



School Guide

# ACADEMY PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL







## Welcome

Thank you for taking the time and interest to consider Academy Primary and Nursery School as a suitable school for your child. Our school guide is intended to help you discover more about who we are and what we are about!
















Our ethos and expectations are clearly and simply defined in our vision and mission statements and through the values we desire to see in each of our pupils. We firmly believe that these goals will be most fully realised when there is a good partnership between school and home and we would encourage parents to take an active role in their child's learning and development. As a staff we are committed to ensuring that your child will have a safe, happy and successful time, right from day one of Nursery through to his or her final day of P7.

However, no school guide can convey the real atmosphere of the school, so we would like to invite you to pay us a visit and see for yourself. As a staff we are committed to ensuring that your son or daughter will have a happy and successful time at Academy.





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Achieve



Stephen Moore - Principal

Mrs J Cockroft - Head of Nursery







Our Mission-

# ACHIEVE

Acceptance

Challenge

Happiness

Improvement

Encouragement

Values

Endeavour







## Our Vision

Academy Primary and Nursery School will provide a safe and happy learning environment in which all children will be valued as individuals. Here their academic, emotional, physical and spiritual needs are met and their full potential is realised. Tolerance is nurtured, respect for others encouraged and a readiness to support and care for each other within our community is developed. We seek to maintain these traditional values whilst embracing innovations in learning and teaching which will enable us to deliver best practice. Academy seeks to develop its status as a flagship of excellence in education whilst being a place each child enjoys attending. Our aim is that each and every child will reflect on their time spent here with affection and pride.

## Celebrating Success

Our school cultivates a culture where success is celebrated and where children are not afraid to fail or make mistakes. Individual children are recognised each week in our Academy Ace Scheme and children are encouraged to share their successes inside and outside of school at formal class and whole school gatherings. Three replica Oscars (Our School Can Achieve Results) are awarded weekly for the classes in each Key Stage who best demonstrate a weekly target.

## Our Values

Children are taught many values in their transition from Nursery to P7. The school focuses specifically on nine values incorporated from the American CAPS Programme (Character Approach to Problem Solving).

These are:

**Responsibility**  
**Diligence**  
**Forgiveness**  
**Honesty**  
**Patience**

**Respect**  
**Care**  
**Courtesy**  
**Friendship**

## Safeguarding

We aim to create both a safe and supportive atmosphere in our school for both pupils and staff. In a recent ETI Inspection (March 2014), the standard of Pastoral Care was deemed “**Outstanding**” and that of Child Protection as “**Comprehensive**.” Parents are invited at regular intervals to discuss, not just their child’s progress but also his or her welfare. The wealth of combined information is invaluable in helping the school promote both the learning and development of each pupil. The school has clear guidelines and procedures and an easily identifiable and approachable specialist team for both Pastoral Care and Child Protection. The prime concern of the school is the interests of pupils. All concerns will be acted upon. Where necessary professional assistance will be sought and the matter referred to relevant outside agencies. We believe that caring is a shared responsibility for everyone in our school community.



## Positive Behaviour

We adopt a positive approach to discipline, encouraging and expecting our pupils to behave with respect and in a responsible manner at all times. Children are made aware of school rules, the reasons for having them and how good behaviour is rewarded. The children are also made aware of possible sanctions which are applied consistently and fairly where behaviour is deemed inappropriate. The success of our positive discipline policy is judged by the behaviour of all pupils on all occasions both inside and outside of school. In a recent ETI Inspection (March 2014), the behaviour of our 415 pupils was described as “Exemplary.”



## Learning Support

It is our aim to identify, at as early an age as possible, those pupils requiring additional support to fulfil their potential. Children are regularly assessed by their class teacher and where a need arises, specialist advice and help is sought in consultation with their parents. Children on an IEP (Individual Education Plan) may receive individual one to one teaching, additional teaching in a small group, support from outside agencies or the provision of a classroom assistant.



## ECO SCHOOL

Our school is also committed to caring for its school and local environment. We are proud to have obtained the top Green Flag Award. A committed team of volunteers made up of pupils, parents and staff have been instrumental in transforming parts of our school grounds and for raising awareness for all things "Green". There are many collection points for a variety of unwanted materials and the mantra always is where possible to reduce, reuse and recycle. Please speak to any member of our Eco Committee or Eco After School Club for any further details.



