

Senior Dance Team

Mia Downey

As the school year began, we all enthusiastically waited for Mrs Neill to announce the reformation of dance team. After not being able to compete for a year due COVID-19, pupils from all year groups were eager to try out for the team. After one quick audition, we split into the junior and senior teams and the hard work began!

We began rehearsals the following week with our coach Ruth Cobb, who worked us hard right from the beginning. We immediately started the choreography for our chosen routine. Ruth had selected the song "You don't even know it" from the hit musical "Everyone's talking about Jamie". It was a dynamic routine which was full of energy yet packed with technical dance. We would learn the choreography with Ruth for 30 minutes and then spent a further 30 minutes cleaning up the routine with Miss Warnock in the Drama Studio. After the first few months of rehearsals Ruth decided to challenge us by entering a second routine, a lyrical dance to "Symphony" by Zara Larsson. It was a big jump from the high energy jazz routine to the delicate lyrical piece, but with lots of extra rehearsals and support from our teachers both



routines looked slick.

Finally, after months of rehearsals, the time came for us to head to our first competition NICMAC in mid-March. We nervously boarded the bus in our brand-new dance team quarter zips and headed to Lisburn Leisure Plex. We were all anxious yet excited to perform. The atmosphere and the support from the audience was incredible and we couldn't wait to get on that stage in our fabulous costumes. We ran on the floor with our heads held high as we knew we had the support of Ruth, Miss

Warnock, Mrs Neill and the juniors. We danced our hearts out and gave both routines our all. After a quick break, the part we were all waiting for arrived...the awards. Both teams sat in a massive circle knowing that no matter the outcome, we had all given everything we had. We were delighted that "You don't even know it" placed third! Knowing the standard of our competition, we knew it was a great achievement to come away with a medal. Our faces lit up as we definitely felt a great difference between how we boarded the bus that morning, and



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how excited we were that afternoon. Unfortunately, our lyrical piece didn't place, yet we left feeling more determined than ever. After a quick trip to McDonald's, we returned to school with smiles on our faces.

With our final competition quickly approaching we got straight back into the sports hall and continued practising with Ruth. Our final competition was the Ulster's, which was being held in the Eikon centre. Knowing this would be our final time dancing these routines together, we gave it everything we had. We were overjoyed to find out that we had

placed first in both of our routines! It was an incredible way to end the year knowing that everyone's hard work had paid off.

This year, some of the dancers had the opportunity to perform duets and trios. The lyrical trio choreographed and performed by Year 13 pupils Mia Downey, Ruby Bushby and Lauren Bell placed first at NICMAC and at Ulster's! Samara Radcliffe and Caitlyn Colgan (Year 13) performed a duet choreographed by Miss Warnock, which placed 3rd in the intermediate section at Ulster's. Year 14 pupils, Leah Crawford and Mia McAviney performed

a moving duet to Celine Dion which placed 3rd in the senior section at Ulster's!

On behalf of the entire team, I would like to thank Ruth, our choreographer and coach for her creative direction, dedication and for always pushing us to be our best! I'd also like to thank Mrs Neill and Miss Warnock as without them dance team would never have happened! Their dedication, support and hard work is so appreciated as dance team played a big part of our school lives. Thank you for always cheering us on!



Junior Dance Team

Freya Downey

After missing out on dance class over the last 2 years due to the pandemic, everyone was eager for a brand-new year, exciting new routines and competitions.

Our dedicated dance teacher, Ruth Cobb, kindly came into school every Friday afternoon and taught us our brand-new routine. Our chosen routine for the Junior Dance Team was "The Schuyler Sisters" from the musical Hamilton, a dynamic number loved by all. We started rehearsing in September and after weeks of dance practice, falling over, messing up (but with lots of fun and smiles), we all pulled together, and everyone played their part. We looked amazing!

In March 2022, we had NICMAC - our first dance competition of the year. We all looked very stylish in our dance costumes, and we were all very excited to show off our hard work. We danced our very best and gave it our all, but sadly we didn't place...this time! Although everyone was disappointed, Ruth and the teachers restored our confidence and reminded us that we had to work harder for the Ulster's competition which was coming up in a couple of weeks, and that's exactly what we did.

Over the next few weeks, we had to make sure everyone was perfect. The day finally arrived; we all eagerly ran onto the bus, attempting to conceal the fact that we were all very nervous. However, we still laughed and sang throughout the journey to the Eikon Centre...we had finally arrived! We were one of the dances in the afternoon so all we could do until then was remain calm, practise, be patient and watch everyone else. The competition was very intimidating and of a very high standard. We waited for our turn with butterflies in our stomachs.

When the time came, we walked on



with our shoulders back and heads held high...ready for action. Show time! As we ran on to perform, it was so reassuring to hear all the seniors and Mrs Neill and Miss Warnock cheering us on and this made us determined to try our best and that's exactly what we did! When the music started to fade, we all took a bow and had massive smiles on our faces; we did it! Then, there was the agonising wait for the results! It felt endless. The team and I stood in the middle of the stage and waited for our category to be announced. We all held our breaths in anticipation and crossed our fingers.

Finally, we heard the adjudicator announce, "First place goes to... Banbridge Academy with The Schuyler Sisters!" We all leapt up and cheered whilst everyone clapped as we walked up and grabbed our gold medals, which the team and our amazing teachers worked so very hard for. I am now so excited for this year and finding out what Ruth and the teachers have planned for us! To celebrate another successful year of junior dance team, the teachers organised a celebration for us at "The Vault" in Banbridge. It was a great night spent with friends, pizza and even some prizes!

Thank you so much to Ruth, Mrs Neill, and Miss Warnock for all their help and dedication. We are so thankful and happy that everyone's hard work paid off!

