Her contribution to all areas of the department is much appreciated.

German

The German department was, yet again, delighted with the excellent results achieved in the public examinations by students in the department: For the second year running our students, appeared in CCEA's list of top students in Northern Ireland. Ben Lambon was the top candidate in Northern Ireland and Cassie Moane was 2nd. These students are to be congratulated on their outstanding performances. At GCSE the results mirrored the excellent work of the department: 100% of entries were grades A* -C of which 64.3% were A* or A It is especially gratifying to see that in 2009-10 five students have opted to study German in Year 13. As a result, we have at the moment a total of 8 students studying German for A-Level. The AS results were also excellent: 75% of students achieved grade A and 25% grade B. We had no students in Year 14 last year.

We maintained our link with our partner school in Dinslaken in Germany, by sending a student, Jennifer Clarke, to do work experience on a local newspaper. In fact, she even had an article in German published in the paper. We hope to send 6 students on work experience next year. This is an invaluable opportunity not only for our students to improve their understanding of the language but also to experience the world of work in another European country.

Martin McBride, an excellent German speaker, won a scholarship funded by the UK-German Connection, which allowed him to spend a month in Germany on a cultural and linguistic programme. He visited several major cities, including Berlin, Munich and Cologne and returned to school with a greatly increased knowledge of German language and cultural heritage. He was an outstanding ambassador for the school.

We were very fortunate to have an excellent assistant, Veronika Dietzel. Her contribution to learning and teaching in the department was invaluable.

In September, as part of our school celebrations for the European Day of Languages our students visited 2 local primary schools to give some pupils a taste of German. The feedback we received was very encouraging.

Unfortunately German is no longer offered to our incoming Year 8 students. Those presently studying German in Years 11-12 will be able to continue their studies. In future German will be

available in Year 11 for GCSE to those students who have demonstrated linguistic ability and the necessary study skills.

Irish

The Irish Department comprises two specialist teachers: Mrs Teresa Maguire and An tUasal Ciarán Mac Murchaidh and we are very fortunate to also have two language assistants Mr Dominic Garland and Miss Nathalie Simpson. The team were very pleased with the fantastic results achieved by our students in public exams. We had 100% pass A – C at GCSE, AS and A2 levels. Three pupils, Fionn Price, Illianna Edwards and Claire Mc Areavey, in Keystage 3 also all passed GCSE Irish. Year 10 pupils were also awarded silver Fainnes to mark their pleasing levels of fluency at the end of Keystage 3. Aquinas scholarships were also won by the following pupils in the Junior School, Máire Hanrahan (Year 8), Conall Gormley and Anna Browne (Year 9) and Ruairí Cumiskey and Barrie Lynch (Year 10).

As part of the celebrations for European Day of Languages in September Year 8 pupils watched a special showing of 'Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom'. Some of our Year 13 students went out to teach Irish in local primary schools and a group of pupils from Bunscoil an Droichid, accompanied by their teachers, spent a morning with us in Aquinas. They took part in a quiz with our Year 12 pupils. It was an enjoyable experience and our pupils appreciated the opportunity to practise their language skills.

Our links with Bunscoil an Droichid continued throughout the year with Sian Deighan and Michael Johnston attending the school on a weekly basis to help the children as part of the *Community Link* Programme. Some of the Form 6 pupils also attended an intensive language course there.

Mrs Maguire took a group of students to Féis Bhéal Feirste competitions in St. Patrick's College. Donal Tinenny in the Junior school won a scholarship. Maeve Colton and Lucy Doran also won scholarships at the Féis.

The Irish Department again provided a wide range of cultural activities and experiences for all students. The St. Patrick's Week/Seachtain na Gaeilge celebrations were enjoyed by our pupils. A céilí and concert were organised for all our Year 8 students. Particular thanks to those Year 14 students who helped with this event. Also that week there were traditional music and scéalaíocht (story telling) sessions in the Library at lunchtime.

A number of our A-level and GCSE students attended intensive revision courses in Coláiste Mhuire, Loch an Iúir at Easter and a number of our junior pupils attended the special course for juniors in Coláiste Bhríde, Rann na Feirste in the Donegal Gaeltacht.

Mrs. Maguire and an tUasal Mac Murchaidh attended all relevant courses provided for Irish teachers.

Rath Dé ar an obair

Spanish

In 2008 Aquinas was officially awarded the title of: '**UK Spanish School of the Year**' by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias de España en Londres. The Spanish Department is made up of 4 specialist teachers: Mr Peter Dobbin, Mrs Geraldine Gibson, Ms Seana Maguire and Mrs Marie Louise McKendry. The Spanish Assistant is Ms Paloma Rivas. We also avail of the expertise of our Mexican Learning and Teaching Assistant, Mrs Laura Menendez-Cupples.