## Charity

Our school actively encourages children to think about others and to give to those less fortunate than themselves. Fund raising is encouraged at individual, class, year and whole school levels. Local, national and international charities are supported. The school also sponsors a child in Uganda through the work of World Vision.

## Community

The school is very much a community school and is proud of its many strong links in Saintfield and beyond. The school is used on the evenings and at weekends by various local groups. Many visitors from the community come in to school to help enrich both the curriculum and the development of our pupils. The school in turn actively takes part in many local events and competitions and makes use of many facilities readily available within its reach.

The school has strong links with other schools such as Saintfield High, St Mary's Primary, Holy Family and Down High. In the past international links have been forged with other Irish, British and European schools.

## Parents / PTA

All parents are encouraged to get involved in their child's time and education at Academy. There are numerous opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of our school – just ask! The school encourages this valuable input and wants all parents to feel welcome and included in our school. A supportive and energetic committee of parents (PTA), which is open to all parents, plan and manage a range of social activities for families throughout the school year.

## Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is elected every four years to support the Principal and staff in the efficient leadership and management of our school. Our governors take a keen interest in the development and welfare of our pupils and work tirelessly on behalf of all who make up our school community. (For a list of names and their designations please refer to insert)

## Staff

The day to day running of the school is delegated to the Principal and staff. The approachable, dedicated and enthusiastic teaching and non-teaching staff all have your child at the centre of their endeavours. The school is organised with a Principal, Vice Principal, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprising Heads of Key Stages (Nursery, P1-2, P3-4, P5-7), subject co-ordinators, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. (For a list of names and their designations please refer to insert)



**Staff INSET 2015  
at Kingspan Stadium**





## Curriculum

The aim of all teaching at Academy is to empower all our pupils to achieve their potential and to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. The curriculum is tailored to meet individual needs, abilities and learning styles. Policies are regularly monitored and evaluated to keep practice informed and effective.

The curriculum is delivered to our pupils at primary level in three phases:

- Foundation Stage                      P1 - P2
- Key Stage 1                              P3 - P4
- Key Stage 2                              P5 - P7

At Academy the children study the full breadth of all six learning areas:

- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- The World Around Us (History, Geography, Science)
- The Arts (Music, Art & Design, Drama & Performance)
- Physical Education

## Religious Education & Preparation for Sacraments

Our school helps to enrich the moral/spiritual needs of our pupils. The syllabus followed is largely Christian and non-denominational. Other faiths are also discussed and respected. The issue of non-faith is also considered.

A qualified teacher of Religion is employed and arrangements are made for children to receive training for the Sacraments.

## Languages

Children from Nursery to P7 have all been learning Spanish or French as a second language.

## Cross Curricular Skills

They are embedded in the curriculum and our children are encouraged to manage information, communicate, work with others, think, problem solve, decision make, self-manage and be effective and creative in the use of ICT.

## Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities

The school promotes a wide and varied programme of learning experiences and at all times seeks to foster positive attitudes and dispositions in our children.





## The Arts

Children receive numerous opportunities to create, participate in and perform through the medium of music. The school choir, school band, groups of children and individual performers all enjoy contributing to the life of our school and local community. Tuition is also offered in a wide range of instruments. The annual school play, regular year group assemblies and drama lessons encourage children to perform for captive audiences. Children enter and support a variety of local art competitions. School classrooms and corridors proudly display the artistic talents of our children and the school endeavours to ensure that all children have their work displayed.





## ICT

The school library, ICT suite and individual classes are equipped with the latest ICT technology and resources to enhance children's learning.

## Sport

The hall and our spacious outside facilities ensure a comprehensive and varied programme of PE, sports and after school activities can take place. Teams compete regularly in football, cricket, rugby, netball, boys' and girls' hockey and cross country. Our older children develop their swimming skills at Downpatrick Swimming Pool. A programme of tuition is also provided by outside agencies including the IFA, the GAA, Galaxy Sports and Supreme Sports. After school activities are many and cater for all children's preferences. A full list of current activities may be seen on our website.

