



**Whitehead**

Primary School  
& Nursery Unit

**Valued Inspired Prepared**

# Annual Report to Parents 2024 / 2025

Empowering everyone to **SHINE**

**Share Help Include Nurture Excel**

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## Members of the Board of Governors

| Key Role   | Name                 | Representing                       | End of Term of Office |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Chair      | Mrs Denise Harvey    | Transferor Representative          | June 2028             |
| Vice Chair | Mrs Olive Crooks     | Transferor Representative          | June 2028             |
|            | Mr Jeffrey Glenn     | Transferor Representative          | June 2028             |
|            | Mrs Heather Craig    | Transferor Representative          | June 2028             |
|            | Mrs Pamela Patterson | Parents' Representative            | June 2028             |
|            | Mrs Laura McVeigh    | Parents' Representative            | June 2028             |
|            | Mrs R Hastings       | Education Authority Representative | June 2028             |
|            | Mrs Victoria Tilson  | Education Authority Representative | June 2028             |
|            | Mr Graeme Baird      | Teachers' Representative           | June 2028             |
| Secretary  | Mr Jim Loughins      | Principal (non-voting member)      |                       |

## Finance

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                           |                   |
| Initial Budget                          | £1,442,738        |
| Additional Allocations                  | £0                |
| 2022/23 carry over                      | £126,008          |
| <b>Total Budget</b>                     | <b>£1,568,746</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                      |                   |
| Teaching Staff                          | £1,115,652        |
| Non-teaching staff                      | £325,586          |
| Non-staff costs                         | £110,423          |
| <b>Gross Expenditure</b>                | <b>£1,551,661</b> |
| <b>Less Income (from other sources)</b> | <b>£0</b>         |
| <b>Net Expenditure</b>                  | <b>£1,551,661</b> |
| <b>Surplus 2024/25</b>                  | <b>£17,085</b>    |

## Bequests

Balance as of 31-04-25 £302.88. The bequest is used to replenish Sports Day medals on a tri-annual basis.

## Primary School & Nursery Unit Current Accounts

The current accounts for both the Nursery Unit & Primary School were duly audited by Mr M Crooks and approved by the Board of Governors.

## **Curricular and Extra-Curricular Opportunities**

### **Nursery**

Last year we continued with the previous year's training in promoting children's speech, language and communication skills. As a result, staff have become more skilful in their use of strategies to support verbal responses of reluctant and struggling communicators. Considering the many types of visual supports and strategies we employ, it was emphasised that, to develop children's working memory, a gradual scaling down of prompts over time is crucial. This was also reinforced with regard to self-monitoring, whereby, over time, children are more readily encouraged to notice and self-correct sound production, use of pronouns etc. Having explored the Blank Level questions model, staff are more confident in selecting the appropriate complexity of questions to ensure understanding for every child.

Our second focus related to nurturing children's interest in books and stories. As book sharing is often incidental, planning notes outlined staff who would take responsibility to share books with groups of children. Progression was reflected in terms of skills modelled by staff e.g. at the beginning of the year, being aware of book format, such as holding it the right way up and turning pages; towards the end of the year, encouraging children to predict or notice familiar letters within the text. Our long-term aim each year is for children to be more confident to independently access and handle books. The creation of several areas outdoors and enhancement of the indoor area has made the exploration of books more inviting.

As always, we continue to reflect on our collective and individual practice, appreciating that we need to have realistic expectations about what can be achieved in a busy classroom setting with many and varied needs.

### **Primary School - PDMU**

This year in PDMU the staff worked collaboratively to update the PDMU curriculum under the leadership of Mrs Murphy. The review focused on Addressing Bullying, RSE and the inclusion and implementation of the PATHS resource. Mrs Murphy and Mr Baird completed all levels of the ABSIT (Addressing Bullying) training. Following this, all staff, including classroom assistants, completed Level 1 training. Training was also shared with, and completed by, the Board of Governors.

