



**St Patrick's Primary School, Ballymaghera**

***Progress Through Partnership***

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16<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back to Spring Term. We hope you had a lovely midterm break, and everyone is returning to school feeling refreshed and ready for plenty of interactive and exciting learning. The weather is set to be cold and icy this week, and we hope that your children will come to school with a warm coat every day, so that outside activities can go ahead for them.

We would like to thank you sincerely for your support over first half of this school year, and what a busy time it proved to be, with many celebrations and events!

**A summary of our celebrations and events since November**

- Anti-Bullying Week
- Speak out Stay Safe Week
- Road Safety Week
- Treat Fridays
- Progress tests and Parent/Teacher Meetings
- Newry Larder Appeal
- Abbey Grammar School PE session with Primary 7
- Friends of St Patrick's School Calendar
- Whole school attendance at Mass for The Immaculate Conception
- Christmas Dinner and Jumper Day raised £210 for St Vincent De Paul
- Two amazing Christmas shows, with four performances!
- Christmas Concert Raffles raised £1444 shared between Evora Hospice, Life and Times and Young lives vs cancer NI
- Annual Christmas Carol Service with our Parish choir.
- St Patrick's PS Christmas Card and Verse competition
- Christmas Concert ticket sales raised £2980 for school funds
- Whole school attendance at Mass for The Epiphany on 6<sup>th</sup> Jan
- P.1 - P.7 trip to Pinocchio in the Grand Opera House, Belfast
- St Colman's College for Primary 7 boys
- The School Book Fair
- P5 water quality improvement project commenced 12<sup>th</sup> of January
- 13<sup>th</sup> of January P6 girls coding workshop in Our Ladies Grammar School
- Saint Malachy's High School talk for relevant Year 7 pupils

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- 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of January Catholic Schools Week celebrations took place
- 21<sup>st</sup> of January Primary 7 attended Catholic Schools Week service in Newry Cathedral
- 23<sup>rd</sup> of January St Patrick's Camogie team attended **Cumann na mBunscol** camogie tournament in Ballyholland
- 26<sup>th</sup> January Primary 7 attendance in St Louis Grammar School Fun Day
- 29<sup>th</sup> of January Primary 5 Trip to Parkanaur Forest, Dungannon
- 29<sup>th</sup> January whole school Mindful Meadow Project commenced
- 30<sup>th</sup> of January Primary 6 and Primary 7 boys attended the Abbey Grammar School blitz
- 30<sup>th</sup> January Primary 7 boys attended the **Cumann na mBunscol** Blitz in Ballyholland
- 2<sup>nd</sup> of February to 6<sup>th</sup> of February Children's Mental Health week
- 2<sup>nd</sup> of February to 6<sup>th</sup> of February Safer Internet Week
- 2<sup>nd</sup> February St Colman's College PE for Primary 7
- 6<sup>th</sup> February Wear your comfy clothes to school day took place

These events could not have taken place without your firm support, and the dedication of our staff and school teams. Thank you for this, and we look forward to our Spring Term with exciting experiences ahead. As we move through 2026, we have many more important events taking place. A separate 'Dates for your Diary' Calendar will be posted later this week.

### **Priorities for Improvement**

As you know, we completed our 3 Year School Development Plan audit with all stakeholders in autumn of 2024 and using the feedback we formed our priorities Learning and Teaching to improve comprehension by reading and thinking about what we see and read, using our knowledge to make predication, retrieval of information, and inference and deduction of what is going on, so that our understanding of things, across the curriculum improves. We have also been focussing on improving Mental Maths and Problem Solving in Mathematics and how we think about and solve problems. Thank you for supporting your children through listening to and talking about what they are doing in school and assisting in the learning through completion of homework.

Another priority for our 3 Year School Development Plan is to improve Parental/Guardian engagement. To this end we encourage you to attend workshops and meetings, and to support your child with homework. Please continue to support your child's learning through checking and signing homework every night and please get in touch if there is ever an issue with this. We also want to enlist your help in the development and improvement of our school, and we would like to sincerely thank those parents who have given so much of their time to through the Parents' Association and through volunteering to help with our Mindful Meadow Project which is really taking shape! We will be posting a full article on the progress made in the very near future.

We are also focusing on behaviour and would like to commend our children for displaying high standards of respect and good manners to all in our school, and through living our School Values of being Respectful, Inclusive, Caring and Hardworking. Well done children, you are a credit to your parents, guardians and families! We will be giving a special award at assembly to those children who are noted to be upholding our school values from this week onwards.

### **Transfer to Post Primary in Year 8**

Primary 7 parents/guardians should apply for Post Primary School places online via EA Connect by Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025 12:00 noon using the EA website at [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk). Please get in touch if you require supporting documentation.

