

# Netball

## Netball

**Nicole Beggs (Coach)**

This year netball at Banbridge Academy had its best year yet! The girls have shown great enthusiasm and have all worked so hard to finish the season off with fantastic wins or great improvement from their first match.

As you read each report from the team captains, it is evident that each squad had a busy season and came across some tough opponents but they never let this deter their determination at each fixture.

Both Schools' League and Schools' Plate Finals Day were a highlight of the season - with five teams no less in attendance! The Senior B squad came away with the win and they fully deserved winning in extra time.

We are thankful this year for the great support of local sponsors: O'Rourke Motors, McCormick Fleet Solutions, Ballydown Kids' Academy and Perfect Image Beauty.

I would also like to thank Miss Hall and Mrs Adair for their help this year coaching; it is very much appreciated.

We enjoyed a wonderful Awards Night in the Vault in April, where the girls enjoyed great food and chat before moving on to the distribution of awards.

**Intermediate Player of the Year**

Lucy Megaw (not pictured)

**Intermediate Most Improved**

Ciara Patton

**Senior A Player of the Year**

Oliveen O'Rourke

**Senior A Most Improved**

Selena Cunningham

**Senior B Player of the Year**

Grace Wills

**Senior B Most Improved**

Katie Scott



## Junior/Minor Awards

We had a fun afternoon with pizza, music and games on a Tuesday afternoon to celebrate the success of the Junior A and B and Minor squads. The girls have shown great attitude and potential throughout their season, coming up against some strong well-developed teams. I am so proud of all the girls and excited to see their talent progress in the coming years.

Congratulations to all this year's award winners:

**Minor Player of the Year**

Abbie Magill

**Minor Most Improved**

Maddison Wilson

**Junior A Player of the year**

Gracie Johnstone

**Junior A Most Improved**

Tara Kennedy

**Junior B Player of the Year**

Ellie Walker

**Junior B Most Improved**

Ruby Archer



**Minor winners**



**Junior A winners**



**Minor and Junior squads**



# Netball

## George Royal Academy Visit

We had the privilege of welcoming George Royal Academy this year to play a netball match against a mix of our Senior A and B squads.

George Royal Academy is a non-profit private school for the underprivileged students in George, South Africa. The students receive full bursaries providing them with quality education, while also tending to their basic needs including food, transport and clothing. The reality for most students in townships in South Africa is that classrooms are overcrowded and education is poor. GRA believes access to quality education is crucial for uplifting students and giving them opportunities to bring about change.

Their Northern Ireland Netball Tour is a culmination of their academic and sporting time at the school - 2nd March until the 23rd of March in which they played 11 games and had a 100% win record.



Our girls really enjoyed the competitive game and loved watching the style and different skills the GRA girls brought to the court on the day. We enjoyed some fun and food afterwards with everyone.

The tour is funded by local NI businesses, churches and schools.



## Netball Fundraiser

This year we had our annual fundraiser to raise money for our netball funds.

We had numerous mixed teams playing in a tournament on a Monday afternoon. It was great fun and the winning team got their hands on the winning trophy kindly donated from Gransha Trophies. Thank you to all that took part.



# Netball

## Senior 'A'

**Oliveen O'Rourke (Captain)**

### TEAM:

Oliveen O'Rourke (C)  
 Catherine Black (VC)  
 Selena Cunningham  
 Sasha Herron  
 Lois Ginnif  
 Ellie Lindsay  
 Katie Mulligan  
 Katie Scott  
 Grace Wills  
 Megan Williams  
 Lara Crothers  
 Brooke Gilliland  
 Zara Moore

This past year has been a brilliant year for netball in Banbridge Academy! We started the year off with a very successful fundraiser in the form of a mixed netball tournament, which saw students from fifth year upwards taking part after school. There was great fun had by all, with the winning team taking home a trophy kindly supplied by Gransha Engraving. Overall this was a great afternoon, while fundraising for new netball dresses.

