



# St. Columba's Primary School



**Prospectus  
2025/2026**



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to St. Columba's Primary School & Nursery Unit, Kilrea. Enjoy browsing through our prospectus which is intended to offer you an insight into the life and work in St. Columba's.

St. Columba's serves the community through its high-quality provision within the context of a faith-based environment. Our school provides a safe, happy environment where children can grow, learn, and make the most of their potential. We pride ourselves in creating a caring, supportive environment in which we respect both traditional values and modern perspectives. The children's best interests are at the heart of all that we do.

At St. Columba's we are renowned for the warm, authentic relationships we nurture with our children and families. Fundamentally, the school seeks to complement the home. We celebrate individuality and develop talents. We take time to get to know each other and strive to meet the needs of every child entrusted to our care. We continuously look for progressive ways to develop our pupils as confident individuals, as contributors to society and as contributors to the economy and environment. We work together to provide a challenging, engaging and supportive place to work and learn. We continue to build strong links with our parents, guardians, local schools, community groups, local politicians, businesses and the local community. We also strive to ensure that our children are aware of and understand the wider world and their place in it. We encourage their participation in projects promoting a fair and sustainable planet and a global vision for the future and embracing new technologies.

The children have a clear voice in the life of our school. As a Rights Respecting School, in receipt of Unicef's Gold Award Status, the UNCRC underpins our core values and Motto: "Enjoying Learning Together for Life".

We have high expectations of our pupils and staff. We celebrate perseverance, resilience and risk taking. Our children learn to welcome challenges and understand that mistakes are opportunities for learning. Pupils in St. Columba's will enjoy a rich, broad and balanced curriculum with a wealth of opportunities and experiences beyond the classroom.

I hope you enjoy our prospectus and if you have any queries or concerns, you are most welcome to contact us, and we will be happy to discuss these with you.

Ciara Henry  
(Principal)



## MISSION STATEMENT

At St Columba's Primary School  
we provide a safe, happy and stimulating environment  
where each child is valued and respected.  
We are committed to preparing our children for the future,  
encouraging them to **'learn and grow'**  
in faith, knowledge and love.



## SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name:	St Columba's Primary School
Address:	3 Agivey Road Kilrea Co Derry BT51 5UT
Telephone:	028 295 40273
Website:	<a href="http://www.stcolumbaskilrea.co.uk">www.stcolumbaskilrea.co.uk</a>
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:info@stcolumbasps.coleraine.ni.sch.uk">info@stcolumbasps.coleraine.ni.sch.uk</a>
Principal:	Mrs Ciara Henry <a href="mailto:chenry396@c2kni.net">chenry396@c2kni.net</a>
Vice-Principal:	Mrs Geraldine Martin <a href="mailto:gmartin706@c2kni.net">gmartin706@c2kni.net</a>
Chairperson of B.O.G.:	Mrs Una Walsh c/o St Columba's P.S. & N.U. 3 Agivey Road, Kilrea BT51 5UT
School Chaplain:	Fr C McDermott
Type of School:	Catholic Maintained School
School Day:	The day begins at 8.55am
Morning Break:	10.30am to 10.45am
Lunch Break:	12.10pm to 12.50pm
End of Day:	Years 1 and 2 - 2.00pm Years 3 to 7 - 3.00pm Years 1 – 7 - 2.00pm on Fridays
N.B.	The 2 o'clock club is available for Years 1 & 2 on a daily basis (Monday to Thursday). The cost is £2 per day and children are collected at 3pm.

**After-Schools Club** is available from 3-5pm (Monday to Thursday) and 2-4pm (Friday) at a cost of £4 per child/hour.



Our School motto “**Learn and Grow**” encapsulates our vision and aims for our entire school community. We aim to develop in our children:

- A respect for our entire school community and others, which develops self-discipline, courtesy, tolerance and empathy and which fosters an appreciation of the aspirations and achievements of others.
- A deeper understanding and respect of our physical, racial and cultural differences both within our school environment and globally.
- An awareness of their “uniqueness” both in the eyes of God and in each other.
- A love and enjoyment of lifelong learning, which will extend their horizons and allow them to develop a range of talents, that will help them enjoy a fuller life.
- A mindfulness of their abilities and skills and a confidence to attain their full potential at every stage of their development through our broad and balanced Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- An independent voice with which they can actively engage and take ownership of their own learning and decision making, in all aspects of school life.
- A lively, inquisitive mind, which seeks to question, make connections, show initiative, embrace new and difficult challenges and make informed decisions.
- An awareness of our responsibilities for the environment and how our actions can impact it.
- An understanding of the necessity of making healthy lifestyle choices.
- An effective partnership and good relationships with Parents, our neighbouring schools (including our Partnership Schools and our community).

## **MEMBERS OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**“The governors are well-informed about, and fully involved in, the life and work of the school. They carry out their challenge function thoroughly and constructively in the best interests of the children, the staff and the local community. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI’s evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence *in the aspects of governance evaluated.*” (E.T.I. November 2016)**

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for the effective management of the school.

### **TRUSTEE REPRESENTATIVES (NOMINATED)**

Father Christopher McDermott  
Mr Conor McErlean  
Mr Fergal McGilligan (Vice Chairperson)  
Mrs Lisa Rainey (parent)

### **N.E.E.L.B. REPRESENTATIVE (NOMINATED)**

Mrs Kate Quigg  
Mr Jimmy Healy

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE (NOMINATED)**

Mrs Una Walsh (Chairperson)

### **PARENT REPRESENTATIVE (ELECTED)**

Mr Eamonn Darragh

### **TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE (ELECTED)**

Mrs Imelda Keenan

### **SECRETARY**

Mrs Ciara Henry (Principal & Secretary - Non-voting)

## **GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT**

St Columba’s is a Catholic school and as such is an extension of your Catholic home. It is there that our pupils first experience the Catholic faith in practice from you, their parents and first teachers.

In this school one of our main aims is to promote values and a way of life in keeping with our shared faith and your aspirations. The staff members firmly believe the caring ethos of the school is very important for the positive growth of each child. Staff members recognise that our faith must be evident throughout the teaching programme and reflected in the school’s ethos and pastoral care provision.

We appreciate the very important partnership role, which you, the parents, play in the education of your child who has been learning from you already in the crucial early years. The interest and example you have shown will now be evident. The constructive co-operation between parent/teacher and home/school must be on-going and based firmly on mutual respect and understanding. It is vital that you, as parent, continue to play an active role in their child’s education. Your time and support are the key elements of your investment in your child.

