

2023-2024
ANNUAL REPORT

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

THORNFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL



“Building confidence in communication”



Principal: **Mrs Louise Creighton** *B.Ed. (HONS)*

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Thornfield House School

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October 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great pleasure that we present this 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Board of Governors of Thornfield House School. This report will provide you with a summary of the work of the school during the past year. We invite you to read the report and to contact the principal if you require any additional information or clarification on any aspect of the Annual Report. On behalf of the Board of Governors, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your past support and look forward to your continued support and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

John Marley Acting Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Mrs Louise Creighton Principal/ Secretary to the Board of Governors

THORNFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

2019– 2024

Term of office ends: 2024

Department Representatives: Rev N. Baylor (Chair) - retired June 2024

Mr J. Marley

EA Representatives: Mrs R. Glenn

Parent Representatives: Mrs I. McMullan

Mrs M. Pearson

Teacher Representative: Mrs A. Kirk - retired August 2024

Secretary/Principal: Mrs L. Creighton

ORGANISATION, DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for the management of the school in keeping with Thornfield House School's educational philosophy and the requirements of the Department of Education. This includes overseeing the curriculum, admissions, staff appointments, management of school funds, Child Protection and the provision and maintenance of school buildings. Responsibility of the day to day running of the school rests with the principal who advises the Board of Governors of any matters arising.

Staff Thornfield House School

(FOR 2023-24)

Principal Mrs Louise Creighton

Vice Principal (Acting) Mrs Alex Kirk

SENCO: Miss Sophie Hutchinson

Teaching Staff			Learning Support Assistants	
Mrs L Cassidy	Mrs A Kirk	Mr P Cordoba	Miss E McClean	Mrs D Anderson
Mrs C Murray	Miss S Hutchinson	Miss R Martin	Miss N Ashe	Mrs M Grant
Mrs J Morgan	Mrs R McAllister	Miss C Spence	Mrs A McLaughlin	Mrs G Karaiskos
Mrs J Graham	Mrs D Logan	Miss N Leckey	Miss R Stewart	Miss N McHugh
Mrs H Beck	Mrs L Finnegan		Mrs J Robinson	Mrs L Smyth
Mrs J Logue	Mrs L McAllister		Mrs K Magee	Mrs A Bowers
Mrs A Russell	Miss R Martin		Mrs P Sullivan	Mrs M Atcheson
			Mrs K Cullinan	Miss S McKibben
			Mrs D Wilson	Mrs L Magee
			Mrs A Kernoghan	Mrs L Dunn

Speech and Language Therapists		Clerical and Auxiliary Staff	
Mrs R Hanley	Assistant: Miss G Crowe	Mr R Sargent	Ms T Wilson
Mrs F McKeown		Miss J Green	Mrs J Downing
Mrs A McTeggart		Miss D Hamill	Mrs R Stevenson (SLT)
Miss R Coulter		Mr M Stevenson	
Miss A Kyle		Mrs C Mackrell	
Mrs L Gorman			

Staff Changes

- Mrs Louise Creighton – Principal - Appointed March 2024
- Mrs Alex Kirk will retire August 2024
- New Vice Principal – Ms Carla McGrady

School Activities/Services 2023/24

Lego Therapy

Mrs Murray leads Lego Therapy in school on a Thursday afternoon. Lego therapy is a social development program for pupils with and ASD diagnosis and other children with social communication difficulties. It uses children's love of Lego play, as well as their strengths and interests, to develop communication and social skills.

Christmas Performance

Our Annual Christmas Performance was a huge success as always with huge efforts going into preparing the children for the stage. We are always so proud at their courage and willingness to take part. Our Additional Foundation classes participated in a Christmas Stay and Play with their families.

Prize Day and Summer Fayre

We celebrated our pupils' yearly achievements in June in a range of areas including academia, effort, pastoral, speech and progress. We are hugely proud of all of our children and celebrate them each and every day however Prize Day recognises those special moments of achievement by individuals. We celebrated our leavers as they successfully integrate back into Mainstream Education or Further Education.

Sports Day

We held our Annual Sports Day in May – another successful event enjoyed by all and attended by parents, family, and friends. Thanks to Mr Cordoba for all his hard work in organising this.

