

GLENLOLA COLLEGIATE

Prize Distribution 2015 – Headmaster’s Speech

Good evening ... **Lady Hermon, Alderman Graham, Mr Weir, Mr Butler, fellow Principals, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen and Prize-winners.**

We are pleased and honoured that you have been able to join us on this happy occasion to celebrate with us the academic achievements and successes enjoyed by our pupils in the past year. As always, there have been many and there is a great deal of which to be proud, so make yourselves comfortable as this may take some time.

I am delighted also to welcome Kelly Gallagher, Paralympian extraordinaire and former pupil of Glenlola Collegiate.

Kelly, thank you for accepting our invitation and for agreeing to be part of tonight's Prize Distribution Ceremony.

Kelly was born 18 May not very many years ago and attended Glenlola Collegiate from 1996 – 2002. After completing her A-levels she took up study at the University of Bath, graduating with a degree in Mathematics.

Kelly started skiing for the first time when she was 17 on a trip to Andorra and began working with Charlotte Evans, from Kent, in late 2010, just months after finishing fourth in the Giant Slalom at the Vancouver Games with previous guide Claire Robb.

In January 2011 Kelly became the first British athlete to win a medal at the IPC World Championships. Competing with Charlotte, the pair won the silver medal in the slalom and bronze in the giant slalom at the event held in Sestriere only five weeks after they started working together.

She is the first athlete from Northern Ireland to compete in the Winter Paralympics and won Britain's first ever Winter Paralympic gold medal at Sochi in 2014

In recognition of these outstanding achievements, Kelly was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2014 Birthday Honours for services to sport for people with a visual impairment.

Kelly, I am reliably informed that during your time as a pupil of Glenlola Collegiate your determination, courage and unerring optimism were already clearly evident. Since leaving the school those qualities, coupled perhaps with a slight taste for danger have taken you to the greatest heights of sporting achievement in your chosen field. You are an inspiration not only to the pupils and staff of Glenlola Collegiate, but also to anyone who is familiar with your story. I am delighted that you have managed to find the time to make the journey here tonight and look forward to hearing from you later.

The main purpose of this evening is, as you all know, to celebrate the academic achievements of our pupils, the daughters of the proud parents who have joined us in the audience tonight.

Those achievements, while rightly belonging to our pupils, also belong in no small measure to the Mums, Dads, grandparents and guardians who have encouraged, supported, cajoled and perhaps from time to time **threatened** the young scholars in their households in order to help them to be the best that they can be.

Our prize winners may not always have thanked you for your efforts but I am certain that they will feel a strong sense of gratitude towards you tonight as they come onto the stage to receive their awards.

Girls in addition to the excellent qualifications that you have secured and the prizes that you are about to receive this evening you have also gained, as a result of your efforts, in other ways, honing essential qualities along the way – determination, self-discipline, the long-term vision needed to imagine the future that you wish to realise. These are the qualities that will stay with you and carry you along your chosen paths through the course of your lives.

I am pleased to see that we are joined by a number of colleague principals tonight who know well the feeling of pride in their pupils that we now share with you.

Colleagues, you are most welcome. Your presence here tonight gives an indication of the mutually supportive spirit in which the local schools of Bangor and the surrounding area work.

On a wider front, the North Down Area Learning Community and Bangor Learning Partnership schools continue to progress in their joint endeavours to provide access for young people to a broader range of courses and programmes of study and, in so doing, to meet the targets for the Entitlement Framework as set out by the Department of Education.

This year, despite further funding cuts, the Learning Community has continued to collaborate closely to ensure that each child has access to a broad and balanced range of qualifications and learning opportunities and I am pleased to report that Glenlola Collegiate continues to play a central part in the collaboration network.

Despite new financial and other obstacles being placed in our way, schools, by the determination and ingenuity of their staff and governors, continue to deliver. Each year schools ask themselves how they can possibly meet the myriad of demands and expectations that are placed upon them. And each year, sometimes to their own surprise, they manage to find ways to do this.

