

# Cross Country

## County Down Cross Country Championships

On 28th January the County Down Schools' Cross Country Championships were once again held at a muddy Dellamont Country Park. With the wet weather, the course was understandably heavy and indeed it had to be altered to allow the races to continue; credit should go to the organisers and to the Dellamont Country Park staff for ensuring the event could continue. The eighteen Academy athletes didn't let the conditions spoil their success however and in ten races, two athletes claimed Gold and four more qualified for the Ulster Championships at Mallusk.

The winners were the 'in-form' Patrick McNiff (Inter Boys) and Rebekah Nixon (Senior Girls). Both athletes have pedigree on both the track and in cross country and both are in particularly sparkling form at the minute due to intensive off-season training. These two young athletes both proved their worth with dominant performances to claim Gold.

In the Mini Girls' race, Nadia Radcliffe had a superb race to finish 9th overall and qualify for the Ulster Championships. While in the Mini Boys' race, Marcus McNeill also ran brilliantly in a field of over 200 athletes to finish in 15th spot and claim his place in the Ulster Championships. In the Minor Girls' race Ruby McNiff, younger sister of Patrick, showed her natural talent as she cruised around to finish in 7th place in another large field. This was all the more impressive as she is primarily a swimmer and has not run a race this year! The Academy's final qualifier was Bethany Nixon, running in the same race as Ruby, who finished strongly to claim 5th place and her spot in the Championships. These two results, plus great runs from Kathryn McGrath 21st, Leah Donnelly 41st and Lucy Bradshaw 43rd saw the Minor Girls' team finish fourth overall and narrowly miss out on qualification by just one place.

Credit also should go to the Academy's other runners who braved the atrocious conditions to race and each one ran well and gave their all: Hannah Spence,

Charlotte Thompson, Carly Wilson, Rebecca Spence, Elizabeth Little, Katie Little, Adam McKibbin, Jacob Somerville and Thomas McIntosh.

## Ulster Cross Country Championships

Both Patrick McNiff and Rebekah Nixon had strong showings at the Ulster Championships in Mallusk. Patrick stole the plaudits that day when he ran a faultless race in the Inter Boys' event to claim the gold medal and the title Ulster Schools' Cross Country Champion. He led from the very start and despite some close company in the early stages, he powered ahead in the latter half of the race to claim the win by some 30 metres. On the strength of this outstanding performance Patrick was selected to represent Northern Ireland in the London Mini Marathon in April, where he ran an excellent race to finish well up the field. Rebekah Nixon also performed wonderfully on the day and claimed 6th place in the Senior Girls' event. Rebekah went with



the leaders from the start and showed great resilience to fight off challengers to finish in this position.

Elsewhere the Academy also fared well. Nadia Radcliffe in Year 8 ran magnificently in the first race of the day to finish in 16th spot and Marcus McNeil, also Year 8, ran well to finish in 18th spot in his Mini Boys' race. These were two great performances



considering this was their first Ulster Championships for the Academy. The Academy also had two runners in the Minor Girls' race with Ruby McNiff, younger sister of Patrick, running a fine race to finish in 19th place and Bethany Nixon, younger sister of Rebecca, also finishing strongly in 31st place. Both should be congratulated on their efforts and grit in muddy conditions.

## Irish Cross Country Championships

Patrick McNiff and Rebekah Nixon once again took centre stage as they raced last in Sligo in the Irish Schools' Cross Country Championships. Patrick was the star man with a fine podium finish, resulting in 4th place in a stellar field of the best cross country runners in Ireland. This backed up his efforts a fortnight earlier when he won the Ulster title at Mallusk. Rebekah ran a very competitive race to finish 20th, which is no mean feat considering the quality of her fellow runners and considering she has another year in this age category.

All in all it was a very good cross country season for the Academy athletes. Plaudits must of course go to Patrick and Rebecca on their fine achievement on qualifying for the Irish Championships, with a special mention to Patrick on his hard earned and well deserved Ulster title, his second Ulster Cross Country title as a pupil at Banbridge Academy, following on from his Mini Boys title in 2012.



# Track & Field

## District Championships

All the above athletes had qualified for the Ulster Championships with top 3 performances at the District Championship, earlier in May, held at Mary Peters track. At these District Championships Patrick McNiff was a gold medallist in the 3000m and followed this up with a silver medal in the 1500m. We also had a magnificent gold medal for Nadia Radcliffe in the Mini Girls' 800m – a sure sign of the promise this young athlete has. In the Junior Girls' race Elizabeth Little set a new school record to win gold in the Long Jump and she also ran brilliantly to claim silver in the 100m. Suzy Neill also ran well, this time in the Minor Girls' 100m and also claimed silver. Rebecca Nixon had a good day and won silver in the 800m and a bronze in the 1500m and the inter-boys 4 x 100m relay team ran brilliantly to win a bronze medal, while Molly Mathers took bronze in the Minor Girls' Shot Putt. Then finally both Molly and Susie combined with Lynsey Orr and Kelly Gley in the Minor Girls' 4x100m relay to claim a silver medal. These were the best results of the day for the Academy athletes but many more put in good performances, setting personal bests, and finishing well up in the rankings. In all, some 35 athletes represented Banbridge



Academy at the District Championships and all should be commended on giving their full effort on the day.

## Ulster Championships

The Ulster Schools' Athletics Championships took place at the Antrim Forum on Saturday 21st May and Banbridge Academy was well represented in nine different individual events and with two relay teams. While all those who qualified performed well on the day, it was Elizabeth Little in the Junior Girls' 100m and the Minor Girls' 4 x 100m relay team who came away with gold medals and the title of Ulster Schools' Champions!