Riding for the Disabled

Our class 2/3 and class 6/7 pupils attended riding sessions every Monday at Laurelhill Riding Centre. It was wonderful to watch the children grow in confidence and ability each week.

Extended Schools

Our Extended Schools Funding provided the following support to pupils:

- Lunchtime post-primary games clubs
- Science taster workshops
- Music with Claire - for KS1 and KS2
- Forest School Sessions with Laura Speight
- Monkeynastix for P1 classes
- Ray's sensory balloon show – p1 classes
- Active Hour multi-sports sessions
- Sensory circuits
- Purchase of resources to support science and music

IFA Football Coaching and Ulster Badminton

Pupils in P4 to 7 were able to avail of several coaching sessions in Football and Badminton through the IFA and Ulster Badminton. We thank these groups for this provision at no cost to the school.

Lidl Sports Community Grant Programme

We were delighted to have won a Lidl Sports Grant. This initiative provided our year 11/12 pupils with the opportunity to work with an Olympic and World Silver Medallist Hockey Player Shirley McCay. Shirley worked with the pupils on Mental Health Workshops and also guided them to devise a mini sports programme to deliver to our younger pupils. We also received £1000 in Sports Equipment for the school.

Woodhall

P6/7 and Post Primary children enjoyed their Annual Trip to Woodhall. This is an invaluable experience in allowing the children to learn new skills, make new friends and develop their independence. Once again thank you to all staff who give up their free time to allow our children to have this opportunity.

Kelloggs Breakfast Club

We applied for and were successful in receiving a £1000 Kelloggs Breakfast Grant which allowed us to provide cereal and toast for every pupil in the morning should they want it.

School Swimming Programme

Pupils from P5 to Year 12 participated in the EA swimming programme. We are grateful that our pupils can avail of this vital life skill.

School Counselling Service

Post Primary pupils had the services of Carlene, our wonderful school counsellor each Tuesday. We hope to increase this service in the incoming year however funding provision has been cut. We hope to be able to continue this through our Earmarked Funding/Private School Accounts.

Summer Scheme

We continued our Summer Scheme this year with 3 weeks Summer Provision split into weekly blocks for differing age groups. The pupils enjoyed lots of planned activities as well as trips out. Thanks to Miss Morgan for coordinating this valued provision.

School Choir

Our school choir had a very successful year winning the Larne Music Festival and finishing runners up in the Ballyclare Music Festival. We are very proud of their achievements. Thank you to Mrs McAllister for leading them.

Team Enterprise

Our year 10 pupils once again participated in this programme and sold their products at St Georges Market and our school Christmas Performance. They demonstrated excellent social skills and the ability to communicate effectively with the public.

Forest Schools

We are very lucky to have such fabulous grounds around us allowing us to develop a wonderful Forest Schools area. We are a recognised Forest School. Classes enjoyed timetabled sessions in our Forest school to avail of lots of outdoor learning opportunities. Staff also created a wonderful Santa trail at Christmas time for our pupils and their families.

Home School Link Funding

This funding stream enabled us to release a teacher one day a week to develop our parental links in re-establishing our school parent group and plan events for the year, Organise visitors to speak at Assembly, organise Christmas events and school trips, support pupil welfare and families, apply for grants and initiatives, plan and project finances for Summer Scheme and support children in their sacramental preparations. We had a successful family Santa Trail created in a Forest School Area for all of our pupils and their families.

Charities

Every year we participate in various charity events. This academic year included Christmas Jumper Day, Blythswood Shoebox Appeal and Noodles Birthday celebrations for Mid Antrim Animal Sanctuary. We also had a team compete in the Belfast Marathon Relay event to raise money to help one of our former school families who suffered the loss of their precious daughter suddenly and unexpectedly. Our FOT have raised money for school through our Christmas Raffle, Easter competitions and Summer Fair.

Pupil enrolment, attendance, and exam results

Current enrolment

Current enrolment 30/09/24 is 125. This is the highest enrolment in many years in Thornfield House School. Pupils can only be enrolled in Thornfield after statutory assessment by an Educational Psychologist and must have a statement of SEN primarily in Speech, Language and Communication needs. In September 2024 we welcomed 2 additional classes of pupils with additional needs, complementing our main school intake. Our enrolment is fluid throughout the school year and pupils can transfer to Thornfield at any point following assessment.