However, schools are not bottomless pits of determination and ingenuity and we must hope that the vital role they currently play in making the education system in this province work, is recognised and appreciated at the highest levels and that the means for them to continue to do so are provided.

I would like publicly to pay tribute to the staff of Glenlola Collegiate in all of their diverse roles for the vital work that they do. **Work** that has translated this year into the excellent examination results of which you shall hear more soon. But also the quiet day-to-day work of caring, supporting, encouraging and reassuring that has benefited numerous young people in ways that we never see and that can never be quantified, ways that only the beneficiaries can ever really understand. Sometimes it is the things that cannot be measured that are most important of all – we must always strive to remember this.

It is easy to thank a teacher for a specific thing - helping with a school trip, spotting that worried child and ensuring that they received support, taking those after-school revision classes, the list goes on – but when it comes to thanking them for what they do more generally as teachers I find myself asking

What is it exactly that teachers do?

What exactly are teachers for?

Can it be defined in a list of actions?

Looking for an answer I consulted that well-known 21st-century Oracle, Google.

Here are some of my findings:

- The best teachers are those who show you where to look but don't tell you what to see.
- It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge
(Albert Einstein)
- computers aren't magic – teachers are!
- If you can read this thank a teacher

Each of these is in my view very true and collectively they begin to hint obliquely at what a teacher does. But I am not sure that I will ever be able to define what a teacher does in a few words.

Fellow teachers, on behalf of all the children whose lives you have changed, I thank you sincerely **for whatever it is that you do and for all that you do!**

If we are not entirely sure what teachers do, there is an even darker deeper mystery surrounding the activities of **school governors**. Those vaguely familiar figures who seem to come into the school building on a regular basis only to disappear into the boardroom where they usually remain until long after everyone else has gone home. Those friendly individuals who attend school events and pass with an almost regal air through the crowd to offer kind words of congratulations and thanks to the pupils and staff involved.

I also consulted the oracle on the question of what governors do and I can say that the descriptions while informative, were less memorable than those I found for the teachers, so I will tell you in brief in my own words what governors do:

They plan, they strategise, they worry, they support, they shape, they worry, they spend an inordinate amount of their time working for the pupils of the school, they bring a range of experience and skills to the school, they bring their wisdom, they commit, they contribute, they care, they don't get paid, they do not ask for, but nonetheless deserve, our gratitude.

Members of the Board of Governors, on behalf of the pupils and staff of the school I thank you for the contribution that you make, the impact of which will be felt in countless lives for years to come. I would also like to thank Jennifer Bell for the invaluable support and wise counsel she gave as a governor before she stepped down last year. Jennifer was always on the end of a phone when she was needed and her ideas and advice were always clear and correct.

I am reminded again how fortunate Glenlola Collegiate is as I welcome Suzie Ledlie and Imelda McDaid to the Board of Governors for the first time.

The end of term saw, inevitably, **changes to staffing.**

In June we bade farewell to 5 of our permanent members of staff as they entered retirement or moved on to other things.

Jacquie Milligan came to the School as a teacher of Biology and Junior Science in 2000.

During her time at Glenlola Collegiate, she built a well-deserved reputation as a creative thinker being responsible for the conception and implementation of many schemes and initiatives from which our pupils have benefited.

In recent years, the work she did as International Schools Coordinator, enabled the School to establish close and lasting links from other educational institutions around the world and gave those girls who travelled abroad access to exciting and formative experiences that they would not otherwise have had.

In recent years, she was responsible for the very successful introduction of GCSE Astronomy as an extension subject in Junior School.

Avril McWilliams began her career in Cygnet House in 1989 and retired after 26 years of loyal and dedicated service. A cornerstone of the prep for so long, she will be greatly missed.

Naomi Elliott who is a former pupil taught as a part-time member of the PE department for the past 4 years.

