

St Mary's Primary School & Nursery



Portaferry

Saint Mary's Primary School
and Nursery Unit
Primary 1 and Nursery School
Prospectus
2022/23





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Principal's Welcome

Dear Parent/ Guardian / Carer

Thank you for taking the time to consider Saint Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit for your child's education. I hope you find this prospectus helpful and it provides you with a brief flavour of what life is like in Saint Mary's.

As a Catholic school, our core aim is to establish an environment where children are at the centre of everything we do. Saint Mary's has a committed and caring staff that work closely in partnership with its parents, parish and governors to deliver the highest quality of standards of pastoral, academic and interpersonal education. We seek to nurture the whole child by trying to provide a broad, balanced, challenging, stimulating learning centre within a safe, caring, well-resourced and happy learning environment.

Of course no booklet can convey the real atmosphere of a school and it is only through visiting or spending time here at Saint Mary's that you will discover the wonderful ethos present and the positive relationships between children and adults. All parents, and prospective parents, are most welcome to visit the school and we look forward to meeting you and welcoming your child into the community of Saint Mary's.

Best wishes

Mr P Gilchrist
Principal

Mission Statement

“Let your light shine”

We aim to create a calm and caring school family within a climate of joy, freedom, respect, challenge, co-operation and celebration. We strive to provide opportunities for the development of the whole person, so that as well as succeeding intellectually, each child will also be supported in developing their imagination, creativity, spirituality, emotional, physical and social skills. This is reinforced by maintaining home-school-parish links with the child at its centre.

Crucial to the creation of this environment is a commitment to the Christian values of love, faith, justice and peace. This is within a culture of tolerance, where each member of the school family, be they child, staff member or parent, is recognised, welcomed, respected and cherished.

We aim to establish a community which promotes a spirit of charity, social justice, global awareness and concern for others leading to practical outreach and partnerships. In doing so, we will enable the children to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives which will contribute to the wider world. Our school aims to be person-centred, promoting the dignity, self-esteem and full development of everyone in the school community, as we are each made in God's image and uniquely loved by God.



SUCCEED

We work together so everyone can be the very best they can be.



INSPIRE

We have passion and pride in all we do resulting in all adults and children reaching their own goal.



CELEBRATE

We celebrate and praise every achievement, however big or small, for everyone in our school family.



HAPPINESS

We are a happy school of happy learners and we build strong relationships in a safe and supportive environment.

Ethos of the School

We enable each pupil to realise his/her full potential and acquire a positive self-image through the provision of a broadly based, balanced curriculum, based upon Catholic principles, which promotes the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of each pupil.

We develop a partnership between school, home, church and the community.

We provide a Catholic Ethos within the school in which children will acquire a reasoned set of attitudes, values and beliefs.

We provide a secure and happy atmosphere in which children can learn effectively, in accordance with their individual needs and abilities, and in which they feel valued.

We provide a family atmosphere in which children can gain the confidence to develop those skills and attitudes, which may be missing from their home lives.

We work as a team, with a common cause, and share our expertise and skills with fellow members. As a highly motivated staff, we have high expectations of our pupils so that they may fulfil their individual potentials.

Our pupils develop self-respect as well as respect for others and their property.

We celebrate our children by weekly awards, certificates and our internal House Point reward system.

General Information

St. Mary's Primary School is a Catholic maintained co-educational school catering for pupils in the primary school age range. In addition, it has its own Nursery Unit which has full use of the school's facilities.

The school is situated at the southern end of the town of Portaferry, on the Windmill Hill, overlooking Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea. The present school premises, extended and refurbished, were opened in January 1987 and are modern and well equipped. There is a footpath from the town to the school, a distance of less than a quarter of a mile. There is a regular bus service from the town to the school for those living outside the statutory distance for walking.

The present enrolment of compulsory school age children is 179, and there are 26 pupils in the Nursery Unit, with 8 full-time teacher members and 1 part-time teaching member of staff. The maximum intake for Primary 1, as set down by EA, is 27. The nursery unit offers 26 free part-time places. St. Mary's is essentially a community school committed to providing fully the Northern Ireland Curriculum for all the children entrusted to its care, regardless of background.



Our School Accommodation and Resources

The school building is a well maintained and stimulating learning environment. We have 8 bright, spacious and comfortable classrooms. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards, ipads, a wide range of learning resources for all curriculum areas.



Staff

Principal: Mr P Gilchrist

Teaching Staff

Mrs G. Breen
Mr S. Denvir
Mrs F. Dorrian
Mrs C. Gibson
Mrs A. M. O'Neill
Mrs K Fowler
Mrs J Birt
Miss U McErlean

Non- Teaching Staff

Ms S Magee
Mrs R Healy
Mrs C Doherty
Miss L Fowler
Mrs C Hannon
Mrs P Bailie
Mrs F Milligan
Ms C
Mrs M Denvir

Secretary: Mrs J Young

Building Supervisor: Mrs P Magee

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church (Trustees), Education Authority (EA), parents and staff have responsibility for the appointments of staff and running the school.

