

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Annual Parents' Report for the 2023-2024 Year

Dear Parent,

The Board of Governors have enclosed 'THE GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT' and in presenting this report for your consideration, the Governors intend to give an overall picture of the workings of the school in the year past : 2023-2024.

In this year our staff worked so very hard on projects which enhanced the experiences of our children and families. We introduced our Forest School weekly sessions, 'Woodland Wednesday.' This meant that children were engaged in an entire day of outdoor learning once a week. It gave staff the opportunity to practice the skills they had learnt over the past few years at our Forest School programme. Our children's learning and wellbeing was positively impacted by these sessions.

Staff also continued to develop our communication methods with parents using the Teachkloud app and our Whatsapp broadcast group. All parents reported in June 2024 that they were well informed about how their child was doing at school and what they could do to help them.

Should you wish to have any additional information or clarification on any aspect of the report, I would be grateful if you would forward your request, in writing, to the Principals, Mrs L Woods or Mrs D Doherty, who will endeavour to address your query. I hope you find this report informative and that it will give you a flavour of the amount of work that goes on 'behind the scenes' in Bligh's Lane Nursery School to ensure that your child is given the best quality Early Years education possible.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Charles O'Donnell
Chairperson
Board of Governors
Bligh's Lane Nursery School

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

The 2023 –2024 academic year began for the children on Wednesday 23rd August 2023. Fifty-two children were admitted to the school during the month of September, in accordance with our admissions policy, and all settled well into the school environment. As before, the settling-in procedure extended through the month of September, with the two classes being divided in half – one half attending from 8.45-10.45am and the other half attending from 11.15am – 1.15pm. Both groups were amalgamated on 21st September, with dinners starting the following week.

As always the staff would like to thank all the parents for their patience and support during the settling in procedure.

STAFFING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Woods and Mrs. Doherty (Principals 0.6/0.4 respectively) were the class teachers in Room 1 and Mrs O'Doherty was class teacher in Room 2. Mrs Meehan and Mrs McGilloway returned at Nursery Assistants.

Ms W Henry and Mrs Carlin are our Special Needs Assistants, caring for a child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and supporting children with additional needs on one day per week in each class

Miss Stephanie Cooke supervised the Breakfast Club and continued her role as Language Support Assistant. She began to work with children at the beginning of October. Mrs. Doherty, Mrs Woods and Mrs. O'Doherty began the "WellComm" Language Screening in September in order to identify those children who would require extra language support.

Mrs McCready (secretary) continued to give secretarial support in the school for 12.5 hours per week during this academic year.

- All staff attended a refresher Child Protection whole school training session on 24th and 25th Aug
- All staff have worked together reviewing SDP and beginning to think about priorities for next 3 years
- 4th October- All staff took part on a NI Forest School session at Magee
- Mrs Woods took part in Safer Schools NI app training on 12th October.
- Mrs O'Doherty attended a designated teacher training refresher on 17th October.
- Mrs Woods took part on one day of principal coaching/mentor training in Antrim on 24th October
- Mrs Doherty booked onto DP refresher training on 21st November
- Mrs Woods attended a 'Principal Assessor' training session online on 28th Nov
- All staff took part in FASD in classroom training on evening of 30th Nov
- 21st Feb Mrs O'Doherty and Mrs Woods attended Farouk session at EPS Maydown
- Mrs Doherty attended outdoor play session by Clare Devlin 27th February
- All staff took part in Calm Plan training on 25th March
- Mrs Woods attended 5 session of EPS Well-being project 29th Apr-3rd May- this project will continue throughout next academic year
- 16th May- Mrs Woods, Mrs Doherty and Mrs O'Doherty to ETI update meeting at Carnhill NS
- 20th May- Mrs Woods went to SDP training by ES SDS