Mrs Murphy and Mr Baird worked together to update both the Addressing Bullying Policy and Positive Behaviour Policy, ensuring that appropriate links between the two policies were clearly established. Staff completed training in relation to the Preventative Curriculum and subsequently collaborated to identify ways to enhance and develop this within each year group.

### **Primary School - Literacy**

The first of our whole-school literacy targets for the academic year 2024/25 was to provide staff training in the fundamentals of 'Learning to Read' and 'Reading to Learn' – focusing on reading skills and strategies. The staff received external training and were given the opportunity to consider how to improve reading within our school. Current practice was reviewed and an agreed way forward was planned, where specific reading skills are introduced in each year group, taught explicitly, intensively and persistently to promote comprehension and increase our children's ability to fully access the meaning of what they are reading.

The second literacy target was to implement Modelled and Shared reading sessions into our teaching, focusing on the relevant abovementioned skills and strategies. Teachers planned and resourced lessons to recap previously learned skills and introduce new skills, beginning with teacher modelling, moving to shared sessions and culminating in our children working independently to develop a reading skill through guided reading lessons.

### Y6 Residential

From Monday 17<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025, 41 Year 6 children and 4 members of staff enjoyed an action packed few days at Delamont Outdoor Education Centre on the shores of Strangford Lough. Children participated in a range of daytime activities including wall climbing, archery, orienteering and a coastal walk around Ballyhoran where some brave (crazy) Year 6's braved the elements to have a swim in the sea. The evening activities included a nightline, orienteering, team games, campfire and s'more making. This was our third year at Delamont, and we found the facilities suitable for our group, proving yet again that Delamont is an ideal destination for our Y6 outdoor residential. We are planning to return in April 2026, a little later in the year in the hope that the weather will be more favourable.



### Y7 Residential

Our Year 7 pupils met bright and early on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April at Larne Ferry Terminal, ready to embark on a four-day residential to Manchester. The ferry crossing went smoothly, thanks to the fair weather, and we met the coach and driver at Cairnryan. A short journey south brought us to Dumfries, where we stretched our legs at Dalscone Open Farm – a fully working family farm that has diversified as a petting farm & fun farm. The children had a blast with lots of trampolining, snow tubing and go-karting – just what we needed after the bus journey from Cairnryan. Later that afternoon, we arrived at the Premier Inn, unpacked our things, had dinner and went bowling at the Trafford Centre. Day two was spent entirely at Alton Towers, where we were blessed with wall-to-wall sunshine! The more daring amongst us enjoyed the more infamous rides like 'Rita' and 'The Smiler' while others enjoyed a calmer experience in David Walliams World. Day three took us to Wildshore Delamere, a picturesque lakeside glamping hotspot with an amazing array of watersport facilities. The children had the floating inflatables completely to themselves and slipped, dived and splashed in the sunshine to the point of exhaustion! Once dried off, we headed back

into Manchester City centre for a stadium tour of the Etihad, where the children got access to the most expensive seats, changing rooms and pitch-side dugouts. In the evening, we headed to Total Ninja to show off our ninja skills on the obstacle courses! Our final day, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May saw us heading north to Gretna where we did some last-minute shopping and had some lunch before boarding the ferry at Cairnryan. This was another memorable trip for our children (and staff)!



### Extra-Curricular Activities

A wide variety of extra-curricular activities as outlined below were offered throughout the year.

| Teachers & Classroom Assistants offered | Outside Coaches offered |
|---|-------------------------|
| ▪ Football                              | ▪ Jujitsu               |
| ▪ Hockey                                | ▪ Irish Dancing         |
| ▪ Netball                               | ▪ Basketball            |
| ▪ Cross Country                         | ▪ Gymnastics            |
| ▪ Badminton                             | ▪ Cricket               |
| ▪ Art Club                              | ▪ Junglenastix          |
| ▪ Drama & Music                         | ▪ Rugby                 |
|   | ▪ Lego Club             |

### Hockey

The 2024-25 season was a very successful one for hockey in Whitehead Primary School with the team growing from strength to strength as the year progressed. We regularly had approximately 30 children attending after-school hockey on Thursday afternoons in Terms 1 and 2. We participated in a monthly tournament at Mossley Hockey Club for schools in the wider Carrick area, often bringing enough boys and girls to make two teams. There was excellent parental support who helped me manage the two teams, who were often playing simultaneously. We also participated in Ulster Hockey Blitzes and qualifiers at Belfast High School, where we had both boys and girls represented. The season finished with two major highlights, the mixed team finished winners on the final day of the Carrick Schools Tournament at Mossley Hockey School and the girls team finished runners up at the Larne Schools Tournament at Larne Grammar School in June.