Moving into the season we started the Senior Netball NI League very well, winning against St Ronan's with a score of 28-18 at home. For our second round we travelled to St Paul's where after leading for the first half, St Paul's managed to gain the lead again with a final score of 28-23. Moving onto our third round we were hopeful for our last match against a very strong Sacred Heart side, so when we met them at home, we were expecting a very tough match and after a hard fought sixty minutes, Sacred Heart took the win with a score of 26-17. After an unfortunate end to the League, we then put all our focus to the Netball NI Senior Shield Competition.

In our First round of the Shield we met a very strong Belfast High team in Lisburn Racquets, who unfortunately knocked us out of the Shield meaning we progressed to the Semi Final of the Senior Plate. Here we met Rathmore in Lisburn Racquets; the team worked brilliantly together and the score went

in our favour winning- meaning we were heading to Finals Day!

During our finals preparation, we had the pleasure of hosting Sports Academy George during their Northern Ireland Netball Tour. We had a brilliant morning getting to know the girls over lunch and the wonderful work that their school does for the children in George, South Africa. Then we played a very tough match against them in the afternoon, where we unfortunately lost but we were very grateful for the opportunity to play such a brilliant team.

the win with a score of 32-28. It was a difficult loss to take, especially knowing it was so close, along with it being most of the team's last match for Banbridge Academy after playing for seven years. Through the sport we truly made friends for life and each of us will be forever grateful for the opportunity to play a final representing our school, for our last match with some of our best friends.

To finish the Season off we had our awards night in the Vault, Banbridge and it was brilliant to catch up after the season ended. After our wonderful meal the awards were handed out, with



After all our preparations and extra training, we were heading to finals day feeling prepared and kitted out in our new fleeces that had been kindly sponsored by O'Rourke Motors.

In the final we faced Glenola, a very strong team that we have played multiple times throughout the years so we knew the match would be tough and that was seen at half time when they led by 11 points. We did however manage to dominate the third quarter, closing the gap to only 2 points. Unfortunately we didn't manage to close the gap further in the last quarter, with Glenola taking

Oliveen O'Rourke getting Senior Player of the Year and Selena Cunningham getting Most Improved Player. It was a brilliant season and a great way to finish out seven great years at the Academy.

Thank you to all the staff who helped throughout the year, especially Mrs Adair helping with games and Mrs Beggs, Head of Netball, who we would also like to congratulate on being a finalist of NNI schools' coach of the year. She truly deserved it after putting in so much time and effort to ensure the continuous progression of Netball in school.





# Netball

## Northern Ireland U17 Selection for Grace Wills

I was first introduced to Netball in Primary 7 at Bridge Primary when Sarah Porter, the council Sports Development Officer, brought a taster session into school. I instantly fell in love with the sport and joined Banbridge Netball Club soon after. When I moved to Banbridge Academy I continued developing my skills in games and afterschool. My initial position was in Goal Defence and I was selected for the U13 Southern Area Development Squad. This was my first real taste of competitive netball and I just loved it!

Unfortunately, Covid hit, and lockdown prevented any game time or training and while this was frustrating, I used this time to do some online courses to widen my netball knowledge. I took part in the NetballNI Introduction to coaching and umpiring courses online. When netball play eventually resumed, I tried an attacking position and was delighted to captain Banbridge U16's team into the League finals! My coach Kate Harrup then nominated me for Northern Ireland U17 trials, where I was up against 200 other players and was successful in making the development squad. This was an amazing opportunity to represent my country on an international level.

As a squad, we worked towards trials for the European Championships which were happening in Antrim in February 2023. NetballNI provided Strength and Conditioning coaching at Ulster University and we trained weekly with the national coaches working on game play and tactics. In November 2022 I found out that I had been selected for a Mary Peters' Trust Award to help with European training costs for our squad, this was such an honour. It was a nervous wait however to see which squad members would qualify

to represent Northern Ireland at the European Championships. Finally, the squad was selected and not only was I chosen as Goal Shooter/Attack, but I was also made Team Captain!

