

# MINI TRIAL REPORT

On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November a group of 12 senior pupils travelled to Falkirk Sheriff Court to take part in the annual mini trial event.

Pupils from the Academy had been given most of the leading parts including the Sheriff (Sharon Taylor), the Procurator (Linzi Penman), the Defence lawyer (Stacey MacKintosh) and three of the witnesses: (Natalie MacKay and Nicola Henderson for the crown and Diane Reid for the defence) - the other school participating was Graeme High.

The pupils had been given documents containing details of the charges and evidence, including witness statements, to study in preparation for the event and PC Jim Bell had also visited the school to brief the two police witnesses on their role.

On the day various members of the court staff, including the sheriff and lawyers, were on hand to give their deputies further advice before the trial began and then sat beside them to keep them right throughout the proceedings.

The “trial” took place in Court No.3 and began with all present having to stand as Sheriff Taylor entered the court resplendent in wig and gown. After the jury, consisting of 5 pupils from Graeme High and three from Bo’ness had been sworn in and other formalities concluded Linzi presented the crown evidence, with Stacey given the opportunity to cross examine her witnesses. Prompted by her mentor beside her Stacey made several objections to the defence case but these were dismissed by Sheriff Taylor as frivolous. Stacey then presented the case for the defence by calling the accused to the stand, but, on the advice of the defence lawyer, decided not to call Diane as a witness.

After the summing up by both lawyers and the directions from Sheriff Taylor the jury retired to consider their verdict. Shortly afterwards they returned and the foreman of the jury announced a verdict of Not Proven. The deliberations inside the jury room are of course completely confidential but sources close to the jury suggest that the three Bo’ness members voted for guilty, while the 5 Graeme High pupils voted for their classmate to be found Not Proven.

In the debriefing afterwards The Sheriff and other court staff were fulsome in their praise for the way the pupils had played their roles and Linzi Penman and Natalie MacKay were picked out for particular praise. Unfortunately we were not able to have the planned tour of the cells (they were too busy!) but the event ended with an excellent question and answer session in which the Bo’ness pupils were well to the fore.

A very enjoyable and informative morning was completed by a quick visit to McDonalds for lunch before returning to school for afternoon classes.