Return to Mainstream Education

We take pride in many of our children being able to return to mainstream education each year. In June 2024 we had 4 pupils return to Mainstream Education and 1 pupil progressing to Further Education.

Attendance

The average whole school attendance for 2023/24 was 86% - It should be noted that this % is has been heavily influenced by EA transport issues.

Thornfield House is committed to a positive policy of encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. The school will work with parents, pupils, and outside agencies to secure this aim. This includes working very closely with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Parents/carers of pupils of

compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school. THS is responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance. We believe that schools which adopt a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourage parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children, can play a major role in improving levels of attendance.

Grounds and Building

In 2023-24 the following improvements were made to our school grounds and building:

- Newly Equipped Sensory Room
- New carpet in corridors and VP Office
- Additional Toilets in Primary Corridor
- New flooring in 4 classrooms
- Newly refurbished Meetings Area in Principals Office
- Additional fencing for Playground improvements

Finance

The school continues to have a partially delegated budget.

Total budget for 2023-24

Article 60 Allocation £78,940

Entitlement Framework £4950

Extended Schools £7892

SEND funding £15, 000

Home School Link - £15, 000

A massive thankyou to all the individuals and agencies who donated or raised money for the school this year.

Private Funds

School Account

01/09/2023 £7701.11

28/06/2024 £10315.76

Current Balance September 2024: 8690.01

Summer Scheme NBC grant: 4998.44

Friends of Thornfield Account

Our PTA are currently working on handover of account details to new post holders and details will follow in due course.

Private school funds help the school to purchase items / resources and activities which help advance the education of pupils. These resources would not normally be afforded through the allocated school budget. The purpose of these funds is to enhance, improve and enrich the children’s educational experience and emotional wellbeing in the school. Examples include extra-curricular activities, and the purchase of additional resources and “experiences” to support learning.

Accreditation

Year 12 results August 2024

Subject	Result	Examining body
Vocational Skills	Level 2 Certificate	OCN
Religious Studies	Level 2 Certificate	OCN
Creative Arts & Digital Technologies	Level 2 Certificate	OCN
Employability Skills	Level 2 Certificate	OCN
Occupational Studies (Engineering Services)	Level 2 Certificate	CCEA
Occupational Studies (Design & Creativity)	Level 2 Certificate	CCEA
English	Entry Level 3	CCEA
Maths	Entry Level 3	CCEA

School Development Plan

Considering the current circumstances, the Department of Education and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) communicated that they recognise the need to continue with a flexible approach to school development planning in the academic year 2024-25. We have come to the end of our 3 year SDP from 2021-24 and completed evaluations in our focused areas of Literacy and Phonics, SEND implementation and have an Interim one year plan for 2024-25 focusing on developing our Curricular Planning, Developing a whole school Numeracy programme from P1-Year 12, training in Trauma Informed Practice for staff, inclusion of enhanced pupil voice, reviewing all school policies and developing a new School Leadership Framework

Teaching & Learning

Pupils continued to access all areas of the NI Curriculum and had specific targets set though Individual Education Plans. Both individual and group speech therapy programmes remained a significant focus in each child’s learning plan.

Staff Training

Staff training included the following in 2023-24:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Developmental Language Disorder Training
- Makaton Level 1 training
- Speech and Language training
- ASD training – classroom strategies and support
- Curiosity Programme
- Mental Health First Aid

- Manual Handling Training
- Team Teach Training
- First Aid in the Workplace
- EA Mandatory Training – Fire Safety, Data Protection, Cyber security, Health and Safety, Equality and Inclusion.
- Teachers on the Senior Management team completed a Leadership and Coaching Course and Steps to Leadership Programme.

Friends of Thornfield

We were delighted to re-form our Friends of Thornfield Parent Group.

Treasurer: Chantelle Nelson

Chair – Imelda McMullan

Secretary: Stuart Blair

Teacher Rep – Jessica Morgan

Members: Lesley Magee, Stephanie Dundee, Chantelle Todd

We would love more parents to get involved in this group. If you would like to find out more please email your child's teacher for information on how to get involved.

On behalf of the Board of Governors, I hope this has given you a flavour and insight into everything we achieved in 2023-24 and we look forward to more successes in 2024-25

If you have a question or comment with regard to any aspect of this report then please feel free to put this in writing to the Principal, Mrs Creighton.