The European Championships ran over 4 days in February 2023. It was such an exciting time! We were in the Challenge



Cup section and were drawn to play in a group with the Isle of Man, Gibraltar, Switzerland, and the Republic of Ireland. We knew it would be no mean feat as there were two matches on some days. We stayed close to Antrim Forum over the tournament and it was so exciting to have great facilities and such professional help with access to team physios and ice baths etc. The squad was able to bond and get to know each other more, which just added to the build-up.

On the first day we faced the Republic of Ireland and unfortunately nerves took over and the expectation and scale of the event got to many of us, as the result didn't go in our favour. However, we rallied around and on day 2 we came out hungrier than ever. Our first match on the second day was against Switzerland and we got our first win of the day. Our passes were stronger, more accurate and created more space for better match play. With fewer nerves and the previous match defeat in the back of our minds, we were motivated and pushed hard for our first win. I was even awarded Player of the Match.

The turnaround was quick and we tried to recover quickly to face the Isle of Man that afternoon. We seemed to find our flow and came away with another convincing win! Our streak continued and we finished our tournament with another win against Gibraltar and a silver medal. I had such an amazing experience that week and made so many netball friends along the way. The support I had was amazing and I would do it all over again if I had the chance!

After the Europeans the excitement did not stop, as I was chosen to be an NI ambassador for NetballNI. Following this I went back to club netball and made the decision to transfer to Kingsway Netball Club, where I

made my senior debut for their Premier League 2nds. Upon returning to school netball, Mrs Beggs coached us to win our school senior league and reached two finals for the Schools' Cup, which is such an achievement!

What a year it has been! I really hope that I can continue developing and look forward to trialling for U19/U21s in September again and to see what the future holds.

# Netball

## Senior 'B' Team



The 2022/2023 season started with matches in the Netball Northern Ireland Schools' League. The girls met Friends' School Lisburn on our home court and walked away with a win, leaving the court with a final score of 30-16. Emily Waddell was player of the match for her tremendous efforts throughout.

We then played Wallace High School and after an intense 4 quarters, we walked away with a win of 32-23 that secured our position in the final of the league. Katie Scott as centre was recognised for her efforts in crucially feeding the ball into the shooters and for her key intercepts. On February 9th 2023, we met Sullivan Upper in the final of the Netball Northern Ireland Schools' League. It was a nail biting match from start to finish. The score tied at 6-6 by the end of the first quarter and then again at 13-13 by half time. Tensions were high and everyone was playing their best. With still nothing separating the score by the end of a tight third quarter which sat at 17-17, everything was still to play for. In the final quarter, we pulled ahead but it finished 21-21 and so was put to extra time. Due to amazing intercepts from our defence and vital teamwork we secured and maintained a lead which meant when the whistle blew, the final score was 25-23. Emotions were high and we knew our determination and the

dedication of our coach had paid off as we picked up gold.

In the Northern Ireland Schools' Shield Competition, we were ready to fight for the Plate. Getting a bye in the first round gave us time to gel as a team, polish off our set plays and be prepared to meet notoriously tough teams. We met Glenlola Collegiate to play for a place in the semi-finals and after an intense 4 quarters, we came out on top and progressed to the next round with excitement but with the knowledge that the job was not yet finished. Our team met Down High School and we walked away with the win which earned us a spot in the NI Netball School Shield Final. This gave us confidence as a team, settled our nerves and reinforced our match play tactics. Heading into Finals Day the tensions were heightened and the reality of what we were playing for kicked in as we made our way to Lisburn Racquets. We were against a very skilful and ruthless Belfast High School side. Despite our explosive passion, consistent fight for interceptions and flowing circle rotation which helped us stay in the game, we walked away with silver medals rather than the Plate.

Overall, the Senior Bs had an outstanding year, bonding as a team, lifting both gold and silver medals and preparing for next

year's season. We have learnt a lot as a team and developed massively, all of which we will put into practice in next year's season.

