

Down High School

Annual Report to Parents by the Board of Governors



SEPTEMBER 2021 – AUGUST 2022

THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF DOWN HIGH SCHOOL

The list below identifies the Board of Governors as it appeared during the 2021-22 academic year.

Chair:	<i>Mrs Avril Heenan</i>	<i>EA representative</i>
Vice-Chair:	<i>The Very Rev Henry Hull</i>	<i>EA representative</i>
	<i>Miss Wendy Bell</i>	<i>Staff Governor</i>
	<i>Mr Roy Creelman</i>	<i>DENI representative</i>
	<i>Mrs Dawn Crosby</i>	<i>EA representative</i>
	<i>Mr Keith Graham</i>	<i>Parent Governor</i>
	<i>Mr David Martin</i>	<i>Parent Governor</i>

The Board of Governors was one member short of the required minimum of eight during 2021-22. Since any co-opted member would be unable to contribute to appointments, it was decided to wait until the next reconstitution of the Board of Governors before resuming a full complement or to seek permission to appoint a new member of the Board as a DENI representative. This was still pending at the end of the 2021-22 academic year but was resolved by the appointment of Mr Philip Lennon as a member of the Board of Governors in the autumn term of 2022.

The Principal, Mrs Perry, was Secretary to the Governors during the period to which this report pertains but was a non-voting member of the Board.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Total Enrolment in September 2020	950
Total Enrolment in September 2021	968
Intake at First Form in September 2020	129
Intake at First Form in September 2021	140
Attendance Rate % 2021-22	93.1
GCE A-Level (2021-22)	
Percentage of total examination entries A*-E	99.8
Average Number of A-Level passes per pupil	A*-C 2.88 / A*-E 3.07
% Gaining 3+ A-Levels at grades A*-C	85.2
GCE AS Level (2021-22)	
Percentage of total examination entries A-E	100
Percentage of total examination entries A-C	94.5
% Gaining 3+ AS-Levels at grades A-C	91.9
GCSE (2021-22)	
Percentage of total examination entries A-C	98.9
Average Number of GCSE's at A-C level per pupil (pupils sit ten GCSE subjects)	9.66
% Gaining 5+ A*-C (inc. English and Mathematics)	100
% Gaining 7+ A*-C (incl. English and Mathematics)	98.4

STAFFING

Teaching Staff

The number of teachers in the school was as follows:

2021-22 Principal + 57.6 full-time equivalent

Changes in staff during 2021-22 academic year

The following joined the staff on a permanent basis during the 2021-22 academic year

Mr J Pentland (Head of Boys PE)
Mrs C Irwin (Spanish with French)
Miss S Wedge (ICT)
Dr H Donnelly (Physics and Science)
Mrs R Owen (Careers Assistant)

Mr N O'Hara continued a period of secondment during the 2021-22 year.

The following permanent members of staff retired or left during the 2021-22 year:

Teaching Staff

Miss B Heaney (Head of Girls PE) – retired
Mr D Doey (Mathematics) – took up new appointment
Mrs K Ellis (English) – retired
Miss K McKeown (Music) - relocated
Dr H Donnelly (Physics and Science) – took up new appointment

Support Staff

Mrs W Cromie (Principal's PA) - retired
Mrs P Gibson – Classroom Assistant - retired

The Board of Governors wishes all departing colleagues well for the future and thanks them for their outstanding contributions to Down High School over many years.

INTRODUCTION

The warm, friendly and caring atmosphere of Down High School arises from the high value placed on relationships between pupils, staff and parents. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards school life, particularly appreciating their friendships as well as the support they receive from teachers who know and treat them as individuals. There is a tradition of high academic achievement in the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils academically but also in terms of their social and moral development. This generates a culture of tolerance within which the spiritual life of pupils can thrive. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which offer opportunities to support the physical, intellectual and cultural development of the pupils. A child-centred approach is made possible by the wise and compassionate pastoral care provided. Positive discipline based on a high trust philosophy means that, when sanctions are necessary, they are used in a manner which seeks to repair and develop relationships.

At Down High School, we believe that through high aspirations, perseverance and commitment every pupil can enjoy school life as they fulfil their potential.

Our Aims:

- Promote wellbeing by providing a safe, caring and supportive environment for every member of our school community
- Nurture life-long friendships and positive relationships through respect for diversity and sensitivity towards others
- Foster our core values of kindness, trust, optimism and respect
- Develop leadership, independence, confidence and resilience in every pupil
- Encourage curiosity, creativity and resourcefulness in pupils who, as fully engaged learners, embrace the knowledge and skills required for a changing world
- Inspire participation and excellence in the rich extra-curricular life of the school
- Raise pupils' awareness of the world around them and their wider responsibilities as members of society
- Celebrate the strong partnerships within the Down High School community

The development of our core value of RESPECT is given particular importance at Down High. Personal growth and character education empowers each pupil to be the very best that they can be, achieving highly as contented, well-rounded young people ready to play an important role in the workplace and their community. We encourage our students to care for others and to take every opportunity to participate in making the world a better place.

At Down High School our core value of RESPECT means:

Responsibility	we value doing the right thing
Effort	we value trying our best
Success	we value high achievement
Perseverance	we value rising to a challenge
Equality	we value our diversity
Community	we value our positive relationships
Trust	we value each other

We expect our students to be committed and resilient learners, working to their full potential in the classroom and finding a voice through our extra-curricular programme. Through developing a true passion for learning and a capacity for independent thinking, the habits of success and sound character are realised at Down High. Students are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and to believe in their potential since intelligence and ability are not regarded as fixed qualities.

