



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

***Progress Through Partnership***

13 Castlewellan Road, Hilltown,

County Down BT34 5UY

**Principal:** Mrs Geraldine Smith

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4<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Happy New Year to our families and community! We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back to school tomorrow, Monday 5th January 2026!

On behalf of the staff of St Patrick's PS, we would like to say thank you to the pupils and parents for the Christmas cards and good wishes received in December. Your kindness is really appreciated. We hope you had a lovely Christmas.

The weather is set to be very cold and icy this week, so it is important that your children come to school with a warm coat every day, so that outside activities can go ahead for them.

### **Reminder: School Meals Price Increase**

The Education Authority (EA) recently set out a number of savings measures in response to a significant funding shortfall of around £300million. As part of these measures, school meal prices will increase in January for the first time since 2017.

Pupils entitled to **Free School Meals will not be affected** by this rise. For pupils who are not entitled to free school meals, new prices will come into effect in January 2026. The price of school meals for primary school children will now be £3.10 per day.

### **Feast of the Epiphany**

On Tuesday morning we will attend Mass at 9:30am to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. We invite any family members are able to attend this Mass with us.

### **P1 Open Admissions portal for enrolment in September 2026 dates and times**

Opens at 12 noon on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January

Closes at 12 noon on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January.

Please pass this information on to any parent/guardian who would like their child to attend St Patrick's in the next school year. Any parents/guardians requiring any help or support with the enrolment process are invited to contact the main office on 028 40630061.

***Respectful Inclusive Caring Hardworking***

### Trip to Pantomime

On Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January, everyone in the school will be visiting the Grand Opera House in Belfast to see the pantomime, 'The Adventures of Pinocchio'.

All children should come to school on Thursday morning wearing their P.E. uniform.

They will have early lunch/dinner and be ready to leave school at 12 noon at the latest. Dinner for P1-P7 on Thursday will be sausages and chips.

Pupils may bring a snack (NO NUTS) and a drink to Belfast in a clearly labelled disposable bag. They should not bring any money.

The children will arrive back to school at approximately 4:45pm. They will be escorted from the buses into school grounds to their class line.

Please monitor the school app for notifications in case there is any change to pick up times.

**Any child who is not attending the Pantomime should be collected from school by 11:00am.**

If your child is prone to travel sickness, please inform their teacher as soon as possible.

Please **DO NOT PARK** in the Bus Bay.

Pupils will only be allowed to leave school with an adult and their teacher's permission.

No child will be allowed to walk to the carpark on their own. If your child is being collected by someone else, it is imperative that you inform their teacher before the trip.

If you wish to discuss any element of the trip with me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### Afterschool Clubs

Afterschool clubs will recommence next week. Details of what clubs are running this term will be issued as soon as possible.

### Traffic management

Please do not park or drop off /pick up in the old site of the old parochial house. This space is for staff parking only. There have been several reports of children being dropped off and picked up in this area. **Please, park in the church car park.** There should be NO parking or turning at the Bus Layby, the school vehicular gates, the footpath along the Castlewellan Road or at the entrance to the old site of the Parochial House. Anyone doing this is endangering the lives of our pupils and members of the public.

### 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 & Thurs   | Tues & Thur |

### **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 now 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**.

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.

### **Lunchtime Supervisory Assistant**

An opening for a Lunchtime Supervisor has become available. Anyone interested should contact the school office.

### **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,

Geraldine Smith  
Principal