## Outdoor Learning

Learning outdoors is part of daily life for our nursery and foundation children. All children make use of the excellent outdoor space and facilities within our school grounds. Children from Nursery to P7 have opportunities to go on educational visits to a range of stimulating local attractions to enhance class learning and the following residential trips take place for our older children:

- P5 Castlewellan (2 days / 1 night)
- P6 Ardnabannon (4 days / 3 nights)
- P7 Edinburgh (4days / 3 nights)

## Health & Wellbeing

The children are also encouraged to embrace *healthy lifestyles* with exercise, rest and good eating and drinking habits considered. The *personal safety* and well-being of children is addressed in a number of ways:

- Child Protection
- Safety on our Roads
- Safety Online
- Rural Safety Awareness
- Drug Awareness
- Physical Changes (P6/7)
- PDMU - Personal Development & Mutual Understanding

**Assessment** - Learning in school is regularly assessed. Pupils, staff and parents are encouraged to view assessment as a helpful and progressive part of the learning process. Pupils' work in class is continually assessed and measured by teacher observations and judgements, class work, class reviews and standardised tests. Pupils are formally assessed in English, Mathematics and UICT.

**Reporting to Parents** - Parents are invited to curriculum talks in August. Parental Interviews are held in October and March. A comprehensive annual report is given to parents in June.





## School Uniform

Our school uniform may be purchased from Marshalls, Saintfield. (02897 510315). Whilst school uniform is voluntary, it is expected that all pupils will wear it. Uniform should be clearly labelled. Items of lost property can be located outside Mrs Dickson's classroom. Items will be periodically given to local charities if not reclaimed. A games uniform consisting of blue polo shirt and shorts is the expected dress wear for PE. School fleeces and tracksuit bottoms for outdoor wear may be purchased as an optional extra.

### Girls

- V – necked sweatshirt in Royal Blue with school motif
- Mid-grey pinafore dress or skirt
- Light blue blouse
- White socks or mid grey tights
- Black shoes

### Boys

- V – necked sweatshirt in Royal Blue with school motif
- Mid Grey trousers
- Light blue shirt
- Mid grey socks
- Black Shoes







## The School Day

Breakfast Club	0800-0850
Arrival for all other pupils	0850-0900
Classes	0900-1040
Break	1040-1055
Classes	1055-1210
Lunch	1210-1255
Classes	1255-1400 or 1500*
After School Club	1400-1500 (P1-3)
After School Club	1500- 1600 or 1700 or 1800



\*Children in P1 finish in September at 1210. Children in P3 stay on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until 1400 and on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 1500

\*\* The Senior After School Club is based on need and currently operates Monday and Thursdays until 1800, Tuesdays and Wednesdays until 1700 and on Fridays until 1600.

## Attendance / Punctuality

Good attendance and punctuality at all times is expected, encouraged and celebrated. Parents are discouraged from taking their child out of school for appointments and from taking holidays during term time. In the event of an absence a written or verbal explanation must be forwarded to the school. If a child is late or withdrawn from school correct signing in / out procedures should be followed. Children should only return after illness if they are fit or well enough to do so.

## Admission to P1

**Step 1** You are welcome to either attend our annual Open Day (early December) or arrange a visit with the Principal at any time.

**Step 2** Once an application form has been completed (December / January) and a place confirmed (April) you will be invited to our Familiarisation Days (Early June). Children meet staff and visit their rooms to help reduce any anxieties and staff in turn will talk to you as parents to both inform and reassure.

**Step 3** The new intake of children is "staggered" over the first few weeks (last few days of August / September) to ensure the transition into P1 is as smooth and happy an experience as possible for all pupils.





## Medical

It is imperative that staff are always made aware of any medical matters and that relevant forms and medications are kept up to date. A Medical Policy is available from the school on request.

## Homework

Homework should be viewed as an extension and /or reinforcement of learning in school. It should also be viewed as an exercise in fostering positive work habits and in terms of independence. Time spent on homework is also an opportunity for you to engage with your child in his / her learning and be kept informed about your child's work.

