

# Netball

## BA Netball Season

*Mrs Beggs*

Banbridge Academy Netball Teams have had an exciting season this year, showcasing remarkable talent and teamwork. With a strong roster of dedicated players, the teams have been competing in the new look Schools Netball League Blitz Days and Cup/Plate Competitions, consistently demonstrating their skills on court. The players have shown great sportsmanship, which has contributed to their success!

The Banbridge Academy Minor A Netball team had a brilliant season in their first year competing in Netball NI Schools' Competitions. For some of the team it is their first taste of competitive netball and for others, like Maisie Nicholl U15 NI Development player, a first chance to play with their school peers on a team. Having a mixture of skills and abilities on one team, has really developed the skills across all players. The girls won their Minor League Division against Lagan College in the final and then competed on Finals Day on 15th March for the Minor Plate. Unfortunately coming up against a strong St Dominic's side, they didn't get the win-but what a great season this young team had!

The Intermediate B Team had their League Division Final against Carrick Academy on 11th April. The girls have worked hard this season but unfortunately just missed out on the win. The team have shown great determination in matches, just missing out in a semi final place in the Intermediate Shield also this season.

The Senior Team showed how far they have come as a team since Year 12 by winning their Senior League Division Final against Ballymena Academy 32-21 in a tough match. It has also been a great year for Year 13 player Aimee Trainor, who was selected for the U17 Northern Ireland Squad and competed in Gibraltar in the European Challenge Event.

Coach Mrs Beggs is so proud of all the Netball squads in Banbridge Academy this year. The girls have shown dedication, strength and an example for the pathway of girls making their netball journey in school.



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# Netball



## Seniors

*Grace Wills, Captain*



Senior's netball had a different format this year. The season began with a blitz day to decide competing groups. We met with St Ronan's, St Paul's, Rathmore and Sacred Heart in the blitz. A successful day led us straight into the semifinals, where we met Methody College Belfast.

The starting team consisted of Grace Wills (C), Katie Mulligan (VC), Aimee Trainor, Taylor Barlow, Katie Scott, Megan Williams and Lucy Megaw who worked tirelessly in both defence and attack to get the ball to goal. After the first half Methody had caught on to our strategic play and started to add goals to their own scoreboard- this is when impact

players Lois Clydesdale, Emily Waddell, Eva Hampton and Lilia Mckinney were needed. After these tactical changes we were able to break their flow and come away with a 39-19 win and a place in the final.

In the final we faced Ballymena Academy with a similar team setup; they were a very physical side but with strong determination and persistence we came away with a well-deserved league title, beating them 32-21.

Further on in the season we were part of the Schools' Cup. The Cup got off to a fabulous start beating both Thornhill College (29-9) and Belfast High (35-23).

Both were extraordinarily strong sides, with international players, but our girls showed strength and an eagerness to succeed that is highlighted in the final scoreline of both games.

Although we made it to the Quarter final our success ended as we faced the very experienced and skilful Wallace High School, who took the win in a highly contested match (33-22). Despite this loss our seniors had an exceptionally good season, and we look forward to improving on what we have learnt this season and bring it into the next.



# Netball

## Intermediate A

This season we faced the challenge of a new structure for all matches; it was definitely a new experience and caused some hardships, as it was far from the normal layout of matches.

The Intermediate A team took the change in their stride, led by captain Alexandra King and exceptional coach and mentor Mrs Beggs, and each training session (although they were sometimes tough) helped prepare the team to place their best foot forward on the court. Blitz day started with a tight game through the mid court against Friends' Lisburn, with both teams being equally matched. This created an action-packed game for our mid court players, Alexandra King, Grace Mussen, Grace Johnstone, Zara Nicholl and Jessica McCoullagh, who battled hard against their opposing markers.