THE CONTEXT

The 2021-22 academic year was again overshadowed by the management of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Down High School. The school implemented fully the guidance published by the Department of Education (DENI), the Education Authority (EA) and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) on managing safety/public health protocols for staff and pupils, recording attendance, and the safe oversight of external examinations. External examinations returned for pupils in Years 11-14 (with a number of units eligible for omission at GCSE, AS and A2 levels).

Regular changes to guidance for schools were implemented, but it was a great relief that no additional closures were in place during the course of the year, nor were classroom bubbles required. The year witnessed a slow return to something resembling normality, with the welcome return of a programme of extra-curricular activities. The number of activities increased as a result of the lengthening of lunchtimes by five minutes.

The adoption of Google Classroom as a single and consistent virtual learning environment for the delivery of remote learning has been built upon, with the regular use of this platform to support day-to-day teaching and learning.

The planned implementation of a new three-year School Development Plan was postponed in line with an instruction from DENI and the EA. Instead, a transitional plan was formulated during the summer of 2021 and implemented, amended and evaluated throughout the academic year. This plan contained sections on the implementation of guidance on the mitigations that needed to be in place to reduce the transmission of Covid-19. These included staggered breaks and lunches, a one-way system, increased ventilation, social distancing measures and additional cleaning protocols – including the regular sanitation of touchpoints during the school day. These measures were gradually relaxed during the year, in line with updated guidance. The transitional plan also included the implementation of the Engage Programme to support learners in either paired or individual settings. The Engage Programme was subject to audit and its effectiveness in supporting those pupils considered to be most in need of support evaluated.

The return of public examinations was welcomed. The changes in the delivery of subjects, exam entries and the degree to which omissions were availed of were communicated regularly to staff, pupils and parents. Separate remote evening meetings to explain how examinations would function and to support pupils and parents with revision strategies were organised for Years 11-14.

The Board of Governors recognises the amount of work, effort, monitoring and evaluation that took place during the 2021-22 academic year and commends the staff for the ways in which the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils were met. The pupils in all year groups

showed very commendable levels of resilience as they met the challenges of a return to internal and external examinations.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

A-Level

The improvement in A-Level outcomes significant in the years before the pandemic and the results in 2022 confirmed this trend. Almost a third of all Year 14 pupils secured at least three A grades in each of their A2 exams, with 54% of all grades being A* or A.

For students sitting AS examinations, 54.3% of all results achieved were grade A.

For Year 14 students, their A-Level examinations were the first public exams sat since they completed a small number of GCSE units in Year 11. Year 13 pupils had not sat external exams before. Despite school closures and broader societal uncertainty during the course of the pandemic, these pupils have been resourceful, resilient and aspirational. The percentage of Year 14 students achieving three A-Levels at grades A*-C was 85.2. This figure is 27% higher than the corresponding figure for 2008. The pupils who joined our enlarged 6th Form from local 11-16 schools again showed that they can achieve the highest grades.

At A-Level, Sarah Carlisle, Dearbhla Curry, Katie Dickson, Jason Hamilton, Sianan Haslett, Channon Heenan, Ellen Johnston and Rosa Morgan-Young attained at least 3 A* grades each. Caitlin Devenport has taken her place at the prestigious St Catharine's College, Cambridge, to read History.

The results at A-Level in 2022 did not take into account students' AS grades in 2021, since those Centre Determined Grades were not based on actual UMS scores. In recent years, the school has placed significant emphasis in maximising UMS scores at AS. The excellent AS grades in 2022 were based on actual UMS scores achieved in the examinations and these augur well for the 2023 results, as long as students continued to exhibit positive learning behaviours in and out of the classroom.

GCSE

The Year 12 pupils sat external examinations for the first time in summer 2022, since the possibility of sitting GCSE units in Year 11 in 2021 was not possible due to the cancellation of GCSE examinations. Fifty-nine per cent of all GCSE grades in Down High were A* or A grades, with 27 pupils gaining ten straight A*/A grades across their subjects. Sophie Chen, Rachel Norris and Holly Thompson secured 10 A* grades each while Daniel Chambers, Sophie Kincaid, Bethany McCoubrey, Grace McMullan and Ellen Taylor each gained 9A* and 1A. For the fourth time in six years - in what is a very proud record which pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic - every single pupil at Down High School achieved at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C including English and Mathematics.

Every single Year 12 pupil in the school secured at least 5 GCSE grades at A*-C, including English and Mathematics. The figure for pupils securing at least 7 GCSEs at A*-C (including English and Mathematics) was 98.4%. Again, the excellent results at GCSE reflect a trend that has been evident for some years and is not, therefore, the result of a Covid bounce.

The teachers and pupils are to be congratulated for the excellent results achieved in public examinations in 2021-22.