During her time at Glenlola Collegiate she was a driving force in the department inspiring the girls with her enthusiasm and energy. We wish her well as she takes up a full time position at Strathearn School Belfast.

Eleanor Edwards came to Glenlola in 2006 as Biology Technician and, inspired by the teaching that she saw around her on a day to day basis, decided to pursue a PGCE and qualify as a teacher herself. She completed the course and qualified as a teacher of Biology in 2010, teaching in Glenlola for two years. We were delighted for her when she secured a permanent post in Belfast High School which she has now taken up. Our loss is certainly their gain

Muriel Massey retired after 25 years in the School, first in the canteen and then as a Supervisory Assistant.

During that time Muriel became an integral part of the School, always carrying out her duties to the highest standard with a smile and a friendly word.

We wish Jacquie, Avril, Naomi, Eleanor and Muriel well in the next phases of their respective lives and hope that they will maintain contact with the school, keeping us up to date from time to time.

I would also like to welcome new faces to the staff:

In October **Karen Aitken** joined us from our partner Bangor Grammar School as Headmaster's PA and Eileen Orr takes over as canteen supervisor.

And a warm welcome goes to those staff who are with us this year on a part time basis.

I wish you all well in your new posts.

Glenlola Collegiate continues to drive high academic achievement and our pupils have enjoyed great success in **external examinations this year**.

This is a school where the most academically able young people in the province can and do thrive, motivated by the high expectations of the School, inspired by the expertise and commitment of their teachers and supported by parents who want the best for them.

At A-level the Year 14 pupils of Glenlola Collegiate achieved exceptional examination results, exceeding the Northern Ireland girls' averages at all grades. They recorded a **99.5% pass rate** in all subjects offered at A-Level, which compares very favourably with the **NI average pass rate of 98.4%**.

Grades A*, A and B accounted **for 72.4%** of all those achieved, far above the **NI average of 59.7%** and the NI girls' average of **just 61.8%**.

The 89.4% of A*-C grades is also well in excess of the NI average of 83.0% and the NI girls' average of 84.6%.

Worthy of particular mention is Molly McVea who achieved an outstanding **4 straight A*** grades in her A Levels – a tremendous feat by any standard.

Many other girls obtained a high number of top grades also:

<u>3 A* + 1 A grade</u>	Kiera Gourley (Loughries PS)
<u>4 A grades</u>	Nicole Waterson
	<p><u>13 girls achieved 3 A*-A grades</u></p> <p>And a further 26 achieved</p> <p><u>2 A*-A grades</u></p>

We are proud of how our pupils have performed in their A-Level examinations. Glenlola Collegiate is, of course, greatly indebted to the dedicated teaching staff of the Primary Schools for their early education which prepares our girls so well for the post-primary phase.

We wish our Y14 pupils well as they embark on the next stage of their careers. They have made their mark during their time at Glenlola Collegiate and we will follow them with interest as they go on to make their mark in the world that now awaits them outside of the school gates.

The results achieved by the Y13 pupils of Glenlola Collegiate at AS-Level are commendable. The overall pass rate was a most pleasing **98.2%** which sits **3.4% above the national average**.

With **58.6% of the 454 entries graded at A-B** (compared to the national average of just 53.9%), this has been another very successful year.

80% of all grades were A-C while a number of subjects recorded 100% in this category.

These results form an excellent basis for the girls as they embark on their studies at A2 Level.

No fewer than 11 pupils achieved 4 straight A grades. They were:

Bronte Cromie (Cygnet House),

Niamh Cummings (Ballyholme PS),

Charlotte Hamilton (Ballyvester PS),

Anna Henry (Ballymagee PS),

Zara Mulholland (Bangor Central PS),

Shannon Murdock (St Malachy's PS),

Rhiannon Osborne (Kilmaine PS),

Bethany Sexton (Ballymagee),

Aimee Sheldon (Grange Park PS),

Rhiannon Wells (Towerview PS),

and

Emel Yavuz (Donaghadee PS)

A 16 girls achieved at least 3 A grades with a further 14 achieving at least 2 A grades.

