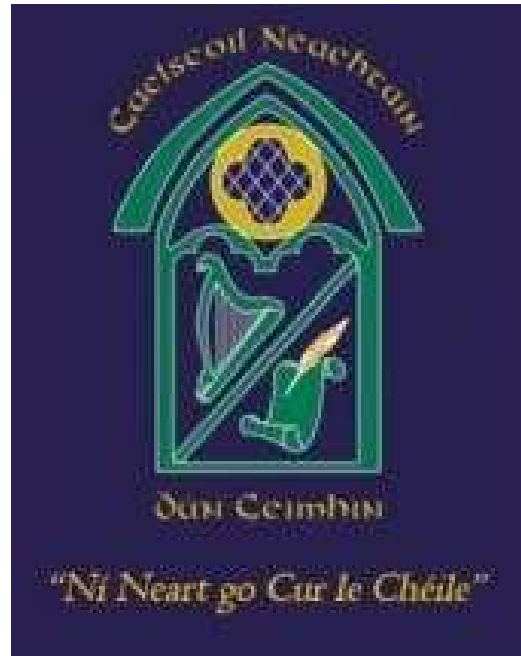


# Gaelscoil Neachtain

*Ní Neart go Cur le Chéile*



**Board of Governors Annual Report**  
Academic Year 2020 - 2021

[www.gaelscoilneachtain.com](http://www.gaelscoilneachtain.com)



## Contents

Chairperson's Address.....	4
Leadership and Management Structure .....	5
Finance .....	5
Gaelscoil Neachtain staff .....	6
Areas of Responsibility and Co-ordination.....	6
Mission statement of Gaelscoil Neachtain.....	7
The Aims of Gaelscoil Neachtain.....	7
School Profile and Achievements.....	7
Child Protection .....	8
Communication .....	8
School Attendance .....	8
COVID-19 .....	9
Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting Procedures.....	10
Pupil Progress and Standards of Attainment.....	10
Additional Support to Enhance Curricular Provision .....	10
Enrolment and Transfer to Post-Primary School.....	11
Gaelscoil Neachtain Summer Scheme .....	11
Cairde Neachtain.....	11
Fundraising and Charitable / Pastoral Events .....	11
Faith Development .....	12
Buíochas / Thanks .....	12

## **Chairperson's Address, 2020- 2021**

As the new school year, 2020-21, began, we dared to dream of 'normality' returning after the challenges of last year. Sadly, Covid-19 continued to affect all walks of life, including the closure of schools once again, with circuit-breakers and full lockdowns instated. However, as the virus evolved, so did Gaelscoil Neachtain. Staff became proficient in their ability to deliver remote learning. The children embraced their new classrooms at home, their conversations via Zoom, and provision for those in need developed as quickly as the outside world changed. Parents, too, developed as they worked with the school, playing no small part in providing the best possible learning experience

I am pleased, and proud, of Gaelscoil Neachtain, of how we have continued to meet ongoing challenges head on, whilst still delivering the best possible education and support for our children. As Covid-19 becomes less dominant on our everyday lives, it is important that we continue to deliver, and to support those in most need. The rebuilding of social interaction and environment is, more than ever this year, as crucial as the children's academic progress.

So to the Annual Report for the Academic Year, 2020-21. This year's report acknowledges the contributions of everyone in the Gaelscoil Family, the staff, the children and the parents.

During the school year 2020-21, Gaelscoil Neachtain, as always, continued to strive for excellence in all areas of the curriculum, academically and pastorally, despite the circumstances. The Governors wish to commend the work of the staff and the level of partnership they promote with parents in the best interests of all the pupils, and for their adaptability to the challenges the current environment brings.

The ongoing pandemic, and associated restrictions and lockdowns, has brought about much anxiety and many challenges for us all. Our Governors trust that all families remain safe and well and we strive to reassure all families of our commitment to help where we can.

It is important that we acknowledge the continuing efforts of teaching staff for their provision of high quality teaching and learning, for their pastoral care and for working to continue a sense of community throughout the Lockdown.