## **HOME - SCHOOL CONTACTS**

It is school policy to establish and promote open and positive home-school links. During your child's time in the school you will have many opportunities for formal and informal links with the staff. You are invited to avail of them for the benefit of your child.

**Listed below are the main occasions for home/school contacts:**

Open Days for prospective parents of Nursery and Year1 pupils  
Initial induction meetings for parents of Nursery and Y1 pupils,  
Pastoral/Curricular Meetings in September for individual classes,  
Parent/Teacher consultation meetings in October and March,  
Sacramental preparation – First Confession, First Communion, Confirmation  
Parent interviews relating to transfer to post-primary education. (Y7 pupils).  
Weekly Digital Newsletter on Sway  
School Website, Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter)  
Thematic assemblies of individual year groups  
School Performances e.g. Plays, Christmas Concert/Carol Service, Easter Drama  
Sports Day & Grandparents' Day  
End of year written report  
End of year Mass and Prize giving.

If at any stage you wish to speak with your child's teacher or the Principal please phone the school office on Tel: (028) 295 40273 to make a mutually convenient appointment.

Parents visiting the school must report to Mrs Mellon, the secretary, at Reception. Parents bringing an item for their child during the day must leave this item at Reception. In keeping with Health & Safety Regulations parents are not permitted to visit classrooms during the school day, except in exceptional circumstances and only with the prior knowledge of the Principal/Vice Principal)

Foundation Stage (Y1 & Y2) staff send out weekly information notes outlining planned work. Information relating to upcoming events throughout the year will be detailed in letters to the parents of the pupils concerned. Weekly Digital newsletters are posted on social media to keep parents informed of activities happening in the school.



## STATEMENT OF AIMS

The staff members of St Columba's are responsive and sympathetic to the individual needs and abilities of our pupils and aim to: -

- help your child develop values, beliefs and attitudes in keeping with our Catholic faith;
- recognise your child's individuality, talents and potential;
- provide your child with a broad and balanced curriculum in keeping with current statutory requirements of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- promote the development of your child's self-confidence, self-respect and self-discipline;
- encourage your child's understanding of each person's present and future role as a valued and contributing member of our community;
- encourage your child to be aware of and respect the immediate environment leading to a better understanding of the widening world and its resources;
- encourage in your child a sense of community with tolerance and respect for others who differ in religion, culture, social background or nationality;
- help your child develop an open, enquiring mind and the ability to question and make informed decisions;
- help your child to value the importance of personal health and fitness.

It is the aim of the staff to provide for the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, cultural and physical development of your child in a friendly, caring and disciplined environment.



## ADMISSION TO THE SCHOOL

Applications for a Primary One place for your child in St Columba's are made through EA Connect and places will be granted in accordance with the published admissions criteria. For further information on admissions criteria or how to apply online visit [www.eani.org.uk/admissions](http://www.eani.org.uk/admissions) or visit our school website on [www.stcolumbaskilrea.co.uk](http://www.stcolumbaskilrea.co.uk)



## **THE CURRICULUM**

The curriculum on offer in St Columba's Primary School meets the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum thus providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all its pupils. It promotes positively the children's self-esteem and confidence through experiencing activities and learning opportunities to encourage creativity and curiosity. It is interactive, enjoyable and encourages pupils to take on responsibility and develop a yearning for learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular learning experiences.

The curriculum consists of the following Areas of Learning: -

<b>AREA OF LEARNING</b>	<b>SUBJECTS / ELEMENTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Religious Education</li><li>• Language &amp; Literacy</li><li>• Mathematics &amp; Numeracy</li></ul>	Religious Education Talking & Listening, Reading, Writing Processes, Number, Measure, Shape & Space, Data Handling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Arts</li><li>• The World Around Us (WAU)</li><li>• Personal Development &amp; Mutual Understanding (PDMU)</li></ul>	Art & Design, Drama & Music Geography, History, Science & Technology Emotional & Social Development Health & Safety Awareness Moral thinking, values and actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical Education</li></ul>	Play and physical activities

Delivery of the curriculum is through a variety of approaches - subject based, cross-curricular, independent study. Pupils are taught in year group classes of mixed ability. On occasions it will be appropriate for pupils to be taught by a teacher other than the class teacher.

### **CURRICULUM SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES**

The development of these Skills and Capabilities for lifelong learning runs through the NI Curriculum.

### **CROSS-CURRICULAR SKILLS**

- Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

### **THINKING SKILLS AND PERSONAL CAPABILITIES: -**

- Thinking, Problem-solving and Decision-making
- Self management
- Working with others
- Managing Information
- Being Creative

Comprehensive schemes of work detailing the content of the programmes of study and linking the development of cross curricular skills and the promotion of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities have been drawn up to ensure development and progression throughout the Key Stages. Assessment, formal and informal, is used by the Key Stage and subject co-ordinators in their review and evaluation of the teaching and learning taking place.

These policies and schemes of work are regularly reviewed and are available in the school and on our school website.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Religious Education programme builds on the faith the children have received from you and helps to extend and deepen their knowledge and practice of our faith. It also aims to increase their understanding and appreciation of the life and liturgy of the Church by promoting active participation in it. The Religious Education programme develops moral and spiritual values that are in keeping with our faith and contribute to the ethos of the school and the development of a meaningful community spirit. Religious Education and its values permeate the life of the school and is not timetable limited.



The school's chaplain, Fr McDermott, visits the school regularly and is very interested and involved in the spiritual life of the school. He is especially supportive of the sacramental preparations in Years 4 & 7. He celebrates Masses in the school to mark the new school year and a Mass of thanksgiving at the end of the school year.

All classes are involved in the preparation of Morning Assemblies to celebrate special feasts and to highlight special church events/seasons.



Pupils are encouraged to become Altar Servers and contribute to the work of the Missions, charities and their parish.

*Any parents who wish to withdraw their child from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship should contact the school directly.*

## CHARITIES

St Columba's P.S. and Nursery Unit work very hard every year supporting various charities both local and national. These include Zomba Action Project (ZAP), Cancer Fund for Children, Action Cancer, The British Heart Foundation, Trocaire, Concern and Save the Children, to name but a few. Each class in our school contribute money to these worthy causes and from a very early age our children learn about others less well off than themselves and they experience the joy of giving. Much of the work is fully integrated into the Religion and PDMU curriculum. It is also inextricably interwoven into our Global Learning Project.



## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

***“The children benefit from a broad and balanced literacy programme.***

***They have regular opportunities to discuss, review and explain their thinking.***

***As they progress, the children benefit from interacting with more complex reading and writing activities which enable them to explore unfamiliar and challenging texts, including from well-integrated digital sources.” (E.T.I. 2016)***



Literacy is a core subject in which our pupils are taught to communicate effectively through an integrated programme of Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing in keeping with NI Curriculum guidance. In teaching reading in Foundation Stage, we place strong emphasis on learning phonics (reading a word by sounding out the letters and blending them together.) We aim to develop in our pupils a lifelong interest in books and enjoyment from reading. Each class has its own library stock of fiction and non-fiction. The development of the ability to communicate in writing is given high priority and high standards are achieved in this area. Spelling is taught daily and assessed regularly. Talking & Listening are developed through a diverse range of situations and contexts.

Individual support is offered to a number of Year 3 pupils through a ‘Boosting Reading Programme’ carried out by trained members of staff. The Accelerated Reading Project is currently part of the Year5/6 Literacy Programme and it will be extended to more classes in the near future.

Children’s Book Week is marked and an Annual Book Fair is held. Visits for year groups are arranged to the local library and writers are invited to share their work and expertise with the children.

***“The children achieve very good standards in literacy and numeracy. The staff track effectively the children’s attainment through, the well-matched, challenging work in their books, and the evidence the teachers accumulate in the children’s individual portfolios.”***

***“The nursery children communicate readily with the adults and their peers expressing confidently their ideas and thoughts; most children show an interest in early mark making and can recall aspects of stories. In the foundation stage, the children talk and listen, read and write with increasing confidence. As they progress, the children write accurately and neatly in a wide range of forms and engage with texts that allow them to develop more demanding comprehension skills. By the end of KS2, most of the children are independent in their reading and writing; they can use more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence construction in order to write for a varying range of audiences and purposes.”***

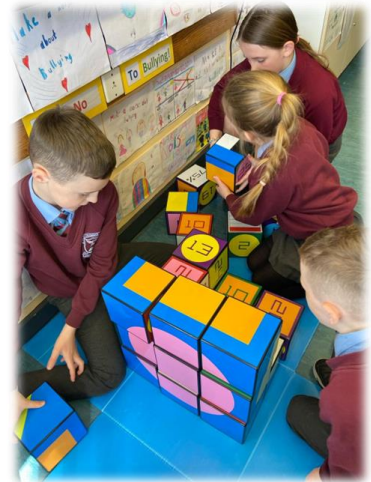
***(E.T.I. 2016)***



## MATHEMATICS & NUMERACY

In February 2020 during our sustained improvement inspection E.T.I. reported:

*“The outstanding leadership focuses on promoting continuous improvement through child-centred provision and highly effective pedagogy. The leadership is committed to teacher professional learning as a driver for improvement. There is a high-quality school development plan, which is underpinned by robust self-evaluation and research informed practice; the outcomes of which improve the learning experiences and contribute to better outcomes for the children. The school’s internal data indicates that, by the end of key stage 2, most of the children achieve as expected, or above, in numeracy. The children in the nursery unit experience a stimulating learning environment which provides appropriate learning opportunities to develop early mathematical skills; the quality of the learning experiences in the nursery unit provides the necessary groundwork for transition to foundation stage numeracy. Following on, the children experience a well-balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and handling-data across all key stages.”*



Children use the Maths Seeds / Mathletics online programmes to consolidate their learning.

While previously in 2016 they stated:

*“In the mathematics lessons, the teachers present well-structured activities to meet the children’s needs and ask probing questions to help the children clarify and extend their mathematical thinking. The children experience a well-balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and handling-data across all key stages; overall, challenge and progression are maintained well from year to year.” (E.T.I. 2016)*

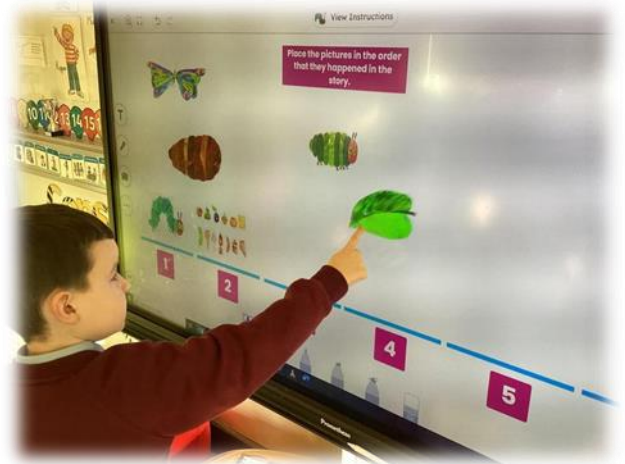
*“The children in the nursery unit have a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts; they count orally, match, sort and continue patterns and use well some mathematical language associated with capacity. In the foundation stage, the children engage enthusiastically in mathematical activities, particularly the more open-ended, practical tasks. In all key stages, most of the children have a clear understanding of key mathematical concepts and use relevant mathematical vocabulary well to explain their reasoning. By the end of KS2, the most able children are very competent across most of the key mathematical processes and concepts. They work well collaboratively in attempting unfamiliar problems and investigations (E.T.I. 2016)*



## USING ICT

***“Across the school, the children are very confident and capable in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool. The staff enable the children to ‘have a go’ and be creative in using a wide range of software and mobile devices. In addition, the development of the children’s interpersonal and problem-solving skills underpin their ability to use ICT in an infused and meaningful way across all aspects of their learning.” (E.T.I. 2016)***

ICT permeates all areas of your child’s curriculum and given the world of today and tomorrow it is essential for children to have ICT access to develop the skills to prepare them for life. ICT has been one of our key areas for development in our School Development Plan over the past two years and the entire teaching staff has received intensive training. We have just secured total Wi-Fi internet access throughout the school and invested in over fifty iPads. Each classroom has its own interactive whiteboard. A dedicated computer suite is available and the school aims to provide extended opportunities to develop pupil competence and confidence in ICT. We now offer clubs throughout the year in iPads and Coding.



## THE ARTS

Through this Area of Learning our pupils are helped to explore and experience opportunities in the subject areas of Art & Design, Drama and Music.