A-LEVEL RESULTS 2022 (cumulative percentages)

SUBJECT	NO. OF ENTRIES	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Art & Design	6	50	83	100	100	100	100	100
Biology	46	11	52	85	91	100	100	100
Business Studies	32	0	25	59	94	97	100	100
Chemistry	24	25	75	92	100	100	100	100
Design & Technology	14	14	57	79	86	100	100	100
Drama	1	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
English Literature	10	20	50	70	100	100	100	100
French	8	63	88	88	100	100	100	100
Geography	21	5	43	90	95	100	100	100
Health & Social Care	27	15	59	89	100	100	100	100
History	17	24	71	94	100	100	100	100
Mathematics	44	27	66	86	95	95	100	100
Mathematics Further	3	0	33	33	67	100	100	100
Moving Image Arts	9	11	56	100	100	100	100	100
Music	3	67	67	100	100	100	100	100
Nutrition and Food Sc.	15	27	80	93	100	100	100	100
Physical Education	10	30	80	90	100	100	100	100
Physics	19	21	68	79	84	95	95	100
Politics	10	10	50	90	90	90	100	100
Religious Studies	8	0	0	25	63	75	100	100
Sociology	29	7	17	55	79	93	100	100
Software Systems	12	17	50	67	92	92	100	100
Spanish	7	29	86	100	100	100	100	100
Level 3 Tourism	9	0	22	67	100	100	100	100
BTEC COURSES		D*	D		M		P	
Engineering	12	33	75		100		100	
ICT	10	60	100		100		100	
Sport	9	22	56		100		100	

GCSE RESULTS 2022 (cumulative percentages)

SUBJECT	NO. OF ENTRIES	A*	A	B	C*	C	D	E	F	G
Art & Design	23	26	65	96	100	100	100	100	100	100
Biology	54	15	39	85	100	100	100	100	100	100
Business Studies	37	14	46	81	89	97	97	97	97	100
Chemistry	31	29	68	87	97	100	100	100	100	100
Digital Technology (Programming)	20	35	70	90	100	100	100	100	100	100
Digital Technology (Multimedia)	15	7	27	67	80	87	100	100	100	100
Design & Technology	40	40	73	88	98	100	100	100	100	100
Double Award Science	61	34	63	76	89	100	100	100	100	100
Drama	16	44	94	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
English	129	14	54	86	100	100	100	100	100	100
English Literature	129	19	59	93	99	100	100	100	100	100
French	54	31	59	81	100	100	100	100	100	100
Geography	49	27	57	84	98	98	100	100	100	100
History	60	30	65	83	90	97	100	100	100	100
Food & Nutrition	37	22	68	97	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mathematics	129	30	73	98	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mathematics Further	37	46	86	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
MIA	16	31	50	75	94	100	100	100	100	100
Music	10	40	60	90	100	100	100	100	100	100
Physical Education	16	13	69	88	100	100	100	100	100	100
Physics	35	11	51	80	91	100	100	100	100	100
Religious Studies (Full Course)	128	16	48	73	88	94	98	100	100	100
Spanish	73	14	51	75	95	100	100	100	100	100

INDICATOR	DHS RESULTS		DHS TARGET 21-22	NI GRAMMAR SCHOOL DATA				DHS TARGET 22-23	DHS RESULT 21-22
	19-20	20-21		LQ	M	UQ	95 th Pce		
KS3 % ≥ level 5 Communication	NA	NA	100					100	NA
KS3 % ≥ level 5 Using Mathematics	NA	NA	100					100	NA
GCSE %7+ A*-C	97.7	100	100	91.2	94.5	97.5	99.0	100	100
GCSE %7+ A*-C (inc. En and Ma)	97.7	100	98.4	91.2	94.4	97.5	99.0	100	98.4
GCSE %5+ A*-C	97.7	100	100	96.8	98.0	99.4	100	100	100
A-level: %3+ A*-C	95	90.9	87	77.6	81.4	87.6	89.6	85	85.2
INDICATOR	DHS RESULTS		DHS TARGET 21-22	NI GRAMMAR SCHOOL AVERAGES				DHS TARGET 22-23	DHS RESULT 21-22
	19-20	20-21							
KS3 % ≥ level 5 Communications	N/A	N/A	100	Unavailable				100	N/A
KS3 % ≥ level 5 Using Mathematics	N/A	N/A	100	Unavailable				100	N/A
GCSE %5+ A*-C	97.7	97.7	100	96.1				100	100
GCSE %5+ A*-G	98.5	98.5	100	99.7				100	100
GCSE % WITH NO PASSES	0	0	0	0.1				0	0
GCSE %5+ A*-C (inc. Eng and Ma)	100	100	100	95.5				100	100
GCSE % achieving A*-C in English	100	100	100	98.5				100	100
GCSE % achieving A*-G in English	100	100	100	99.9				100	100
GCSE % achieving A*-C in Maths	100	100	100	97.9				100	100
GCSE % achieving A*-G in Maths	100	100	100	99.9				100	100
A-level % 3+ A*-C	95	95	87	72.9				84.8	85.2
A-level % 2+ A*-E	100	100	100	99				100	100
Attendance %	95.6	95.6	97	95.5				97	93.1

LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS 2022

The vast majority (90%) of Year 14 student leavers embarked immediately upon university/further education studies in 2022. This figure excludes students planning to re-apply to their desired courses next year after a "Gap Year." Despite the much-publicised concerns about the shortfall in university places, most students were able to take up their first-choice course. The Careers Department is also proactive in helping students see the benefits of work-based apprenticeship schemes after A-Level.

CAREERS EDUCATION & GUIDANCE

Careers Advice Education Information and Guidance (CAEIG) in Down High School provides students with the opportunity to complete effective research, discuss any issues relating to career choices with their teachers and assist them in their decision-making throughout the key transition stages during their school years.