We would also like to thank the parents for their continued support, patience and cooperation throughout the school year, as they too navigated the changes with us.

Governors would also like to acknowledge and thank Cairde Neachtain, parents and friends of the Gaelscoil for their financial and community support. Whilst the inability to have physical fundraisers is recognised, the need for financial support continues.

I commend this report and the work of the school to you and emphasise the importance of the ongoing partnership between Home and Gaelscoil.

Is Mise le Meas,

Tim Gordon  
Chair of the Board of Governors.

## **Leadership and Management Structure**

### **The Board of Governors**

Governors represent trustees, EA, DENI, teachers and parents.

Cathaoirleach / Chairperson: Mr. Tim Gordon.

Leas-Chathaoirleach / Vice-Chairperson: Mrs. Emma McCloskey.

Iontaobhaithe / Trustees:

Emma Bn. Mhic

Bhloscaidh

Mrs. Celine McKenna

Liam Ó Flannagáin

Ionadaithe an Údarais Oideachais / Education Authority Representatives:

Mr. Tim Gordon

Déaglán Ó Doibhlin

Ionadaithe na dTuistí / Parent Representatives:

Sarah Kelly

Seamus McLaughlin

Ionadaí na Múinteoirí/ Teacher Representative:

Róisín Mhic Thaidhg

Rúnaí / Secretary:

Máirín Bn. Uí Cheallaigh.

### **FINANCE – Local Management of Schools (LMS)**

The total budget for the school year 2020-2021 was £503 777. The school budget is robustly monitored by the Principal and the Finance Committee of the Board of Governors. The majority of our expenditure is on staff and running costs, e.g. lighting, heating, etc. Regular meetings of the Board of Governors ensure that the budget is best spent to provide a quality education for our children.

**Gaelscoil Neachtain Staff, 2020 – 2021.**

<b>Rang</b>	<b>Foireann / Staff</b>	<b>Seomra</b>
Naíscoil	Múinteoir: Máire Mhic Eoin Cúntóir Ranga: Michelle Uí Chonchúir	Naíscoil Neachtain
Rang 1	Múinteoir: Lauren Nic Lochlainn Cúntóir Ranga: Carla Ní Dhochartaigh	Leacach
Rang 2	Múinteoir: Róisín Mhic Thaidhg Cúntóir Ranga: Caoimhe Uí Mhaoildeirg	Caiseal
Rang 3	Múinteoir: Brídín Ní Mháirtín Cúntóir Ranga: Brónagh Nig Riallais	Éadan
Rang 4	Múinteoir: Ellen Ní Uiginn Cúntóir: Shannon Nic Lochlainn	Briseadh
Ranganna 5 / 6	Múinteoir: Fionnuala Ní Dhufaigh Cúntóir Ranga: Carla Ní Dhochartaigh (PA)	Seomra 6
Rang 7	Múinteoir: Seáinín Mhic Lughaidh Cúntóir Ranga: Michelle Mhic Oscair	Seomra 7

**Areas of Responsibility and Co-ordination**

<b>Area of Curriculum</b>	<b>Co-ordinator</b>
Literacy	Róisín Mhic Thaidhg
Maths	Máirín Uí Cheallaigh
Special Educational Needs	Lauren Nic Lochlainn
ICT	Fionnuala Ní Dhufaigh
R.E.	Máirín Uí Cheallaigh
Safeguarding and Pastoral Care	Róisín Mhic Thaidhg / Fionnuala Ní Dhufaigh
The Arts	Ellen Ní Uiginn
Sport	Fionnuala Ní Dhufaigh
The World Around Us	Brídín Ní Mháirtín
Monitoring and Evaluation	Máirín Uí Cheallaigh

## **Mission Statement of Gaelscoil Neachtain**

Gaelscoil Neachtain is a co-educational, interdenominational, controlled, Irish-medium primary school. Here at Gaelscoil Neachtain, every child is encouraged, every day, to believe in his/her value as a person and, in turn, to value all others. Children, parents and staff, supported by the Board of Governors, work together to help each child achieve his/her potential as a confident bi-lingual in a safe and caring environment. We have high expectations for *all* our children. At Gaelscoil Neachtain, we appreciate the Irish language as a valuable, living heritage, and, embrace it to facilitate and enhance every child's learning potential. We foster, also, understanding and respect for all cultures and traditions and celebrate diversity. Gaelscoil Neachtain is a place of learning led by the Spirit, a place where the Christian ethos is fostered, a place where good character is nurtured.

