



Learn to Love, Love to Learn

**Board of Governors'
Annual Report
2022/2023**

Chairperson's Welcome

... but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Mt 19:14)

Dear Parents and Carers,

We began the year with uncertainties re staffing, however, that was never conveyed to the children, as **each** member of staff welcomed them with open arms, love and care. Our patience was rewarded and by Christmas our new Principal and Vice-Principal had been appointed and the staff welcomed their appointments and the stability this brought to the school.

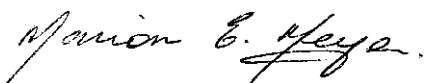
We said goodbye to Miss Ciara Taggart and thanked her for her commitment to the school during the years she was here and wished her well in her new position. We welcomed Miss Janine Kerr to the staff.

Apart from formal learning, we had a year of a variety of activities and successes, some on the sporting field, that make St Mary's on the Hill renowned for catering for all our children, promoting their various talents. These could only be achieved with your help and thank you for your unwavering support.

We have a vibrant PTA who give up their time to generate vital funds for the school, much of the improvements around the school are in thanks to them.

In the last term, we were given the opportunity to put our mission statement directly into practice, we were asked by EA if we would, with their support, open a Specialist Provision Unit within the school. This was such an honour as we had been chosen because of our reputation for excellent pastoral care.

We look back on this past year with thanks and with God's blessing and under the patronage of Mary, our Mother may **all** of our school community have a happy year surrounded by Jesus' love.



Marion E Meyer

Chairperson, Board of Governors

This year has seen another year of change and one of challenge for our school. At the beginning of this academic year, Mr O'Brien was appointed as Principal of St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. As a school community we look forward to Mr O'Brien continuing to enhance the strong pastoral and Catholic ethos of our school and also to continue to strive for school improvement in all areas.

With the appointment of Mr O'Brien it meant that a new Vice-Principal was required. We were delighted that Mrs Niblock, a long serving member of our school community, was appointed to this role. There already exists strong and effective working relationships in our school and with Mrs Niblock's appointment we look forward to this ethic being instilled from a senior level. With two young and enthusiastic senior leaders in the roles of Principal and Vice-Principal, we know the school will be forward thinking, progressive and up for all challenges that are faced in today's modern society.

The school would also to thank Miss Ciara Taggart who left us and we wish her well in her new endeavours. We are also delighted to welcome a new permanent appointment in Miss Jenna Kerr. We wish her every success in St. Mary's on the Hill P.S.

Although we are moving further away from the COVID era there are still effects from this time being seen and felt by our pupils. The school has continued to support all the children effectively. Along with this continuing challenge, a backdrop of increasing financial pressures faced by all public sector departments, impacts our school. However, our school Mission Statement continues to drive our work '*where we keep the child at the centre of everything that we do*'.

Our school community has continued to develop, and we have offered more opportunities to bring the wider community into our school throughout the year, whether it be through our Summer and Christmas Fairs, P7 Concerts, the Carol Services or our P2 Christmas Performance. It was wonderful this year to have family members in our school and being able to enjoy life in St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. again.

Due to the uncertainty that this year had in regard to the leadership of the school, it was prudent to continue with a one-year plan for our school, this focussed on 4 Key areas;

- World Around Us – including early years experiences and outdoor learning.
- ICT – Development of Planning
- Shared Education – Initiating and Developing partnership with Carnmoney P.S.
- RSE – Development of Policy

Alongside these the overarching areas that existed in the previous SDP where also relevant

- Supporting the physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing of pupils and staff;
- Developing effective approaches to remote/blended teaching and learning and/or assessment;
- Identifying and addressing underachievement, particularly for those pupils who have experienced barriers to engaging in remote learning.

This kept the well being and mental health at the centre of our work as we moved further from the COVID era.

THE SCHOOL'S MISSION STATEMENT

The philosophies, aims and objectives of the school, as defined by the Board of Governors, have been set out in the following short mission statement:

We, the governors and staff of St Mary's on the Hill Primary School, believe the school to be a vital part of the Catholic Community living in the Parish of St Mary's on the Hill. We aim to create a supportive inclusive Christian school community. A community in which all members are valued.

