



St. Mary's Primary School
Caledon Road
Aughnacloy
BT69 6AJ
Monday 5th January 2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope you enjoyed a restful and joyful Christmas break. The children certainly brought 2025 to a close in a special and befitting way as our school community gathered in the serene glow of our chapel for the Christmas Candlelit Carol Service—a truly magical celebration of music, joy, and togetherness. This celebration followed our earlier dramatic success with *In Your Shoes: A Role Reversal Performance*, a creative project involving P5 pupils from St Mary's and Aughnacloy Primary School. The initiative built empathy across generations, sparked conversations about technology in family life, and showcased outstanding drama skills in a memorable performance at The Garage Theatre, Monaghan.

As we embark on a new year and begin Term 2A, we do so with optimism and renewed energy. We are proud to announce that our school vision and ethos emblem has now been installed on our school building. A powerful symbol of the values that unite and inspire our school community. This emblem represents the dedicated work by our School Council, who led the process with focus groups and ensured every voice was heard through whole-school consultations. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this journey, including parents, guardians, and the wider school community for their invaluable support. We continue to promote an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment that supports the wellbeing of every child and maximises pupils' learning. Our staff remain dedicated to providing high-quality learning opportunities and experiences that empower holistic growth.



A Heartfelt Thank You

I would like to reiterate my sincere gratitude to all the local businesses and individuals who generously donated prizes to our Christmas Raffle, and to everyone who returned raffle lines, guessed the sweet number, or purchased our unique self-portrait tea towels. These tea towels were a fun, creative, and truly child-led way to fundraise and we are delighted to share that every single towel sold out! This success highlights the power of involving our children in meaningful initiatives and the incredible support of our wider school community. Funds raised will go towards continuing to enhance our outdoor play facilities and provision, building on the terrific outdoor lean-to and creating more opportunities for engaging and innovative outdoor learning.

Special thanks go to all the parents forming the Friends of St Mary's for their enthusiastic fundraising, which has already helped us upgrade our sensory room—now state-of-the-art—improve digital resources like iPads and Chromebooks, and fund impactful wellbeing and learning programmes. These investments have supported significant progress across our school and reflect the voice of our children.

We are also deeply grateful for the partnership and ongoing support of Aghaloo GFC, who organised a wonderful Christmas Charity Match between the over-30s and under-30s, with proceeds benefiting local primary schools, including St Mary's. This event was not only a fantastic fundraiser but also a joyful celebration of fun and community spirit.

Exciting Progress on Our Accommodation Project

In my September newsletter, I shared the positive news that an Education Authority Project Manager from Minor Capital Delivery completed a feasibility report on 13th June. This followed earlier steps taken to initiate the process of securing additional accommodation and resource space for our school. I am delighted to share that our minor works application has now successfully progressed through both the feasibility and business case stages, and all necessary Department of Education (DE) approvals are in place. This is a significant achievement and reflects the sustained effort and collaboration that began with our application at the start of 2024.

Based on an estimated cost of **£414,027.61**, the Education Authority (EA) will now move forward to develop a detailed design and specification in collaboration with the school before submitting planning applications and tender packages.

This approval marks a major step forward as we continue to strive to develop and enhance our learning environment for every child. I will keep you updated on progress as this exciting project moves ahead.



Upcoming Events

Please see the 'Upcoming Events' calendar to stay up to date with what is happening in school. This is easily accessible on our school website homepage:

www.stmarysprimaryaughnacloy.co.uk

To view upcoming events in the remainder of January and February simply click 'View Calendar' emboldened in yellow.

Upcoming Events

Monday, 5th January 2026

EA Music (Strings) Tuition (9.15am)

P7 Swimming @ Dungannon Leisure Centre (1.30pm)

Lego Club (P1-P3: 2pm-3pm P4-P7: 3pm-4pm)

Tuesday, 6th January 2026

Tyrone GAA Hurling and Camogie Coaching P4-P7

Wednesday, 7th January 2026

P7 Future Visions Programme

EA Music (Woodwind) (1.15pm)

Afterschool Irish Language Club (P1-3 from 2pm-3pm P4-P7 from 3pm-4pm)

Thursday, 8th January 2026

AB Coaching (Afterschool P1-P3 from 2pm-3pm P4-P7 from 3pm-4pm)

Friday, 9th January 2026

Traditional Music

Whole School Assembly

View Calendar

Catholic Schools Week

Catholic Schools Week 2026 will take place from **Sunday, 18th January to Saturday, 24th January**. This year's theme is "**Normal Lives, Called to Holiness**", which reminds us that living a good and meaningful life is something everyone can strive for—at home, in school, and in our community. The week is a chance for pupils, families, and staff to reflect on the values that guide us and celebrate the important role Catholic education plays in helping children grow in character and purpose.

As part of the celebrations, we will hold our **Grandparents' Day Prayer Service on Friday, 23rd January**. This is a special opportunity to honour the love and support grandparents give and the role they play in passing on faith and values.

School App & Communication

We will continue to use **Class Seesaw** as our primary communication app. Seesaw is a secure online journal where children document and reflect on their learning. It allows you to engage with your child's school experience and celebrate their achievements. A consent letter and QR code will be sent home later this week—please ensure you connect to Class Seesaw.

Important Reminders:

- Urgent messages should always be communicated by phone to ensure they are received and acted upon promptly within office operational hours, between 8.30am and 4pm
- Teachers are not available to take calls during teaching time. Calls will usually be answered by the school secretary, who will take a message and pass it on to the teacher
- If your query requires a meeting, the secretary will arrange this at a mutually suitable time between you and the class teacher
- Morning drop-off is not an appropriate time to discuss issues with teachers. Teachers are preparing for the school day and cannot give the time or attention your concern may require. Instead, please ring and arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time between you and the class teacher
- Teachers will respond to messages via Seesaw as soon as possible, but not during teaching time or after 4pm.



You can also stay informed via:

- **School website:** <http://www.stmarysprimaryaughnacloy.co.uk>
(The homepage includes a calendar of upcoming events and activities. Bookings for after-school clubs will become available later this week.)
- **Friends of St Mary's Facebook page**
(Updates on fundraising events, initiatives, and successes)

Seesaw remains an invaluable tool for sharing learning and strengthening home-school connections. Thank you for supporting these communication guidelines—they help us ensure clarity, efficiency, and the best possible experience for your child.

It is vital that our **school app** is installed and operational on your mobile device. You can download it from your app store by searching *St Mary's Primary School* or using the following link:

School App on Google Play -

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eprintinguk.stmarysps>

Access Code: 11111

The app will be used for:

- **Bookings** – Dinner, AB Coaching, Traditional Music, Swimming, Irish Language, Irish Dancing, 2–3 Club & 3–5 Club (and other after-school clubs)
- **Parent Area** – Absence reporting, communication, dinner menu, and holiday list
- **Forms** – Sims Data Collection Form
- **Notifications** – Letters and reminders

Please note: A letter was shared before Christmas to enable bookings for the Lego Club. Registration is available through:

https://www.burnskillsschool.co.uk/service-page/st-mary-s-primary-school-aughnacloy-2?referral=service_list_widget

If you book a service through the app and your child does not use it, please contact the school office. Our secretary can transfer or refund the booking.

Wishing all our children and their families a happy, healthy, and enjoyable year.

Yours sincerely,
Mr McCaughey