The development of CAEIG within the context of the Lecale Learning Community (LLC), with good practice being shared between a number of schools in the area, continued to be a feature of the 2021-22 academic year.

The Careers Library is situated on the ground floor beside the Margaret Curry Library and is always open to students who wish to research career pathways or discuss careers-related issues. Significant attention is given to students in Years 13 and 14 as they approach, construct and refine their UCAS applications. The increasing use of Unifrog as an on-line research tool and repository has been a real success and this is now used extensively to research courses, bookmark universities, log preferred destinations and upload personal statements. Similarly, the large team of teachers who compile academic references for students are able to access subject references and upload academic references to the limited access sections of the platform and this has made the processing and sending of UCAS applications considerably easier.

Time is spent with 6th Form students on either Monday or Thursday mornings to help with personal statements and discussions on important ethical and political topics for those interested in applying for Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary, Dentistry or Law. A number of virtual work experience opportunities were shared to offer pupils some understanding of the world of work. The Careers Department uses the Google Classrooms for Year 13-14 to advertise university open days, MOOCs, virtual and real-life work experience opportunities and other support. The Careers Department continues to prioritise broadening the CAEIG provision for the school's expanding and changing Sixth-Form student base. It is committed to developing the resources and skills base in relation to a wider range of post-18 pathways (including Apprenticeships, Company Leavers' Programmes, Further Education, CAFRE, Institutes of Technology in the Republic, universities in the USA and continental Europe, business start-ups, and Company Selection Day challenges).

Additional preparation for Oxbridge candidates, including mock interviews, was organised through Down High School. Prospective applicants for 2022-23 met virtually and a programme of reading and preparation for the summer holidays set up. Additional virtual mock interviews for all students applying for places in nursing, teaching and social work were held. The services of DE staff have been appreciated at various stages throughout the year. Interviews with students were conducted virtually during the pandemic, and the school was disappointed that this mode was continued during the 2021-22 academic year. Careers Presentation Evenings for parents of pupils in the key transition year groups (Years 10 and 12) were conducted virtually.

Pupils accessed subject presentations and also broader subject choice and Careers information on-line, via links sent to all pupils and parents.

The mock interview experience was conducted very successfully using an on-line format in June 2022. The school would again like to extend its thanks to members of the wider community, many of them Old Dunumians, who participated in this very important on-line event, which the students took seriously and derived much benefit from. These benefits included the preparation for interview, the interview experience and the feedback given.

Mrs Owen's appointment as Careers Assistant was most welcome and she worked Mr Williamson and the Senior Leadership Team in August 2022 to help students with confirming their university places.

The School Day 2021-22

The 10-period structure of the school day resumed a more normal format after the practice of staggered break and lunchtimes during the height of the pandemic. Longer lunchtimes were introduced during junior and senior periods in order to encourage a greater range of extra-curricular activities during the school day.

Period	1	2	3	4	Break	5	6	7E		7L	8	9	10
	9:15 to 9:45	9:45 to 10:15	10:15 to 10:45	10:45 to 11:15	11:15 to 11:35	11:35 to 12:05	12:05 to 12:35	12:35 to 13:10	13:10 – 13:15 Lunch changeover	13:15 to 13:50	13:50 to 14:20	14:20 to 14:50	14:50 to 15:20

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PROVISION

CURRICULAR PROVISION

Sustaining Improvement Inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate in 2016 and 2019 affirmed the appropriateness of a curriculum offer that is extensive in all key stages and allows the school's pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for success in public examinations, subsequent study and the world of work.

The curriculum in Down High School comprises all the learning experiences within the school and includes not only knowledge and skills but the attitudes, beliefs and values which underpin the relationships within the school community. The school aims to ensure that the pupils in all year groups experience a broad, balanced, enriched and relevant curriculum providing opportunities for them to discover and develop their interests and talents. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their full potential during their time here, leaving Down High School equipped with the necessary skills for success in the wider world. To this end increased flexibility has been introduced to the curriculum. In order to broaden the choice of subjects on offer to pupils, a number of both Applied and General Academic subjects have been introduced at GCSE and A-Level and the school has met the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. In 2021-22, a number of pupils in Year 14 completed BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary awards in Engineering, Sport and ICT in collaboration with the South Eastern Regional College and the excellent results achieved allowed pupils to access their next steps.

Down High School has always promoted the acquisition of thinking skills and capabilities, and opportunities for these to be developed amongst pupils are included in departmental schemes of work. The importance of knowledge and the integrity of academic subjects have been upheld within a curriculum that enables pupils in Down High School to develop personally and serve as contributors to society and the economy and respecters of the environment. The centrality of Learning for Life and Work has been recognised and clear connectivity between LLW and the Learning Areas has been encouraged. A comprehensive review of the LLW programme is under way and changes will continue to be implemented. Down High School also believes that pupils should be able to connect their learning and, for this reason, collaboration between subjects is encouraged and facilitated where possible.

Good levels of Literacy allow pupils in all year groups to access the full curriculum and all teachers have a responsibility to develop pupils' capacities for reading, writing, talking and listening. In 2021-22, the COPS strategy was continued and pupils are now increasingly aware of the importance of the quality of written communication, which continues to be rewarded in public examinations at GCSE and A-Level. In order to support a number of pupils in this area, Literacy Support was offered one day per week by the Literacy Support Tutor for pupils whose needs have been highlighted by the English Department. Furthermore, the promotion of pupils' competence in numbers and measures will allow them to acquire the financial capabilities needed for adult life. The Heads of English and Mathematics are coordinators for Literacy and Numeracy respectively.