September 2008 commenced with 8 Year 14 students entering A2 level Spanish and 18 beginning AS level. It was decided to continue with the CCEA syllabus at A'Level

The main focus of the Department was the implementation of the N. Ireland Curriculum into Year 9.

During the year various events took place:

- September 2008: As part of the European Day of Languages the Spanish Film 'El laberinto del Fauna' was shown to the Year 10 students.
- The Spanish Department in Aquinas presented to leading educationalists on the promotion of Spanish at the 'Positively Spanish' Conference in Belfast, in the Wellington Park Hotel.
- October 2008: 26 A'level students travelled to Barcelona for a week long exchange to our Partner School IES Vall del Tenes. This was a very successful visit to Barcelona with the return trip planned for March 2009.
- November 2008: A'level Spanish students were accompanied by students from other subject areas: Politics and Geography to Belfast Academical Institution for a talk by the Colombian Vice President on the damage to the environment by the growth of cocaine and other drugs.
- December 2008: Peter Norris, in Year 12, came 5th overall in the United Kingdom in the Ruta Quetzal Competition as organised by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias in London.
- February 2009: Onatti Theatre Company staged a play in Spanish for our KS3 students
- March 2007: Our Partner Spanish School, IES Val del Tenes arrived for a week long exchange with Aquinas students. This was a very successful and rewarding week for all involved.
- Annual Semana Santa Competition for KS3, this year the students had to work in groups to devise a Powerpoint Presentation on a Hispanic theme. The participation from all students was excellent and the department was delighted to have as its judge, Mr Pat Doris (CCEA Chief Examiner at A'Level) and Mrs Geraldine Gibson (Vice Principal)
- Mr Peter Dobbin presented at the Annual promotion of Spanish conference in London organised by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias.

Students from A'Level worked with the Community Link Programme and delivered a short Spanish Course to Primary School students in St. Michaels. All in all, a very successful and productive year was had and we hope to continue this in 2009/10

Mathematics

In the academic year 2008 – 2009 the Mathematics Department continued to work as a very strong team to provide the best possible experience for all their students. This year our team was complemented by the addition of a new member of Staff, Miss Lisa Connolly, as well as a student teacher and a student observing classes. All of these have contributed to keeping the department outlook fresh and therefore open to change and development, and our students have benefited from the variety of teaching styles they have experienced.

In line with this outward looking approach, the Mathematics Department liaised with the inspectorate in early December, participating in a 'Maths in Transition' survey. This was a very rewarding experience, involving classroom observation of Year 8 classes, a meeting with some Year 8 pupils and discussions between visiting inspectors, Senior Management, SENCO, the Head of Maths and the Using Mathematics Coordinator. Although the aim of the survey was to inform the inspectorate regarding how the needs of pupils are met in the Primary to Secondary transition, the Mathematics Department saw it as a two-way process. Feedback from the inspectors after the session was very positive and provided a catalyst for worthwhile departmental discussion and planning at a later date.

As the year progressed the Mathematics Department contributed to the school application for Specialist School status, under the umbrella of Improving Standards in Maths and also STEM. Although the school was unsuccessful in the application this was still a valuable exercise, raising awareness of standards and target setting.

The N. Ireland Curriculum continues to be a major focus and the Mathematics department provides a very rich learning experience while effectively delivering content which prepares pupils well for starting the GCSE mathematics course. This was reflected in the quality and success of the Year 10 Using Mathematics task developed and piloted this year. In order to maintain this standard, staff continue to participate in a variety of courses which provide the opportunity for professional discussion and development and directly or indirectly enhance classroom teaching as well as the learning experience of the pupil.

Departmental results overall continue to be of a high standard, reflecting the dedication of staff and students and we were delighted to once again have a 100% pass rate at GCSE as well as excellent results at all other levels. The GCSE modular Mathematics provides flexibility for our students and this year a Year 9 pupil sat the same module as our year 11 pupils, achieving the top score for this module in Aquinas.

We were delighted this year when one of our Year 12 students applied for and was accepted to participate in a week long residential Mathematics Summer School run by Queen's University. The experience was very worthwhile and has fuelled the student's interest in and enthusiasm for this subject.

Music

September:

Aquinas Ensembles resumed. They took place in the Music Department or Hall at lunchtime each day, they are as follows:

Monday: School Choir, Tuesday: Chamber Choir, Wednesday: Madrigal Choir and String Quartet, Thursday: Orchestra and Friday: Folk Group and Traditional Group.