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

THE PRE-SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The staff worked closely in planning the Pre-School Curriculum for the development of all the children, and to ensure the best quality provision, appropriate to each child's needs. They made accurate observations of significant achievements made by the children during play and recorded them in order to inform assessments, future planning and parents meetings. The use of the Teachkloud app was further developed and tweaked to enable staff to do this most effectively. Staff committed huge effort and time into developing the outdoor classroom and delighted in seeing the development of the children's play outdoors. The Block Play Area enabled the children to have space to build and extend their ideas and the staff were able to observe good examples of Shared Thinking; group work; problem solving and Early Mathematical Experiences. As the school is very well resourced, all areas of the curriculum – Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Language (including Listening, Pre-Reading and Writing), Mathematical Development, The Arts, Physical Development and The World Around Us were included and planned for in the daily activities prepared for the children. The "Musical Pathways to Learning" Programme began on 25th September and was delivered by Mrs Una Carlin from the Music Service. It was thoroughly enjoyed by the children. Unfortunately, we were unable to deliver any extended day sessions for the first time since the introduction of the Extended Schools programme. This was a decision the governing body took with heavy hearts as the children of Bligh's Lane Nursery have reaped the benefits of those activities we offered over many years. Ever tightening budgets and the need to protect our core day led to this very difficult decision.

LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

Our Language Programme was re-introduced this year. This programme involved parents and staff working together to support and encourage children's language development. The programme was explained to parents at two meetings held via Zoom on 20th September. We focused on the 'Language sheet' for each story which included ideas and suggestions for parents enabling them to get the most learning out of each book. Mrs O' Doherty created a display in the porch area each month, depicting aspects of the story and suggested questions to ask the children in order to develop their understanding. This encouraged conversation between parents and children as they passed the display daily. Each child received the 'Story of The Month' in turn to take home and share with their parents. Parents were very good at reporting back in the "Parents Comments Books" provided on how their child reacted to the stories and activities given.

Our own Language Support Assistant, Miss Cooke, worked with groups of children every day in order to help progress their language. The class teachers provided Miss Cooke with detailed and specific weekly plans and activities which were then ably delivered. We also worked closely with the community speech and language therapists and followed closely any of the programs they provided for specific children.)

"GETTING READY TO LEARN" PROGRAMME

The 'Getting Ready to Learn' programme continued with a particular emphasis on the Big Bedtime Read. Parents were invited to a virtual session on 9th November which aimed to emphasise the importance of reading and language development for future life chances. It was well attended and parents were very appreciative of the 'lending library, that they could access weekly for the remainder of the year.

Nursery School of Sanctuary

We continued our journey to embed the good practice which led us to become a Nursery School of Sanctuary in June 2023. We made a huge effort to incorporate different cultures, languages and religious celebrations into our curriculum. Our children's learning was enriched by exposure to and enjoyment of the cultures that are different to their own.

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

We tended to our planting beds in our 'Greened up' outdoor canopy area, our a 'Garden of Sanctuary.' It has being transformed into an area full of colour and beautiful scents from the flowers and herbs we have planted.

We welcomed a number of longer term students from overseas who came to Bligh's Lane to observe and learn from our practice. We hosted visits from their teachers and mentors who were also very keen to find out about our wonderful nursery and they were very impressed by what they saw.

Finally, we offered an Air fryer cooking programme which ran throughout January and February. It gave our parents a place to meet and get to know each other whilst learning something new.

Eco-Schools

We are continued to evolve our Green Flag status. We continued to recycle, teaching children about looking after the environment and how to be healthy through the daily mile. We had a visit from Health and Social Care Trust to see our children take part in Daily Mile and they used our example to promote to other nurseries and schools in the Western area. We gained our bronze and then silver accreditation for the Woodland Trust Green Tree Award.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school is proud of its excellent reputation for supporting children with Special Needs. In the 2023-2024 year, we had one child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and another who received his statement during the course of the year. This was a big reduction in our staffing from previous years and it took a long adjustment period. Children with Special Needs require detailed written Individual Education Plans which are prepared by the class teacher. As always the staff ensured that these children had access to the same activities that were provided for their peers. Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and a range of other professionals liaised with the school regularly to assist the staff in assessing the progress of specific children, and in order to discuss this progress with their parents.

VOLUNTEERS

We were delighted this year to welcome back our regular volunteers, a retired teacher and a retired nursery assistant, both of whom brought a wealth of knowledge and experience. This voluntary assistance was invaluable and very much appreciated. Mrs S O'Donnell and Mrs M Barr came into our setting on a weekly basis specifically to assist children with Special Needs who were awaiting assessment. These children very much needed one to one support and benefited greatly from the skills and experience of both volunteers. They also worked with the whole class during morning sessions, supervised during outdoor play and assisted with the dinner routine.

