

## Growing Together – BA Horticulture Group

Banbridge Academy's Horticulture Group continued to expand this year, with a growing number of senior pupils getting involved and also with the introduction of a Junior Horticulture Group. Our senior group, led by Reuben Robinson and Luca Scappaticci, were tasked with the responsibility of setting up our newly installed polytunnel. The Horticulture Group, in conjunction with the Eco-Schools' Committee, successfully applied for a Bupa Foundation green grant which was used to fund the installation of a polytunnel on the school grounds. The tunnel was installed before Easter, just in time for the Spring planting season.

The team began by filling two raised beds in the tunnel, with a mixture of topsoil and compost and then filled crates that had been donated by a local greengrocer, with the intention of planting a range of vegetables. Once this task was complete, we were ready to begin planting. The raised beds were planted with strawberries, sweet peppers, tumbling tom tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, green beans and courgettes. The crates were planted with sweetcorn, beetroot, red and green cabbage, parsley, lettuce, pak choi, cucumber, Brussel sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower.

The Junior Horticulture Group, made up of pupils from Year 8 to Year 10, took over the care of the polytunnel in the Summer term as the senior pupils went on study leave. The pupils showed great enthusiasm and took a collective responsibility for ensuring the



*James Kerr, Matthew Harkness, Aaron Wharton, Nikki Cheuk, Jasmine Li, Olivia De La Torre, Reuben Robinson, Luca Scappaticci, Sean Corrigan*

plants were well watered, fed and weed-free. They were also involved, under the guidance of Mr McKinney, with the installation of a water-butt and drip irrigation system to keep the plants watered during the Summer holidays.

Throughout the year the team made good use of the greenhouse by growing a range of flowering plants from seeds, bulbs and cuttings. In early autumn Coleus and Ornamental cabbages were grown from seed and used to fill planters throughout the school grounds. From February onwards the greenhouse was utilised to the maximum, growing a full range of bedding plants and perennials from seed and bulb. Plants grown from seed included annuals such as: snapdragons, night-scented stock, cosmos, sweet pea, petunia and lobelia; edibles such as cucumber, chilli peppers and cerise tomatoes; perennials from tubers such as dahlia, begonia and kniphofia and from cuttings such as geranium and pelargonium. The team also worked hard to cut back the native wildflower patch at the front of the school in autumn, in preparation for Spring flowering.

Work has also begun on the installation of further raised beds in the incoming academic year and a garden area adjacent to the



polytunnel is beginning to take shape with rhubarb, sweet potato and black-eyed susan already planted. If you are interested in our work, the group has a noticeboard in the science corridor and meets every Wednesday and Thursday after school.

Please speak to Mrs Tully if you have an interest in joining!

