

# Bar Mock Trial

**Isabelle McKenzie**

At the beginning of September 2021, a group of sixth form students who were interested in participating in the Bar Mock Trial each prepared a discursive speech on a current topic. This was presented to Miss McClelland who, based on the quality of the speech and the confidence of the delivery, then chose pupils to fill the roles of barrister, witness, court clerk, usher and jury.

As soon as practices began, both the barristers and witnesses were given their roles, quickly discovering the challenges ahead. Once familiarised with the cases, the barristers began to assemble their questions, which were to be put to the witnesses. Barristers had to prepare two questions for both cases (examinations in chief and cross examinations) alongside opening and closing speeches. Both of these were to be kept to a tight time limit, which had to be followed meticulously. The prosecution barristers were Abigail Noke, Daniel Moore and Catherine Lonsdale, while the defence barristers were Lara Crothers and Ben Greer.

Meanwhile, the witnesses of Joe Magee, Dylan Harrison, Owen Evans, Rose Widdis, Mia Downey, Simone



Kucina, Kiera McQuaid, Aoife Magowan, Isabelle McKenzie, Pushti Patel and Ellie Lindsay were tasked with memorising the statements specific to their character. A thorough knowledge of these answers was essential for the examination in chief but was particularly important for the cross examination, during which the witness would be rigorously questioned by a barrister from one of the other schools. Here, they had to answer in line with their statement and give convincing responses to a series of unknown questions designed to put them on the spot.

Practice took place every Wednesday from 1:45 until 3:20. This time was extremely valuable not just for rehearsal purposes, but also as it provided an opportunity to ask for and receive feedback from the two barristers who had volunteered to help the team, Severina Kelley and Vikki Singer, both of whom are past pupils of Banbridge Academy. Sev and Vikki were invaluable in explaining more about the legal system and the process of a court trial.

The first case to learn for the competition was R v Summers and was a case concerning intimidation of a witness, while Case 2 was R v Piper where Alex Piper was accused of causing Actual Bodily Harm. Both were complex cases which, in their own ways proved to be challenging. All the team members dedicated hours of their time preparing for whatever they could be asked on competition day. We worked closely as a team and as the competition grew closer, the work began to pay off. Speeches were finalised, answers perfected, and both were rehearsed down to the second.





and expert help was paramount in our preparation for this competition. From advice on writing the opening and closing speeches and guidance on writing questions, the whole team is hugely grateful for their expert help throughout our preparations, we could not have done it without them.

In conclusion, to anyone who has a passion for advocacy or Law and feels that the Bar Mock Trial challenge may interest them - get involved! Our past and current teams have had students from all subject backgrounds including science, mathematics, languages, and drama. Bar Mock can truly be enjoyed by anyone. Our Year 13 members would like to wish the Year 14 the best of luck in their paths to further education as they move on from Banbridge Academy. Those taking part in Bar Mock Trial in 2022 – 2023 are looking forward to competing in person for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic and we can't wait to get started and hopefully improve on last year's result.

Due to Covid restrictions, we still had to compete through Microsoft Teams and were still unable to travel to the High Court in Belfast to perform the cases. This meant dealing with potential issues with sound cutting out and WIFI breaking up. We met in school early one Saturday in September fully prepared and ready to show what we could do. Luckily, things went smoothly, and the technology was on our side. We had to perform two cases back to back this year; during the competition we were set Case 1 twice - prosecution in Round 1 against St Patrick's Grammar and Defence in Round 3 against the Royal School Armagh and Prosecution of Case 2 against Belfast High School. We managed to win 2 out of 3 of our rounds thanks to genuine deliberations from the jury and the hard work and dedication of our teams of barristers and witnesses.

After being judged by a QC, a High Court judge and even a former Chief Justice we came a very creditable second place. Every team member gained valuable transferable skills and we learnt that Bar Mock Trial was often more challenging than expected and at times high pressure. I am confident that all of the team members would agree that everyone

can gain something from the experience. Whether a career in Law is your goal or something in a completely different field, what can be learned from participating in Bar Mock Trial can improve your skills in many areas of work. Our confidence improved, as well as our public speaking, teamwork and thinking on our feet. Despite the difficulty of having to compete online, our team still presented convincing cases throughout.

A special extra note of thanks must be given to our barristers Severina Kelley and Vikki Singer, as their attentive