We believe that high quality teaching and learning are central to our motivation as a school. We believe that all children can learn and that all pupils have strengths. We encourage pupils to:

- develop their full potential spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically;
- contribute positively to the world in which they are living;
- contribute to the economy and environment.

We are a Catholic school, committed to the Statement of Aims of Catholic Schools, and to the promotion of an ethos throughout the school which reflects the Christian teaching and values of the Church. We aim to help the children grow in awareness of the presence of God in themselves, in others and in the world around them.

Our school is not an isolated institution but it is part of the community, responsible to it and providing an important community service. We take this responsibility seriously and will seek the further involvement and interest of parents and others not only in the welfare of individual children but in the school as a whole. We work hard to build tangible links between the school, home, parish and wider community.

We seek to provide a caring service that recognises the human value of pupil, teacher and parent; that appreciates the need to help pupils manage their present lives as well as helping them prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life; one that treats teachers not just as employees but as valued associates and partners of parents.

We aim to provide a centre of educational excellence - one that is planned, developed to the highest professional standards, and constantly evaluated so as to maximise the benefit each pupil receives from his/her experiences at the school

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors have overall responsibility for the effective management of the school. As well as nominees of the Trustees, the Education Authority and the Department of Education, its membership includes a Governor elected by the parents and a Governor elected by the teaching staff. The principal is also a member.

A list of members is included in Appendix 1.

The Governors have particular responsibilities in relation to the curriculum, the appointment and dismissal of staff, admissions to the school, discipline, complaints, school funds and buildings.

An important function for the governors is to consider the needs of the school in terms of staff, buildings, and other resources and to advise the various other authorities if we believe these needs

are not being met. An equally important function is to ensure that the resources available to the school are being effectively used.

THE CURRICULUM

The enrolment figure for 2022/2023 was 356.

The curriculum is made up of all the opportunities for learning provided by the school - not just the formal lessons, but the climate of relationships, the style of behaviour and general quality of life evident within the school community. In a Catholic school such as ours, the teaching and expression of our Catholic values are an important element of the curriculum.

The curriculum is set out in six areas of learning:

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- The Arts
- The World Around Us
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Physical Education

It is infused with the cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using Information Communication Technology.

The curriculum promotes children's self-esteem by concentrating on activities and learning experiences which encourage confidence, curiosity and creativity. It encourages children to take an active responsibility for their own learning.

In St. Mary's on the Hill, pupils are given opportunities to learn in a variety of ways and in different social groupings. Teachers employ a wide range of teaching methods to ensure the children have opportunities for interactive, practical activities where children are encouraged to self-assess and plan for improvement.

Teachers plan together each week to ensure pupils' learning intentions are agreed whilst ensuring that their own individual class needs are catered for. They ensure that work is planned, reviewed and evaluated every eight weeks. Teachers include assessment methods for each 8 weekly planners. These assessments provide teachers with information on how each pupil is progressing and also identify areas which may require additional help.

CURRICULUM PLANNING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum Development and In-Service Training were ongoing throughout the year. The Principal and the Senior Leadership Team guided the staff on areas that needed further development. Encouraging pupils to continue to develop skills in resilience and understanding has helped them throughout this academic year

Linked to the teams that were established in the school, curricular development allowed all staff to develop skills that would have an impact on the learning of the children. The teams included, Shared Education, World Around Us, ICT and Relationship and Sexuality Education. The teams all engaged in Teacher Professional Learning within the teams and there were aspects that were disseminated to the entire staff when needed.

Planning was an area that all staff took on to develop, not only in ICT and WAU but also in the other core learning areas of Literacy and Numeracy. Staff took time to develop their templates and made the planning of these subject areas more beneficial for themselves and in turn, efficacious for the children.