At GCSE our pupils continue to achieve at the highest levels with **17.0% of all grades A* and 43.8% at least A**, an impressive **5.4% and 10.2%** above the NI Grammar Schools girls' averages respectively.

Our girls have clearly excelled at the highest academic level compared to girls in other grammar schools.

96.4% of all grades were C or better, 14.2% above the corresponding NI Grammar School girls' average.

These results place Glenlola Collegiate School in the Daily Telegraph list of top Grammar Schools in the UK.

Nine girls achieved a remarkable 11 A* or A grades,

Obtaining 11 A* or A grades were:

Hannah Ardill (Bangor Central PS),

Lucy Canning (Ballyholme PS),

Bethany Conlon (Cygnet House),

Samantha Dornan (Bangor Central PS),

Ciara Gilroy (Cygnet House),

Rhianna Gourley (Loughries PS),

Niamh McCartney (Rockport),

Cherry McVea (Ballyholme PS),

And

Daisy Pollock (Ballyholme PS).

21 girls achieved at least 10 A* or As with a further 29 achieving at least 9 A* or A grades.

Special mentions go to Samantha Dornan who achieved an impressive 10 A*s and 1 A and Emma Dow who obtained 10 straight A*s.

Congratulations go to all of our Y12 girls on their well-deserved success.

We have seen exceptional performances from our GCSE students this year.

In recent years the Department of Education have stressed the need for a ‘value-added’ measure to be used as a means to compare the attainment of pupils of the same ability across different schools. This they believe will help to reveal which schools have the greatest impact on their pupils’ learning and performance.

The examination statistics for Glenlola Collegiate which I have just quoted speak for themselves, but I can also confirm that when a rigorous value-added analysis is carried out for our pupils, we find that more than 4 out of every 5 perform better in public examinations than pupils of the same ability in other schools.

The message is clear:

The vast majority of pupils coming to Glenlola Collegiate perform better than they would have done had they gone somewhere else.

The facts are undeniable:

GLENLOLA COLLEGIATE IS A HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL

And our high achievers further down the school are distinguishing themselves too as almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of our Y10 pupils who took GCSE Astronomy this year achieved grades A*, A or B.

This habit of high academic performance that our girls catch during their time with us sticks.

On Tuesday I received a letter from Dr Alice Prochaska, Principal of Somerville College Oxford in which she informed me that Rachel Porter, former pupil, having achieved a first class honours degree in Chemistry, has been awarded a Mary Somerville Prize and a Principal's prize in recognition of her achievement and for attaining top marks in Organic Chemistry.

I suspect that the prizes we distribute to our outgoing Y14 girls tonight will not be the last they receive!

We have heard of the academic excellence that our girls have achieved and of the substantial commitment of time and effort that they have made. And yet, those same girls manage to find ways, not just to participate, but also to excel in extra curricular activities.

It seems that commitment breeds success which in turn strengthens commitment and I am proud to say that our girls become part of this particular virtuous cycle in ever-larger numbers.

At this stage in my report I usually make apologies to those whose extra-curricular achievements, although worthy of celebration, will not be mentioned due to restrictions of time.

Instead this year I make my apologies to you the audience because this year, I intend to provide a more extensive summary which will highlight clearly the range of activity and

success that took place in Glenlola Collegiate last year and recurs in various forms every year. My summary will still not be fully comprehensive as I am aware that one can only remain seated for so long without the risk of posterior numbness setting in!