### TEAM

Katie Mulligan (C)  
Grace Wills (VC)  
Katie Scott  
Megan Williams  
Lilia McKinney  
Taylor Barlow  
Eva Hampton  
Lois Clydesdale  
Eimear Simpson  
Emily Waddell



# Netball

## Intermediate Team

Intermediate netball was tough and hard hitting this season. We had a strong squad of 13 ready for on court action every match. Alex King captained the team with Lassara Magennis being vice captain. We faced challenging schools in the Netball NI schools' league, starting with St Paul's away. Despite an outstanding performance from our defenders, the team finished with an unfortunate loss.



We had lots of matches in the league with a strong home win against St Mary's High winning 30-14. Thanks to super effort from shooters and tight defenders who got the ball up through centre court to keep the scoreboard ticking over.

Our team was in the Netball NI Shield Competition passing through round one via a forfeit from Rathmore getting a

place in round two, which unfortunately finished in a narrow defeat against Lagan College that brought the end to our 2022/23 season. Many thanks to our Coach Mrs Beggs.

**Team:** Alex King, Lassara Magennis, Jessica McCollough, Anna Atkins, Olivia Mcdowell, Ellie Cousins, Lucy Megaw, Kristen Ginnif, Arianne Bell, Ciara Patton, Rachel Greer, Lucy Hodgen and Rachel Moore.

# Minor Team

**Sophie Black - Captain**

The 2023 Minor team consisted of 13 players: Sophie Black (Captain), Casey Cousins (Vice Captain), Gwenan Adam, Erin Dempsy, Abbie Magil, Maddison Wilson, Isabel Clyde, Nancy McCusker, Abbey Cherry, Juila Nesbitt, Tara Crawford, Chelsey Joslin and Anna Bell. Considering this was the first year we all played together, we did very well.



Our first match was on November 7th; it was at home against Killicomaine Junior High School. This was an extremely close game and it ended up a draw, with the final score being 10-10. Abbie Magil was awarded player of the match for her amazing effort throughout the court.

The second match we played was against St Mark's High School on November 21st. This time we were able to pull ahead and win with a score of 12-7.

Player of the match was awarded to two players, for always being aware of the space that they could go into to safely receive the ball; it was received by Abbie Magil and Casey Cousins.

The next match we played was on December 5th. We played against St Ronan's. We were able to hold our own all the way through until half time, with the score being 5-4. Then St Ronan's decided to step up to take the win in the last couple of seconds.

It was extremely close and none of us knew who would win. The scores were

9-10 to them. We had an outstanding performance from Nancy McCusker who stepped in for Sophie Black as Goalkeeper.

Our final match was against St Mary's on December 15th. All the players were amazing in this match, and it was a great way to end our season. This time there was a clear winner and we were able to get an astonishing 8-0 win.



# Netball

## Junior 'A' Netball

**Tasja Sneddon (Captain)**

The Junior As netball team have had a great season this year. We played a total of 10 matches between league, shield and friendlies. In the Northern Ireland school league we won 3/4 matches, playing and beating St Ronan's 18-11, Lurgan Junior high 33-7 and St Paul's 16:6 with our player of the match being Wing Defender Zara Nicholl. Unfortunately we lost narrowly to Our Lady's in our semi final league match but held our own due to the great intercepts of player of the match, Ruby Johnstone as goal keeper. In the Netball Northern Ireland Shield Competition we persevered through Round 1 against St Paul's and round 2 against Ballymena Academy winning 10:9. Unfortunately in the semi finals we played against our Junior B team due to the match ups. We continued to the finals playing against Glenlola Collegiate in a

tight match with only a couple of goals separating us at halftime. However in the final quarter, Glenlola pulled ahead leaving a final score of 14-20, bringing the season to an end. We are very proud of everyone who won awards, especially Gracie Johnstone who won the Player Of The Year and Tara Kennedy winning most improved.

I am glad to have been a part of this squad this year with my teammates; Ruby Johnstone, Gracie Johnstone, Emma Newell, Zara Nicholl, Grace Mussan, Christina Bickerstaff, Tara Kennedy and Lexie Kerr (vice captain).

I am proud of the squad's successes and achievements and hope for the team to do even better next year with the help of our Coach Nicole Beggs.