PARENTS

Parents continued to be a source of invaluable support to the staff of the school, both in providing information about their child, which enables the staff to provide experiences necessary for each child's learning, but also in practical ways, such as supporting staff on Environmental Visits and especially on Sports Day – bringing food etc for the staff to sell back to them and participating in all of the races. At Christmas time parents were extremely generous as they made contributions towards our Saint Vincent de Paul Appeal. Thankfully parents were able to return into school regularly, as in previous years. We loved having the Breakfast Club parent helpers in and so did the children!

Monthly newsletters continued to inform parents of school events and aspects of the curriculum, as did the Parents' Notice Board, our Facebook page, regular texts and our new school website. We also introduced a communication App called TeachKloud which allowed us to regularly update parents on what their child was doing in school. It also allows us to keep track of children's progress across all areas of learning. Two Parent / Teacher meetings – in October and February – were held so that parents were kept informed of their child's progress and were given an opportunity to support the work being carried out in school. From February onwards, parents were involved in the Language/Maths Programme (explained to them at the February meeting), by working with their children using the Literacy folders and Maths packs which were sent home each week. The parents provided us with invaluable written comments following each activity.

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

Parents also received a copy of a progress report and a “WellComm” Language Assessment in June, which was forwarded to the child’s Primary School.

School Policies that have a direct impact on children – such as Child Protection; Health and Safety; Special Educational Needs; Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying etc - are always available for parents to read and are located in the entrance hall.

Parents whose children were due to start in September 2024 attended an information meeting in May and then brought their children to meet the staff later in June and also in August, just before their start date. We began this as a result of some changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic but kept it as it worked really well. The staff also carried out home visits as part of the transition into school.

The Governors would like to express their appreciation to all the parents, since their support is a source of encouragement for all the staff as they endeavour to provide an environment of care and education for each child.

GOVERNORS

The Governors of the school gave of their time freely in the interest of the children, parents and staff. We welcomed back our EA representative and DE representative governors. They attended meetings during the year which focused on for example, the general management of the school, new admissions, new staff appointments and budget deployment. The dates of all Governors meetings are recorded in the Calendar of Events, minutes of these meetings are forwarded to the EA, and copies are held on file in the school.

THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOL

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The staff and Governors of the school worked closely together so that all members would be clear about their roles; the continued development of teaching and learning; the aims of the school and the importance of protecting children at all times. The children and staff in the school are protected on a daily basis by a Security Entry System, which allows staff to restrict admittance to the building if necessary. A high priority is given to the promotion of health in the school. The staff continually talk to the children about health and healthy eating as part of the curriculum. The children had access to fresh fruit daily and are encouraged to eat a balanced school dinner. The building’s alarm system is activated when the building is closed for the night and is connected to the PSNI and Group 4 Security. A fire drill is conducted each term.

ORGANISATION OF STAFF

The staff work together in the afternoons when the children leave in order to prepare for the following day, reflect on practice, devise new teaching strategies and discuss children’s progress on an individual level. The Nursery assistants stay in school until 4.45pm one day each week to assist the teachers in planning for progression. The staff work an additional 10 days per year (Baker Days and School Development Days) during which time they engage in staff development and training as well as preparing the school for the children at the beginning of the new academic year.

FINANCE

The Education Authority continues to support the school in all financial matters and the Schools Financial Systems continued to be monitored closely to ensure the efficient deployment of the Budget. The school’s budget is still in a small surplus but the three year plan would indicate that this will cease to be the case in the coming years. This is despite very careful spending and deployment of resources by the principal.

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

THE COMMUNITY

The community continued to play a vital role in the life of the school and the staff endeavoured to use every opportunity to use the community to develop the curriculum further. The school worked closely with the following groups and professionals during the year:

- Speech and Language Therapists
- Educational Psychologists
- Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists
- Health Visitors
- Social Workers
- St John's Primary School
- Schools Library Service
- 'Jo Jingles'
- Musical Pathways to Learning" Instructor
- Eco-Schools coordinator
- Nursery of Sanctuary link officer
- EPS Wellbeing project coordinator

Work experience was provided within the school for students from various colleges in the city at different stages of the year. We also had a number students from Germany who joined us throughout the course of the year.

