

Integrated AlumNI Annual Report

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Board of Trustees 1 April 2023 -31 March 2024:

Matthew O'Neill (Chair)
Colin Hagan (Treasurer)
Nicole McNeilly (Secretary)
Michael Lynch (Chair Emeritus)
Grace Boyle
Lise McCaffery
Patrick Hadley
Sarah Christie
Ren Thompson
Mal Farrell
Lucie Wilson

Non-Trustee Attendees:

Amelia Kai (Project and Development Manager)
Adam McGibbon (Advocacy Lead)

Overview:

Integrated AlumNI ensures that the voices of past pupils from Northern Ireland's integrated schools are heard, valued and empowered to shape the future of education.

In a region where more than 90% of school-aged children continue to attend schools divided along religious lines, Integrated Education offers a powerful and practical route to a more inclusive, peaceful, and reconciled society.

Since our formation in 2013 and our registration as a charity in 2017 (NIC106805), Integrated AlumNI has grown into a dynamic network of alumni, ambassadors, and advocates for change. We support and amplify the voices of those who have experienced Integrated Education first-hand, championing its benefits for individuals and communities alike.

Our members contribute broadly, from mentoring and inspiring current pupils to leading campaigns, engaging in policy reform, and raising public awareness. We remain deeply connected with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), and continue to build active networks across the UK, Ireland and beyond.

Whether offering support to pupils transitioning from school to higher education or the workplace or contributing to public discourse on Northern Ireland's educational future, we ensure that integration is no longer the exception but the expectation.

Education should unite rather than divide. We are proud to be part of a movement that builds bridges, not barriers, through the lived experience and leadership of its alumni.

Purpose of the Charity

Integrated AlumNI was established to build a strong and supportive network of past pupils and supporters of Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. Our core purpose is to promote and advance Integrated Education by empowering those who have experienced it to contribute meaningfully to public dialogue on education and social cohesion.

We believe that alumni, as living examples of the value of an integrated education ethos, have a vital role in conversations about the kind of society we want to build. Our members represent a broad range of perspectives and come from across the political spectrum, unified by a belief in an inclusive ethos built upon intent.

Through our growing network, we:

- **Champion Integrated Education** is a catalyst for inclusion, peace and mutual understanding.
- **Support and inspire current pupils** through mentoring, visibility and encouragement.
- **Contribute to public discourse** on education reform and social cohesion in Northern Ireland.
- **Build intergenerational and international networks** of alumni, educators, policymakers, supporters and other schooling sectors.

As we continue to grow, Integrated AlumNI offers a vital platform for connection, advocacy and influence, ensuring that the experiences of integrated school communities remain part of shaping Northern Ireland's ongoing journey toward a more shared and inclusive society.

Our beneficiaries:

Who we support and why it matters

Integrated AlumNI exists to represent, connect, and amplify the voices of those who believe in, and have experienced, Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. As a charity rooted in lived experience, our work benefits a broad and diverse community of individuals and groups committed to building a more inclusive society within education and beyond.

1. Past Pupils of Integrated Schools

Our primary community comprises alumni who have attended integrated schools at any stage — whether primary, post-primary, or both. Everyone’s educational journey is different: some attended an integrated primary school and moved into other sectors; others joined integrated education at the post-primary level. These experiences are valid and valuable, and we are proud to represent the full spectrum of integrated education pathways.

We provide past pupils with:

- A supportive, welcoming network for connection and collaboration
- A platform to share their stories and insights
- Opportunities to participate in public dialogue, mentoring, campaigning, and events

Our members come from across the political, cultural, and social spectrum, reflecting the integrated values they carry into adult life.

2. Supporters of Integrated Education (Regardless of School Background)

While our roots lie in alumni advocacy, Integrated AlumNI also proudly welcomes individuals who did not attend an integrated school themselves but support the mission of inclusion, respect and shared learning. Many of our members, volunteers and advocates are passionate allies who believe in the transformative power of Integrated Education for future generations.

We are glad to provide a space for all supporters, whether family members, educators, or individuals who discovered the importance of integration later in life. Your voice and support are vital to this movement.

3. Current Pupils and School Communities

By showcasing alumni stories, mentoring, and being visible advocates for shared education, we support current students by raising aspirations, providing relatable role models, and reinforcing the long-term value of their integrated experience.

4. Parents and Families

Integrated AlumNI helps create bridges between families, school communities and alumni. Many parents support Integrated Education for its values of inclusion and high standards, and our work strengthens those values by celebrating the outcomes of integrated schooling through the experiences of past pupils.