Down High School aims to be inclusive in all aspects of its work and pupils' individual needs and learning styles will be accommodated in the classroom. Differentiated strategies are used to allow pupils with individual needs to learn most effectively, and the School's SEN policy and guidelines will be implemented in classrooms to allow pupils to reach their full potential. The school's Learning and Teaching Policy provides the basis for effective classroom practice and accentuates the importance of the pupils as curious, participative learners who are challenged using a range of classroom methodologies, including ICT.

Key Stage 3

In Years 8-10 all pupils follow a programme in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum. At present pupils in Year 8 study Mathematics, English, French, Religious Studies, Physical Education, Science, History, Geography, Art, Home Economics, Music, Technology, ICT, Drama, Learning for Life and Work and Games. Year 9 pupils undertake a second language, Spanish, in Year 9. Drama is not offered in Year 9. In Year 10, pupils learn Science in separate Physics, Chemistry and Biology classes.

Key Stage 4

Pupils in Years 11 and 12 study ten subjects at GCSE. All pupils take the core subjects of English with English Literature, Mathematics, French or Spanish, Religious Studies and non-exam lessons in Physical Education, Games and Learning for Life and Work.

All pupils also study either Double Award Science or at least one Science as a single subject. They are then free to choose the remainder of their subjects from Art, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Digital Technology (Multimedia and Programming pathways), Drama, French, Geography, History, Home Economics, Moving Image Arts, Music, Physical Education, Physics, Spanish and Technology. A number of pupils undertake nine GCSE subjects and are assigned senior student mentors to help with their studies. This arrangement exists only after significant consultation between the school, parents and pupils.

Sixth Form

The majority of pupils study four subjects at AS level in Year 13 and three subjects at A2 level in Year 14. The following subjects were offered to Year 13 in 2021-22:

Art & Design	Government & Politics	Physical Education	Theatre Studies
Biology	Health & Social Care	Physics	BTEC Engineering
Business Studies	History	Religious Studies	BTEC Sport
Chemistry	Home Economics	Sociology	BTEC ICT
English Literature	Mathematics	Software Systems Development	WJEC Level 3 Diploma in Tourism
French	Further Mathematics	Spanish	
Geography	Moving Image Arts	Technology & Design	

In addition, there is a non-exam Games provision for all pupils in both years and Enrichment and Careers in Year 13.

The school is grateful for the work carried out by the South Eastern Regional College in terms of the delivery and assessment of the BTEC courses.

ASSESSMENT IN DOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Down High School regards the formative process of assessment as an essential part of learning and teaching, enabling teachers and pupils to make judgements on the effectiveness of learning. Each teacher seeks to provide positive feedback to pupils, identifying their strengths and areas for development so that the pupils can take active steps to improve the quality of their work. Assessment for Learning techniques are an established part of classroom practice and pupils are encouraged to review their learning and suggest strategies for improvement. Down High

School has a separate Assessment for Learning Policy and all departments have policies for their subject areas.

Summative assessment: Pupils in Years 8-11 sit twice-yearly written and practical examinations. A short report, consisting of a pupil's % mark, year average and effort grade is compiled in January/February and sent home to parents. Parents receive a full report (with comments) in June. Students in Years 12-14 receive full reports and comments after the January examinations. Departments employ additional common tests throughout the school year and all teachers use summative assessment to assess pupils' understanding of a topic. Each subject's scheme of work illustrates the nature of the assessment techniques used.

Pupils in Year 8 were again assessed using the Cognitive Abilities Test in the first term and the outcomes were published for all teachers as a classroom tool to help identify pupils who are not realising their potential. In the light of examination performance, pupils whose outcomes differed most significantly from their baseline scores met with the Year Head to discuss progress, study techniques and their learning skills. The school researched and purchased Class Charts software to increase the amount of information available to class teachers and this will be used for the first time in the 2022-23 academic year.

Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning and diagnose areas of strength and weakness before agreeing new priorities.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Visits to the school by the Education and Training Inspectorate have confirmed that a robust culture of self-evaluation is established across the school. As well as Sustained Improvement Inspections in 2016 and 2019, discussions between senior leaders and the Inspectors continue to be positive, despite the absence of formalised visits during the height of the pandemic.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROVISION 2021-22

The school provides a wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities that offer pupils the opportunities to find interests beyond the classroom which are both enjoyable and contributory to their development as young people. The Governors are very grateful to the significant numbers of staff who devote lunchtime or after-school opportunities for pupils.

The pandemic had a residual impact on extra-curricular activities, especially in terms of Music. The school's annual Carol Service was again cancelled, but a pre-recorded service was organised in late November 2021 and the Governors were very grateful to the Music Department for organising this event in line with the strict social distancing measures still in place for choirs and musicians at this time. The Governors are grateful to the Vice Chair and Dean of Down Cathedral, Very Reverend Henry Hull, for facilitating the virtual Carol Service. It was delightful to see that the Spring Concert and Summer Junior Music Concerts went ahead in a welcome return to normality. The thanks of the Governors are also extended to the Games staff who were able to resume training and fixtures. These after-school and Saturday fixtures provided opportunities for our pupils to connect fully with school life and take pride in their community. Short extensions to lunchtimes allowed pupils to take part in an impressive array of new extra-curricular activities such as Lego Club, Programming, Debating, Chess, Craftivism and Film Clubs.