## Football

Our footballers put in some brilliant performances over the course of the year in a range of regional and national competitions. Our U11 team finished joint first, losing out in a closely contested playoff league decider against Carrickfergus Model. Our U10 team also had a strong campaign after Christmas, losing out on the league trophy by a point.

This year saw our girls' team compete in the Carrickfergus district 5-a-side competition, as well as the national 5-a-side and 7-a-side finals. The girls came out as winners in the regional competition, before finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in both national competitions, losing only one game across all 3 competitions, a superb effort from a talented group of girls.



## Music & Drama

The start of the new school year brought an exciting kick-off for art, drama, and music across WPS. After-school clubs resumed, offering pupils a variety of creative opportunities in singing, acting, and artistic activities each week. Beautiful artwork soon adorned the windows and walls, showcasing the children's talent and enthusiasm. We even had one pupil whose artwork was shown in the Royal Academy of Arts!

As autumn progressed, the sound of Christmas songs began to echo through the halls as pupils from Nursery to Year 3 rehearsed for their Nativities. At the same time, the school choir, instrumentalists, and the Year 4 and 5 choirs were busy preparing for the annual Carol Service. The choir's hard work paid off when they were invited to perform at the Civic Carol Service, Radius Housing Coffee Morning, and Whitehead Nursing Home—wonderful opportunities for the children to share their talents with the wider community. The term finished with a beautiful carol service, putting everyone in the mood for Christmas.

With Christmas behind us, attention turned to the Spring Recital—a delightful evening of music and song. Many pupils bravely took to the stage to perform solos and duets on a range of instruments, creating a memorable night for families and staff alike.

Throughout the year, 33 pupils received music lessons from EA music tutors, and the end of the year saw a flurry of music exams. We are proud to celebrate the achievements of four pupils who earned their Grade 1 and two pupils who achieved Grade 2—an impressive testament to their dedication and progress.



## Culture & Diversity

The focus for Diversity Day this year was Brazil. Pupils took part in a range of engaging activities including tasting 'Pineapple and Mint' juice in the Brazilian Café and taking part in the 'Blackbean Tweezer Challenge'. They also enjoyed creating a carnival mask and dancing to carnival music. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all and provided pupils with a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, traditions and communities.

## Pupil Voice

It was another excellent year for the Pupil Voice! Elections took place in September with two pupils being voted in from each class. It has been impressive to witness the confident manner in which contributions have been made during the monthly meetings. As part of our focus on Addressing Bullying, Pupil Voice explored the issue in depth and completed a questionnaire, as part of the ABSIT training. Pupils reported that they were happy with how school deals with such issues and that they feel safe in school. Pupil Voice also thought about the ways in which the Ethos, Vision, Mission Statement and Core Values reflect what happens in our school on a daily basis. Class councils were held to consider whether pupils wished to suggest any changes to these statements or values. Pupil Voice also took part in the 'Improving Playgrounds' initiative with Alison from EOS, exploring ways to enhance the playgrounds in the town of Whitehead. This year's chosen charity was 'Children with Cancer UK', and the Pupil Voice organised a 'Movie and Munch' day for their fundraising day. Pupils were invited to come to school in their PJ's or onesies and to bring a teddy or blanket. Classes voted on the movie that they wanted to watch. A total of £275 was raised.

## Eco Committee

Our elected Eco Committee began their journey this year by completing a detailed environmental review of our school. After thoughtful discussion and collaboration, they chose to explore Marine Life, a subject that sparked great interest and passion among the group. During a special assembly, the children shared their ideas and goals with the whole school, encouraging others to think about why it is so important to care for our oceans and marine creatures.