5. Educators and School Staff

Our engagement helps validate and uplift the ethos that teachers, principals and governors work hard to embed. Alumni involvement supports school development, advocacy efforts, and the broader promotion of integrated values.

6. Wider Society and Policy Stakeholders

AlumNI voices enrich public dialogue on Northern Ireland's education system and contribute to a more informed conversation about building social cohesion. By participating in consultations, media, campaigns and community forums, our network helps ensure that the alumni experience is heard and central to shaping future thinking. Through partnership and collaboration, we support the broader aims of NICIE and IEF to grow access, awareness and support for integrated education across society.

Our Services

How we serve our community and advance our mission

Integrated AlumNI delivers a focused set of services designed to empower alumni, support Integrated Education, and contribute to the broader movement for inclusion and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Our strategic goals, Trustee planning, and the needs of our growing network shape our activities.

- **Alumni Engagement and Community Building:** We maintain a welcoming and inclusive network for those who have attended integrated schools, whether at primary or post-primary level, and for supporters of Integrated Education from all backgrounds. This includes individuals who may not have experienced integrated education personally but believe in its values. We connect alumni across Northern Ireland and beyond through regular communications, events, and targeted outreach. Our digital and community-based engagement helps foster relationships across generations and regions, with over 700 members now actively engaged.
- **Mentoring and Youth Development:** We support the development of young voices within the Integrated Education movement.
- **Advocacy and Public Voice:** As a community of people with lived experience of Integrated Education, we contribute meaningfully to public discourse.
- **Partnership and Sector Support:** Our work is delivered closely with partners, especially the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and the Integrated Education Fund (IEF).

Summary of Activities

Reporting Period: 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

This year of meaningful progress for Integrated AlumNI has been characterised by growth, professionalisation, and a renewed focus on strategic action. Against a shifting education and political landscape in Northern Ireland, our work to connect, empower and advocate for past pupils of integrated schools has taken on fresh urgency and produced measurable impact.

Membership Growth and Engagement

This year's most visible marker of success has been our membership and reach growth. Supported by our part-time Project and Development Manager, Amelia Kai, we grew our registered membership by **over 25%** within ten months — from 280 to over 350 members. Our social media presence increased by **18%**, and our website saw a **38% rise in traffic** year-on-year, with a peak in engagement during the Baroness May Blood Memorial Lecture.

Key investments included implementing a new CRM system, a fully redesigned website, and tailored messaging for different segments of our audience. These tools have enabled us to understand our membership base better and communicate more consistently and effectively. We continue to track member sign-ups, regional engagement, and the impact of offline events — all essential for maintaining momentum.

Schools' Engagement and Youth Work

Re-engaging with integrated schools and developing opportunities for younger voices have been core to our strategy this year. With growing support from school leaders, we began outreach to integrated colleges across Northern Ireland, inviting them to connect their leavers with the AlumNI network. New branded bookmarks were designed and distributed to introduce Integrated AlumNI to school-leavers as a pathway for continued involvement.

Initial groundwork was also laid for the **Integrated AlumNI Youth Panel**, an initiative aimed at 16–18-year-olds currently attending integrated schools. This panel will launch in 2024–2025 and will provide a platform for young people to inform our strategy, contribute to advocacy, and build their capacity as changemakers.

Events and Storytelling

2023–2024 saw the introduction of a regular events calendar that includes both flagship programmes and informal connection opportunities. Notable highlights:

- **The inaugural Baroness May Blood Memorial Lecture**, drawing 56 attendees, celebrated the life and work of one of Integrated Education's most enduring champions

and highlighted the role of women in the peace process.

- **Education Unplugged**, a new dialogue-based series, offered space for honest reflection and discussion on education, identity and inclusion.
- **AlumNI's 10th anniversary celebration** in Belfast was both a celebration of progress and a moment to recommit to the work ahead.
- Additional social and networking events took place online in Belfast, London, helping expand regional reach.

Accessibility and inclusion remained key priorities: we ensured that event spaces were accessible, interpreters were available when required, and our communications became more inclusive, including improvements to website accessibility.

Advocacy and Sector Influence

AlumNI continues to build its reputation as a trusted and authentic voice in the education sector. Through the work of our Advocacy Subgroup, supported by our Chair and trustees, we have:

- Monitored policy changes affecting Integrated Education and shared analysis through member newsletters and our WhatsApp group
- Held meetings with elected officials, including Minister Anderson and members of the Stormont Education Committee
- Contributed to strategic discussions around the implementation of the Integrated Education Act and the broader Independent Review of Education

Our goal is not only to respond to consultations and proposals but also to contribute proactively to the narrative around Integrated Education and its role in reconciliation, inclusion, and social cohesion.