### ART AND DESIGN

Art & Design stimulates creativity and imagination in our pupils. It is an ongoing process through which they are given opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding to help them work in a variety of media, styles and forms. It enables all pupils to explore ideas and achieve and appreciate their potential. Pupils work individually and in groups allowing them to develop social and personal skills. Art is not taught in isolation, but as appropriate, is linked to other curricular areas.

Various year groups have worked recently with professional artists in some community art projects.

### DRAMA

Drama is an art form that is an outlet for our pupils' creativity and the creation of imagined characters and situations. It helps our pupils express themselves imaginatively and confidently while exploring their emotions and communicating with others. There are many opportunities for Drama – at Foundation Stage role play is an important aspect. All pupils have performances at Morning Assembly, the Annual Christmas Show. There is also the Easter Drama performed by KS2 pupils.



## MUSIC

Music helps pupils develop their creativity, their enjoyment and appreciation of various musical styles and traditions. It develops their instrumental and vocal skills and allows them work creatively with sound using simple and proper musical instruments.



A member of EA Peripatetic Music Service staff provides violin and flute tuition to selected pupils in Years 4 – 7. Parents are expected to contribute towards the cost of this and pay for any exam fees should their child be offered the opportunity.

We have an exceptional school choir who contributes fully to various school, parish and community events throughout the school year.



## WORLD AROUND US (WAU)

Children are naturally curious and often ask questions about themselves and the nature of the world around us. The purpose of this Area of Learning is to help our pupils explore and find age-appropriate answers to some questions from the subject areas of Geography, History and Science and Technology now grouped under WAU.



## **THE GLOBAL LEARNING PROGRAMME**

The Global Learning Programme (GLP) is a formal education project designed to enhance the global learning taking place in schools throughout Northern Ireland.

The GLP enriches the learning process, connects learning and brings an exciting new dimension to existing subjects such as literacy and numeracy. It develops young people's understanding of global issues and empowers them as global citizens to take action for a fair and sustainable world.

We have implemented Global Learning across the school curriculum and through whole school initiatives and have received our Level 2 certificate in recognition of our hard work.



## **MODERN LANGUAGES**

On European Language Day in September the pupils are treated to a variety of languages including those spoken by our Newcomer children.



## GEOGRAPHY

This subject explores the relationship between the earth and its people through study of places and the environment. It develops knowledge of places and environments throughout the world, an understanding of maps and different investigative skills inside and outside the classroom. Our pupils will gain knowledge of their place in the world, other places and peoples and the processes that effect life and conditions in a particular place. They explore ideas about people, jobs, weather and the environment locally and in the wider world and begin to realise their part in maintaining a sustainable world.



## HISTORY

History is about people, places and cultures of the past, their development over a period of time how we use evidence to learn about them and from them and how they have shaped our world. The children learn to value their own and others' culture and traditions.

We teach our pupils about the past and help them understand how people and events in the past influence our lives today. We teach them to investigate past events and in doing so develop skills of enquiry and analysis of evidence.



## STEM

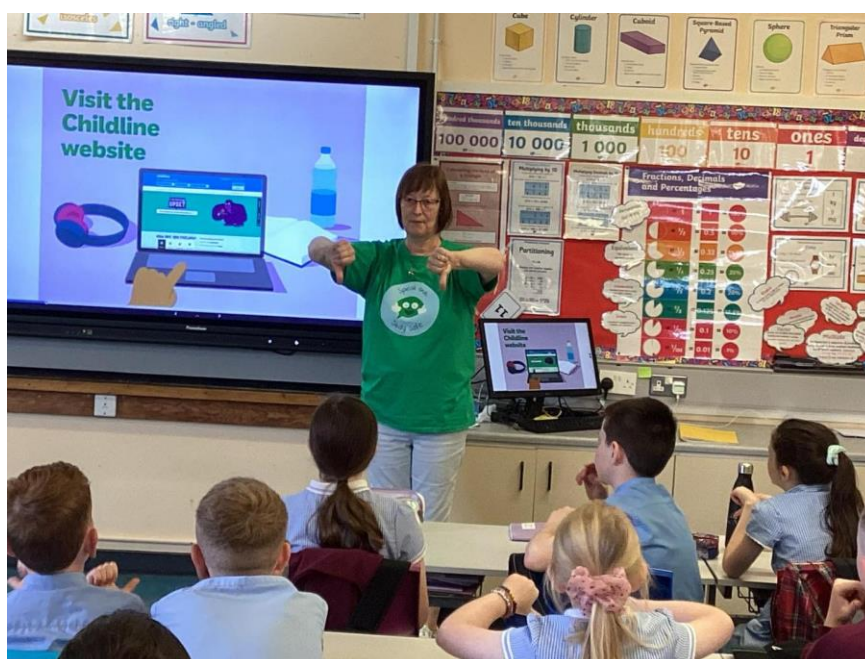
Science and Technology aims to foster our pupils' curiosity to find out why things happen in the way they do. It teaches methods of enquiry and investigation to develop creative thinking. Our pupils learn to ask meaningful questions and start to appreciate the way science will affect their lives in future on a personal, national and global level. They will also develop related relevant skills and an awareness of the value of Science and Technology in everyday life.



## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING (PDMU)

PDMU focuses on encouraging our pupils to become personally, emotionally, socially effective, to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives and become confident, independent and responsible adults who will make informed and responsible choices and decisions.

The purpose of PDMU as a separate Area of Learning is to provide the opportunity for particular attention to be given to the emotional development, health and safety, relationships and the development of moral thinking, values and actions.



## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education plays a very important role in ensuring a balanced programme for our pupils. It enables body and mind to work together and our pupils experience a wide variety of activities which develop many skills. We incorporate a sense of fun, enjoyment, challenge and achievement in all activities. Through PE our pupils develop a sense of responsibility, determination, confidence, interaction, team spirit and fairness. The school consistently enjoys success in inter-school sports competitions such as Gaelic, camogie, cross-country and soccer. We have a close association with our local G.A.A. club the Pearses. We work closely with the club and avail of their resources and support.

Weekly swimming lessons in Joey Dunlop Centre Ballymoney during terms 2 & 3 form part of the Y6 & Y7 programme. Parents are asked to contribute to the travel costs.



## **KEY STAGES**

At primary level, the seven year period of compulsory schooling is divided into: -

Foundation Stage	Years 1 & 2
Key Stage 1 (KS1)	Years 3 & 4
Key Stage 2 (KS2)	Years 5 - 7



## **TRANSITION FROM NURSERY/ PRE-SCHOOL SETTING TO YEAR 1**

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and to fulfil his/her potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow. Children transfer from our Nursery and from other Pre-School Settings.