October

8th: Aquinas received its first **ICT Mark**. Students Eugene McQuaid, Ciara Power and Anthony Bergin presented their compositional work produced using **Cubase 4** and **Garageband**.

Week beginning 13th: Year 11 GCSE music students completed, **performed** and recorded their first group **composition** task.

Week beginning 20th October: Year 11 **evaluated** their first Composition task, Year 10 **performed** their Blues Compositions and Year 9 performed their Halloween Compositions

November:

Week beginning 3rd: Year 9 and 10 pupils submitted Composition **Evaluations** in an **ICT** produced **format** with clip art.

External exams, including **ABRSM** [on the 10th] and Rockschoool took place.

ABRSM Candidates were: Aine Curley [gd1 Piano], Hannah Smyth [gd2 piano], Rachael McVeigh [gd2 violin], Caoimhe McCarthy [voice gd3], Aidan O'Kelly and Arun Murtagh [gd4 violin], Peter Houston [gd5 trpt] and Susannah Wilson [gd6 violin].

24th: **results** came in. All passed, including 1 Distinction [Aine] and 2 Merits [Hannah and Caoimhe].
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December:

10th: CBSM Carol Service at the Waterfront Hall involving many Aquinas students

Shakespeare Festival for year 8 and 9 pupils on the 12th. Prize awarded for the 'Most Original Use of Music'.

Year 11 music students recorded their **Solo Performances** which go forward as GCSE coursework on the 12th and 17th.

Year 11 music students submitted their first individual compositions based on 'Music For Dance'. All were produced using *Sibelius 5*.

Confirmation with Bishop Noel Treanor and **Senior Celebration of Achievement** on the 16th, featuring music from this year's top GCSE student, a Year 13 Ensemble, the Folk Group, Aquinas String Quartet and the Chamber Choir.

School Carol Service on the 17th, featuring seasonal music performed by all Aquinas ensembles and soloists.

Carol Service on the 18th for the residents of Nazareth Care Village, organised by Aoife Monaghan and Sinead O'Kelly and co-ordinated by Ms Pauline McAnulty.

January:

Received news on the 5th that Aoife Monaghan gained a place at Selwyn College, Cambridge to study Law with a Choral Scholarship.

Internal exams took place between the 7th and the 16th.

First auditions for principal roles in **Calamity Jane** took place after school on wed. 21st.

23rd: Chris McGuigan gained a place in the Ulster Youth Choir. Well done!!

Open Morning on the 24th featured music by the Traditional Group, String Quartet, Soloists and Madrigal Choir.

February:

4th: Year 11 GCSE students began Composing Coursework worth 25% based on *Music For Special Events*

10th: Cast announced for forthcoming production of Calamity Jane in October 2009

20th: Year 11 GCSE students redid Solo Performances

27th: Trinity Guildhall Musical Theatre Exams.

March:

Several Aquinas students took part in Musical Productions with various Belfast Musical Societies.

5th: Richard Gault [gd8] and year 9 Calum McIntyre [gd 7] did their piano exams and both gained a Distinction! Anthony Bergin and Roisin McAlister [yr12] passed their ABRSM Grade 5 theory.

9th: Options Day for year 10 and 12 students with lots of interest in GCSE and A level music.

11th: external ABRSM exams – 23 students entered [gds 1-7] accompanied by Mrs Miriam Plunkett.

11th: Submission of Scholarship proposal by Brian McAlea [12J]

13th: St Patrick's Day Ceilidh, music provided by Traditional Group

CEA course for new GCSE and A2 specs [J Gould]

28th: concert in aid of *Habitat for Humanity* in St John's Parish Hall featuring CBSM, and Aquinas Chamber Choir.

April:

1st: Sinead O'Kelly did her Performance Diploma in Musical Theatre with London College in Music along with 4 other students [grades 5-7]. Sinead gained a Distinction – an amazing achievement for any student!!

2nd: Aquinas **Spring Concert** took place in the Assembly Hall and featured all Aquinas Ensembles with several soloists. 130 students took part to a full house who gave us a standing ovation!!!

8th: Received ABRSM results from 11th of March. 20/23 passed with 6 gaining a Merit and 2 gaining Distinctions.

20th: Rehearsals proper began for the cast of *Calamity Jane*.

29th: First rehearsal of the first ever Aquinas Jazz Band for junior students directed by Dan Forshaw [flute/sax peri].

May:

Submission of Coursework by GCSE and A Level students

7th: A2 Performing with Donal McCrissican as examiner **and** Leavers Mass directed by the Year 14 students under Aoife Monaghan.