TRANSITION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary One teachers and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator from St John's Primary School met Mrs M O'Doherty, Mrs D Doherty and Mrs Woods in June to discuss the individual needs of the children. The teachers then brought the children to a Stay and Play session in St John's and the parents visited with their child near the end of June. The teaching staff also completed a Transition Form for every child which was forwarded to the relevant Primary School.

The vast majority of our children transition to St John's each year and this meeting with the Primary One teachers and SenCo is invaluable each year. The February Reports and Speech and Language Therapy Reports were passed on (with parental permission) to the P1 teachers.

The Reports of children transitioning to other Primary schools were posted to the Primary One teachers in each case. 38 of the 53 children enrolled in the 2023-2024 School Year, transitioned to St. John's Primary School, two to St Anne's, two to Holy Child PS, two to St Eithne's, one to Longtower Ps, one to St. Eugene's PS, one to The Model PS one to Holy Family PS and one to Rosemount PS. Four children returned to Bligh's Lane, one as over age retention for reasons of SEN, one as a deferred P1 placement and two previously underage children returned as target age.

SCHOOL POLICIES

The following School Policies are displayed for parents to read in the entrance porch and a copy is available on request:

- Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Special Needs Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Policy on the use of Reasonable Force
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

- Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Notice

The Freedom of Information Act requires publicly funding bodies, including nursery schools, to be clear about the information they publish. We have produced a publication scheme setting out all the information we publish on a regular basis and where to find it. Please ask the Principal if you wish to see, or be provided with a copy of the scheme.

SCHOOL HOURS

The school hours are 8.45am – 1.15pm

CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

The Board of Governors has adopted the following Charging and Remissions Policy.

A Charging Policy

Free milk is provided daily for the children attending the nursery. In addition all children are provided with a snack daily and parents are asked to contribute £3.00 per week towards the cost of bread, fruit, biscuits etc. Surplus monies are used for the following:

- Parties (Birthdays, Halloween, Christmas, Summer)
- Picnics and School Trips
- Contributions towards family bereavements
- Items that are bought regularly e.g. Flour, salt etc. (for dough), bulbs, seeds, books

B Voluntary Contributions

The Board of Governors reserves the right to seek voluntary contributions from parents in support of any school activity or for the benefit of the school. Pupils whose parents are either unwilling or unable to make such contributions will not be treated differently. However, the school reserves the right to cancel planned activities if the voluntary contributions are insufficient to meet the costs of the planned activity.

C Breakage / Losses

The Board of Governors reserves the right to seek to recover from parents the whole or part of the cost of breakages and losses incurred as a result of a pupil's behaviour.

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

THE SCHOOL GOVERNORS 2023-2024

CHAIRPERSON:	Mr C O'Donnell
SECRETARY:	Mrs L Woods
REPRESENTING EA :	Mrs R Mc Gill Mr C O'Donnell Mrs P Logue
REPRESENTING DE:	Mrs M Shields Nr G McGowan
REPRESENTING PARENTS:	Mr K Dunne Mr J McDevitt
REPRESENTING TEACHERS:	Mrs M O' Doherty
PRINCIPAL:	Mrs L Woods and Mrs D Doherty (Non-Voting Member)

WHAT ARE THEIR MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES?

The Governors are ultimately responsible for the overall management of the school. Some of their responsibilities include:

1. The management of the school budget
2. School maintenance
3. Implementation of new legislation
4. Selection of new staff and other personnel responsibilities
5. The oversight of the curriculum
6. Admissions policy
7. Fostering links with the community and pursuing the objectives of mutual understanding
8. Responding to consultative documents

STAFFING 2023-2024

Staffing Complement 2023 – 2024:

Teachers:	P/T Principal and class teacher (0.6)	Mrs L Woods
	P/T Principal and class teacher (0.4)	Mrs D Doherty
	Class Teacher	Mrs M O'Doherty
Ancillary Staff:	Nursery Assistant (32.5 hours per week)	Miss M Mc Gilloway
	Nursery Assistant (26 hours per week)	Mrs M Meehan
	Nursery Assistant (6.5 hours per week)	Mrs G Carlin
	Special Needs Assistant (22.5 hours per week)	Ms W Henry
	Special Needs Assistant (18 hours per week)	Mrs G Carlin
	Special Needs Assistant (22.5 hours per week)	Ms C Bonner
	Nursery Assistant (covering maternity)	Mrs D Toland