Nurturing Approaches in Schools

Mrs McIntyre and Mr O'Brien completed the nurture approach in school's readiness questionnaire and submitted this to the Education Authority. As this has been completed we were able to access the training and support that this service offers. We received a one-day Staff Development Day on 4th January full day training session giving us of this we designated level 3. This is something that needs to be celebrated by the school and we look forward to developing links with the EA in this area.

The Happy Healthy Minds programme took place in school with a counselling service being made available to children who were identified by teachers that needed support. This service is funded by the Department of Education and an outside agency is engaged in the delivery of the service. Unfortunately, due to the huge budgets cuts across the public sector this vital resource is no longer funded by the Department and many of our children who were availing of this service no longer can.

Four members of our staff completed training using Lego Therapy. This initiative called Beyond Bricks gave the opportunity for staff members to train in and use this style of therapy to support children with mental health issues, communication problems and possible medical diagnoses. Four members of staff, Louanne Turner, Stephanie Keers, Adrienne McNally and Jade Kearney are now trained and certified to deliver the programme within the school.

Physical Education and Sport

The ETI recently launched a report detailing their findings on Physical Education and how it is being delivered across schools. The report can be found on the link below and is also part of the communication documents.

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/a-thematic-evaluation-of-physical-education-in-primary-schools.pdf>

Staff engaged in two training sessions organized by our PE coordinator Miss Kerr. The first session dealt with the theory associated with good PE delivery in Primary Schools and the second focused on practical based work and delivery of PE. This was accessed by the entire staff. The work that was completed by the staff enhanced competence and confidence in this area. A focus on the improvement in planning and delivery of PE will be part of our next School Development Plan.

School teams and competitive matches resumed this year with Gaelic football, Hurling, Camogie all being represented. The teams represented the schools at a variety of tournaments and matches.

Special Educational Needs

This year has seen an exciting development for our school. We agreed with Education Authority to provide Specialist Provision in a mainstream setting. The context for this is based on both national and local issues, as it is clear that children with Special Educational Needs are increasing and in particular those pupils who need specialised support.

The Specialist Provision that we will be providing in St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. is for Social and Communication needs. This will benefit those pupils that perhaps have a diagnosis of Autism, ADHD or have Speech and Language issues. The benefits to the school are not just contained within the Provision. The entire staff were provided with training to develop skills in supporting the development of pupils with Social and Communication needs.

The school continues to have strong links with outside agencies to support pupils including, Literacy Support, RISE NI, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, Autism Advisory and Intervention Service and Behaviour Support. Along with this we write IEP's and support all our pupils that have difficulties on a range of areas.

Outdoor Learning

The school secured £10,000 in grant money to enhance the outside of our school. This money was earmarked to enhance our garden area in the school, to make this an area that the children can use and also find calm if required. The work undertaken was completed during the summer break and will be available for the pupils in the new academic year.

We also secured other funding for outdoor library boxes. Some of our pupils do not like the noise of the playground as other children play. We have space in our playgrounds that pupils can access if they do feel overwhelmed. With these library boxes, the children can also access books to read which will help them to relax in this busy environment.

The school is also updated our playground markings and money has been given to the school to re-mark the football pitch and basketball courts. Some of our PTA funding also went to enhance other areas of the playground. This has made our playground a vibrant, colourful and welcoming place for all our children.

Forest School

The Forest School programme continued and grew this year. Mrs Ross was able to train Mrs McConvey to be a leader of the programme, which meant that P1, P2 and P4 classes were able to take part this year. We secured a Elder Award for the work that has been undertaken.

Music

More than seventy pupils were in receipt of music tuition. A number of children received tuition in woodwind instruments including, flute, clarinet and oboe and some children received tuition for baritone, tenor horn and trumpet. Mr McEvoy continued to conduct the choir, teaching them new pieces throughout the year. They performed at the Peace Proms event at these SSE Arena, this event The also performed at Ashwood, Glebe and Dunanney Nursing Homes and in Tesco, Northcott.

Cultural

European Day of languages took place this year with the children receiving lessons from Ms Walsh in school and also linking with Fortwilliam Dominican College via zoom and receiving Irish lessons from year 13/14 pupils.