Our Primary One teachers and Classroom Assistants work very closely with our Nursery teacher to make the transition smooth and rewarding. In the third school term prior to their entry, our Principal, Primary 1 teacher and classroom assistants meet our new Primary One pupils in the nursery settings. After this, there are induction visits. This helps the children become familiar with their new surroundings, staff and routines of St. Columba's. During this period, there are meetings for the parents in which we discuss our partnership with you.

## **FOUNDATION STAGE**

The Foundation Stage is seen as providing a more appropriate curriculum for younger children by developing their confidence and skills and the introduction of formal learning when the children are ready. The Foundation Stage curriculum is established to meet the particular needs of young children in the 4-6 age range.

The Foundation Stage curriculum features a child-centred approach. This allows a flexible programme in which individual needs can be met more appropriately with emphasis on developing the children's confidence and independence.

The key teaching and learning tool is play – a child's work. It is through play that children learn best. This approach recognises the value of oral language. This helps the children communicate and express their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Talking and listening are at the heart of the child's experiences.

Children can be helped think creatively if they are given experiences and have been growing up in a culture that nurtures and celebrates creativity. Children in the Foundation Stage need to be encouraged to explore, experiment, investigate and pose open-ended questions and problems that will support them in taking risks in their learning.

The importance of regular and structured physical activities at this stage is essential to ensure the development of children's physical skills in terms of balance, co-ordination and motor skills.

## PLAY IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE – (PLAY: A CHILD’S WORK!)

**“The best way to prepare children for their adult life is to give them the things they need as children.” (Tina Bruce 1987)**  
***Our outside Play Area has been developed and is a fabulous resource for all of the children throughout the Key stages. It has been totally maximised during the Pandemic.***



The core means of learning and teaching in the Foundation Stage is through play – lots of research over many years highlights how children learn best through play.

Some of the benefits include:

- Activity keeps brain and body active.
- Builds confidence and positive attitudes to self, others and environment.
- Social skills – helps children to get to know others, share, take turns. . .
- Children learn new skills including development of vocabulary.
- It is fun!

Play – What do children learn through play?

Through play the children are:

- Motivated to learn
- Developing a sense of enquiry
- Developing and consolidating skills
- Communicating and co-operating
- Playing out real-life situations
- Problem-solving
- Investigating and exploring the environment
- Able to take risks in a secure environment
- Active and absorbed
- Able to make choices
- Provided with access to the curriculum
- Allowed to be self-motivated and independent in their learning.



How can I help my child learn through play?

- Have fun!
- Encourage all kinds of play.
- Talk to your child.
- Read and rhyme with your child every day.
- Daily routines have lots of learning potential.
- Reinforce turn-taking / sharing etc.
- Emphasise the process, not the end product.
  
- TAKE TIME OUT – enjoy spending time with your child.



## **ASSESSMENT & REPORTING PROCEDURES**

In St Columba's Primary School, we believe that assessment lies at the heart of the process of learning. We use it not just to measure standards but to enhance achievement and improve learning. Assessment enables our pupils to gauge their own progress and potential and take informed action towards ongoing improvement. Teachers will use a variety of assessment techniques as part of an integral approach to teaching, learning, planning and assessment. Children's skills, knowledge, understanding and approach to learning will be assessed in a range of contexts, for different purposes. Children's contributions will be encouraged and valued at all times within our assessment framework.



A key element in the assessment arrangements at St Columba's is the continuous monitoring of pupil progress. Teachers regularly assess their pupils in a variety of contexts within the classroom, from observations of pupil's play to end of topic tests. Children's progress will also be assessed with the use of weekly spelling and numeracy tests. This is recorded formally and informally and has proved very beneficial in providing formative and summative assessments of pupil progress.

Parents are invited to a **parent/teacher consultation** evening on two formal occasions each year in October and February/March. They will be advised of their children's progress to date. Parents wishing to consult with teachers at any other time, should they feel their child's progress is of concern, should contact the school for an appointment with the teacher. Parents will also receive an annual written report on their child in June of each year.

In St Columba's **standardised tests** are carried out once a year in Literacy and Numeracy in Years 3 to 7. The school currently use the GL PTE (Progress Test in English) and PTM (Progress Test in Maths). We also use CAT tests to assess I.Q.

### **Standardised tests**

- advise parents of pupil progress.
- compare pupil and class attainment against a standardised norm.
- identify pupils who are experiencing difficulty in reading/mathematics with a view to early identification and intervention.
- identify areas of learning which need to be re-visited.

## SPECIAL NEEDS PROVISION

***"The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in line with their individual targets. They benefit well from the high quality support programmes and strategies tailored to meet their various needs" (E.T.I. 2016)***

In order to ensure that your child realises his/her true potential at school, the teachers will ensure that activities and content of lessons are carefully matched to individual needs.

In St Columba's P.S. we pride ourselves on early identification and intervention for any pupil experiencing learning difficulties. We feel that this is achieved through constant monitoring of pupil progress both formally and informally by the teacher in the classroom.

Children identified as having additional needs will be included on the Special Needs Register and the class teacher and SENCo (Mrs Martin) will draw up an individual programme of support for the child. This is known as a PLP (Personal Learning Plan). Any advice available from outside agencies will be used in drawing up the PLP which will be shared with the parents.

We are currently in the fortunate position to provide individual / small group withdrawal in 'The Hive' with our Special Needs Teacher, for those children who require support.

Please note: Parents are always kept informed at each stage. Initially the children will be catered for within their own class through differentiation of the work. The teacher will do this by matching the work to your child's level of ability. If your child's difficulties continue the school will consult with the EA's partnerships to discuss possible strategies/further assessments which are required.

Before a child is seen by the psychologist, parents will be kept fully informed of all aspects of the referral and will have access to any subsequent reports and an opportunity to meet the psychologist.

If necessary, a Statement of Special Educational Needs may be drawn up and one to one classroom support sought from E.A. North-Eastern Region. Within budget constraints a member of staff may provide additional support and this support may involve your child being withdrawn from the class and given tuition on a one to one basis or in a small group situation. Your child's progress will be monitored closely and you will be given regular updates. As parents your co-operation and home support will be invaluable.



