



CARRICKFERGUS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

**INFORMATION for JOB APPLICANTS
HEAD OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
(full-time permanent - 2 TEACHING
ALLOWANCES)**



INTRODUCTION

Carrickfergus Grammar School is a successful, over-subscribed and thoroughly ambitious school. Our unrelenting mission is to ensure the highest quality learning and teaching experiences for our students.

The school is on an exciting journey, and in the past three years the following has occurred:

- in December 2024, the school was named as one of the top 100 state selective schools in the UK, 11th in Northern Ireland for 'A' Level Results and 13th overall;
- in 2024, every single girl achieved 7 or more A*-C passes at GCSE level;
- in 2024, boys outperformed girls by 0.3%, with 98.4% of boys achieving 5 or more passes at A*-C including English and Mathematics;
- Religious Studies results at A Level in 2024 were a record 25.2% above Grammar School averages at A*-B; at A*-C our pupils exceeded Grammar School averages by 11.2%. At GCSE, results were 2.9% above Grammar School averages at A*-C;
- in 2023, a third of the year group attained 9 or more A*-A GCSE grades at GCSE;
- over 58% of pupils achieved at least 2 A*-A grades at 'A' Level in 2022;
- we became the first school in Northern Ireland to appoint a Director of Research for learning and teaching, as we deliver on our ambition and vision to be a regional and national hub of excellence for learning and teaching;
- in September 2024, the school hosted the first ever ResearchED Conference in Northern Ireland, bringing together educationalists from across the world;
- the school secured five million pounds for the development of infrastructure, which will result in state-of-the-art sporting facilities to rival any school in the country.

The school's current journey is rooted in evidence-based research. In 2020, the school was featured as a case study in Kate Jones' best-selling latest book on Retrieval Practice and was noted by the author as the inspiration for writing the book.

The school espouses the following:

- a no-nonsense approach to behaviour management, with centralised systems for sanctions and detentions, emphasising the notion of 'warm-strict';
- clear and established routines;
- an unfaltering focus on learning and teaching which incorporates clear stretch and challenge for our students;
- a belief in the importance of equipping our students with powerful knowledge to give them the edge in later life;

- a focus on highly positive, respectful relationships between students and staff;
- professional development opportunities which emphasise the development of subject-specific knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy.

The school's School Development Plan 2022-2025 priorities will include:

- embedding spaced retrieval practice into lessons and student self-study, in the clear belief that this approach will facilitate the embedding of powerful knowledge in long-term memory;
- the development of a knowledge-rich curriculum in all subjects at Key Stage 3 by June 2025;
- raising the A*-A profile of pupils across the school.

In relation to learning and teaching, Rosenshine's 10 Principles of Instruction form the bedrock of our approach. It is essential that applicants to this post have an excellent knowledge of these.

The very clear school vision is to ensure that all children are well-equipped with the powerful knowledge which will lead to the development of robust domain-specific skill. This will facilitate strong academic outcomes and increase opportunities for success and happiness in later life, not just from an employment perspective, but culturally and socially as well.

The clear aspiration embedded in this school is the mantra "no labels, no limits" for every single child who attends this school. No matter what their background, needs, interests or academic potential, they will be taught in a manner which will expedite opportunities for the greatest possible social mobility – affording access to Higher Education. We do not place a limit on opportunity, potential, aspiration or ambition for any child.

The values which are embraced at Carrickfergus Grammar School such as respect, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, gratitude, kindness and community spirit remain a constant and unshifting element embedded within the history and future of the school and are core to the school.

The school seeks to appoint a hard-working, dedicated, reliable, ambitious, innovative and forward-thinking Head of Religious Studies who shares its vision and ethos.

THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT

The Religious Studies Department at Carrickfergus Grammar School has a legacy of robust results, not just in relation to high-quality learning and teaching, but also standards and outcomes. This is reflected in the results outlined in the previous section.

All students at this school follow a highly academic GCSE pathway which includes in most year groups Full Course Religious Studies. The School undertakes modules in Philosophy and Ethics, and we believe that these modules align well with the ethos of a traditional Grammar School.

Equally, at A Level, the school often enjoys 100% pass rates at A*-C in Religious Studies. The Department has prioritised the pursuit of a greater number of A* grades at A Level, and this target reflects the high standards of the teaching team.

The Religious Studies Department has embraced fully the school's new knowledge-rich curriculum at Key Stage 3, incorporating greater depth, stretch and challenge into the curriculum.

The Department is wedded to the school's overarching belief in explicit instruction, alongside well-utilised textbooks, booklets and assistive technology for the purposes of reinforcing learning.

The Department is currently led by Mrs Lisa Best, a highly experienced teacher of Religious Studies.

The Department is a high-functioning, cohesive and collegial team of two full-time specialist staff members. A number of other teaching staff assist with Key Stage 3 provision and – to a much lesser extent – Key Stage 4.