Ms Walsh also prepared the children to take part in the Belfast Feis. With 7 out of the 8 participants receiving medals, this was a very successful event for the school.

Planning

The Cluster for Play/Activity Based Learning led by Mrs McIntyre including local schools in the area have continued to meet to discuss good practice and share ideas and resources. These clusters have also taken place in the key areas of Literacy, Numeracy and SEN. The curricular areas of Literacy and Numeracy also had a KS2/KS3 link with local post primary schools involved.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Teachers continue to keep up-to-date pieces of pupils' work as evidence of each child's achievements in the main curricular areas. At the end of the school year, a file containing information about pupils' progress is transferred to the child's new teacher.

In Term 1, parents and carers of pupils in Years 2 to 7 were formally invited to discuss their children's progress via telephone this year. Year 1 parental meetings were held in January 2022.

Annual reports, outlining each child's progress and achievements, were sent to parents and carers in the Summer Term.

Records of Achievement, that record both academic and non-academic achievements throughout the children's years of primary schooling, were awarded to our P7's following their remote Leavers' Mass in June.

Standardised Testing PTE/PTM

The school completed standardised testing for P4, P5, P6 and P7 pupils. The data was analysed and along with teacher input and coordinator discussions and will be used to set targets for pupils, year groups, curriculum areas and whole school. This information will be used in conjunction with Cognitive Ability Testing (CAT).

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

On-Line Masses & Prayer Services

We had organised with Fr Pat a number of online Masses and Prayer Services:

- The Opening of the New School Year Mass;
- Prayer Service for our Year 1-3;
- Class Masses.
- Children were able to watch these virtual Masses from their classrooms

The Sacraments Holy Communion and Confirmation

Communion was held in June for our Year 4 pupils. Confirmation was held in May for our Year 7 pupils. Thank you to Fr Pat for his spiritual guidance and support and to the parish volunteers for their presence throughout. The services, as always, were very special and enjoyed by children and parents.

Catholic School's Week

Catholic Schools' Week began Sunday 23rd January. The highlight of the week was Grandparents' Day and this was celebrated remotely.

All pupils took part in remote Assemblies. This provided an opportunity for the children to come together and build the sense of community.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Maths Week Ireland

We celebrated Maths Week Ireland during October. In school, we carried out different problem-solving activities and watched Maths Week TV shows which focused on different topics such as: Number Patterns, Maths Rocks and It Doesn't Add up. The presenters were well known mathematicians, teachers and scientists.

School Council

The school council played a very active role this year in planning and helping the school. They had an outing to Stormont and Mossley Mill where they met the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey. The school council played an active role in developing our outdoor learning in school by having library boxes installed in the school.

Anti-Bullying Week

In St Mary's on the Hill, we have had a very proactive curriculum which helps us to reduce the number of bullying episodes recorded in the school. Through the pupils' PDMU programme, circle time activities, religion programme and ICT lessons, we limit the amount of relationship issues that can develop into bullying. We also encourage and seek the help of outside agencies such as the NSPCC to deliver assemblies to support the pupils in our school. During Anti-Bullying week, the children participated in a range of activities on the topic of Anti-Bullying. The week will begin with Odd Socks day on Monday 14th November.

Year 2 Concert and Year 1 Prayer Service

The Year 2 Christmas Concert was performed in school with an audience of the children's family members. This was the first occasion since the pandemic. The Primary 1 children also took part in their Prayer Service in St. Mary's on the Hill Church. Great efforts were made by both pupils and teachers and the prayer service was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Carol Service

Year 5 led the annual Carol Service this was in St. Mary's on the Hill church and was a great community occasion. This was the first time the Carol Service was performed live since the pandemic.

Safer Internet Day 2023

This was celebrated globally and in our school on Tuesday 7th February 2023 with the theme *All Fun and Games* exploring safety in the online world. Over the course of the year the children also explore internet safety with their class teacher.