## **CHILD PROTECTION**

***“The provision for pastoral care is outstanding in promoting the well-being of the children and supporting well their individual learning needs. Through the school-and Eco-councils, and other positions of responsibility which they carry in the school, the children develop confident leadership, resilience and communication skills.” (E.T.I. November 2016)***

Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be given proper care by those looking after them.”

(Article 19 of U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child)

All staff members of St Columba’s have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of our pupils. The welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration. We will make a determined effort to protect your child from abuse and to minimise the risk of abuse through our pastoral care policy that aims to provide a caring and safe environment in which the children can learn and develop their abilities. All staff members, including non-teaching staff, have been subject to background checks. Staff undertake annual Child Protection training within school.

If there is an allegation of abuse the staff member can not and should not promise confidentiality but should explain that important information will be passed on to Mrs G Martin - designated teacher. In her absence your initial contact should be Mrs K Maguire and Mrs P McCormick, deputy designated teachers. The Principal should be kept informed at all stages.

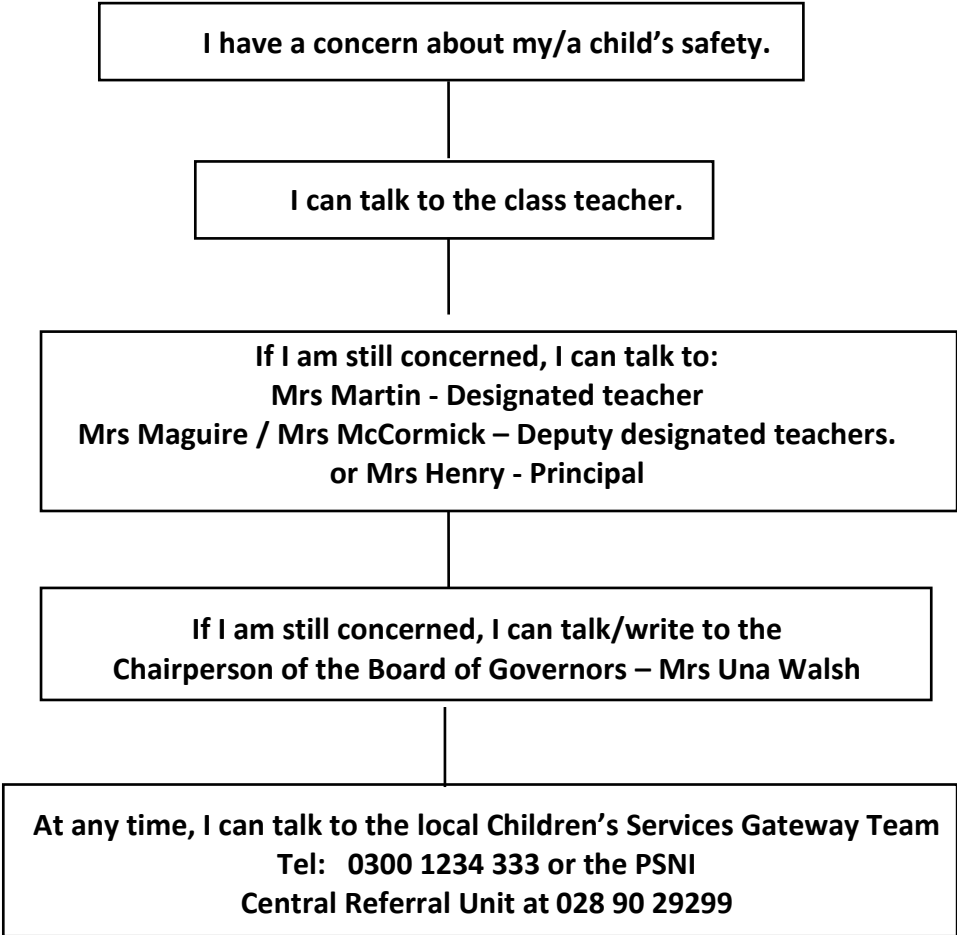
Child abuse occurs when ‘a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. The abuse may take a number of forms:-

- neglect:  
the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child’s health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive;
- physical injury:  
actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child;
- sexual abuse:  
actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles;
- emotional abuse:  
actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.
- exploitation:  
is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person.

***“The school and the nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children.” (E.T.I. November 2016)***

**CHILD PROTECTION (continued)**

If parents are concerned about possible abuse the diagram below outlines the procedure for a parent to register their concern.



**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

At St. Columba's we work together to provide a challenging, engaging, supportive and caring environment for the whole school community, where everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential. We encourage parents to keep open lines of communication and act promptly to inform us if they have a concern or complaint. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. If concerns are dealt with at an early stage, they are more likely to be resolved.

Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant member of staff in school who will be happy to help. There is an open-door policy with regards to contacting staff regarding a concern. Parents should phone to make an appointment to speak to the relevant member of staff or arrange a meeting. Meetings are always arranged promptly.

If you have any issues, please talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Concerns about matters outside of the classroom should be raised with the Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

A copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure is available on the school's website or is available from the school on request.



## **SCHOOL RULES**

The rules set down and the standards expected in this policy are considered reasonable, acceptable and within the capabilities of our pupils. They are designed to develop, in each pupil, a sense of self-discipline and responsibility.

Pupils must:

- come to school on time
- wear the full school uniform
- enter and leave the grounds by the small gates
- assemble in playground as instructed by teacher/supervisor before entering school (morning, mid-morning, lunch break)
- walk in quiet and orderly manner within the school
- use the handrail on stairways and steps
- take proper care of school books, equipment and property
- complete homework tasks in a manner satisfactory to the teacher
- avoid littering the school building and grounds
- obtain permission before leaving classroom, dining hall or grounds
- obey instructions given by teachers and supervisors including those occasions when involved in school activities off the school premises
- show respect for all staff, peers and visitors
- avoid fighting, bullying or threatening behaviour
- avoid using foul language or engaging in indecent behaviour
- behave on way to and from school - on foot, by taxi, by bus
- avoid going unnecessarily on areas of grass.
- refrain from chewing gum, spitting
- leave mobile phones at home

This list is not exhaustive but may be considered as containing the main rules.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

*“The provision for pastoral care is outstanding in promoting the well-being of the children and supporting well their individual learning needs. “E.T.I. Nov. 2016*

Pastoral care is an integral part of the school’s ethos and curriculum and permeates every aspect of school life. All members of the school community need to feel valued as they work together. Staff members, teaching and non-teaching, are involved in pastoral care. A designated teacher, Mrs Martin, and a deputy designated teacher, Mrs Maguire and Mrs McCormick have been appointed to promote and monitor good pastoral care practice within the school.

