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IglooCode 2023 – Impact report

Report prepared retrospectively by Verglas, August 2025

About this report

- This impact report has been compiled to capture the outcomes of the first IglooCode event.
- At the time of the competition, Verglas had not yet been established as a company, so a formal impact report was not produced.
- With Verglas now in place, we are proud to share this report to highlight the event's achievements and the foundation it set for future years.

How IglooCode began

- Organised by three sixth-form students from Ballymena and Belfast with a shared passion for IT and cybersecurity, who met at QA's CyberFirst Advanced course in August 2022.
- Inspired by their experience at the residential, they wanted to create the opportunity for like-minded students to explore IT in a fun way like they did.
- Within a few weeks, they drafted plans for a cross-community programming competition and reached out to 65 NI schools.



What is IglooCode?

- A programming and cryptography competition for KS3 pupils from Northern Ireland, aimed at those looking to study IT or Digital Technology at GCSE, or have an interest in computers or programming.
- Students compete in teams of 4 to complete challenges across multiple categories, suitable for all skill levels.
- Industry talks from leading Northern Ireland tech companies.
- Prizes to reward achievement and inspire students to grow their passion.



Impact at a glance

87

students
participated

12

schools
represented

348

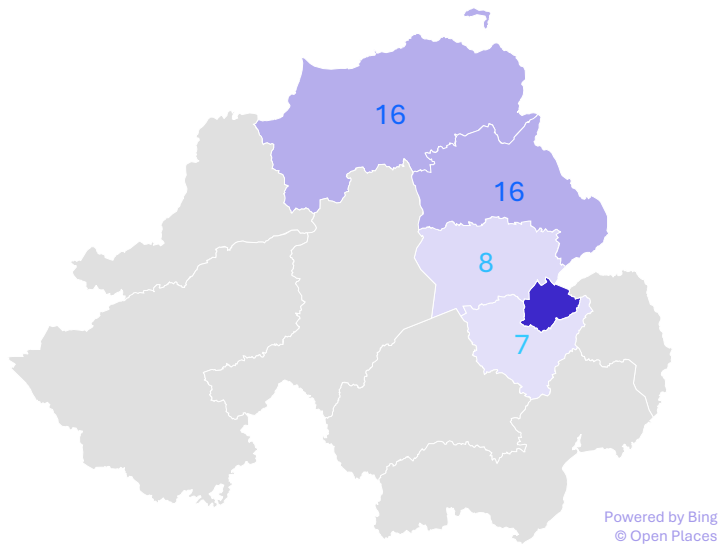
hours of
programming

2288

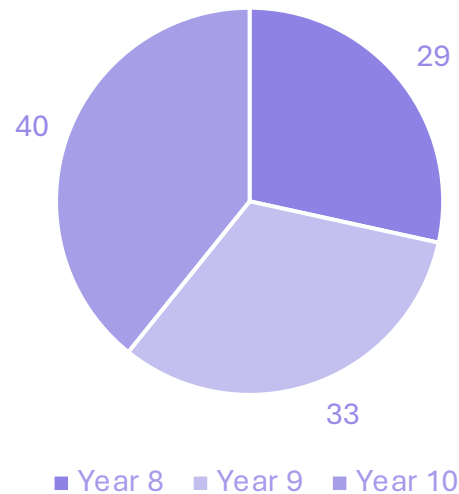
challenges
solved

Who took part?

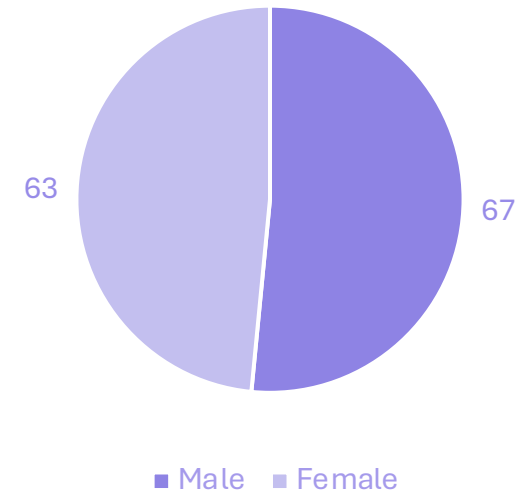
- Students from 14 schools across the north-east of Northern Ireland took part, spanning Years 8-10, with a balanced mix of male and female participants.