15th: AS Performing with Nuala Shaw as examiner

External GCSE and GCE A level exams on 6th, 13th, 21st and 28th.

29th: Submission of GCSE coursework composing by Year 11 students, **and** Guitar external exams with Trinity Guildhall [12 Juniors].

June:

1st: ABRSM instrumental exams took place – 12 Junior students grades 1-5. All students passed well, with a Merit gained by Madeleine Magee in year 9!

5th; notification that Niamh McCrossan [year 8] was awarded the top prize for grade 3 theory and Dario Angelone [year 11] for Grade 5 theory by CBSM. Dario, Niamh and their families attended a special buffet and presentation at the Harbour Commissioner's Office. Certificates were given out by Mr Michael McClean!!!

8th: JG hosted a cluster group for music teachers to discuss the N. Ireland Curriculum at Ulidia for BELB [Arthur Webb]. Musical Theatre external exams took place today also – all students entered passed, with Distinctions for Ben McDaid, John Gillen and Eoin McCrossan. Fabulous!

17th: JG attended Clarendon Dock to take part in standardising for AS Music Aural Perception.

18th: **Mass of Celebration for Year 8** students and their families. Music provided by the Junior Choir and several soloists, directed by Louise Irvine.

22nd: Sinead O'Kelly did her Diploma in piano Performance. She gained a Distinction – no mean feat. Brilliant!

23rd – **Junior Celebration of Achievement**. Music provided by the Junior Jazz Band and the Guitar Ensemble.

Summer News

David Furey who left Aquinas 3 years ago has just graduated from York University where he read Music Technology. He gained a First Class Hons degree, came top of his course and 2nd overall in his whole year!!

A level and GCSE results were superb again this year. Overall, out of 21 students, there were 5 A stars, 12 As, 2 Bs and 1 C. Well done to the students and everyone in the Music Department.

Aoife Monaghan gained her place studying Law at Cambridge with a Choral Scholarship to Selwyn College.

Finally many congratulations to Dan Forshaw and his wife Katie on the birth of their daughter Aimee Thea born on the 24th of July 2009.

Physical Education

Physical Education in Aquinas aims to make a unique contribution to the overall education of every student by meaningful experiences that will challenge the physical and intellectual development of the students through relevant cultural activities.

Extra-curricular sport is a key feature of Aquinas. Activities on offer include athletics, basketball, cross-country, gaelic football (boys and girls), netball, rugby, hurling, soccer, camogie and outdoor pursuits. Teams are entered in School Leagues and training for all teams is held on a weekly basis.

At examination level 25 students completed CCEA GCSE Physical Education attaining excellent results 100% A*-C. With the employment of past pupil Patrick Higgins, Year 11 and 12 GCSE students were successfully coached in the sport of Orienteering. The students successfully competed in the in-house Aquinas orienteering event based at Cavehill Belfast and the schools' orienteering event at Tollymore Forest Co. Down. 5 students sat AS Physical Education and attained good grades. 8 students sat the A2 level and attained excellent results.

In the Junior School the core areas of study include swimming at the Robinson's Swimming Centre, games, athletics and gymnastics. The yearly Health and Fitness Day for the Junior School took place in September and as always was a roaring success. The highlight of the school year was the annual Sports Day held in June 2009. The Senior School received tuition in Health Related fitness, games and athletics. From Year 11 onwards, all students use the Fitness Suite developing their fitness levels. At the end of the term the Fitness Suite was updated and now includes 21 spin bikes. The spinning classes will become a key feature on the key stage 3, 4 and 5 programme of study.

Basketball

The 2008/09 school basketball season proved a highly successful one for all Aquinas teams and also for players gaining international representative honours. Aquinas continues to play at 'A' grade basketball – the highest standard across Ireland. There are 5 teams within the school all competing successfully at this level.

Ben Horner played for the U18 Irish team in the USA during July adding another eight caps to his already impressive collection.

The U19 team travelled to Limerick for the All-Ireland play-offs. A very disappointing tournament saw Aquinas lose out on a semi final place in the Cup but later in the year progressed to the Plate final before eventually succumbing to hosts Colaiste Eanna in Dublin.

The U16 team also travelled to Galway and lost both games to Oranmore and St Brendan's Killarney.

The Year 8s reached the final of the Vince Halloran tournament at the Antrim Forum in May before losing 42-26 to St Malachy's in an entertaining final.

Once again the Year 9s travelled to Limerick over the May Day weekend Holiday for the annual All-Ireland play-offs. Considerably outsized by southern schools, Aquinas showed great spirit and determination in all three games eventually defeating Ballincollig to gain a creditable eight place finish.

REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS

BASKETBALL

Ben Horner	Ireland U16 (12 caps) Has also played for Ulster at U14 & U16 level
Joe Burns	Ireland U18 (12 caps) Has also played for Ulster at U14, U16 & U18
Ben Scullion	Ulster U14
Ciaran Ashe	Belfast Youth Games team 2005
Ciaran McFarland	Ulster U14
Conal O'Neill	Ulster U14
Conall Devlin	Ulster U14 & Ulster U16
Emmet Loughrey	Ulster U14 & Ulster U16
Jack McConaghy	Ulster U16
Michael McAlister	Belfast Youth Games team 2005
Michael McGarry	Ulster U14
Charlie McGrath	Belfast Youth Games team 2005
Rory McCormick	Ulster U16
Ryan Magee	Ulster U14 & Ulster U16

GAA

Aquinas entered six competitions in football. This has been Aquinas' most successful year to date.

In the Fr Faul Cup (Year 11/12) Aquinas were beaten by a hungrier St Patrick's Bearnageeha team at the quarter final stage. Aquinas had won three of their four group games previous to this.

In the Treanor Cup Year (10/11) Aquinas began well with two good wins but lost their next two matches, eventually losing to Our Lady's Castleblaney, Aquinas did not qualify for the knock out stages.

In the BT Ennis Cup (Year 9/10) Aquinas were narrowly beaten by a strong Ballyshannon team in the final. Aquinas had been very impressive in all of their group matches, quarter-final and semi-final. The school is very proud of their efforts. In the Mallon Cup (Year 8/9) Aquinas were beaten by an impressive Bearnageeha team to pip them for the second qualifying spot in the group stages. This team was very impressive in the group stages and quarter-final. In the Ulster Colleges Year 8 blitz the team was beaten in the semi-final by Edmund Rice in a highly successful blitz at St Genevieve's.

Aquinas won Bro Nolan final. After losing three finals, Aquinas Grammar finally achieved their goal. Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School reach all –Ireland Colleges C final. Aquinas Grammar Senior Gaelic Football team reached their first ever All Ireland final. Aquinas then beat the Munster champions, Mercy Mounthawk from Tralee in the All Ireland Semi-final on March 14th, winning the game 1-6 to 0-7. Aquinas played St Marys Strokestown in the All Ireland Final in Breifne Park Cavan. Unfortunately Aquinas lost the game 1-12 to 1-8. This was a special day out for the team and the large group of supporters attending the game. The team management and team itself were over whelmed with the support they had received from school management team, vice-principal and principal. They were also grateful for the wonderful support of their fellow pupils, family and friends that made this devastating defeat bearable.

This campaign has put Aquinas on the map in the GAA world. As a result of this success the school will be entering their senior teams at B level football i.e McLarnon and Herald cup. This will be a big challenge for those teams but one which the school feels it is ready for.

Netball

A great start to the season with Marion McGuigan Maeve and McQuillan gaining a place onto the Northern Ireland Netball Squad at Under 19 level. Moya McQuillan has gained a place on the Under 17 N.Ireland squad At regional under 15 level, congratulations to the following girls Claire McVeigh Rachel Goldsmith Rachel Ferguson Moya McQuillan and Aoife Sheridan. The regional championship took place in May 2009 at QUB sponsored by Golden Cow. This season the following girls have been selected onto the Under 15 Regional Netball Academy, Aideen Murphy, Frances Hewitt, Catherine Conaghan and Aislinn McFarland

At the Aquinas front six teams battled away in League fixtures. Both the Minor and Senior teams were marginally defeated in the Belfast Area League.

Finally in June, St Bernard's Primary School, in preparation for their league finals, paid us a visit and beat the Year 8 team!

It has been hard work all year for the Aquinas Netballers and this was truly reflected in their play. The girls must be applauded for their commitment and hard work.

Teenage Kicks

Fifteen Year 11 and fifteen Year 8 students participated in the Teenage Kicks programme alongside five post primary and primary schools. The students were coached in dance by Fitness Freddie. A successful evening of dance aerobics was performed in the Ulster Hall on the 4th June 2009.

Religious Studies

Examination Results

The department was delighted to celebrate our students' examination results at all levels, especially at A-level, where Catherine Carswell was awarded second place in the CCEA A2 Religious Studies for Northern Ireland. The Year 11 students should also be commended as they achieved 100% grades A*-C in the Modular One paper of their GCSE course.