In St Mary's the Board of Governors play an active role in all aspects of school life. They fully support the teaching and learning taking place in the school by:

- Monitoring and reviewing school policies on learning;
- Supporting the staff of the school;
- Self-evaluating their own governance; and
- Monitoring and evaluating school development planning and action planning.

Chairman	Mr P. Merron Fr. F McGrady Mrs M Merron Mr G. Moreland) Representing) the) Trustees)
Vice Chair	Mr B Coleman Capt. E. McGee) Representing) EA
	Mr K McGarry) Parents' Representative
	Mrs F Dorrian) Teachers' Representative

Parents can address the Board of Governors via the Parent representative.

Our Curriculum

The curriculum is the sum of all the learning experiences present for each child, those planned by the teacher and those that emanate from our school ethos and environment.

Our curriculum takes into account the uniqueness of each child and his/her individual needs. We adapt a child centred approach to the curriculum. Our balanced curriculum is in line with the Education (NI) Order 2010 and involves the learning areas of:

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

Across the curriculum we have an emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society.

These whole curriculum skills and capabilities include Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Cross-Curricular Skills.



Teaching and Learning



At Saint Mary's we have 8 full time teachers and 1 part time member of teaching staff in the Nursery Unit. We plan our lessons in line with the revised Education (NI) Order 2010. However, in our school, teaching is not just classroom based but learning that also emanates from our school ethos and environment.

Teachers are committed and enthusiastic and they enjoy a positive relationship with the children, parents and all school based staff.

As a school community we strive to raise standards and set realistically high expectations which both challenge and inspire pupils.

Teachers use adaptable flexible teaching strategies that respond to the range of abilities within the classroom.



Learning activities are broad and balanced and incorporate the learning areas of Communication, Using Mathematics, The World Around Us, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, Music, The Arts, Physical Education and we use ICT throughout.



Learning activities develop the pupil's cross curricular skills, thinking skills and personal capabilities and promote risk taking and independence.



Homework

Homework is defined as the time students spend outside the classroom in assigned learning activities. At Saint Mary's Primary School, we believe that homework is an important part of children's learning. We use homework as a way of keeping parents up to date on what their child is learning in school and to reinforce in school learning. We have made our homework guidelines so that they reflect government policy.



Good Practice Guidelines for Homework

Homework should be:

- completed regularly and fully.
- neatly presented.
- supported and encouraged by parents.
- Set for children's individual ability.

Religion

As we are a Catholic maintained school we have a role in the religious life of the child. The RE programme is based on the Grow in Love series. We prepare children for the sacraments of First Confession(P3), First Holy Communion (P4) and Confirmation(P7). We work closely with our local Priest. Children from all denominations are welcome at our school.



Supporting Charities

We feel it is important to teach children about the need to look beyond our own needs and help others who are not as fortunate as we are. During this academic year our nominated charities are;

- Trocaire
- Northern Ireland Children's Hospice
- St. Vincent de Paul



Sports and Extra Curricular Activities

The Board of Governors are aware of the importance of visits and other enrichment activities in the development of our children. These form a major part of Saint Mary's education. Children take part in a wide variety of visits throughout their school life.

We join with external agencies to provide a wide range of sporting and musical activities. We believe that every child should leave primary school with a sport they take part in or with an instrument they should try. Saint Mary's offers Hurley, Gaelic Football, Soccer, Netball, Basketball, Gymnastics, Swimming, Singing, Music Tuition and Dance throughout the year. We have close links with local sporting, drama and singing organisations and can introduce parents and children to them. We also offer After School Clubs in Arts & Crafts, Speech and Drama, Sport and Music to further add to the breadth of experience on offer.

After School clubs run until 4.00pm each day Monday through until Thursday.



Admissions

Application forms may be obtained from the school. The Board of Governors will be involved, along with the Principal, in the application of the Admissions Criteria.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

P1 INTAKE

The following criteria will be applied in the order set down 1 - 6 by the Board of Governors of St Mary's Primary School, Portaferry, in selecting children for admission to Y1 in September 2022.

- 1 Children who normally reside in the parish of Ballyphilip. Parish map available from school office.
- 2 Children who have brothers/sisters (half-brothers/half-sisters) presently enrolled in the school.
- 3 Children regarded by the Board of Governors, on the basis of supporting evidence by parents and/or statutory agencies, as having special circumstances - medical, social, security factors – that would necessitate attendance at this school.
- 4 Children from other areas.

In the event of over-subscription in any one of the criteria, taken in order, the following sub-criterion will be applied.

Final selection will be on the basis of the closeness of the home to the school as measured by the shortest walking distance.

SAINT MARY'S NURSERY UNIT ADMISSIONS

The criteria for admission to St. Mary's Nursery Unit is available upon request.



School Uniform

It is important that children come to school neat and tidy. Our uniform reflects the individuality of Saint Mary's and offers a reasonably priced form of common dress.