Sports Day

For our Sports Days this year, we looked at more inclusive and fun event for our P1 – P3 pupils. This meant the pupils could participate in a range of activities and enjoy the morning. The P4 – P7 Sports Days took place at Carnmoney Primary School, who is our new Shared Education partner. This meant that we were able to use their extensive playing fields which allowed for a

safer event. Both Sports Days were well received and events that we can build upon for next year.

Young Enterprise

We had a variety of Young Enterprise lessons this year and the pupils were able to gain a lot about the business world from these events. Emma Crawford from Young Enterprise facilitated events from P1 – P7.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Induction Programme

This year we have worked hard to ensure that the children transferring to SMOTH in September 2022 have the best possible transition experience under the current circumstances and that their parents also found this a positive rewarding process. Our transition process this year included:

- Updated EA training for the Coordinator and the Year 1 teacher May 2021;
- Contact with all relevant preschool providers;
- Invitations to a 'Greenfingers' session for all children in small groups as appropriate;
- Photograph of Year 1 staff and Year 1 classroom - sent to preschool as requested for anxious children;
- Communications sent to parents – policies and Google Forms for data collection;
- Induction video;
- Teachers video for the children to replay over the summer containing an introduction to their Year 1 teacher and classroom assistant. This video also provided a virtual tour of the Year 1 environment;
- Photograph and flier and message from Year 1 teacher (to put on fridge!);
- Sunflower postcard sent to the children over the holiday period;
- Parent - Teacher interviews in August.

Provision Before and After School

After school activities returned with a more varied programme this year. Activities have resumed for the all year groups. These were facilitated by an outside agency, Activity NI, and allowed the children to continue to develop social connections.

Breakfast Club 7.55am to 8.45am

Waiting Class 2pm–3pm - after a risk assessment we resumed our Waiting club for P1 and P2 pupils.

Sleepy Hollow provided Wrap Around Care 5 days a week.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

St Mary's on the Hill Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) organised various fundraising and social events during the year. We are greatly indebted to the PTA for the time and energy they devote to raising much needed funds for the school but also for helping to further enhance the family

atmosphere within St Mary's on the Hill through their fundraising efforts. Some of the activities from the summer term were:

- Organised a party for the Year 4 children after Holy Communion and provided PartyBags;
- Organised a Bounce-a-thon;
- Organised Winter and Summer Fair
- Provided *Hoodies* for the Year 7 Leavers.

Communicating with Parents

The Monthly Events Newsletter has continued, celebrating the achievements of the pupils in the school and keeping parents/carers up to date with important dates and events. Further details of the events for the year can be accessed through the links below: <https://stmarysonthehill.co.uk/for-parents/publications/>

Our school website, <https://stmarysonthehill.co.uk/> provides parents and carers with detailed information on the life of the school, celebrates pupil achievements and provides information on how parents/carers can support their child's education. Within the Pupil Links, our students have access to various websites and documents in order to assist their learning. General school notes are emailed, distributed and then posted on the school website.

COMMUNITY LINKS

We are proud of our local and extended community links. We enjoy good relationships with the other parish primary and post-primary schools.

Charities

Trócaire

The children took part in the annual fund raising for Trócaire. They got creative with the theme of Spring. They were able to:

- draw/paint a picture;
- write and record a song or rap;
- make a model;
- write a poem or short story;
- make or decorate an Easter bonnet;
- create a dance routine.

Parents were able to make a donation to Trócaire through school money as an entrance fee. Each teacher had to judge the entries for their own class and one winner received an Easter egg. We raised £4,102

Facebook

This medium is used to mark events throughout the school year. The school has continued to communicate and update parents via email and text. Facebook was not used to send messages to parents and we asked that parents do not use Facebook to contact the school.

Click on the link below and please share with anyone you think would be interested or has a connection to our school - <https://www.facebook.com/StMarysOnTheHillPS/>

Some of the highlights have been:

- Mental Health Awareness Week;
- Maths Week
- Sporting achievements
- Christmas celebrations
- Marking the progress of our new build;
- Holy Communion celebrations;
- Confirmation;
- Sports Day.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Board of Governors is committed to continuing the process of further upgrading the school's environment and ensuring the Education Authority and Department of Education fulfil their responsibilities with regard to the upkeep of the school buildings in the current academic year.