SIXTH FORM RELIGIOUS PROGRAMME

As in the previous years, the programme was delivered on a modular, rotational basis. In the delivery of this programme we have chosen topics which will hopefully enable us to prepare our

students morally and spiritually for an increasingly secular world. This programme has been enhanced by the use of guest speakers.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS & EVENTS

The department began the year with a visit by Bishop Noel Treanor who presided at a beautiful Confirmation service held in our school Chaplaincy. The department continued to support the spiritual life of our students with daily Mass, Advent services, Christmas celebrations, Penitential services and other liturgies.

Both Years 10 and Years 14 tutor groups went on retreat to the De La Salle Pastoral Centre. All our students found their experience very positive and worthwhile.

The department hosted two student teachers from St. Mary's University College and the University of Ulster during the year.

Year 13 A-level ethics students were privileged to have two afternoon revision sessions from Fr. Gary Toman of The Queen's University Chaplaincy on Bio-ethics and Fr. Eddie Magee of St. Mary's University College on Ethical Theories and Applied Ethics.

Representatives from each of the four Year 12 classes attended the LIFE N.I annual school's conference and Fr. Gary Toman visited each of the Year 12 tutor groups to discuss sanctity of life issues. Fr. Gary also spoke to all Year 14 students about life at Queen's University and the role of the Chaplaincy. Our students enjoyed these frank yet humorous talks.

The department was delighted to continue our links with the local Jewish community, with Year 9 pupils visiting the Belfast Synagogue. Our pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning about and appreciating a different faith culture.

A most memorable day for all our students was the visit by The Original Brotha' Reggie Dabbs, a famous rapper and saxophone player who told his personal life story and asked our young people to ponder many of the difficult issues they face in society today.

Science

The academic year 2008-2009 was a very busy and productive year for the Science department as all staff continued to develop the "Aquinas approach" to the N. Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and introduce the new specifications at AS level.

Without doubt the highlight of the year was the outstanding results achieved by our pupils in the GCSE, AS and A level exams in June 2009. At GCSE level, 100% achieved grades A* to C in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Double Award Science. In addition, the level of attainment was very high, with 55% (Biology), 58% (Chemistry), 75% (Physics) and 33% (Double Award Science) attaining grades A* or A.

At A level, the achievement was equally high with 93% (Biology), 95% (Chemistry) and 67% (Physics) achieving grades A to C and confirming the high standard of teaching and learning throughout the Science department.

October saw the recommencement of our participation in the Sentinus Engineering Education Scheme. In conjunction with the Technology department, a team of five Year 13 students were selected and began work on this six month project. They worked with Alan Haley of Harland and Wolff who provided them with a design brief based on a real-life problem. They carried out research

on methods for monitoring energy consumption at the Harland and Wolff site. Unfortunately, due to a difficulty in obtaining data, they were unable to complete the project this year but will continue to work on it in the next academic year.

In November, with the aim of forging stronger links with tertiary education, Ms Byrne met with Alan Fitzsimmons of Queen's University, Belfast to gain a greater understanding of the requirements of Level 1 Physics. We hope to bring students to the Level 1 laboratory in the next academic year as part of a project to help smooth the transition for Physics students to tertiary education. We are pleased that, for the second year running, a student has been accepted to Cambridge to study Engineering. Congratulations to Niall Quinn on this success. The challenge of the Lego league was to the fore when pupils from the Junior School participated in the N Ireland competition at W5. This was the culmination of another joint project with the Technology department in which Mr Sames and Mrs O'Brien worked with the pupils to build and test a prototype robot.

The Science Expressions project was further developed in Aquinas in December when the P7 classes from three of our local primary schools, St. Bernard's, St. Michael's and Holy Rosary, visited Aquinas to participate in three science workshops on the theme of 'Colour'. Mr Feron looked at the use of indicators in Chemistry, Dr Magill looked at the use of chlorophyll, the green pigment in leaves, in Biology and Ms Byrne looked at 'What is colour?' and 'Why is the sky blue?' in Physics. The pupils were very enthusiastic, a credit to their schools.

The Science department also participated in the primary school taster days on 12th January. Over 100 Year 7 pupils from our feeder primary schools were given the opportunity to sample life in Aquinas. Mr Feron led the way for the department by educating and enthusing the pupils on a range of Chemistry practicals. Also in January, thirty Year 12 students visited Eurodisney, Paris where they attended three seminars on material linked to the GCSE Science course. The trip was coordinated by Ms Byrne, whilst Dr Magill, Ms Tallon and Dr McHugh accompanied the students on the journey. A great time was had by all.

During February, as part of our Careers Education programme, Dr David Irvine of the Engineering Faculty of the University of Ulster spoke to our Year 10 students about Engineering as a career opportunity. Mr. Sames delivered an ICT workshop to PGCE students at Queen's. Ms Tallon and Mr Duffy participated in the "Creative and Curious Science" workshop at Victoria College.