## School Buddies & School Council

Children are encouraged to take responsibility and help in the decision making of our school. Buddies are assigned at break and lunchtimes to look after their peers and younger pupils. Helping them to play safely and happily with the games equipment.

The school council is elected by the pupils and the representatives are encouraged to give input into the daily life of the school.

## School Bus

Eligibility and availability for transport to school by our bus can be made by application with the Education Authority (SE Region) 02890566200.







## School Development Plan / Policies

A full list of school policies are available on written request from the Principal covering a range of pastoral, educational, financial and organisational matters.

## ETI Evaluation - March 2014



## ETI INSPECTION REPORT March 2014

### ACADEMY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

*"I am delighted with the high level of consistency in everything our school seeks to do. To attain very good or better in every aspect of school life is very gratifying as this is a very difficult standard to attain in such a large school"* - Stephen Moore (Principal)

Overall Performance Level	VERY GOOD
Achievements and Standards	VERY GOOD
Provision	VERY GOOD
Leadership and Management	VERY GOOD
Nursery	VERY GOOD
Pastoral Care	OUTSTANDING
Safeguarding Arrangements	COMPREHENSIVE
Pupils	HIGHLY MOTIVATED
	COMMUNICATE CONFIDENTLY
	EXPRESS THEMSELVES ARTICULately
Behaviour of Pupils	EXEMPLARY
Attendance	97%
Quality of Teaching	70% OF LESSONS OBSERVED, DEEMED VERY GOOD TO OUTSTANDING
Leadership & Governance	STRATEGIC & INSPIRES CONFIDENCE



## Raising a Concern

Our experience is that most of our children are happy most of the time. On a rare occasion you may have a serious concern about your child's well-being or the curriculum. At Academy our complaints procedure is based on the dual expectation of addressing pupil needs and endeavouring to resolve matters as close to the point of difficulty as possible beginning with contacting the class teacher. If the matter is not resolved then formal contact should be made with the Principal. Almost all complaints will be resolved on one of these two levels.



## Academy Nursery



Going to Nursery for the first time is a very big step into the outside world for children, and at Academy we aim to work in partnership with you to make the transition from home to Nursery a smooth and enjoyable one. We hope the information in this section will help to inform you about this exciting stage in your child's life. We are a friendly and open Nursery and would be delighted to meet with you to discuss any queries.







The Nursery is situated in a purpose built mobile adjacent to the school library and shares very close links to the school. Staff from the Nursery work very closely with those from the main school, and we share the resources, leadership, vision and policies of the main school.

The Nursery enrolls children of 3 and 4 years of age, usually in the year before they begin primary school. Children come from Saintfield and the surrounding area, and almost all children will move on into the main school after their Nursery year.

The Nursery is staffed by a qualified teacher and Nursery assistant per class, and we are able to enrol 52 children each year in part-time places, with 26 in each class. The timings for each class are:

Morning class: 9.00am – 11.30am  
Afternoon class: 12.30pm-3.00pm

## Daily routine

Young children love consistent routines and most days in Nursery follow a very similar pattern:

9.00/12.30 – children arrive in Nursery and play with tabletop activities

9.15/12.45 – good mornings/good afternoons – time to say hello to everyone and find out what is happening in Nursery that day

9.30/1.00 – free play session - during this time children may choose their own activities, will be encouraged to take part in adult led activities and will have the opportunity to play outdoors with a group. During this time a snack table is available.

11.00/2.30 – story/music/drama time

11.20/2.50 – children can be picked up at any time during the last 10 minutes of the session, during tabletop play. This allows staff time to say goodbye to the children individually and to chat to the grown-ups.





## Curriculum

Children in the early years learn best through play - this is their 'work' and it is the way they discover things about the world. Play in the Nursery is carefully planned and structured to meet the needs of all children, providing them with a broad and balanced curriculum which aims to challenge, interest and motivate. Each month the play is planned around a topic or theme, with various activities designed to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across the six areas of the early years curriculum.