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### **Fáilte chuig Comhaltas Chluain Daimh!**

We extend a warm welcome to Clonduff Comhaltas on its relocation to our school. Clonduff Comhaltas has grown from strength to strength in our community, commencing its journey in Clonduff Youth Club. We are looking forward to hosting you and wish you every success for the coming season!  
Beannachtaí ó chách i mBunscoil Naomh Pádraig!

### **Ash Wednesday**

On Wednesday morning we will attend Mass at 9:15am to commence our Lenten journey. We invite any family members who are able to join us in this Mass. We request that everyone is in school for 9am sharp to enable us to be seated in St John's Church, Ballymaghera for 9:10am. Any children arriving after 9:05am should be accompanied by a trusted adult to the church. Thank you for your understanding.

### **Children's Mental Health Week 2026**

Last week we explored the theme 'This is my place' and the children took part in assemblies, workshops and physical workouts to learn how to take care of their mental health. We celebrated an extra special day on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February with a 'Comfy Clothes Day'.

### **Literacy and Numeracy Books**

Literacy and Numeracy books were sent home on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February to help you stay up to date with how your child is performing in school. We hope you found this informative.

### **Cumann na mBunscol Events**

**Tráth Na gCeist:** Primary 7 children took part in the Cumann na mBunscol quiz in Burren GFC . A great overall performance was given and we are so proud of our team.

**Girls football:** We participated in the indoor Cumann na mBunscol girls' football competition on the 6<sup>th</sup> February in Ballyholland GFC. The girls gave a great account of themselves and were only narrowly defeated by the overall winners. Maith Sibh.

**Hurling:** The Primary 7 hurlers travelled to Ballyholland to take part in the Cumann na mBunscol indoor hurling blitz on 16<sup>th</sup> January. The boys played superbly but unfortunately were defeated in the semifinal.

### **Friends of St Patrick's Parents' Association**

In term one, the Parents' Association were extremely busy organising and designing the beautiful calendar which included every child in our school! They also arranged a Halloween raffle and disco, and Treat Friday! A massive thank you goes to them for their hard work and dedication in giving up their time to arrange these fundraisers which will contribute to improving our pupils' learning experiences. There are a small number of calendars left so please contact the school office if you would like to buy one. The next meeting will be on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 6:15pm.

**The Smarties Challenge:** On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February your child took home a packet of Smarties with an accompanying explanation poster. To complete the challenge, your child could complete simple tasks to help around the home and get a small payment of 20p or £1. The Parents' Association would like all Smarties tubes returned by the 27<sup>th</sup> February. Thank you!

### **Sacramental dates/class times reminder**

Sacrament	Date	Time
First Penance	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	1:00pm
P7 Service of Light	13 <sup>th</sup> March	1:00pm
Confirmation	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	2:00pm
First Holy Communion	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	10:30am

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**\*\*Parents must accompany their children to First Penance.** Further details will be sent in the coming week. We are looking forward to working with you in helping you prepare your children for the sacraments.

### **Catholic Schools Week Celebrations**

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January both Primary 7 classes travelled to Newry Cathedral for the Catholic Schools Week Prayer Service. It was a special event where we came together with all the Catholic schools from the area to celebrate the very important role Catholic Schools play in building our communities. The children represented our school with pride, joining beautifully with the singing. Please talk to your children about the activities they completed in class to celebrate Catholic Schools Week. Well done everyone!

### **Spelling and Reading Workshop**

**Is your child having difficulties with spelling or reading?** Join us in school on **Monday 16th February 3pm - 4pm** - click the link on the school website to book your place.

### **Warrenpoint Feis Primary Section**

Warrenpoint MUSIC Feis will be taking place from Wednesday 18th February to Thursday 26th February 2026 and the SPEECH Feis will be taking place from 2nd March to 13th March 2026.

Our school choir have been practicing very hard and will be performing in the Feis at 11am on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February. Ádh mór! Programmes are for sale in local shops in Warrenpoint.

### **Supporting Well Being Workshops for Parents/Guardians**

P.5 to P.7 parents are invited to attend 'The Birds and the Bees' workshop this **Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> February at 7pm** in the assembly hall, facilitated by Love for Life. This workshop will support parents with child development conversations and strategies and it will give tips on how to teach your children about resilience and emotional regulation.

### **First Penance**

Primary 4 children will receive the sacrament of **First Penance 27<sup>th</sup> February at 1:00pm**. Parents must attend this sacrament. A letter will go home this week with more information.