Age range



Gender balance

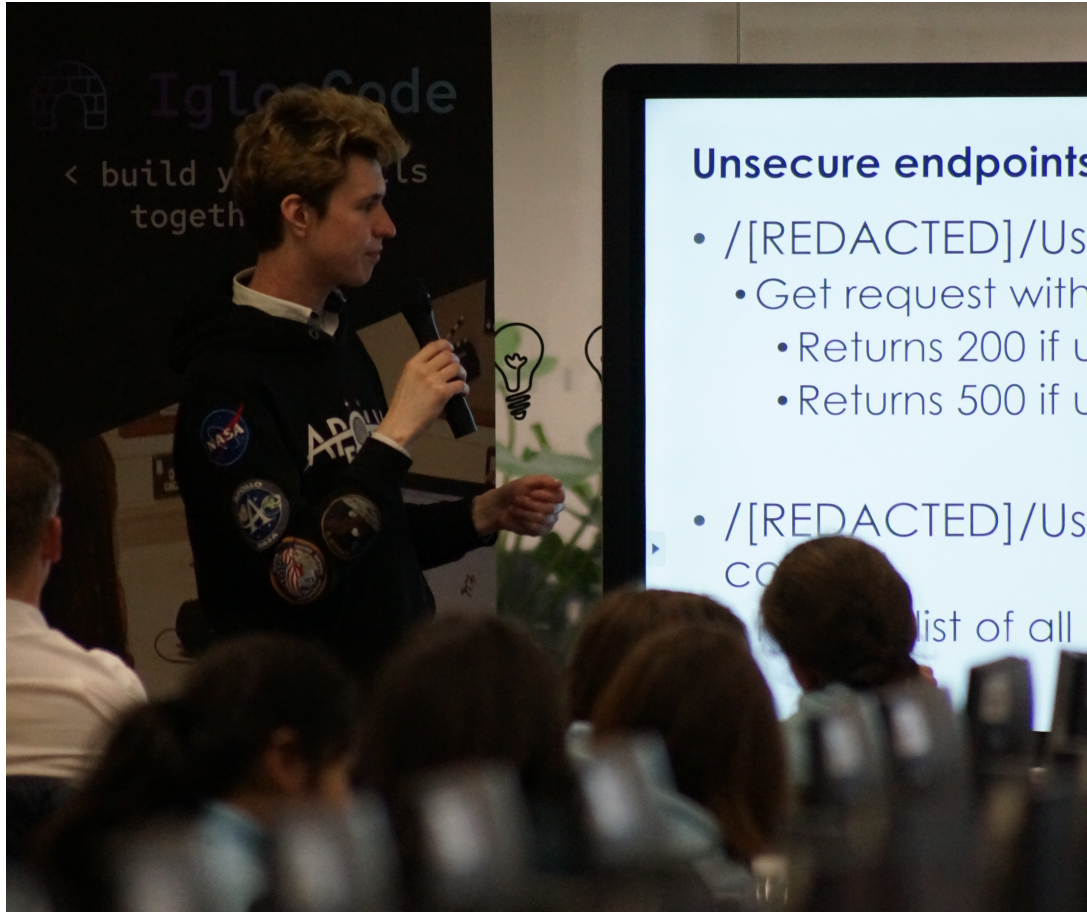


External support

- IglooCode in 2023 was made possible thanks to generous support from Liberty IT, Kainos and Queen's University Belfast.
- Sponsor contributions helped to fund the event, venue, prizes and hosting costs.
- Through our sponsor companies, we had access to a support system and previous knowledge on hosting events, which was incredibly valuable in our first year.



Industry insights



- Liberty IT and Kainos provided expert talks on Machine Learning and cybersecurity, respectively.
- Students gained practical insight and inspiration from professionals in the NI tech industry.
- The talks received very positive verbal feedback from students, and were encouraging to explore different careers in IT.

Feedback at a glance

- 100% of teachers agreed the event was beneficial, with overall satisfaction at 4.6/5.
- Entering teams was extremely easy and straightforward at 4.7/5.
- Even though teachers rated our information booklets as highly beneficial (4.6/5), pupil preparedness still varied significantly, with one school rating it at 1/5.



What teachers said

Praise

- Well-organised and professional event – teachers appreciated the planning and smooth delivery.
- The tasks and our in-house software were engaging, well thought-out, and provided a competitive edge.
- Our prizes and industry talks were highly valued.
- Teachers praised our pupil-led organisation and enthusiasm about the event.
- Outstanding experience for pupils and sixth-form team helpers.

Suggestions

- Some teachers suggested adjusting break times and session slots, as some felt like they dragged on too long.
- Assigning a volunteer per table rather than runners could improve support and reduce wait times.
- Upgrade web server to reduce lag and crashes and improve sound/screen setup for better visibility during talks.
- Provide clearer instructions for first-time entrants.

Celebrating achievement



- Our grand prize, four Arduino starter kits worth over £100 each, went to RBAI who scored 700+ points.
- Smaller team prizes went to the teams voted for the best team-name, best teamwork, most impressive comeback and most craic.
- Teachers also took part in inter-school teams, winning a box of chocolates each.

“A very well organised event and such a credit to the pupils that organised. A great system to add some competitive edge during the competition sessions. Well done to all.”