They followed this up by working incredibly hard to put together a presentation and fun, hands-on activities for every class. In pairs, the committee members visited each classroom to share their research on local marine life and to teach their peers about the important role we all play in protecting these ecosystems. Their strong leadership and commitment helped raise awareness and engage the entire school community. To put their message into action, they invited every class to take part in a year-long litter-picking initiative, helping to clean up our town and reduce the amount of waste entering the ocean.

Thanks to our dedicated school gardening group, made up of the supportive family and friends of WPS, several areas of our school grounds were given a fresh update this year. Our vegetable patch was a particular highlight, with new beds installed and the whole area tidied to enhance our growing activities.

We were also delighted to welcome Blossoms of Magheramorne, who visited our Foundation Stage classes to deliver an engaging session on 'Farm to Fork.' The children thoroughly enjoyed learning about where their food comes from and getting hands-on experience with planting and growing.

A special thanks also goes to Mrs Leckie, whose efforts during the Cash for Kids campaign enabled us to get brand new playground equipment for our Year 3 and Year 5 outdoor areas. This exciting upgrade will play a key role in supporting our outdoor learning and giving pupils more opportunities for play and exploration.



## Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs

During 2024/25, we had 43 children on our SEN register. All of these children have a PLP (Personal Learning Plan) and 12 of them have a Statement of Special Educational needs and work alongside an Additional Adult Assistant to support their learning.

All KS1 and KS2 pupils completed CAT4, PTE and PTM tests in March 2025. Our Senior Leadership Team met with teachers from each year group to analyse the data and identify any children that required targeted support through boost groups in literacy, numeracy or potential referral to psychology in the new school year. Once the children in need of intervention were identified, we sought parental permission so we could begin boost groups from the beginning of September.

Through the 2024/25 academic year, we provided direct intervention/support to individual pupils through:

- Numeracy and literacy boost groups that ran throughout the year on Monday & Thursday afternoons with class teachers.
- Identified Y3 children participated in Reading Together which was carried out by some of our classroom assistants, to support the development of reading skills. These children were tested at the end of P2, then again at Christmas and Easter of P3. All of the children on the scheme this year, met their target by Easter and were able to be signed off.

All pupils continue to be supported through quality differentiation in the classroom and also in smaller groups through Numeracy and Literacy Boost and the Reading Together Scheme.

There have been some recent positive changes to SEN recently. This means that Education Authority SEN Support Services are more accessible through focus teams called Local Impact Teams. Our Local Impact team will work closely with our school so we can get professional, targeted advice and support and in some cases, children will have 1-1 and small group intervention with a professional such as Speech and Language Therapists. Information on PLPs and the data that we analyse each year helps us to identify any children who could benefit from support from the Local Impact Teams.

## Our School Community



### ASPIRE

The ASPIRE (Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education) Project is a multi-year, cross border & cross-sectoral Shared Education initiative.

In January of 2025, Olderfleet, Moyle, St MacNissi's, and Whitehead were successfully accepted onto the Shared Education Project. This marks a continuation of our well-established four-school partnership, which began through the CASE (Collaboration and Sharing in Education) Project in 2018.

From January onwards, all Year 7 pupils from the four schools (six classes in total) and one of each of the Year 3 classes (four classes, including a Y3/4 class at Olderfleet) actively participated in the programme.

Pupils from each school connected initially via Zoom and/or Microsoft Teams, fostering early relationships with their partner classes. These virtual introductions were followed by in-person visits, where each school hosted an activity-filled day designed to strengthen bonds and promote collaborative learning.

The Year 7 programme focused on the theme "Inclusion Through Sport", while the Year 3 theme was "Celebrating Everyone". Both year groups culminated their learning with celebratory events held at Larne Leisure Centre, where pupils engaged in a variety of activities aligned with their respective themes. These events were met with enthusiastic participation and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from both staff and pupils.

### **Intergenerational Project**

Our Nursery children visited the local nursing home on several occasions and both the children and the elderly residents enjoyed the company of each other.