March was a very busy month for staff and pupils in the Science department. Professor Magee from the Chemical Engineering dept at QUB presented a talk on careers to A level students. The Biology department were visited by staff from W5 who introduced materials on "The nanny state". National Science and Engineering Week was celebrated with a number of events. Year 10 pupils who had designed and built their Formula 1 racing cars competed to find the fastest car. Year 8 pupils competed in the Annual Science Quiz. The Biology department hosted two Biomedical Science students from QUB as part of the Ambassadors' Program which was coordinated by the School of Education. The students observed A level classes over a period of five weeks and then worked with Dr Rea to produce and present a lecture to the class.

In April, twenty Year 13 Physics students attended a lecture on 'Use of low energy radiation in the treatment of cancer' by Bob McCullough at Queen's University, Belfast. The pupils then produced a 'podcast' on the topic as part of the Physics Podcasting Project being run by Ruth Jarman and Billy McClune, School of Education, Queen's University, Belfast.

In June, Ms Byrne delivered training for post-primary science teachers on 'Motivational teaching methodologies for the revised curriculum in Science' at the Annual Physics Teachers' Conference at Queen's University, Belfast. Our commitment to staff development was once again demonstrated by the attendance of our technicians, Peter Cullen and Sean Duffy at the technicians' training days at QUB

2008-09 was a remarkable year in the Science department where we consolidated the work of previous years while moving forward with innovative approaches to the N. Ireland Curriculum and new A level specifications.

Technology & Design

This academic year proved eventful and rewarding for the Technology and Design department in terms of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The results from the Summer 2009 GCSE and Advanced Level examinations are above average in the school and all members of staff and pupils are to be congratulated on their hard work and due diligence. Several of our Advanced level students are now pursuing undergraduate courses in the field of Engineering, Technology and Design, Product Design, Architecture and Computer Games Design.

GCSE Technology and Design is a popular option at Key Stage 4 and advanced level. We continue to attempt to address the gender imbalance at GCSE through our work with the Young Engineers Club. Advanced Level Technology and Design is strong with sixteen students in Year 13 and 14. In the school year 2008 - 2009 Aquinas Technology and Design Department continued to be successful in their participation in regional competitions in association with Sentinus.

Continuing the initiative to address the gender balance in Technology and Design and improve the graphics in the design folders, all Year 10 pupils embarked on the Formula 1 Model Car competition in December 2008. The classes were divided into teams where they had to design a Formula 1 racing car, present a design portfolio and a PowerPoint presentation explaining their ideas. All teams had to produce a computer aided design of their final solution. There was an internal competition and an external judge who decided which team would race their car at the regional finals in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra. The team performed admirably. A great day was had and we hope to continue the project.

This was a year of preparation for the Key Stage Three reforms and the department has been busy updating the KS3 design folder to reflect the changes. Schemes of work for Year 8 and 9 are now up to date and in line with the recommendations, with continuous evaluation occurring. ICT is a major focus in many aspects of Technology and Design. The ICT facilities within the department are up to date and software packages such as Crocodile Technology, Circuit Wizard, PCB Wizard and Solidworks are in constant demand.

As a consequence of the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, we are collaborating with the South Eastern Regional College. Mr. Richard Morrison from the SERC worked with our A2 students on a practical course in building A2 electronic circuits. We look forward to enhancing this collaboration and applied aspect of Technology and Design in coming year.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

During 2008-09 the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme went from strength to strength with continued development of, and participation in the Award scheme in Aquinas.

The continued high level of interest within the school was reflected in the increased number of applications by Year 11 pupils, with almost half of the year group applying to participate. With the staff team now consisting of Mr. J Duffy, Mr. C Murphy, Dr. D Mc Hugh, Ms K McIlvar, Mrs K McWilliams and Mr S Sames, and the help of John McSorley of The Outdoor Fox, we were able to increase the number of participants to 48. Training sessions for the expedition started in early November and the first day walk took place on 22nd November in Lagan Meadows. Further training and practice walks during March and April prepared the teams for the successful completion of the 30km qualifying expedition through the Mourne in September.

The participants are now working to complete the skills, service and physical recreation sections of the award. During the year a further 19 Aquinas pupils completed the Silver Award. Once again our association with John McSorley enabled the provision of the Gold Award for a group of Year 13 pupils. In May, six pupils, under the guidance of Mr Sames, commenced the training for the

expedition and following an accelerated training program, they successfully completed the qualifying expedition in the Lake District during the last week in August.