## Junior 'B' Team

**Abigail Walker (Captain)**

Our Junior B netball team started the year with our team of twelve, working towards the Northern Ireland School League. Our first league match was in November at home against Killicomaine but unfortunately, we lost 8-2. We continued working hard and although we suffered a second defeat against Sacred Heart, we were making progress. Soon after we played St Mark's High and left overjoyed having won 10-6, feeling more like a team and excited to continue to improve. Our final League match was another win against St Mary's. Sadly, we did not make it into the final of the League, however we qualified for the Shield.

In addition to our competition matches we played a friendly match against Dromore High, which was an enjoyable experience.

The next match in the Shield was against Down High and our 9-7 win sent us into

the semi-finals - against our very own 'A team'! While we lost, it was great to see the friendships on the court between both teams working towards the final.

I loved seeing our team coming together this year and to be a part of the experience with my teammates: Mya Jess, Rebekah Mathews, Abigail McConvil, Evie Cowan, Ellie Walker, Caitlin McErlean, Izzie Taylor, Ruby Archer, Clionhna McGrath, Ella Bell and Charlotte Hampton (vice-Captain). We couldn't have achieved what we did without each other match by match, both on the court and supporting from the side.

Congratulations to those who achieved 'Player of the Match' including: Ellie, Ella, Ruby and Clionhna. We finished the year off with a pizza party and prize giving, with Ellie Walker winning 'Player of the Year' and Ruby Archer winning 'Most Improved'. I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the team this year and



can't wait to see what happens in the year to come. A special thanks must go to our incredible coach Mrs Beggs who has encouraged and supported us week by week.



# Netball

## U13 & U15 Southern Development Squads



**Well done to Maisie Nicholl (Year 8) and Sophie Black (Year 9) who were both selected for the U13 Northern Ireland Southern Development squad. The girls worked hard at training sessions throughout the year and had several matches against the other Northern Ireland Regions.**



**U15 girls pictured with Mr McLoughlin and coach Nicole Beggs**

## Netball Experiences: Year 8

The netball team here has given me some great experiences and I have made lots of new friends while playing for them. We've played a few teams like Wallace and Dromore High, which was good fun as the games were just friendlies. I loved playing netball in Year 8! It was really fun; I made a lot of new friends and learnt so many new skills. I played in all of the matches against Rathmore Grammar, Wallace and Dromore. It was so fun to go to different schools and play against them. Our coach Mrs Beggs is really fun and a very good coach, as she is always identifying ways that the team could improve on for next time. I've really enjoyed playing netball and being able to progress throughout the year and I look forward to playing next year as a proper team in the league.

**Alexandra Ervine**

My name's Lily and I'm in Year 8 and have really enjoyed playing netball this year. Apart from being very fun, it was useful to help me learn skills that I will take on for my next year in netball. I would highly recommend any Year 8 to get involved as it's a great experience, made better by a lovely coach.

**Lily Staffor**

My experience with netball in Year 8 has been really good. Mrs Beggs is a really lovely coach who always encourages you



**Banbridge Academy v Dromore High School Friendly match**

to do your best and contribute to netball. You're able to pick netball for games and it's always fun playing mini matches with your friends. There are also two teams that you could be selected for. I was part of the B team and was selected as captain for our first match against Dromore. You get to play in several matches and cheer on your friends whenever you're not on court. Overall Year 8 netball is a really good experience and is worth joining.

**Maja Sulkowska**

At the start of the year I wanted to play netball, but I wasn't good at it. I decided to go to after school netball to try and get better. Mrs Beggs is a great coach and I soon became very good at the

sport. I was put onto the B team and was captain for one of the matches. I really enjoyed my first year playing netball and I hope that I will continue to get better at it. I hope many other young girls will play netball or at least have a go at it.

**Ellen Mussen**

I loved playing netball in Year 8! It was really fun as I made a lot of new friends and learnt so many new skills. I played in all of the matches, the one against Rathmore Grammar, Wallace and against Dromore. It was so fun to go to different schools and play against them. Our coach Mrs Beggs is really fun and a very good coach.

**Eva McKay**