### **Breaktime Snacks/Water Bottle/Lunches**

St Patrick's follows a Healthy Breaks Policy – this consists of water (**not flavoured**) and pieces of fruit/vegetables. No juice is allowed in class. We ask you to be mindful of the amount of sugary treats included in lunchboxes and please remind your children they should not share or swap food items because of allergies! Several children have severe nut allergies. **Please do not send any food with nuts into school.**

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

Congratulations to all those children whose attendance was of a high standard last year! Our overall school attendance for last year was 96%. It is our aim that this will increase to above 97% by the end of 2025-2026. There will be a special award for those children whose attendance is above 98% at the end of year awards ceremony. Last year we had 5 children who received a £10 voucher! We look forward to rewarding many more children this year!

Please ensure your child attends school when they are well enough to do so. Missing school means your child is missing out on forming relationships with friends, staff, and of course learning. Therefore, it is extremely important that your child does not miss school unless they are ill or have an exceptional reason.

All absences must be reported on the first day, either to the general office or by email to [info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk) . When a child returns to school, they should have a written note

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explaining the reason for absence. The Education Welfare Service will be contacting parents of children whose monthly attendance is below 90% where a valid reason has not been given to the school. Every effort is being made to assist in developing your child's experience of learning, with a focus on wellbeing, from when your child enters the school, therefore it is vital your child arrives punctually. The buzzer gate opens at 8:00am for breakfast club and 8:30am for all other children. Children are brought to class at 8:50am and learning commences at 9:00am. The school gate closes at 9:00am sharp.

### **Assemblies and Prayer Services**

Each month a class has been leading an assembly with the whole school, and a prayer service for their parents and family members. Thanks to those of you that have been able to attend, it is great to have your support. We appreciate it is not always suitable to attend the prayer service and request that you get in touch if you are not able to attend the 1:15pm time. Well done to the classes who performed theirs already.

**Mrs O'Hare's P.3/4 Family Prayer Service will take place on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 1:15pm.**

### **Health and Safety and Traffic management**

Thanks to all those who park safely in the church carpark when leaving and collecting your child to/from school. At all times your child's safety is our number one priority. We respectfully request that no one parks or turns in the Bus Layby or the school vehicular gates or the old Parochial House site (staff car parking only). Anyone doing this is endangering the lives of our pupils and staff.

### **Uniform**

Thank you for your effort in ensuring that your children are wearing the correct school uniform on the correct day. Please ensure your child is wearing their PE uniform on PE days only. Please see the PE timetable below. This is posted in the Parent Area of the school website for each half term. **\*For After School Clubs, children should bring their PE uniform in a bag for changing at the end of the day.**

PE TIMETABLE					
P.1LMcA	P.1/2MMcN	P.2OR	P.3UK/KA	P.3/4SO'H / KA	P.4KF
Tues & Thurs	Tues & Thurs	Tues & Thurs	Tues & Wed	Tues & Wed	Tues & Wed
P.5NM	P.5AMcG	P.6CC	P.6SF	P.7SO'P / KA	P.7PMcC
Tues & Thurs	Mon & Tues	Wed & Thurs	Tues & Wed	Tues & Wed	Tues & Thurs

### **Child Protection, Safeguarding Concerns and Age-Appropriate Apps**

Please ensure that you are aware of the content of the apps/games your child is using. Please download our **Safer School App** at <https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/parent-carer/> and use our school website to look at <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> for guidance on parent controls and age limits.

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) has developed an Online Safety Hub <https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/social-media-and-apps/>. The Hub brings together advice and resources from a range of partner organisations so that parents, carers and young people can easily access advice and resources in one central place. Please make sure you have the correct parental controls on your devices and that you know what your child is experiencing online. **We strongly recommend time spent on non-educational activities on devices should be limited to weekends only, fully supervised and time restricted.**

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If you have any concerns regarding Safeguarding and Child Protection, please remember to call the school or email [info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk) to request a callback. The safeguarding team consists of: Mrs. Reavey, Ms. McNeill, and Mrs. Smith.

### **Communication with school**

Please check that you have redownloaded the school app to ensure you are receiving up-to-date information. Please check the relevant information on the Parents Area of the school website.

**Classroom queries:** If you have any general queries, please contact the office on 028 40630061 or email the school at [info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk). Teachers will not be able to respond during teaching time, or where they have meetings to attend after school, therefore it may be a few days before they can reply. If the matter is urgent, please state this when you are calling the office, and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

As a school family, we want you to know we are here to support you in any way we can. If there are occasions when issues, activities or events become a problem, please contact a member of the School Leadership Team and we will work together to ensure every child gets the best opportunities in school. It would be much appreciated if any complaints were brought to the attention of the School Leadership Team so that we can work together to come to a resolution. The school Complaints Policy is available on the school's website, or a copy can be obtained from the school office.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued help and support. It is very much appreciated.

Yours in partnership,

Catherine Clarke  
Plunkett McConville  
Geraldine Smith  
School Leadership Team