This full-time appointment, starting in September 2025, is an excellent opportunity for an ambitious, driven and outstanding practitioner with excellent interpersonal skills to join a cohesive and successful team. It is an opportunity for someone who shares the school's ethos to come and work in a friendly school which is on a very clear journey towards becoming outstanding.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT

Applicants should refer to the essential and desirable criteria in the personnel specification advertised in the press. We invite applications from interested persons who meet the criteria.

The school is looking for someone with a combination of energy, enthusiasm, dedication, innovation and ambition who is prepared to give complete commitment to the role as an outstanding practitioner and teacher of Religious Studies, and develop / promote the school's ethos.

A tour will be arranged for shortlisted applicants. Shortlisted applicants will be required to teach a lesson as part of the selection process.

CURRICULUM

KEY STAGE 3

English	Mathematics	Religious Studies	PE / Games
Biology	Chemistry	Physics	History
Geography	French	Spanish	Home Economics
Art and Design	Technology	Music	Drama (Year 10)
ICT	Learning for Life and Work		

KEY STAGE 4 (GCSE)

English	English Literature	Mathematics	Further Mathematics
Religious Studies	PE / Games	PE (GCSE)	Art and Design
Biology	Chemistry	Physics	Business Studies
Digital Technology (ICT)	Drama	History	Geography
French	Spanish	Food and Nutrition	Child Development
Careers	Learning for Life and Work	Music	Technology

KEY STAGE 5 (A Level)

English Literature	Mathematics	Further Mathematics	Religious Studies
PE (A Level)	Accounting	Biology	Chemistry
Physics	Art and Design	Business Studies	History
Government and Politics	Geography	Travel and Tourism	French
Spanish	Food and Nutrition	Health and Social Care	Music
Photography	Technology	Digital Technology (ICT)	Technology
Applied ICT	Media Studies*	Moving Image Arts*	Sports Studies*
Environmental Technology	Games		

**On offer through the Carrickfergus Learning Community.*

Students study the following core subjects at GCSE:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- a Science
- Religious Studies (Full Course)
- a Modern Language (with the exception of a small number of students)

Most students then choose three or four optional GCSE subjects.

PASTORAL CARE

The high quality of Carrickfergus Grammar School's pastoral care provision has been recognised as a strength by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the school places great emphasis on the provision of appropriate pastoral care for all students.

We foster a warm and happy school environment, and the size of the school allows for a real family ethos. The Senior Teacher in charge of Pastoral Care at the school is ably assisted by seven experienced Heads of Year and 28 Class Teachers.

Our robust attendance rate of over 95% means that we are well above the average for Northern Irish schools.

A pastoral system has been designed to build up the students' confidence, enabling them to thrive academically, to understand themselves as individuals and to develop sound relationships with other students and staff at the school.

The pastoral care team provides informed and sensitive guidance to support students in their personal development and in times of personal, family or social difficulty. Some students may at certain times benefit from the opportunity to work through any difficulties with a trained counsellor and this service is available through school.

Our experienced Learning Support Co-ordinators work to ensure that the pathway for children identified with additional educational needs is tailored appropriately, whilst maintaining the highest of aspirations and expectations. Individual Education Plans / Personal Education Plans are in place for relevant students, with reasonable adjustments where necessary.

DISCIPLINE

In this school, as in all well-ordered establishments, it is necessary to have rules laid down to assist the smooth running of the school. Carrickfergus Grammar School believes in firm boundaries and routines, and the importance of a 'warm-strict' approach. It is expected that all students will behave in a respectful manner.

In Carrickfergus Grammar School, positive behaviour is encouraged in the following ways:

- allocation of Positive Notes
- active promotion of positive behaviour in Assemblies;
- a well-maintained, clean and bright learning space;
- active promotion of positive behaviour through wall displays and posters;
- positive stories on the school's online learning environments and in local press;
- access to a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular clubs and activities;
- school trips and team-building days such as the Year 8 Breckenhill Adventure Day and Year 8 tours to Barcelona and Paris;
- use of departmental strategies for rewarding positive approaches to learning such as postcards home;
- celebration assemblies;
- positive and proactive relationships with a range of charities;
- prizegiving events;
- representation on school teams, including sports teams;
- posts of responsibility for students such as Prefects and Team Captains;
- positive written feedback when appropriate, either on marked work or through other documentation;
- strong links between Form Teachers and their classes;

SCHOOL UNIFORM

All students attending Carrickfergus Grammar School must wear the complete and correct school uniform. Correct clothing for Physical Education is also compulsory. The school stores great importance in the maintenance of high standards as regards uniform.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The school offers students a wide range of activities, for example Choir, Debating Society, Duke of Edinburgh, Young Enterprise, Bridge, Warhammer, Chess Club, Creative Writing, Book Club and Scripture Union. On the sporting side students have the opportunity to participate in soccer, rugby, hockey, volleyball, netball, athletics, cross-country, orienteering, cricket, golf, basketball and much more.

Educational visits and trips also play an important part in the curriculum offered.

It is anticipated that teachers will become involved in extra-curricular activities.

J. A. Maxwell (Mr)
Principal