

Causeway Academy

Newsletter 3 - December 2024

A new co-educational, 11-18, non-selective Controlled Integrated School
Principal Designate: Ms RM Harkness

Introduction

Following on from the first newsletter that was issued in June 2024 I would like to introduce myself with the following letter to our community:

Letter from Ms RM Harkness, Principal Designate

Dear Parent/ Carers and members of the community,
I am delighted to have officially taken up the position as Principal Designate of Causeway Academy from Monday 7 October 2024. Together, with our school community, we have been given the opportunity to create a unique learning experience for the young people of the Causeway Area. I am looking forward to working with parents, students, staff, governors, and all stakeholders on this exciting journey, with Causeway Academy opening on 1 September 2026.

With over 20 years of experience in education, I have had the privilege of working with diverse groups of students, parents, and educators. My journey has been driven by a passion for fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. I believe in the power of education to transform lives and am committed to ensuring that each student at Causeway Academy receives the best possible opportunities to succeed.

I have received a warm welcome from the staff of all three schools and have been working closely with the three Principals, Mr Smyth, Mrs Passmore and Mme S-J Skobel on key priorities. I thank them for the excellent support they have offered me. I look forward to continued opportunities to meet in the months ahead. Since my appointment, I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with the Interim Board of Governors, Education Authority (EA), Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC), Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Ulster University. This highlights the extent of commitment to making Causeway Academy a success.

As we embark on this new chapter together, I am eager to work collaboratively to build on the strong foundation already in place. I am dedicated to maintaining open lines of communication and will establish appropriate platforms to hear from you. Together, we can create a vibrant and dynamic school community where every student feels valued and empowered.

In the coming weeks, I look forward to meeting with the staff teams in each school and the interim student council to hear their aspirations for our new school.

Finally, I would like to reassure you of my personal commitment to the young people of the Causeway area. It will be my privilege to lead Causeway Academy as Principal and to strive for excellence in every aspect of school life.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely
Ruth Harkness



Site for Causeway Academy

Following on from the Department of Education decision to approve the development proposal and establish Causeway Academy, the Education Authority are working closely with the Department of Education to confirm a site in early 2025. The interim Board of Governors, along with EA, CSSC and NICIE have stated that their preferred site would be Lodge Road (previously occupied by Coleraine Grammar and previous to that, Coleraine High School). Processes are currently underway to establish the feasibility of this option.

Communication

Termly newsletters will be available, this will update you all on the progress made to establish Causeway Academy. There will be links from the current three schools to all copies of the newsletters, this will be available after Christmas.



Staff session - Anti-Bias Approaches in Education

As part of the lead-in to the opening of Causeway Academy, the staff teams of Coleraine College, Dunluce School and North Coast Integrated College had a shared development day on 27 August 2024 at Ulster University. The session focused on 'Anti-Bias Approaches in Education', a core strand of Integrated ethos, built around the themes of Identity, Diversity, Justice and Activism. This involved exploration of the valued contribution that each staff member makes and learning together about developing Anti-Bias approaches within their current role and in preparation for Causeway Academy.

Vision, Ethos & School values

Work has commenced to create the vision, ethos and school values for Causeway Academy, I am looking forward to working with the staff of the three schools and the interim student council and parents to create a shared vision and collective ambition valued by all in our community.



Causeway Academy branding



The consultation around the school badge & logos, along with school uniform, PE kit and other branded merchandise will commence in early 2025. I look forward to engaging with all stakeholders in this key area of development.

Current Year 10 - Key Stage 4 Curriculum Offer

Year 10 students in our three schools will commence their 'Key Stage 4 options process' after Christmas, in preparation for this an audit of subject choices across all three schools has taken place. At the heart of the process is the core aim of creating parallel, interlocking pathways which will allow every student to achieve their full potential in Causeway Academy. It is to be expected that the full range of academic and vocational subjects currently offered in the three schools will be offered in Causeway Academy. Thank you to Mr Smyth, Mrs Passmore and Mme S-J Skobel who have worked in collaboration to create an excellent suite of subjects for all students. Parents and students will receive this information from their respective schools in the New Year.

Primary School Open Evening events

I look forward to meeting as many perspective parents/carers of children in primary 6 & primary 7, I am very excited about what lies ahead for Causeway Academy and want as many primary 7 school students as possible to be part of the new school. I plan on attending Open Evenings events at Dunluce School, Coleraine College, and North Coast Integrated College.

Additionally, I plan on meeting all Primary School Principals in early January 2025.