## **Aims of Gaelscoil Neachtain**

At Gaelscoil Neachtain, we recognise the spiritual, emotional, academic and physical needs of all children. We work together to create an atmosphere and ethos which contributes to their care, safety, well-being and learning. We recognise the place of parents as their children's first teachers and warmly welcome, and actively encourage, parents' participation in their children's learning. The staff work to provide successful learning and to tackle disadvantage so that every child can fulfil his / her potential. We are committed to ensuring continuous high standards through planning, practice, assessment and reflection. Gaelscoil Neachtain is committed to positively addressing all challenges, as they arise, with children's education and welfare being paramount in all decision making. By developing links with the local community, and beyond, Gaelscoil Neachtain aims to enrich the children's cultural and educational experience. Gaelscoil Neachtain aims to be a place of learning influenced by the Spirit, a place of kindness, a place where good character is fostered.

## **School Profile and Ethos**

Gaelscoil Neachtain is situated at 8, Chapel Road, Dungiven. The Gaelscoil opened in September 2012 with an enrolment of 63 pupils and was situated in mobile classrooms at 11a Curragh Road, Dungiven. In June, 2014, Gaelscoil Neachtain moved to the refurbished building of the former Dungiven Controlled Primary School, at 8 Chapel Road. An extension to the Gaelscoil was completed in February, 2019.

There are six permanent classrooms not including Naíscoil Neachtain. In addition, there is an ICT area, multi-purpose hall and servery.

The Gaelscoil is well resourced with a range of equipment including six interactive whiteboards, i-pads, indoor and outdoor play-based learning equipment and a plentiful supply of text books and reading books.

In June 2018, a Development Proposal for statutory nursery unit was agreed to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2018.

Gaelscoil Neachtain is a place of learning led by the Spirit, a place where the Christian ethos is fostered, a place where good character is nurtured. We welcome pupils from all faith and non-faith backgrounds. We serve the spiritual needs of each child according to the wishes of the parent.

Our *Cairde Gael* pupils work with Gaelscoil staff to support, encourage and promote the speaking of Irish throughout the Gaelscoil. Every *Cara Gael* has a badge in recognition of the honour and the responsibility it carries. All children are encouraged, and have opportunities for reward, to make every effort to speak Irish. Four 'houses' operate in the Gaelscoil, namely, Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connacht, and every child is a member of one house. Unfortunately, due to social distancing implemented because of COVID-19, the house system was restricted to in-class activities during the school year 2020 – 2021. Children's efforts in speaking Irish were still recognized in various ways, however, including *Gaeilgeoir na Seachtaine* (Irish speaker of the Week).

Our *Comhairle Scoile* / School Council continued to give pupils a voice and involve them in the decision-making processes of the school.

Our *Coiste Glas* / Eco-Committee also gave pupils a voice and involved them in developing environmental awareness. Having achieved Eco-Schools Bronze flag in 2017, and the Silver flag in 2018, our World Around Us Co-ordinator continues to lead a programme of activities working towards the Green Flag award.

During the school year 2020 – 2021, COVID-19 restrictions limited certain social activities including full interaction between classes, e.g. *Cairde Gael* and *Coiste Glas* activities. We look forward to the easing of all restrictions in the next school year and gradual integration of social activities to complement children's positive learning experience.

We are committed to the development of a strong partnership between children, parents and our community.