### **Educational Visits**

We value our local community and as such undertake several local educational visits to include:

- Whitehead Library
- Whitehead Bakery
- Foster's Greengrocers
- Whitehead Fire Station
- Seashore at Whitehead (Study of Living Things)
- Whitehead Town (House Study)
- Gobbins Path

In addition, the children had opportunity to visit:

- Clandeboye Estate (Forest School)
- Streamvale Open Farm
- Ark Open Farm
- Folk Museum at Cultra
- W5
- The O'Neill Theatre (Christmas Pantomime)
- The Ulster Museum

### **Links with Pre-school and Post Primary Schools**

Mrs McConnell visits any local playgroups whose children will be coming to Nursery. Mrs Kidd & Mrs Parkes visit the local playgroups and the Nursery to meet with staff and children who will be enrolling in Whitehead Primary. Link teachers from local post primary schools are invited to visit school and speak to the Year 7 pupils and teachers to assist continuity of learning opportunities.

### **Parents and the School**

A very special partnership exists between parents and the nursery and primary school. Many of our parents come into school on a regular basis as parent helpers. This creates a sure and effective foundation

upon which positive learning and positive behaviour can be built. The Board looks forward to ensuring that this bond is further strengthened and built upon in the future.

### **Parental Meetings**

The following meetings took place to inform parents about children's progress, the curriculum and future plans. Attendance at the meetings was excellent.

- PTA AGM and Child Protection Training for all parents who wish to assist in school or accompany children on a school trip.
- Induction evenings for Nursery & Y1 parents.
- Curriculum Evenings in September for Y2 – Y7 to outline the key areas of learning and how parents can best support their children.
- Parent / Teacher consultations in October, February & May (for those children with an PLP).
- Information evenings in preparation for the Y6 residential to Delamont and the Y7 residential to Manchester.
- Information evenings to inform & support Y6 parents as children prepare for the Transfer Test and Y7 parents as they complete the Transfer to Post Primary Application Form.

### **Parent Teacher Association**

Whitehead Primary School PTA organises events to both raise funds for the school as well as to create a sociable atmosphere and provide an opportunity for the children to enrich their time at the school.

The PTA met on 29th August 2024, 14th November 2024, 16th January 2025, 13th March 2025 and 12th June 2025.

### **Halloween Disco**

A fancy dress disco was held for all the children on Friday 25th October, ahead of the half term break. PTA staff came in the night before to decorate the assembly hall and create a fun entrance in the reception area for the children to walk through. All the children received some sweets and visited the disco during timetabled slots as arranged by teachers.



### **Cash for Kids**

The school was chosen to be one of the Cash for Kids finalists, meaning we had from 25th September and 31st October to raise as much money for the school through PTA as possible. To do this many different activities took place with the hope that they would be the winning school and be awarded a cash prize on top of the money we had fundraised. We encouraged all pupils to have a go at fundraising in whatever way they chose and we had an amazing response. Readathon, bracelet making, sponsored cycles/walks, a pumpkin sale, a fancy dress pet competition, litter pick and many more were organised by pupils. A coffee morning and bun sale took place, and a raffle was put together which garnered amazing generous donations from all across the Whitehead community. Although we didn't win the additional money, this amazing opportunity brought the school community together and raised an incredible £9,554. £2500 of this has been spent on a fantastic play area at the front of the school, allowing all the children to have an additional place to play in.

## Christmas Cards

All pupils were given the opportunity to design their own Christmas card by drawing a picture in a template, which was then sent to a company enabling parents to order personalised Christmas cards for their children. A profit was then made for the PTA through this process. Families loved being able to order these special cards to send to friends and family during the festive season.