In the Junior Girls' 100m, Elizabeth ran a magnificent race to win the gold medal in an extremely tight photo-finish. Elizabeth now adds this title to her previous titles in the 100m and the Long Jump. Elizabeth also competed in this year's long jump and this too was extremely tight with Elizabeth finishing fourth, jumping 4.78m and finishing just 5 cm behind the winner.



The Minor Girls' 4x100m relay team also ran a fantastic race to win their semi-final and then ran even better again to win the final and claim the title of Ulster Champions. The team consisted of Suzy Neill, Molly Mathers, Lynsey Orr and Kelly Gley. Their time in the final of 54.36 seconds was also a new school record. Individually, one of the team (Suzy Neill) ran in the 100m final and here she ran brilliantly to a time of 13.5 seconds to finish fourth and narrowly

miss out on the medals. Another team member, Molly Mathers, in the Minor Girls' Shot Putt threw well but was unable to place.

In the Inter Boys' 3000m Patrick McNiff defied illness to finish fourth, narrowly missing out on a medal, but unfortunately this illness meant he was unable to race in his second event of the 1500m. In the Senior Girls' 800m, Rebekah Nixon ran a new school record of 2.24.99 to finish seventh and followed this up an hour later with a great run in the 1500 m to finish fourth in a time of 5.06.35, another new school record. Elsewhere Nadia Radcliffe, our youngest competitor, ran a strong race to finish fifth in the Mini Girls' 800m, a really impressive performance at her debut Ulster Championships. The Intermediate Boys 4 x 100 relay team, consisting of Tom Stannage, Andrew Denver, Harry Campbell and Srinivas Suresh, ran well in their heat to qualify for the final but unfortunately did not manage to get the baton safely around the track in the final.

## Irish Schools' Championships

The Irish Schools' Athletics Championships were held at the Tullamore Harriers track in Co. Offlay on Saturday 2nd June. Elizabeth Little (Year 10) was placed 5th in the Junior Girls' 100m running a school record of 12.88secs. The Minor Girls' 4x100m relay team (Year 9) of Suzy Neill, Molly Mathers, Kelly Gley and Lynsey Orr was also placed 5th with a school record time of 53.93 seconds.



### Inter-Provincial

Elizabeth Little was selected for the Ulster Inter-pro Team to compete in the 4x100m team against Munster, Leinster and Connaught. This was all the more special as Elizabeth was only Year 10 so would be running against girls in Year 12, some two years older. On the day, in Santry Dublin, the team performed magnificently to claim the gold medal for Ulster. Well done Elizabeth!

### Sports day

Unfortunately Sports day had to be called off after only an hour due to bad weather and very few events were completed. A hectic end-of-term meant it was unable to be rescheduled so we had no 'best athletes' this year.

### Interschools

Banbridge Academy athletes had much success at the Banbridge District Interschools' Athletics day held at the Mary Peters Track. All six local schools were in attendance with the Academy joined by Dromore High, St Patrick's College, Newbridge Integrated College, Banbridge High and Rathfriland High. There were competitions at Junior and Senior, boys and girls, with medals individually for the top three places and overall team trophies. The Academy's Junior Girls' team won the team trophy and Suzy Neill won the best individual athlete in that category. The Senior Girls' team tied for the lead in their category but unfortunately lost out on 'wins' count-back, but this meant the girls won the overall title. Elizabeth Little won the best Senior Girl title. The Senior Boys' team also excelled and lost out on the title by just 1 point and in the Junior Boys' race Marc Matthews won the best individual athlete trophy. Many other Academy athletes also medalled



and overall it was a hugely successful day enjoyed by all the athletes.

### Thanks and best wishes to Mrs Camblin

2016 also marks a sad farewell. Mrs Heather Camblin, who for over 40 years has been involved with girls' athletics in the school, is retiring! All members of the Athletics Club, both past and present, would like to wish her an enjoyable and relaxing retirement and would like to thank her for the countless hours of training and competitions she has attended or officiated at over the years. Banbridge Academy athletics will truly miss her dedication.

So all in all it was another successful and enjoyable season for the Banbridge Academy athletes. Well done to everyone!



### In 2016, 19 new school records were set. These were as follows:

Ben Bradshaw	Year 8 Boys	Javelin	19.82 m
Suzy Neill	Year 9 Girls	Discus	21.40 m
Louis O'Neill	Year 9 Boys	Shot Putt	10.40 m
Molly Mathers	Year 9 Girls	Shot Putt	8.07 m
Leah Donnelly	Year 9 Girls	1500m	6 mins 07.0 secs
Suzy Neill, Molly Mathers, Kelly Gley, Lynsey Orr	Year 9 Girls	4x100m Relay	53.93 secs
Elizabeth Little	Year 10 Girls	100m	12.6 secs
Elizabeth Little	Year 10 Girls	Long Jump	4.81 m
Megan Ferguson	Year 10 Girls	Shot Putt	7.66 m
Elizabeth Little, Katie Little	Year 10 Girls	4x100m Relay	57.05 secs
Helena Silva, Gemma Hassan	Year 10 Girls	4x100m Relay	57.05 secs
Tom Stannage	Year 10 Boys	100m	11.7 secs
Rose O'Neill	Year 10 Girls	Triple Jump	8.14m
Thomas McIntosh	Year 11 Boys	800m	2 mins 16.8 secs
Tom Stannage, Matthew Robinson, Andrew Denver, Harry Campbell	Year 11 Boys	4x100m Relay	48.0 secs
Robbie Mathers	Year 11 Boys	Discus	32.23 m
Patrick McNiff	Year 12 Boys	1500m	4 mins 26.0 secs
Patrick McNiff	Year 12 Boys	3000m	9 mins 27.7 secs
Rebekah Nixon	Year 13 Girls	800m	2 mins 24.99 secs
Rebekah Nixon	Year 13 Girls	800m	5 mins 06.36 secs