The school’s pastoral care programme seeks to support the learning and development of the children in all aspects of school life. Through our pastoral care we aim to provide for our pupils: -

- i) A caring, safe environment where all are helped to develop their full potential.
- ii) Opportunities to develop clear attitudes and values.
- iii) The right to be treated fairly and equally to ensure the development of their self-esteem and confidence.
- iv) The ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships.
- v) The right to be a valued member of the school community regardless of academic or social background.
- vi) The ability to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and the confidence and skills to keep themselves safe.

A “Buddy System” is in place between pupils of Y6 and the new intake group in Y1. There is regular contact between these classes and it is continued between the children as Y7 and Y2 classes.

Liaison with parents is a very important aspect of the policy. Many opportunities, formal and informal, are available for contact with the staff to inform, to advise and to discuss your child’s progress and achievements or deal with any other relevant matter.

“Catholic schools are called to recognise and respect the uniqueness of all individuals, to enable them to realise their potential and help create the world as God intends it to be.”  
(John Paul II Redemptor Hominis 1979)

## **DRUGS POLICY**

Drugs Education is part of the school’s Health Education programme. The main aims of this element of the programme are to educate our pupils so that they are aware of the dangers associated with drug abuse and to develop their confidence and self-assertive skills to help them cope with the peer pressure they may encounter in the wider community.

## UNIFORM

The uniform gives the children a sense of belonging and reflects the individuality of the school. Pupils are encouraged to take care with their appearance and to take pride in the wearing of the uniform. Parents should ensure that their child is provided with, and wears the uniform as detailed below.

### **BOYS**

Grey trousers

Blue polo shirt  
with crest

School sweatshirt

Grey socks

Dark trainers  
(with Velcro for younger children)



### **GIRLS**

Grey pinafore/skirt

Blue polo shirt  
with crest

School sweatshirt

Grey socks/tights

Dark trainers (with Velcro for younger children)



The sweatshirt/cardigan and crested polo shirt are available from: J & M Clothing, 11 Laragh Road, Swatragh BT46 5NS (Telephone No: 028 79401855). The remaining items may be purchased from other outlets. All other items of uniform may be purchased in Asda, Tescos, Sainsburys, Marks and Spencers, Dunnes or any other uniform retailer.

Parents should ensure their child brings a coat to school. Footwear should have a non-marking sole eg. a trainer type shoe. For P.E. pupils should wear shorts, T-shirt and trainers. You are asked to make sure your child brings the P.E. gear on those days timetabled for P.E.

To allow for greater comfort for children on warm days during the Summer term children are permitted to wear the following options.



Boys have the option of wearing **grey shorts** of a similar style to their grey uniform trousers and grey socks.



Girls have the option of wearing a **light blue summer gingham checked dress** with **white socks**.

**PLEASE MARK YOUR CHILD'S NAME CLEARLY ON ALL ITEMS OF CLOTHING.**

## CHILDREN'S MEALS

Children may have:

**Dinner**

**Packed Lunch**

Cost of dinner is £2.60 per day.

All children taking dinners in school must now book through an online system called ParentPay. You will receive an email with a username and password explaining how to login and create an account. It is very important that **EVERYONE SIGNS UP**, as even those in receipt of free school meals need to login and book their dinner for the week. Dinners must be ordered before 8.30am on the day the meal is required.

If your child is sick, you also need to login and cancel their meal. Again, this must be done before 8.30 am.

If you have any difficulty signing up, please contact the school office.

A copy of the weekly menu will be available a week in advance.

If you believe your child is entitled to have free meals you should apply online at [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) – Free School Meals / Uniform Grants.

## PACKED LUNCH

**Please Note:** St Columba's PS is a Health Promoting School and has received a Silver Award in recognition of its work. Parents are asked to support its policy by providing Healthy Lunch options.

"Junk Foods" should not be included in lunches. Lunches should not include fizzy drinks, crisps, chocolate, chocolate bars/biscuits or similar sugary type items. **One treat is allowed on a Friday.** Your child will enjoy and benefit from a healthier lifestyle.

Lunches and drinks should be packed separately from books to avoid damage in the event of spills. Your child's name should be put on his/her lunch box.

Please note: As some pupils are allergic to peanuts it is very important that the following are not brought to school – peanuts or any foods containing peanuts.

## HEALTHY BREAK

Drinking water is very positively promoted in school. Children may bring their own water bottles. We also encourage a fruit break for mid-morning and encourage all children to go outside and play and have fun in all weathers. (Always remember a coat with a hood)



## **CHARGES AND REMISSIONS**

No charges will be made for normal curricular provision given acceptance of the children's right to a free education. However, charges will be levied for the transport, admission and accommodation necessary to meet the costs of providing the additional optional educational and cultural activities the school arranges throughout the year. The school will attempt to keep these charges to a minimum.

## **SCHOOL DAY**

Pupils should arrive at school for 8.55am.

You are asked to have your child in school on time. The staff will provide supervision from 8.40am.

**Please Note: There is NO supervision of children who arrive before this time.**

<b>8.55am – 12.10pm</b>	Morning Session
<b>10.30am - 10.45am</b>	Morning break (supervised)
<b>12.10pm – 12.50pm</b>	Dinner/Lunch
<b>12.50pm - 2.00pm</b>	Afternoon Session - Years 1 and 2
<b>12.50pm - 3.00pm</b>	Afternoon Session - Years 3 – 7 (Friday 2.00pm)

## **ATTENDANCE**

Give your child the best start – every school day counts.

As parents you have a legal responsibility to ensure that your children attend school regularly and what you may think is a satisfactory level of attendance may be seen very differently by the Department of Education whose guidelines describe 95% attendance as satisfactory and 90% as poor. Irregular attendance, without a genuine reason, is unfair to your child as he/she will have difficulty catching up with what was missed and this type of attendance shows your child that his/her education is not valued by you.

It is essential that all children attend school on a daily basis. If, however your child/children are unwell please notify the school. You must report an absence on the first day of your child's/children's illness. There is a direct line specifically for the Reporting of absences.

**Please Note:** In addition to the child's home telephone number at least one other contact person and telephone number must be available in the event of illness or emergency. **Please notify the school of any change of number.**

Parents are asked to arrange medical/dental appointments, holidays etc outside school times to avoid absences and disruption to your child's education. It is unfair to disrupt your child's education and it is very difficult for your child to catch up.