SUMMARY FROM STAFF FOLDER

Public Speaking	<p>Our team was awarded the PSNI Cup by the Bangor and Ards Road Safety Committee.</p> <p>Emma Acheson Y9 was awarded 1st place in her Section Anna McDowell Y11 2nd place in her section Martha Ward Y14 awarded 1st place in the Senior Section.</p> <p>In <u>Nov 2014</u>, Rae O'Dowd won the local heat of to the Soroptimists' Public Speaking and represented Glenlola in the N.I Final in the February 2015.</p>
Creative Writing	<p>Ellie Shevlin Year 9 was selected to represent Northern Ireland in The Power of Poetry Competition with her poem 'Night'. Twelve poems were been selected out of 15,000 entries from 450 schools across then UK to compete in the final!</p>
Yr 9 Minor Netball team	<p>Won the NI Schools Cup, for only the second time in the school's history.</p>
Showjumping league winners	<p>In April at Gransha Equestrian Centre Schools' showjumping league. Both the KS3 and KS4 teams were crowned league champions</p>
SENIOR AND JUNIOR DANCE TEAMS	<p>Both our Senior & Junior teams won the Ulster Dance championships. They were competing against schools and dance schools.</p> <p>The Junior team also finished 3rd in the NI schools championships and the Senior team won the senior section of the NI schools championships</p>

Sea Cadets	Amy Atwell, Year 14, was appointed Lord Lieutenants Cadet for County Down.
Trampolining	Rosa Scott (Year 10) Sarah Hughes Year 10 Sophie Hughes Y 9 Heidi Quinn Y10 Skye Houston 10 Amy Meehan Y8
Emilie Vose	who are members of the ‘Sercosaults’ Trampolining Club represented Northern Ireland at the Regional Team Finals 2015 in Peterborough in May of this year and travelled and competed as members of the Northern Ireland Squad. Won Young Entrepreneur of the year, through the Young Enterprise Scheme. She travelled to Canada in August to attend an international business conference for young entrepreneurs.
Ada Wong GCSE Emily Osborne AS Catherine Taylor A2	The pupils had their work selected for the “True Colours ART Exhibition” The work is selected to represent the Highest Achieving Exam Work by CCEA.
Ellie Martin Catherine Taylor Emily Osborne Emilie Vose Zoe Beckett Sarah Box Anna McKee Elizabeth Brown Anisa McConnell	Had their work selected and exhibited in the Creative Peninsula Art Exhibition. The exhibition housed work from up and coming young artists from all the Secondary Schools in the North Down Area. Some of the art work is on display in the entrance and you may wish to look at it after tonight’s ceremony.
Saskia Greer Y13	Competed in the Northern Ireland Athletics Championships held at Mary Peters track on Saturday 6th June 2015. She won a gold medal in 200m and is current club 200m champion.
Jule Michelo	Attended National Youth Theatre Summer School Only 200 places offered from over 4100 applicants

<p>British Show Pony Society International Championships</p> <p>Leah Jackson 14C</p>	<p>Cerys Howell, 9b, and her pony Twyford Captain Morgan, were chosen to compete for their country for the Northern Ireland Working Hunter International team at the British Show Pony Society International Championships at Grantham in England between 22nd and 30th August 2015.</p> <p>Cerys achieved the highest Northern Ireland place with a fourth out of all forty eight competitors.</p> <p>Qualified to compete at the Pony Club Championships at Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire where she came 2nd in the qualifying event.</p>
<p>Trampolining</p>	<p>Zoe Kerr is currently the elite ladies Irish and Northern Irish trampolining champion. Represented Ireland in the world championships in USA, finishing 18th on the planet for her age group. Earlier this year Zoe received a Mary Peters award for excellence in her field</p> <p>Zoe was due to collect Junior Honours tonight but is currently in Spain participating in a European training event in preparation for the 2015 world championships in Denmark in December.</p>

There is even more, but we would all be here for the rest of the evening if I were to list fully the extensive achievements of our girls.

I thank our staff for their commitment to their respective extra-curricular areas which help to make the educational experiences of our girls so enriching in so many ways...