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

1 Clerical Assistant (12.5 hours per week)	Mrs M Mc Cready
1 Building Supervisor (20 hours per week)	Mrs M Doherty
1 Dining Attendant (7.5 hours per week)	Mrs M Harkin
Language Support Assistant (15 hours per week)	Miss S Cooke
Breakfast Club Assistant (5 hours per week)	Miss S Cooke

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Autumn Term

August:	23: Staff Development Day: 24: Stay and play sessions; Staff Child Protection training 25: Stay and play sessions 29: Autumn Term begins: Intake Group 1
September:	1: "WellComm" Language Screening begins Group 1 5: Intake Group 2 20: Reading Meeting for parents 21: Amalgamation of Class Groups 25: Breakfast Club begins; Musical Pathways begins 28: Dinner Routine begins
October:	2: Language support begins 4: All staff to Forest School Training at Magee 17: Designated Teacher refresher training Mrs O'Doherty 27: Halloween break for children begins
November:	7: Term 1 Governor Meeting 8,9: GRTL 3 year check 15: Visit to Brooke Park 21: Designated Teacher refresher training Mrs Doherty 29: Mrs Woods to Principal mentor training session 30: Whole staff training session on FASD in the classroom
December:	1: Christmas Theme begins 6 : Christmas Dinner 7/8: Nativity Plays 11: Carol performance at OLT for senior citizens 15: Pantomime at Waterside Theatre 19: Visit to Winter Wonderland at St Johns PS 20: Visit to Creggan Chapel 21: Last Day of Term

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

Spring Term

January: 4: New term begins for children/ Winter Theme begins
10: Open morning for prospective new families
22 – Session 1 Airfryer Cooking course
9-30 - 4 sessions 'In your Space Circus Skills'

February: 6-10: Parent Teacher Meetings
6: Annual Reviews
14-16: Mid Term Break
20: Mrs O'Doherty Shared Education Outdoor Play training
23: Banyan Theatre visit

March: 13: Term 2 Governor Meeting
15: 'Green Day' celebrations
18: St Patrick's Day holiday
20: Weatherbees visit
25: Whole School Calm Plan training
27: Last day of term- visit to Bananas

Summer Term

April: 8: Spring topic begins
10: Room 2 visit to milk bar
17: Woodland Walk at Gransha Park
24: Room 1 visit to Milk Bar

May: 3: Minibeast Topic begins
15: New Parent Meeting at St. John's
17: Sport's Day at St. Mary's Youth Club
21: P1 Teacher visits from St Johns
22 : Visit to Tropical World
21/23: Stay and Play visits for new children

June: 3: Beach Theme Begins
6: Visit from Wee Critters
19: Governor's Meeting
12-22: Home Visits on various days
14 and 15: P1 teachers visit
28: End of School Year
29,30: Baker Days: Staff Meetings

BLIGH'S LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

2023 –2024

SCHOOL BUDGET			
INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
School Budget for Year	£308,990.00	Staff Costs	£242,926.00
		Premises & Maintenance	£5,700.00
		Operating Costs	£9,776.00
		Non capital purchases	£227.00
		Re allocation of costs	£10,573.00
		Capital expenditure	£0.00
		carry over	£39,788.00
TOTAL	£308,990.00	TOTAL	£308,990.00
<i>Carry Over</i>	<i>£39,788.00</i>		
SCHOOL FUND ACCOUNT			
INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	
Balance @ 01.04.2022	£1,303.55	Uncleared cheques	£355.00
income received	£5,110.48	Resources	£363.33
Other income:	£13,156.67	Breakfast/Snacks	£1,252.05
		Trips & Parties	£1,142.04
		Charity	£100.00
		Stamps	£954.79
		Other	£1,050.39
		Petty Cash (staff refunds)	£1,832.06
		balance c/f	12521.08
TOTAL	£19,570.70	TOTAL	£19,570.74
Balance c/f	£12,521.08		
plus uncleared cheques	£257.00		
<i>Bank Balance @ 31.03.2024</i>	<i>£12,778.08</i>		