- BOYS** School Sweatshirt (with the school crest)
White T-shirt
Grey Trousers (Boys in P1 and P2 may wear jogging pants the SAME colour as the school trousers)
- GIRLS** School Sweatshirt (with the school crest)
White T shirt
Grey Skirt or trousers (Girls in P1 and P2 may wear jogging pants the SAME colour as the school trousers)
White knee socks (or black tights in cold weather)

The School supply the school sweatshirt directly; the rest of the uniform can be purchased locally or in the larger stores.

P.E. Girls and Boys

Our PE Uniform (below) is supplied by Signature Works and can be ordered on
<https://www.signatureschools.co.uk/ards-north-down/primary-schools/st-marys-primary/>



Break and Lunch

We offer well balanced school meals for the children. A fresh dinner is cooked on site each day. The children enjoy the dinners as there is a good variety of food on offer over the course of a week. School meals cost £2.60 per day or children may be eligible for free meals.

The school promotes healthy eating and pupils are encouraged to have a healthy alternative such as fruit yoghurt for their break time snack.



Discipline

The school focuses on the development of a positive and caring climate which is based on respect. We are quiet, understanding but firm in the way we encourage high standards of behaviour. We promote positive behaviour through simple reward and merit schemes. We use fair sanctions which the children's Student Council helped to decide.



Pastoral Care

Pastoral care permeates all aspect of school life. It reflects the values, attitudes, beliefs and practices of our Catholic faith. In Saint Mary's we try to create caring, happy children who have gained skills and positive attitudes necessary for adult life. We aim to nurture confidence, tolerance, understanding and a good attitude to lifelong learning



Child Protection

Our staff are trained in child protection ensuring the welfare of all children in our care. The designated child protection teacher is Mrs Breen. Mr Denvir is the deputy designated teacher for child protection. The children are made aware of these roles and know who they can approach in times of need.



Special Educational Needs

The early identification of children with Special Educational needs is a priority at Saint Mary's. Mrs Dorrian (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) liaises with class teachers to identify specific needs and draw up individual education plans for these children. The class teacher will cater for the identified needs of each child. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress during regular consultations. The school also works closely with outside agencies in order to meet the needs of all children.

Parents

Children's education is an on-going partnership between home and school. Parents are the children's first educators and teachers. Home and school share in the child's education.

Parents are always welcome at Saint Mary's and the staff are committed to fostering excellent home/school links.

To keep our parents well informed they are invited to the school in the first term for a curricular meeting which gives a general outline of the work to be covered and class routines. Also in the first term individual parent interviews are held to discuss and review your child's progress.

Parents who have any concerns or worries about their child can arrange further appointments with the class teacher or Principal.



Parents also have a responsibility to the school. We would like parents to;

- Ensure their child has the best punctuality and attendance possible;
- Ensure that their child is well equipped for school;
- Do their best to keep the child healthy and fit for school;
- Inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect performance or behaviour in school; and
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general.

Parents Support Group

We have a very active parent support group who work throughout the year raising money to fund anything from outdoor play equipment to trips and excursions. It is an excellent way to know the school and become active in the school community.

Please contact the school and get involved to make a difference in your child's education.

What other say about us.

“My child is very happy at school and I am more than happy with how he is progressing. Thank you to all staff.”

“The whole school is a credit to you all- keep up the great work.”

“Just to fully appreciate all that the staff do on a regular basis for our children. We are very lucky to have an excellent school on our doorstep. Well done to all!”

“Very proud of this school.”

“Very lucky to have this wonderful school, staff and PSG”

“Excellent school. Thank you for everything.”

“A very well run school – well done.”

“I am extremely happy with the standard of education provided by St Mary’s. I also feel it is very supportive if there are any issues ie child unsettled.”

“My daughter loves coming to school. She gets on great with friends and likes her teacher. At present school is doing a fantastic job- long may it continue.”

“To be honest I can’t think of anything – keep up the good work.”

Source: Parent Questionnaires May 2019



At a Focused Inspection the Education and Training Inspectorate found that the strengths of the school include:

- the inclusive ethos which is underpinned by the very good quality of pastoral care provision and the excellent working relationships at all levels;
- the courteous and well-motivated children who have a very good disposition towards their learning and work very well both independently and in groups;
- the commitment and strong sense of collegiality of the teaching and non-teaching staff who work very hard to meet the needs of all of the children;
- the quality of the teaching observed which was very good or outstanding in the majority of the lessons;
- the very good standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy and the very good quality of the special educational needs provision; and
- the effective leadership provided by the Principal and his dedicated service to the school and the community.

An inspection of the Nursery Unit gave the provision an outstanding report.

Code of Conduct

Be kind and polite, everyone is special

Show respect to the adults who work in the school

Help each other

Always try to be truthful and fair

Make visitors feel welcome

Come to school on time

Wear the school uniform and the proper P.E. clothes

*Bring a bottle of water to school and bring a healthy
break*

Remember to bring your homework to school

Walk quietly around the school

Keep the school tidy

Do your best at all times

You are special

God loves you

Act special

Notes



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