### **Child Protection**

We have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the children in our charge and we carry out this responsibility through the Pastoral Care Policy and Child Protection Policy which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment to enable each child to reach his/her full potential. All staff who work in Gaelscoil Neachtain, both teaching and non-teaching, have been vetted through Access N.I. Structures and procedures are in place to protect our children by ensuring that everyone who works in the school, i.e. teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers, have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected.

### **Communication**

Despite the challenges of lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic, Gaelscoil Neachtain continued its communications frequently with children and parents throughout. During the school year, 2020 – 2021, the Gaelscoil Neachtain App was the main means of general communication whilst e-mail was used by class teachers to communicate personally with parents. Communication by phone was used as appropriate.

### **School Attendance**

Pupil attendance for the school year 2020 – 2021 was 97.2%.



## COVID-19

In response to the rampant spread of COVID-19, the NI Executive announced that all schools should close for face-to-face teaching from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020. Learning and teaching subsequently moved on-line.

Staff returned to the Gaelscoil on 18<sup>th</sup> August in preparation for the new school year, 2020 -2021. Workshops were held to educate staff about the new systems in place to mitigate transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Notices, and clear directions, informing all of safety measures, were put in place inside and outside the Gaelscoil building.

Staff agreed the format of a 'new school day' and parents were informed accordingly. Children returned on Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> August. Great emphasis was placed on safety and pastoral care.

During the school year 2020 - 2021, however, COVID-19 challenged all of us as positive cases were reported again and again. PHA and DENI guidance were followed in all situations and children's learning moved on-line, as necessary, when staff and children were isolating. Staff and children's ICT skills developed very quickly in this climate.

A second lockdown was announced in January, 2021, and remote learning, Monday – Friday, began immediately. This involved a variety of synchronous and asynchronous learning, videos and writing. Parents were asked to collect reading books for children on Mondays and return on Fridays.

As happened during the first lockdown, much emphasis was placed on pastoral care and similar strategies were put in place.

Gaelscoil Neachtain was open for supervised learning for children of key workers during this period - forty-two children registered. On average, thirty children attended every day within four *bubbles*.

On Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, we welcomed children in Naíscail and in Ranganna 1 – 3 back for face-to-face teaching. On Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, we welcomed children in Ranganna 4 – 7 back for face-to-face teaching.

In February, 2021, parents were given an opportunity to review their, and their children's experience, of remote learning through an on-line questionnaire. 67% - over two-thirds – of parents responded and, overall, feedback was very positive. An overview of children's and parents' experience was provided as well as important information regarding teaching and learning. Particular aspects of information were acted on, as appropriate, and parents were provided with full feedback relating to the questionnaire.

COVID-19 foregrounded the issue of mental health which concerns everyone - children, parents and staff. Gaelscoil Neachtain takes this issue very seriously and, during the school year 2020 – 2021, we developed a professional and personal focus. Using funding provided by the Department of Education, the Gaelscoil invested in workshops, training and resources. Particular strategies, activities and resources have been introduced to teaching and learning. Professional advice is sought as appropriate and mental health for all is under constant review. The importance of talking to someone is reinforced with all. The focus on good mental health for all will continue.

## **Monitoring and Evaluating Procedures**

The following Monitoring and Evaluating Procedures remained in place during the school year, 2020 - 2021 –

- Principal meets half-termly with Education Sub-Committee of Board of Governors.
- Education Sub-Committee reports to Board of Governors half-termly.
- Staff meetings
- Minutes of staff meetings
- Evaluation of staff workshops
- Classroom Observations
- Half termly evaluation of planners.
- Weekly / half-term review of pupil targets
- Co-ordinators monitor weekly / half-term plans against the agreed success criteria and provide feedback to teachers.
- Teacher observations to ensure classroom practice reflect short, mid and long-term planning.
- Classroom observation feedback.
- Book trawl
- Monitoring of *Friday Review*, end of half-term assessment, end of year assessment.
- Teacher feedback.

## **Pupil Progress and Standards of Attainment**

Baseline Assessment in Literacy and Maths was carried out in Ranganna 3 – 7 at the beginning of September, 2020.