SCHOOL TRIPS

Pupils at Down High School avail of a number of opportunities to further their development through participation in a range of school trips that are curricular and extra-curricular in nature. A number of departments organise site visits and trips. There are also several residential experiences during the course of any school year. The pandemic caused foreign travel and more local trips and residentials to be called off, but it was lovely to see the reintroduction of the Year 8 Induction experience, this time to Ganaway Activity Centre rather than Cultra.

OTHER POLICIES

The delivery of the curriculum in Down High is achieved with reference to a number of important policies and documents which set out the expectations and experiences that are appropriate for the pupils who attend the school.

- Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviour Policies
- Assessment for Learning Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Homework Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Literacy Policy
- Bring Your Own Device Policy (6th Form)

The curriculum offered in Down High School is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is appropriate, relevant and implemented effectively. Reviews are conducted with reference to Governors, outside agencies, senior leaders, teachers, pupils and parents.

HEALTH & SAFETY AND SECURITY

The Board of Governors continues to be very cognisant of its responsibility for the safety of pupils and staff and the need to provide secure premises. CCTV operates within the School grounds and a Senior Teacher (in conjunction with the Building Supervisors) reports regularly to the Senior Leadership Team on the safety and security of the school site. A Governor, Mr K Graham, has been designated as a Health and Safety representative, reviewed and reported on issues relating to the school site throughout the year.

Emergency procedures, including fire drills, were followed during the school year. The School alarm system is fully operative and effective. These safety procedures were reviewed throughout the year and modifications made where appropriate. Colleagues were informed of any significant changes in the operation of evacuation procedures.

Full risk assessments are conducted and approved in advance of trips and visits. New and temporary staff are provided with initial training on health, safety and risk and there was a H&S briefing included in the Baker Day programme in August 2021.

All visitors must report to the Reception desk in the Reception Office and sign the Visitor's Book. At the completion of their visit they sign out at the appropriate time. Volunteers who assist departments in preparation for PGCE applications are accompanied at all times and comply with the visitor protocol. The school was able to offer PGCE placements to two trainee teachers from Queen's University and Ulster University during part of the second and third terms of 2022.

The school is grateful for the support it receives from the Education Authority in the areas of health, safety and site improvement.

SCHOOL COUNCIL

The 2021-22 academic year saw the further development of the School Council as a representative body of the pupil voice despite the impact of the pandemic and school closure. The School Council continues to play a leading role in the initiative of Promoting Positive Mental Health in the school community. The School Council helped to raise money to support mental health charities. The School Council prioritised Diversity and Inclusion in 2021-22 and this contributed to the development of a Diversity and Inclusion Policy and an entrance sign welcoming visitors to the school in a range of international languages.

SAFEGUARDING 2021-22

Child Protection and Safeguarding is a major element of the school's pastoral responsibility. It is our aim that each child will learn in a safe and secure environment, receiving the support required to best develop his or her diverse talents. In 2021-22, Mr McKillen was the Designated Teacher for Child Protection issues and Miss Bell and Mrs Hamilton the Deputy Designated Teachers. The Safeguarding Team worked closely with the Principal and the rest of the Pastoral Team to deal with any issues. All staff in school were provided with Child Protection and Safeguarding training. Child Protection and Safeguarding assemblies were also delivered to pupils in school. During the year the school was able to secure an additional counsellor to support pupils wishing to avail of the service. The Board of Governors is informed of the School's Child Protection status at every meeting, in line with statutory regulations, without any confidential disclosures being made. An annual Child Protection and Safeguarding report is also made available to the Board of Governors, as well as the ETI self-evaluation pro-forma designed to help review and quality assure Child Protection and Safeguarding arrangements in school. Wellbeing walks were organised for pupils in Years 8-11 in the summer term of 2022. New Anti-Bullying legislation led to the rewriting of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and a report on any incidents of bullying was embedded as a mandatory item at meetings of the school's Board of Governors.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS 2021-22

Down High School is committed to supporting all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The Special Education Needs/Inclusion Policy is updated to take account of the Special Education Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO), the subsequent supplement to the Code of Practice and the ongoing changes brought about by the SEND Act (NI) 2016. A copy of the policy was updated in June 2022 and is available from the school on request.

The School's aims in relation to Special Educational Needs are:

- To ensure that pupils with Special Educational Needs or a Disability will have access to the full NI curriculum and will be fully supported so that their personal, social and academic development may be realised.
- To provide learning and pastoral support for pupils with defined special educational needs through individual education plans specific to the needs of each child.
- To maintain effective communication with parents, the Education Authority and outside agencies to ensure that support for the individual child remains a priority.

The Special Needs programme is directed by three teachers. To ensure that the school building is accessible to pupils with a disability, most classrooms have access via ramps and there is a lift in the main building which gives access to the first floor. Specialist rooms such as Technology and Home Economics have been adapted to give all pupils access to all parts of the curriculum. In 2021-2022 a temporary classroom was also repurposed and adapted to meet sensory and physical needs. Consideration is given to timetabling arrangements, ensuring that pupils are accommodated in classrooms that are accessible and appropriate to their needs. Progress continues to be made in the development of Special Needs provision in Down High, and staff are kept updated on changes and briefed on the needs of specific pupils.