We very much appreciate children being punctual at all times. As morning lessons begin promptly, your child will miss crucial learning and teaching if he/she is late. If your child is late coming to school, the Secretary must be advised as attendance records are kept on computer.

## **SETTLING IN**

You should bring your child to school on time. You may wish to remain with your child for some time. Before leaving reassure your child you will return later.

Parents/guardians/childminders living in the town are encouraged to walk with their child/children as this promotes an active healthy lifestyle and provides a good opportunity to teach Road Safety. Parents may wish to take turns to supervise a "Walking Bus" from their area of the town while parents living outside the town could use the "Park and Stride" option by parking a distance from the school and walking the rest of the way. These options reduce the congestion and associated dangers at the school gate.

Parents who bring children to and from school by car cannot park in the lay-by. This is a drop off zone only.

In the interests of safety parents accompanying pupils must always use the small pedestrian gates from the lay-by. Parents must not to bring their child in using the staff car park gate.

It is very important that all pupils, especially those in Years 1 and 2 are aware of the arrangements for getting them home. Parents collecting children should wait outside the door of the main building where they will be re-united with their children.

Try not to be late as this can cause your child anxiety.

## **2 O'CLOCK CLUB (2.00PM – 3.00PM)**

Parents who wish their child to stay in school or who have an older child in Y3 - 7 may access the 2 o'clock club and pay to have their Y1 / Y2 child collected at 3.00pm. Parents should book and pay this in advance. The cost is £2.00 per day.

**NB This money must be in an envelope and marked accordingly.**



## **AFTER SCHOOL**

At first your child may find school tiring but given time, attention and regular bedtime, will be much better able to cope.

Let your child know and see that you are interested in what is happening at school. Set aside time each day to talk about what he/she has been doing.

If your child sees you value education, then he/she will appreciate more fully the importance of ongoing effort on his/her part.

## HOMEWORK

It is school policy to set homework as it is important that homework is seen and valued as an integral part of your child's schoolwork. It informs parents about their child's work in the classroom and extends learning opportunities and helps your child get used to the discipline of home study. Homework allows teachers to assess the effectiveness of their teaching by providing evidence of the child's level of understanding of work. You are asked to find time to provide active support and a suitable environment to ensure the required work is done.

The homework activities given may involve oral preparation, written exercises, revision and practical work. Homework is most beneficial when it is given adequate time and done with care and attention. It is important that written work is well presented. Learning homework should also be seen as equally important.

If your child has no written homework please make sure that the appropriate amount of time is spent on reading and revision or on independent learning for KS2 pupils.

Suggested periods for homework:

Foundation Stage (Years 1 & 2)      10 – 15 mins

Key Stage 1 (Years 3 & 4)      20 – 30 mins

Key Stage 2 (Years 5, 6 & 7)      30 – 50 mins



If your child cannot complete the homework in the suggested time, please make note of this on the homework or in the diary.

You should contact the teacher if difficulties regarding homework are experienced. It may also be necessary for the teacher to contact you should problems arise.

## TRANSPORT

Parents whose permanent address is more than 2 miles from the school may be eligible to claim free transport or financial assistance. These parents should apply online at [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) - Home to School Transport.



A screenshot of the Education Authority website. The page is titled 'EDUCATION THROUGH COVID' and features several sections: 'Admissions', 'Supporting EA Staff', 'Covid FAQs and Guidance', 'Supporting Learning', 'Youth Services Support', 'Educational Support Services', and 'Department of Education updates'. At the bottom, there is a section for 'Home to School Transport' which is highlighted in yellow. The website also includes a search bar and various navigation links.

**SHARED EDUCATION**

St Columba’s PS and Kilrea PS have enjoyed a very successful partnership spanning almost two decades. Both staff and pupils alike have formed friendships and good working relationships. Over the years children from both schools have enjoyed a variety of opportunities across the curriculum. These opportunities have included ICT, PE, World Around Us, Literacy and PDMU. Children have enjoyed such visits as Baronscourt in Newtownstewart, Woodhall, Kilrea and end of year visits to the beach and People’s Park in Ballymena. Staff from both schools have availed of Staff Training opportunities across the curriculum all in an effort to improve the learning experiences of our pupils.



## EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In keeping with the ethos of the school for the development of the whole child there are many additional experiences and activities provided by the staff.

These activities may take place on or off the school premises.

Pupils are encouraged to take part in outdoor and indoor sports -

Gaelic football, camogie, hurling, soccer, netball, basketball, cross country, athletics, swimming, soccer drama performances, choir, theatre visits, art and craft exhibitions, public speaking, quiz competitions, field trips and educational visits including residential.



Teachers also organise and supervise clubs for Key Stage 2 pupils in the following areas:

Boys Games (Gaelic/Soccer/Hurling)

Girls Games (Camogie, Gaelic football)

Cross country running

Gardening

Drama

Quiz

Music Club/Choir

Cycling Proficiency

I.C.T.

Transfer Club (Y6&7)



Admission to these clubs depends on the number of children wishing to take part with priority being given to senior pupils.

**Clubs take place 3.00pm - 4.00pm. Parents are responsible for transport arrangements of children after the club activity ends.**

## AFTER SCHOOLS CLUB

We have introduced an After-School Club for the convenience of parents. It runs from 3 to 5 pm (Monday to Thursday) and 2 to 4pm (Friday). The cost is £4 per child / hour. The children have an opportunity to play, relax, eat and complete any written homework.

**ST COLUMBA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, KILREA**

**HOLIDAYS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2024 / 2025**

**Autumn Term**

School begins Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Class ends at 12 noon on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Staff Day Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September

Halloween Mid-Term – Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November

School closes for Christmas Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 12 noon.

**Spring Term**

**School re-opens Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

Mid-Term - Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February

St Patrick's Day Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March

School closes for Easter Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April at 12 noon.

**Summer Term**

**School re-opens Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

May Day Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May

Spring Bank Holiday Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Last day of term Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June at 12 noon.

**Class ends at 12noon on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September for all pupils and on the last day of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms and also if Confirmation takes place on the evening of a school day. Dinners will only be available on these days for children who qualify for Free School Meals.**

**Parents will need to make their own arrangements for their children's transport on these early closings as buses may not be available.**

**NB The schedules for beginning our new term for Nursery and Year 1 pupils will be given to parents/guardians on Induction Day.**

**Dates may be subject to change.**