Outside of lockdown, half-term assessment in Literacy and Maths was carried out throughout the school year.

Gaelscoil Neachtain's end of year, standardised assessment took place in May 2021. As happened in the school year 2020 – 2021, and due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and associated lockdown, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) informed all primary schools that End of Key Stage data was not required for the academic year 2020 – 2021.

Gaelscoil Neachtain continues to closely monitor and track the progress of all our pupils and meet regularly to discuss children's progress across the Gaelscoil. All assessment results are analysed and inform future planning.

Annual written reports were sent to parents on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2021.

## **Additional Support to Enhance Curricular Provision / Extra Curricular Activities**

As has been the situation in all schools due to COVID-19 restrictions, activities to enhance the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, were curtailed throughout the school year 2020 – 2021. Children, however, benefitted from the following activities -

- Gaeilgeoir na Seachtaine
- Daily mile
- Christmas Shows
- Seachtain na Gaeilge
- Participation by Rang 7 children in various local post-primary Open Days.
- Return of Breakfast Club in Term 3

## **Enrolment and Transfer to Post-Primary School**

### **Enrolment 2020 - 2021**

#### **Open Enrolment**

We were allocated twenty-one places for admission to Rang 1 in September, 2020, and received nineteen applications, all of whom were accepted.

#### **Transfer to Post-Primary**

Fourteen pupils transferred to Post-Primary Education in September 2021.

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of Pupils Transferring</b>
Gaelcholáiste Dhoire	10
St. Patrick's College, Dungiven	1
St. Patrick's College, Maghera	1
Loreto College, Coleraine	1
St. Patrick's and St. Bridgid's College, Claudy.	1

### **Gaelscoil Neachtain Summer Scheme**

Despite the many challenges and disruptions faced by children and staff during the school year 2020 - 2021, Gaelscoil Neachtain's Summer Scheme, funded by the Department of Education, and co-ordinated by Ellen Ní Uiginn, brought the school year to an end on a high note. During the fun-filled and activity-packed week, children were given opportunities to participate in art, sport, visits to Sperrin Fun farm and Screen Skating, music, singing, nature walks. The scheme, supported by Glór Dhún Geimhin, also provided children with great opportunities to develop their spoken Irish. Very positive feedback was received from children, staff and parents alike.

### **Cairde Neachtain**

Gaelscoil Neachtain is very grateful to our parents' association, Cairde Neachtain, for their ongoing support. Whilst fundraising activities were once again curtailed due to COVID-19 during the school year 2020 - 2021, the Board of Governors recognises and appreciates the ongoing work of Cairde Neachtain, and of all parents and friends, who support Gaelscoil Neachtain in any way. Go raibh céad maith agaibh.

### **Fundraising and Charitable / Pastoral Events**

Gaelscoil Neachtain supported the following charities during the school year 2020 – 2021 –

- Shoebox Appeal
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Trócaire

### **Faith Development**

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, there was no Mass for Beginning of School Year 2020 – 2021.

*Adoration* Programme: Ranganna 5,6,7. (Recommended in Term 3)

Service of Light: 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

Confirmation: 20<sup>th</sup> June,  
2021.

First Sacrament of

Penance: 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

First Holy Communion:

29<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

### **Buíochas / Thanks**

The Board of Governors wishes to thank all members of the school community who supported, and contributed to, the development of Gaelscoil Neachtain during the school year 2020- 2021-

- The pupils for their enthusiasm, willingness to learn and for their co-operation with teachers and staff.
- The parents for their co-operation, help and support for their children, for staff and for the Gaelscoil generally.
- Principal and all teaching and non-teaching staff, for their dedication, hard work and commitment.
- *Cairde Neachtain* for ongoing support.
- Fr. Kelly for his ongoing support.

Thank-you for your time in considering this report. Dia leat is le do chúram.

### **Gaelscoil Neachtain**

*Ní Neart go Cur le Chéile*

[www.gaelscoilneachtain.com](http://www.gaelscoilneachtain.com)