Individual Education Plans are in place for all pupils at Stages 1-3 of the new SEND Framework. In the midst of the pandemic's impact on school, Annual Review meetings took place via Zoom, allowing parents, pupils, teachers and classroom assistants to evaluate the progress of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The SENCo accessed additional professional development online during 2021-22 to ensure up to date knowledge of access arrangements, as well as changes ahead regarding the new SEND Framework. Teaching and support staff received dedicated training in supporting pupils with ASD during the academic year, with all members of staff following an on-line certificated course using excellent resources provided by the Education Authority and led by young men and women with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Regular updates and guidance on pupils with Special Needs and medical needs were offered, including the provision of resources in the Special Education Needs dedicated digital area in the Staff folder. Classroom Assistants provided bespoke support for pupils with a statement of special educational needs and catered for their educational and emotional needs.

SCHOOL YEAR 2022-23

Holiday dates (inclusive) and other closings

DATE(S)	DETAILS
Tuesday 23 rd & Wednesday 24 th August	Baker Days
Thursday 25 th August	GCSE Results Day / Career interviews
Friday 26 th August	Careers interviews
Monday 29 th August	Bank holiday
Tuesday 30 th August	School Development Day
Wednesday 31 st August	Year 8 pupils in school 8.50am - 12.00pm Year 13 pupils in school 9.30am – 12.30pm
Thursday 1 st September	Year 8 and Year 13 pupils in school all day Year 14 pupils in school 9.30am – 12.30pm (Senior prefects until 3.20pm)
Friday 2 nd September	All pupils in school (all day)
Thursday 13 th October	School Development Day
Monday 31 st October – Thursday 3 rd November	HALF-TERM HOLIDAY
Friday 4 th November	Baker Day
Wednesday 21 st December – Tuesday 3 rd January	CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY
Friday 6 th January	School Development Day
Monday 13 th February	Baker Day
Tuesday 14 th – Friday 17 th February	HALF-TERM HOLIDAY
Thursday 16 th March	Baker Day
Friday 17 th March	HOLIDAY
Wednesday 5 th April	School Development Day
Thursday 6 th – Friday 14 th April	EASTER HOLIDAY
Monday 1 st May	BANK HOLIDAY
Monday 29 th May	BANK HOLIDAY
Thursday 8 th June	P6 Day (selected pupils in)
Monday 12 th June	School Development Day
Friday 30 th June	Last day of term (half day)

STAFF TRAINING 2021-22

Down High School availed of the training and development time that was available for schools during time when schools were open during the 2021-22 year. Baker Days and School Improvement Days were used to update staff on pastoral and curricular issues and allow time for school leaders to consult and identify priorities for the School Development Plan. Departments were given time to plan, monitor and evaluate their action plans. A summary of the training and professional development programme is set out below.

DATE	SUMMARY OF CONTENT	FACILITATED BY	VENUE
19 August 2021	Learning & Teaching/Pastoral Action Plans Health and Safety Pastoral meetings	SLT Pastoral leaders	Assembly Hall
20 August	Action Plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numeracy • Literacy • Environment • Shared Education • ICT 	Mrs Droogan Mrs Cooper Mrs Wilson Mr Wiliamson Mr Daniells	Assembly Hall
23 August 2021	Safeguarding Medical and SEN briefings	Mr McKillen/Miss Bell Dr Napier and Miss Bell	Assembly Hall
24 August 2021	Positive Behaviour Management SEND	Mrs Perry/Mr McKillen Dr Napier/Mrs Wilson	Assembly Hall
25 August 2021	Departmental Planning	Heads of Department	Assorted venues
25 October 2021	Departmental Development Day	SLT Heads of Department	Assorted venues
25 November 2021	Staff training on Metacognition – led by Paul Gray (Learn Spark) Staff self-evaluation surveys to help inform the new 3-year SDP	Mr Dawson/Learn Spark SLT	Assembly Hall
20 December 2021	Departmental Development Day	SLT Heads of Department	Assorted venues
7 January 2022	Review of staff survey findings Inclusion Policy Departmental meetings	Mrs Perry Mr Morrow	Assembly Hall Assorted venues
17 June 2022	Staff wellbeing Neuronimo briefing Educating the heart	HMcG	Assembly Hall

LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2021-22

Despite the continued disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, Down High School maintained healthy links with a range of external agencies as part of its continuing community emphasis during 2021-22.

In March 2022, we were delighted to welcome a large number of pupils from 11-16 schools to an information session on the 6th Form experience. The event included a summary of the curriculum, pastoral and careers provision as well as a tour of a number of departments. The school was also represented at an ALC event held in Blackwater IC which was an opportunity for schools and employers to meet with young people from 11-16 schools in the district to discuss future options. From these events, the school was able to make initial preparations for its annual Intake Day in August 2022, during which many of the young people who had expressed a written interest in joining 6th Form signed up for post-16 study. While we were able to welcome visitors in the springtime, the prevalence of Covid-19 in the community meant that, the cancellation once again of Open Night in January 2022. Primary 7 pupils and their parents were provided with a digital experience of the school, thanks to the production of several promotional videos produced by Lindsay Armstrong Media and coordinated by Mr Daniells.