With a quick turnover the next match was against Wallace, which challenged our skilled defenders Ciara Patton and Ruby Johnston. Both players created a fantastic amount of turnovers, which led to incredible shots scored from our own Lexie Kerr, Tara Kennedy and Christina Biggerstaff. The final



match of the blitz day was against Down High and each player fought their individual battle to earn us a spot in the Cup section.

We travelled to play Antrim Grammar, which resulted in a very tight game. From this we progressed further to the Plate semi final

against Loretto, which was a tough game of skill and ability unfortunately bringing our season to an end.

A huge congratulations to the whole of the Intermediate A team, their captain Alexandra King and coach Mrs Beggs. Well done girls!

## Intermediate B

*Emma Newell*

The Intermediate B team played in a competitive, high-skilled league this year. The team consisted of the Captain Emma Newell, the Vice Captain Ellie Walker, Abigail Walker, Caitlin McErlean, Charlotte Hampton, Ruby Archer, Cliodhna McGrath, Tasja Sneddon and Ella Bell.

This year all teams had to play a blitz day to see what division they would be in. The 'Inter bs' got put in a very difficult league against St Paul's, St Mary's, St Malachy's and St Colman's. After the challenge of playing back to back matches, despite the cramping muscles and shortness of breath, we won 2 out of 4 matches and ended up coming out as 2nd overall. It was safe to say that this was a very successful day for our first run as a team.

Unfortunately, the Shield was not meant to be in our possession this year. Despite the incredible win of 34-5 against Carrick Grammar, we lost in the second round against Ballymena Academy. This didn't stop us

though. With our heads held high, we spotted our mistakes and decided how we were going to improve to go further in the League.

The League was not easy to say the least. After hours upon hours of training and hard-work put in by the girls, there was no doubt we earned our place in the final. To get there we had to play against very skilful teams such as Antrim Grammar and Lagan College, but as a team we worked together with blood, sweat and tears to achieve the well deserved win. However, the final was not our day. Every single girl on the court put their heart and soul into their performance but unfortunately it was just not enough. Even though we were in the lead most of the match, Carrick Grammar managed to pull through a two goal win.

As a team we played flawlessly on the court together; it was like we grew up together as a team. We knew who to throw to and when. We knew who would be where when we



needed them. We knew what to say when the team needed guidance. As a whole, I think everyone can agree with me that it was a very successful season with the wins outweighing the losses.



# Netball



## Minors

The Minor team consisted of Lauren McCallister (Captain), Maisie Nicholl (Vice Captain), Poppy Rodgers, Kelsey McGaffin, Louise Colgan, Poppy Smyth, Lily Stafford, Maja Sulkowska, Eva McKay and Scarlett Carson.

We started the season with a 'Blitz Day' on 9th November at Sacred Heart. There were four other schools there; we played Our Lady's, St Ronan's, St Paul's and Sacred Heart and we ended up placing in Division 5.

On January 29th, we played the semi final of the League and we beat Regent House 20-15; then on 19th of February, we played the final of the League and beat Lagan College 21-2, winning Division 5.

We then played Methody in the quarter final of the Plate and won 15-6, progressing then on the 8th of March to the semi-final, where we played against Wallace and won 24-19.

Then on the 15th of April, came finals day where we unfortunately lost against St Dominic's 27-8.

Last season was a great experience; we all really enjoyed playing together and we did very well.





# Netball

## Minors

*Maddison Wilson and Abbie Magill*

**The Minor A netball team was made up of**

**11 players:**

Abbie Magill (C)

Maddison Wilson (VC)

Abi Cherry

Casey Cousins

Nancy McCusker

Erin Dempsey

Emma Baird

Isabel Clyde

Sophie Black

Julia Nesbitt

Retha Matlhodi

Our training on a Thursday (3:30-4:30) consisted of ball work, skills and match play.

The season started off with a blitz day where the team played 4 matches to determine which league they would play in. The team had a successful win against St. Ronan's, winning the match 6-3 and giving them a place in the Plate.

In the Plate the team had a very close match that eventually resulted in Banbridge coming



out victorious to win in the quarter final 10-7 against Cookstown. Unfortunately they were knocked out of the Plate after losing the semifinal against St. Dominican.