## Cosy Christmas

On Thursday 19th December we held an event themed 'Cosy Christmas'. Pupils came to school in non-uniform, wearing whatever cosy clothes they wished - pyjamas, onesies or otherwise! A Chief Elf visited the classrooms to read out the names of the children who had made it onto Santa's Nice List. The children were then brought up to visit Mrs Claus for a Christmas story before making their way into Santa's grotto, where they received a small gift. Members of the PTA spent the evening before decorating two rooms and the classroom doors. This event required a large amount of prep work beforehand and on the day took a good number of PTA to support. There was also a substantial amount of outgoings - gifts, decorations, etc. The hard work paid off and we received great feedback from pupils and staff.

There was bingo arranged for the older pupils in the assembly hall, as an alternative to visiting Santa. This was very popular, with School Principal/Head Elf Mr Loughins calling out the bingo numbers, and Santa making a special appearance at the end.

## February half term

On the last day before February half term we held a Bake Sale and coffee morning in school. Pupils were asked to donate buns and we were overwhelmed with wonderful treats. Some members of the PTA came in and set up the Assembly Hall for a coffee morning, where parents, grandparents and other friends of the school could come in to enjoy some of the premium buns and a tea/coffee and a chat. The pupils were timetabled throughout the day to visit the gym hall and purchase buns.

In the run up to half term we also had a Guess the Number of Sweets in the Jar and a Squishmallow raffle. This event was one of our most successful, as it took very little preparatory work and we raised a large amount of money.

## Sponsored Colour Run

This event took place for the second year in a row, but earlier in the school calendar, on 4th April before the Easter break. PTA set up the colour run course, beginning at the top of the senior playground and looping round the boundary of the school grounds. We hired Healthy Kidz to provide the colour powder and a member of staff to warm up the pupils and instruct them on how to run through the course. We sent pupils home with a sponsorship form, inviting them to ask friends and family for contributions. We received an amazing response to this, and this was by far our most successful fundraiser of the year.



## Games Night

This year saw the return of Games Night, which was an event held in the school in past years. It required a large amount of organisation by a sub-committee who met regularly to oversee all the details for the event to run successfully. This included booking, planning and arranging many different activities with both companies and volunteers. On the night pupils and their families were invited to come to school between 5pm and 8pm and enjoy 10 Bouncy Castles, BBQ, Face Painters, Football Shoot-out, Tea, Coffee, Fairground games with prizes to claim with winning tokens, a DJ, Pick a Mix, Slushie Machine and visits from the Fire Brigade and the local Sailing Club. This was a very intensive event to run, requiring a very large number of volunteers and a large outlay. Although this event did not bring in the largest profit for the year, it certainly made for a brilliant night and gave the children and their families an amazing experience.



PTA has been very appreciative of the support of all who help at and attend the events that took place during the year.

As a result of fundraising efforts by PTA, £13,883.18 has been raised which brings our total funds in account to £40,815.67. The school are currently in the process of purchasing new iPads and Chrome Books which will benefit all of the children as they strive to develop their skills in ICT.

## Security of Staff, Pupils and Premises

### Child Protection

- The School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, containing all relevant guidelines and procedures, was strictly adhered to during the year. (Copies of this policy, which is reviewed annually in August, can be downloaded from the school website or obtained from the office.)
- Mr Loughins (Designated Teacher) conducted training for all members of staff (including playground supervisors, canteen staff, cleaners, caretaker & secretary), members of the Board of Governors and all parents wishing to be involved in school life on a voluntary basis.

### Security & Safety

- All electrical appliances in use in the school were given their annual safety check by an electrical contractor holding the essential public liability insurance.
- The PSNI, DOE, DFI Roads and the EA-NER Safety Officer worked in liaison with the Board of Governors to ensure safe parking for parents and safe crossing for children at the school.

## In Conclusion

The Board of Governors would like to record our thanks to everyone who plays a role within the school.

- Mr Brown and his team who work tirelessly to maintain high standards of cleanliness.

- Mrs Williamson who manages the office in a friendly, welcoming and very efficient manner.
- Mrs Campbell and the canteen team for providing healthy and nutritious lunches.
- Our crossing patrol person & playground supervisors who ensure the safety of our children on the way to and from school and in the playground.
- Classroom and Nursery assistants without whom our job would be very difficult.
- The teaching staff who work extremely hard to ensure that all children achieve their full potential.