2009 also saw our first Gold Award recipients successfully completing each of the five sections. They are now planning their trip to London to receive their Awards.

Sign Language

During the past year, Sign language in the school reached a new level of attainment with thirteen pupils completing their BSL Level 1 qualification

This was the culmination of 20 months of weekly classes to learn introductory sign language, conversational sign language and sign language at home and in school.

This QCA endorsed qualification is administered by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People [CACDP] and under the expert tuition of Ms Elizabeth McAghtery, herself a member of the Deaf Community, all of the entrants successfully completed the final assessment

Congratulations to all of the students who completed their BSL Level 1 qualification during 2008/09

Christopher Brown

Jennifer Clarke

Sarah Early

Mary Flanigan

Madeleine Knowles

Anna McCavana

Christina McCloskey

Christopher McGuigan

Aoife McLarnon

Sophie Warde-Hunter

Maeve Cowan

Clare Kelly

Aine McGowan

Sixth Form Community Link Programme

The Community Link programme has continued to thrive with seventy-nine Lower Sixth students participating. Our students thoroughly enjoy this opportunity and gain a wealth of experience from working with disabled students, Primary School pupils, the elderly and the general public.

Students travelled to their respective placements on a weekly basis, committing an hour of their private study time to do so. In schools, they engaged in a wide range of activities such as paired reading, language classes, art, drama, social skills, music and games.

In partnership with the Languages Department Year 13 students attended the local primary schools to deliver language classes in French, German, Irish and Spanish for the European Day of Languages and many of our young people used their languages skills to help deliver Spanish lessons throughout the year in St. Michael's Primary Schools.

In Glenveagh Special Care School our young people had a wonderful year. They undertook a range of activities which included assisting at the Glenveagh Science Day, partaking in their celebrating Sports Day and the highlight of the year was an art project entitled 'working together', which resulted in the Glenveagh and Aquinas' students painted canvas being exhibited in the Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast;

Within Nazareth House Care Village, students were involved in a wide variety of activities, visiting the residents and organising and performing at a Christmas Carol Service. Our links have continued with the local charity shops, Oxfam, Action Cancer and N.I Hospice. Throughout the year students organised collections of clothes, toys and books. Positive feedback from each of the placements was a clear indication of the enthusiasm and dedication of our students.

Our 'A' Level students have continued to take responsibility for recycling within the school in partnership with Bryson House Recycling. This has proved to be a real success with pupils promoting awareness and sacrificing their break time on a rota basis to collect recyclable paper. I would like to acknowledge the help and support we receive from the many organisations who provide the opportunity for our young people to undertake voluntary work.

Fundraising

As usual, the fundraising efforts of the staff and pupils for the 2008/09 year were outstanding. The Macmillan Coffee Morning began the year. This morning is designed for the senior pupils of the school, along with the staff, to raise funds for the Macmillan nurses looking after cancer patients. The fundraising committee organised tea and coffee for this event. The event ran for a break time raising a total of £750. This year we welcomed guests from Wellington College and St Joseph's College. Coming up to Hallowe'en, the Shoebox Appeal was launched. Each class within the school was invited to prepare at least two shoeboxes that could be sent to disadvantaged children throughout the world. Each box must contain a toothbrush, toothpaste, facecloth and soap. We also encouraged extra items such as toys to be included. These boxes were then sent on to communities living in poverty via the Samaritan's Purse Charity. In October, Aquinas students collected and sent 304 boxes along with £385 In November, The annual 'Aquinas Christmas Appeal' was officially launched. This campaign is designed to aid people living closer to home. Pupils work together with SVP, Bryson House and the Salvation Army to bring Santa to those less fortunate than them. Hampers were prepared for families and gifts provided for 66 children and £342 given to SVP.

In early March, as Lent was fast approaching, the Trocaire campaign was launched. At the Ash Wednesday services, members of the fundraising committee presented a PowerPoint to the members of the school, making them aware of the impoverished conditions in which some children live. Each form class was supplied with a Trocaire collection box and a schedule was established with each form tutor. The total raised for Trocaire in 2009 was £8858.50.

AQUINAS DIOCESAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2009

INCOME

Department of Education Grants	3,880,040
Gross Income	<u>28,646</u>
	3,908,686

EXPENDITURE

Teaching Staff Costs	2,572,005
Non Teaching Staff Costs	874,737
Other Operating Costs	<u>450,844</u>
	<u>3,897,586</u>

Operating surplus/(deficit)	11,100
Bank Interest Payable	<u>(12,317)</u>
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR	(1,217)

SURPLUS BROUGHT FORWARD	<u>1,036</u>
ACCUMULATED (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS	<u><u>181</u></u>