They had another opportunity to compete in the Cup later in the season. Our first match was against St. Patrick's Dungannon, where the girls had their best win of the season. In this match the defence worked tirelessly

to win back the ball. The mid court skilfully worked the ball up the court to the shooters, who shot with great precision to score points. This hard-work resulted in a win of 18-2.

However in the second round of the Cup, the girls lost to St. Dominic's. Overall the girls had a great season with lots of great play alongside some unfortunate losses.

## Year 8 Pupil Highlights

"My highlight of netball 2023-2024 is being selected for the team to play against Wallace and my favourite thing about netball is making lots of friends."

**Ellen Hanna 8A**

"I really enjoyed netball in Year 8; it was a great experience and a great extracurricular activity that let me make many friends."

**Ellia Parkes 8A**

"My favourite thing about playing netball is making lots of new friends and gaining new skills."

**Isabelle Duggan 8A**

"I enjoyed netball in Year 8 as I made new friends with the same interests as me and I got to learn more about netball."

**Heidi Meeke 8A**





# Netball



## Northern Ireland Netball

### Maisie Nicholl

After completing the U13 NI Netball Academy, I was lucky to be selected in September 2023 to continue with the U15 NI Netball Academy. There were two stages to selection and then the final squad was chosen. There were 18 of us and we trained twice a month in Gilford Leisure Centre.

As well as the physical training, I attended

online courses about food and nutrition and female health as part of the program. The training was very challenging and has really helped me develop as a player. We then had some competitive matches over a few weeks against other NI Academy areas and we ended up coming second to a very strong Belfast squad. I was very proud of my team and was delighted to have been made captain. My time

in the NI U15 Netball Academy was amazing and the coaches (Emma and Sinead) were very passionate about our development, both on and off the court. I'm delighted to say that I am back again this year as part of the squad and I can't wait to develop and improve even more!



### Aimee Trainor

Following selection onto the U17 NI Short squad, as a squad of 12 we trained together every other weekend in the build up to our Netball Europe Competition. Training camps were organised and we developed into a strong team. In March 2024, we travelled to Gibraltar to compete against the Isle of Man, Switzerland, and Gibraltar.

On day 2, we came up against the Isle of Man. This was our toughest match, but we came away with the win of 56-24. Through this match, it allowed us to adapt to a different style of play and learn how to counter their defence.

On day 3, we had our third match against Switzerland; this was also a win of 89-25. Switzerland were a very respectable team, who we found to be a hard working team putting in effort until the final whistle. On our final day, we had our last match against Gibraltar. This win of 71-25 secured us Netball Europe U17 Challenge Champions!

My experience of Netball Europe was unforgettable and it was a very valuable experience. Being selected onto the squad allowed me to learn how best to fill my body to play my best game.





# Netball

## Awards Night

It was a great season for Netball at Banbridge Academy this year. All teams have shown great determination and confidence, and Coach Mrs Beggs is proud of all the girls. Netball is thriving as a sport in the Academy with several teams across the year groups. The girls' finished their season with 2 league wins while two more teams made it to their finals. All teams competed strongly in their competitions throughout the year and the future is looking bright with over thirty Year 8 pupils training every week. Coach Mrs Beggs is proud of all girls involved.

Thanks also to Mrs Adair, Miss Gordon and Mrs Hetherington for their help during the school year. A great season for the Academy!



### Minors

Most Improved – Kelsey McGaffin  
Player of Year – Maisie Nicholl

### Juniors

Most Improved – Abi Cherry  
Player of Year- Abbie Magill

### Inter B

Most improved- Cliodna McGrath  
Player of Year- Caitlin McErlean  
(Not pictured)

### Inter A

Most Improved – Christina Biggerstaff  
Player of Year- Alex King

### Seniors

Most Improved – Lucy Megaw  
Player of Year- Aimee Trainor