The Careers Department has long-established links with business organisations close to the School and further afield. The annual Mock Interview Evening in June 2022 was held digitally for the second time. The event granted a degree of flexibility for the team of interviewers with strong past and present connections to Down High School.

The Community Action Programme, which enables Sixth Form students to take up placements with local charities, nursing homes and schools, was pursued on a more modest scale in 2021-22 given the continued presence of the pandemic. It is evident from the response of outside agencies that this work is valued and the return to better times will allow our pupils to be visible in the wider community, carrying out good works and feeling the benefits of civic participation.

In sport, extensive links continued with local rugby (especially the Ulster Branch and Ballynahinch RFC), hockey and cricket clubs. The Equestrian staff and pupils competed regularly and successfully across a range of venues and worked closely with organisations such as local pony clubs.

Cross-community Links

While Down High School is a selective grammar school, it is also an inclusive school, which welcomes children from all denominations and none. That it attracts a significant number of applications from every section of the community is, no doubt, due in part to its respectful ethos, which is well supported by the cross-community links which include close cooperation with Assumption Grammar in Ballynahinch under the aegis of the Saphara programme and our shared education partner, St Patrick's Grammar, in Downpatrick. The Shared Education link with SPGS is a particularly visible aspect of school life and the programme is led expertly by Mr Williamson. As well as cooperation through the successful Politics in Action programme, the two schools worked together visibly by undertaking a street collection for the Special Olympics, a spray paint workshop for Year 11 artists in Killyleagh and litter picks in Downpatrick. The pupils and teachers also managed to convince staff in Parliament Buildings to switch off the lights during Earth Hour in March 2022, in what was a powerful statement about protecting our environment. Thanks are extended to local MLAs Mr Harry Harvey and

Mr Colin McGrath for supporting this endeavour. A very successful cultural day for Year 8 pupils in both schools allowed them to see, experience and participate in activities that promoted local, national and global understanding.

Liaison with Agencies Linked to Pastoral Care Provision

Down High School's commitment to the welfare of its pupils has meant that it has maintained excellent relationships with agencies such as Allstate, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Counselling 4 Youth, Love For Life, CALM, Youth Initiatives, Action Mental Health and the PSNI.

Significant links have been established with local agencies to support the school's work in the area of mental health and wellbeing.

CHARITIES

Fostering awareness amongst our pupils of those who are less fortunate is an important part of the school's aims and ethos and a number of charities benefited from the generosity of the pupils and staff in 2021-22. The list below identifies some of the groups receiving support.

07/01/2022	NI Children's Hospice - (Just Giving)	£1,615.00
08/10/2021	Simon Community	730.00
28/01/2022	SAVE THE CHILDREN - Xmas Jumper	782.34
28/01/2022	Children in Need - Uniform and Baps	1079.06
28/02/2022	MS Society	605.00
01/04/2022	Cancer Fund Child - Read On Collections	3290.00
12/04/2022	Autism NI Movin' March - Collection	1,827.00
12/04/2022	DEC Ukraine Appeal - Collection	2,935.00
06/05/2022	Air Ambulance	300.00
30/06/2022	Bring Cian Home - (Just Giving)	1,100.00
		£14,263.40

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION

A voluntary contribution is requested annually to meet additional costs in the running of the school, including those arising from extra-curricular activities. This vital revenue source has a direct impact on pupils' learning, pastoral support and sporting/musical experience. Quite simply, the school cannot function without the voluntary contribution and the Board of Governors is eager to promote its importance as a means of supporting the ethos of the school, especially at a time when school budgets are under serious pressure and traditional provision is threatened. The voluntary contribution cost has not changed in ten years and currently stands at the following:

One Child	£75
Two Children	£125
Three Children	£150
More than Three Children	£150

APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Year	Admissions No	Total Applications <i>i.e. All preferences</i>	Total Admissions (including temporary variations)
2020/21	128	224	138
2021-22	128	188	133
2022-23	128	165	133

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2021-22

LMS financial summary year ended 31/03/2022				
Receipts			Payments	
EA	£3,785,168.00		Teaching Staff	£3,678,053.00
Letting of Facilities	£400.00		Non Teaching Staff	£516,365.00
EF funding	£0.00		Premises	£194,623.00
Earmarked funding (e.g. COVID, Education restart, Engage, Wellbeing)	£221,862.00		Books, Equipment, Facilities, Examinations	£265,594.00
			Contract Cleaning	£109,882.00
			Travel	£1,030.00
			Administration	£43,943.00
			Sundries	£10,583.00
			Carry forward	-£812,643.00
Totals	£4,007,430.00			£4,007,430.00
School Accounts for the year ended 30/06/2022				
Receipts			Payments	
Departments	£9,341.00		Departments	£17,185.00
DHS Societies	£37,100.00		DHS Societies	£19,077.00
Voluntary Contribution	£40,800.00		Trips	£10,819.00
Trips	£46,546.00		School Concerts / Shows	£356.00
Exams	£277.00		Exams	£209.00
School Concerts / Shows	£1,035.00		Extra-Curricular Activity Costs	£16,892.00
Charities	£16,044.00		Charities	£16,442.00
Music Tuition	£6,050.00		Music Tuition	£8,743.00
Commissions received	£548.00		School Events	£8,296.00
Other income	£31,414.00		School publications and promotion	£1,382.00
			Minibus expenses	
			Insurance and professional fees	£2,700.00
			Other expenditure	£14,394.00
Totals	£189,155.00			£116,495.00