The House system, Combined Cadet Force, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, School Tours and Trips, the range of winter and summer sports and the large and still growing number of clubs and societies. The charity work from which so many organisations, amongst them local, benefit. The Explorer Scouts, the summer hockey school for incoming Year 8 pupils.

The school musical. The list goes on and on...

I have spoken of academic success and of extracurricular achievement all of which have rightly earned the awards and prizes to be distributed this evening. I have not however, made

reference to the innumerable selfless acts of kindness and caring that take place in Glenlola Collegiate every single day but do not carry with them trophies or medals. They are the acts on which the ethos of the school is founded and they cannot ever be captured in their entirety as they are too numerous and often too subtle and, importantly, carried out with no desire on the part of the doer for recognition or reward. So on behalf of all those unknown beneficiaries I thank all their benefactors.

We are privileged to be able to work to help others both close to home and further afield, but I am also aware that there are those who work in order to help us here in our School. I would like to offer my special thanks once again to the members of our PTA, who continue to give of their time and ingenuity to support and promote the School through their fundraising events.

In June, the fourth annual dinner of the 'Friends of Glenlola Collegiate' took place at the Bangor Golf Club with the attendance continuing to grow and I was delighted to see many of our outgoing Year 14 pupils there. This bodes well for the future of the organization and I would urge anyone wishing to learn more to visit the 'Friends of Glenlola' area on the School website.

Glenlola Collegiate continues to maintain a wide range of projects and collaborations with other schools, both at a local level, but also internationally. In September a group of staff and pupils travelled once again to Tallwood High School, in Virginia Beach, USA as part of an exchange visit and we were pleased to receive return visitors in April. A group of our pupils will travel to Tallwood next Thursday on what will be our third exchange trip. We are delighted that this partnership continues to grow in strength from year to year.

It is never advisable to try to sum up all that a school is in one word.

However, if I were to choose a single word to encapsulate Glenlola Collegiate, that word would be ‘WOW!!!’

Preparing an annual report is no easy task. There are certain clear and obvious objectives which a report should achieve.

- The celebration of academic and extracurricular success at individual and team levels.
- The mention of notable events not falling into those categories.
- The thanking of those who make it all possible.
- The wishing well to those leaving us and the welcoming of new members of staff.

And then there are more elusive messages to be conveyed.

- A sense of the school’s ethos and the spirit of commitment and dedication that every member of the community brings.
- A connection between what the School has been in the past and what it will become in the future.

For me, as I write my report I find myself asking another question...

‘What is a school?’.

This is not a new question – it has been pondered for years, decades and centuries.

Some believe that schools are essentially businesses and strive to shoehorn them into business models. While there are some similarities, on closer inspection, and after relatively little consideration, it becomes clear that schools are somewhat different. They do not operate for financial profit. When one tries to speak of ‘the product’ and ‘units’ one must always remember that one is speaking about young people with feelings, minds of their own and lives and families outside of school.

‘The raw material’ does not reside in a warehouse waiting to be formed into a marketable product, but leaves the ‘factory’ at the end of each day to resume its life outside of school before returning the next morning. In fact in the course of a year children typically spend 17% of their lives in school and 83% out of school.

In an attempt to characterise the modern school some use the **football team as an analogy**. It is a competitive, all-or-nothing world where anything other than a win is deemed by some to be a failure. **While it is gratifying to enjoy success and to find oneself ahead of the pack as we do this year,** the football team analogy too breaks down quickly on reflection.

- Schools don’t drop players who aren’t performing at the required standard, who are in danger of ‘pulling down the team’.
- Schools help, support and encourage them.
- Schools don’t ‘rest’ injured players.
- They help, support and encourage them.

That’s what we are here for.

Schools are unique organisations and tonight I hope that I have given you some sense of the unique character of Glenlola Collegiate.

I could easily delay proceedings for the remainder of the evening, but we have prizes to distribute so **I will finish by** once again **congratulating our prize winners and their parents** and thanking **everyone who helps to make this School** such a wonderful place for our girls.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to present my Report.