We aim to provide a safe, stimulating and varied environment for the children to play in and the Nursery is set up with different areas such as water, sand, construction, role-play, dough, art, painting, writing, interest table, tabletop play, junk modelling and book play. The resources in these areas are changed daily, weekly or monthly to support planned activities or to follow interests expressed by the children. We are also well resourced in terms of ICT equipment, with a computer, an interactive whiteboard and some iPads. Outdoor play is an important part of each day and the children have access to a safe, enclosed and well resourced outdoor play area.







Here is just a sample of the kind of activities your child will take part in during their year in Nursery:

- sorting, counting, matching, measuring and exploring shapes
- talking, listening, acting out stories, writing cards and invitations
- designing and making models
- being creative with a wide range of materials and techniques
- exploring natural materials such as water, sand, soil, stones and clay
- imaginative role play in a variety of situations eg post office, clothes shop, fairytale castle, café, vets, launderette
- exploring their environment, talking about weather and seasons, planting and caring for plants, bulbs and seeds
- physical play with a variety of climbing equipment, wheeled toys, ball games and large construction
- cooking and baking eg gingerbread men, Easter buns, jelly
- using ICT to support learning
- taking part in a Christmas Nativity play performed for parents
- enjoying visitors into Nursery, and having a trip out at the end of the year



All children are different and come to Nursery with a wide range of abilities and experiences. We place a great emphasis on observing and getting to know your children well so that we are then able to meet their needs and plan activities which are suited to them.

Parent interviews are held twice a year and a written report is provided at the end of the pre-school year. In this way parents are informed about their child's development and we are able to work in partnership for the benefit of the children.

## Behaviour

We want the Nursery to be a caring, supportive and secure environment for all our children and we encourage them to develop self-discipline, self-esteem and respect for other people and property. We use a range of strategies to encourage good behaviour and our expectations are clearly displayed and explained to both children and parents.

## Healthy Eating

During the session a healthy snack is available to the children. They are able to visit the snack table once during each session, and will sit with a small group of children and chat whilst they eat. They are encouraged to be as independent as possible during this routine and quickly learn to serve themselves and tidy away afterward. The range of food over the week includes crackers, cheese, fruit, toast, pancakes and veda, with milk or water to drink. The children are encouraged to think and talk about healthy eating and dental care during snack and through other activities such as stories and cookery. We ask for a monthly contribution from parents to cover the daily snack costs.





## Academy Nursery



### Uniform

In Nursery your child will have lots of practical experiences, some of them very messy! Aprons are provided but sometimes accidents occur and children may get their clothes marked or wet. The Nursery uniform is informal and practical and consists of a blue sweatshirt with additional polo shirt and jogging pants. These are available from Marshalls of Saintfield all year round. Marshalls Tel: 02897510315







## Transition & Getting Involved

### Transition

Making the transition from home to Nursery is a very important time and can be a stressful, though exciting time for your children. We aim to make this as easy and smooth as possible and in early June children are invited to have a play visit to the Nursery and parents are invited to an introductory information evening. The settling in period in September is designed to be fair to each child and to give them time to get used to the new setting and to build relationships. All children are different and will take varying amounts of time to settle in, and the settling in procedure is flexible to allow for this.

Towards the end of the Nursery year, most of our children begin the process of moving from the Nursery to Primary 1 in the main school. This is usually a very smooth, stress-free and successful transition and involves visits by the children to the P1 classrooms and visits from the P1 teachers over to Nursery.

### Getting involved

At Academy we feel that it is vital for parents and staff to work together in order to do the very best we can for your children. We therefore encourage you to be as involved as you can with your child's life in Nursery in various ways:

- sharing your knowledge of your children with us to help us get to know them and settle them in
- each month we send home a topic sheet so that you can support the learning happening in Nursery
- we encourage parents (or grandparents) to volunteer to help with our snack routine
- we run a DELTA course each year, in collaboration with P1 staff from the school – this is a practical and informal course which aims to give parents an insight into ways in which they can contribute to their child's development

We hope this Nursery section has answered some of the questions you may have had as you choose a Nursery for your child. However, it is only a brief guide. There may be lots more you would like to know. We would encourage you to contact us or to arrange a time to visit us and we will be delighted to answer your questions. We look forward to meeting you and your child in the very near future.













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## How To Find Us

