

Sharing Stories

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West Winds Winners at the Families First Awards

Earlier in the year we received the news that our nursery unit, here at West Winds Primary School, had been nominated for three awards at the Family First NI Education Awards. The Nursery Unit was nominated in the Best Nursery, Best Teacher and Best Assistant categories. Mrs Leary has been teaching and leading our Nursery Unit for three years and Miss Murray has been at the Nursery for a whopping 23 years!

Mrs Leary and Miss Murray both attended the awards ceremony and were delighted that West Winds Nursery Unit took home the award for the Best Nursery School! To make matters even better, Mrs Leary and Miss Murray both received a Highly Commended Award for their efforts and dedication to the Nursery.

To say that the staff and parents here are delighted would be an understatement. This award only further confirms the high level of education, care and good teamwork that we strive for here at West Winds Primary and Nursery.



A big thank you to the West Winds Development Association for funding the tickets to attend the awards. Also, a huge thank you to our school families for the nominations and their continued support.





West Winds joins Ben Vista CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

This term we are delighted to welcome Biruk our Organic Gardening Teacher back into the school, and to be part of a new project linking West Winds Primary School to a nearby farm.

Through a grant from Bridging the Gap, school is being supported to undertake a whole host of activities to inspire our children and community about fresh healthy sustainable local vegetables. Over the next two terms pupils will not only be growing food in school with regular classes with Biruk, but they will also be visiting the nearby farm of the Ferguson's on Ballyrogan Road, and will be part of a new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme, aimed at connecting our community in Westwinds with a new source of fresh vegetables. The school has adopted a no-dig bed on the farm and each class is adopting a vegetable, which they will grow, and will be used in events in the school and West Winds Community during the autumn season. School will be sharing news about the project regularly, and "Ben Vista CSA" as it is known has as a priority making its vegetables easily available for the WestWinds Community. There is a weekly CSA Veg Box scheme starting in July, and a Saturday stall will start later in the summer too, all with fresh sustainable local veg, and this is subsidised for the West Winds Community.



Staff Spotlight

Name: Sarah McDonald

Hometown: Belfast

Hobbies: I love nothing more than a trip to a nice coffee shop and a long walk. I also love music, and like to sing and play piano whenever I can. I also like going for a run, but tend to prefer it when the weather is nice!

Favourite Food: You can't beat a roast dinner!

One interesting fact: I can play 7 instruments... however, you may not want to listen to some of them for very long!

Proudest Moment: I once wrote, directed and starred in a Pantomime when I was at university. It was a tough process, with lots of challenges, but everything came together in the end and it was one of the best things I have done.



Friends of West Winds PTA

Our Friends of West Winds PTA have had a busy year so far, organising fun events to help raise school funds. This year we have had a disco, Mother's Day raffle, Coffee and Cake, easter competition, a school quiz and not to forgetting our monthly tuck shop. With all their efforts, they have raised over £1400 - an incredible amount!

Thank you for all the hard work you have put into organising these events. The money raised will go towards providing educational and enjoyable experience for all pupils here at the school. We plan on purchasing new ovens to allow cooking and baking throughout the school and playground markings for our newly resurfaced playgrounds.



Christmas Tree Festival

In December, we hosted our very first Christmas Tree Festival alongside West Winds Community Church. Over the course of the weekend, we had hundreds of people visiting the school and taking part in the festivities.

The Friday night saw our lantern parade kick off celebrations, we even had a special visitor from the North Pole. Saturday we were ready to open the doors to our Christmas Tree festival here in our school hall. Over twenty different groups and classes each decorated a tree of their own and it was an absolutely wonderful sight to see. Sunday night was a chance for us all to reflect upon the reason for the season at the Carol service, with singing from our school choir.

It was absolutely wonderful to see so many different groups from our community come together to take part in such a spectacular celebration. The amount raised was just under £1,500. All donations and proceeds were greatly appreciated. We would like to extend our thanks to the following for sponsoring our event:

- *West Winds Development Association Information*
- *Tesco*
- *Ark Housing*
- *Scrabo Presbyterian Church, Newtownards*
- *Tile and Wood Floor Store*
- *John Gray & Co*
- *Movilla High School*
- *Mrs Elaine McBratney*

Thanks to everyone else who came to visit our school, who took part in organising and decorating the hall and anyone else who contributed in anyway to making the entire weekend a huge success.



Football Team

Football is a key part of life here at West Winds Primary for many pupils. The Newtownards and District PSFA league started on 28th September 2023 with matches being held on a fortnight basis at Londonderry Park football pitches.

17 teams play in this league from Newtownards, Comber, Ballygowan and Killinchy Primary schools. Our football team have seen some successes as well as hard times as we are playing with schools twice the size as West Winds. However, through good and hard times the children have been a credit to our school with their sportsmanship attitude.

Finals day this year for our grouping was held on 18th April 2024. We began the finals against Killinchy Primary, winning by penalties, we moved on to our final match against St Finian's. This match resulted in a penalty shoot out won this time by St Finian's. We came runners up in our group and were thrilled. Everyone at West Winds Primary are so pleased with the dedication shown by all pupils who have played for our team.



Cross Community Work

P7 had the privilege to take part in a 4-week Cross Community Programme with the P7 class from St Finian's Primary School. The programme was funded by Ards and North Down Borough Council Good Relations money and was delivered by a team from Active Youth NI.

Before the programme began the children were paired up with their peers from St Finian's. We made videos to introduce ourselves and were really excited when we got to watch the video from our St Finian's partners. When we got to meet in person, we had great fun trying to find our partner and over the four weeks we established new friendships.



Each session focussed on games developing communication, teamwork and cooperation. The children were also asked to share about their likes and dislikes, comparing and contrasting with their peers from St Finian's. We learnt how to embrace differences but also found out that there were lots of similarities no matter what our background.

Alongside this, some of our pupils were invited to take part in a fishing session with the Northern Ireland Cross Community Angling group, funded by ARK housing. This was a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to experience something new, while making cross community links with other pupils.

As teachers, we were so proud of how our children took part and love that true connections have been made with children continuing to be in touch with the St Finian's pupils. A really successful programme!

Get in touch:

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