Internal Development and Governance

This year also saw a significant strengthening of our governance and internal operations:

- Four new trustees were recruited, with an emphasis on bringing in diverse voices and skills
- Trustee training (through NICVA and peer learning) was expanded, and "Trustee Buddy" roles were introduced to support onboarding.

- Internal systems were overhauled, including email and document storage via Google Workspace, improved compliance, and CRM training for board members.
- Our annual strategy session helped set priorities and build a shared work plan for 2024

Looking ahead, we will build on this work by formally introducing a youth panel, continuing to expand our school outreach programme, and deepening our focus on impact storytelling and advocacy training.

Next Steps for 2024–2025

Strategic priorities for growth, inclusion and impact

Building on a year of growth, advocacy and internal strengthening, Integrated AlumNI enters the 2024–2025 period with a clear focus on deepening impact, widening reach, and empowering the next generation of voices for Integrated Education.

Our work will continue to centre around four strategic pillars: **Membership and Engagement**, **Advocacy and Voice**, **Schools and Youth**, and **Governance and Sustainability**.

1. Launch and Sustain the Youth Panel

- Finalise recruiting and onboarding 5–8 students aged 16–18 from integrated schools across Northern Ireland.
- Provide training and mentoring for youth panel members.
- Produce the panel's first **Annual Youth Report**, reflecting their perspectives on education, identity and integration.
- Embed youth voice into AlumNI's strategic planning and event programming.

2. Strengthen School Outreach

- Visit at least 10 integrated primary and post-primary schools to deliver assemblies and workshops.
- Use Amelia's DE&I (diversity, equity and inclusion) expertise to facilitate youth-centred conversations on equity, identity and Integrated Education.

- Expand the distribution of branded school-leaver materials to reach all integrated colleges in N.I
- Develop an online offer for school-leavers, including videos and digital sign-up prompts.

3. Grow and Diversify Membership

- Increase overall membership by at least **25%**, reaching a target of 440+ by March 2025
- Continue to expand presence in underrepresented regions and communities.
- Hold regional events outside Belfast, including a social event in Derry/Londonderry and London
- Use CRM insights and digital outreach to increase conversions from passive to active members

4. Enhance Advocacy Capacity

- Develop and deliver **media and advocacy training** for Trustees, Youth Panel members and active volunteers
- Increase public storytelling by alumni via blogs, video and social content
- Maintain regular engagement with education policymakers and contribute to ongoing strategic consultations
- Respond to and shape public discourse around the Integrated Education Strategy and sector reform

5. Deliver a Meaningful Events Programme

- Host the **2025 Baroness May Blood Memorial Lecture**, with a larger venue and with broader outreach
- Participate in Belfast Pride and host a Black History Month event focused on racial equity and integration.
- Mark the 2025 Freshers season with outreach events for new university students.

- Ensure all events are accessible, inclusive and representative of our diverse membership

6. Deepen Organisational Resilience

- Hold the 2025 **Trustee Strategy Away Day** to align goals and set direction
- Provide training on digital tools, safeguarding, and inclusive practice for Trustees
- Ensure regular impact reporting and membership updates to funders (e.g. IEF)
- Streamline workflows and embed sustainability in programme delivery.

Risk of harm and private benefit:

The charity trustees confirm that this purpose does not lead to any harm. There is no private benefit flowing from this purpose.

Our obligations:

We are pleased to submit our annual report for the period April 2022 to March 2023.
Financial position

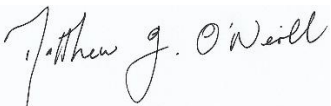
At the end of the financial year, our charity remains in a strong financial position. The initial grant received from our funders has extended beyond its original timeline, with an agreement in place with Integrated Education to carry this forward into the next financial year. This extension is largely due to reduced expenditure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. While our current financial standing is stable, we will actively seek additional funding opportunities in the next financial year to ensure long-term sustainability. A copy of our financial reports is included with this annual report.

At the end of the financial year, the charity did not hold any funds that were materially in deficit.

The charity trustees confirm they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the Commission's statutory public benefit guidance.

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Signed: 

Dated: 22/05/25

Chair of the Board of Trustees, Integrated AlumNI