- The replacement modular classrooms for Year 4 and Year 5 is complete. The new modular classrooms are in place and in use. A new single modular build is also complete and in use by the school

FINANCE

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for the allocation of the budget, but on a day-to-day basis this responsibility is exercised by the Principal. The budget is calculated by the Education Authority using a formula which applies to all schools in its area. The main elements in the formula are the number of pupils, the number of pupils entitled to free school meals and factors related to the size and design of the school buildings which affect running costs.

The Board of Governors would like to thank parents and carers for responding so generously to the various fundraising activities during the year.

Appendix 1

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Trustee Representatives

Mrs Meyer (Chairperson)
Mr Wright (Vice-Chairperson)
Mrs McComiskey
Mr Todd

Education Authority Representatives – N E Region

Mr McCann
Mr Grehan

Department of Education Appointee

Mr Turner

Governor Elected by the Teachers

Mrs Niblock (Secretary)

Governor Elected by the Parents

Mr Feeney

Principal

Mr O'Brien

The full Board of Governors met five times during the period 1st August 2022 and 31st July 2023.

Teaching staff

Class	Teacher 2021-2022
P1A	Mrs Ross
P1B	Mrs McCluskey
P2A	Mrs McIntyre
P2B	Mrs Keers
P3A	Mrs Magee
P3B	Mrs O'Brien
P4A	Mrs McConvey
P4B	Mrs Thompson
P5A	Mrs Dempsey
P5B	Ms Walsh/Mrs Nolan
P6A	Miss Kerr
P6B	Mrs Carey
P7A	Mr McEvoy
P7B	Mrs Niblock
Withdrawal Support Teacher	Mrs Reddick

Non-Teaching Staff

Name	Responsibility
Mrs Mason	General Office Manager
Mr Martin	Building Supervisor
Mrs Kennedy	Foundation Stage (FS) Classroom Assistant (P1),
Mrs Turner	FS Classroom Assistant (P1), Classroom Support,
Mrs McAllister	FS Classroom Assistant (P2), Classroom Support,
Mrs Beggan	FS Classroom Assistant (P2)
Mrs O'Hagan	FS Classroom Assistant (P2)
Mrs Dougan	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P1)
Mrs Strain	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P2)

Miss McAllister	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P3)
Miss Smylie	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P3)
Miss Millar/Mrs Prendergast	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P3)
Mrs Ashe	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P5)
Ms Lowry	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P5)
Mrs McNally	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P6)
Mrs Thompson/Miss Gribben	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7)
Miss Kearney	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7)
Mrs Turner, Mrs Kennedy, Miss Smylie, Mrs Beggan, Mrs McAlister Mrs McNally, Miss Kearney, Mr Carter, Mrs O'Hagan, Miss Millar, Miss McAllister, Mrs Ashe, Miss Gribben, Mrs Dougan	Lunchtime Supervisory Assistants
Mrs Butler	Head Cook
Mrs McKinstry Mrs Russell Mrs Hynes	Canteen Staff
Mrs Tierney Mrs Dougan	Cleaning Staff

Voluntary Fund (01.09.22-31.08.23)

The school has a Voluntary Fund:

Monies in:

- Year 7 Educational Trip;
- Monies contributed to defray costs of other educational visits;
- Course Fees;
- PTA Fund Raising Activities;
- Monies raised on behalf of various charities;
- Sale of Book bags;
- Book Fairs;
- Sale of Photographs, DVDs.

Monies out:

- Year 7 Educational Trip;
- Educational Visits (Other);
- Monies Donated to Various Charities;
- Purchase of Sundry Items for School;
- Payment of Photographs;
- Current Account Fees;
- Book Fair Monies;
- Transfer of Monies to LMS Account;
- School Web Site;
- School Money;
- Annual Playground Equipment Report.