Board of Governors' Annual Report

2025/2026

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For everything there is a season…a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4

This past year was dominated by our 125th Birthday celebrations. Many hours of laughter and dance. Many hours of reminiscences, of happy times, of meeting past, present and new faces. Sometimes we shared sadder memories when we remembered beloved pupils and staff no longer with us. All those memories reinforced our family ethos which is the beating heart of our school. The school buzzed with excitement this year and we continued to

Learn to Love, ***and*** **Loved to Learn**

making our days fun-filled. Thanks to our whole school community, pupils, staff, parents/carers and parish for their dedication to St Mary's on the Hill and making this such an outstanding year.

Mrs Marion Meyer
Chairperson of the Board of Governors
St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School

It is my pleasure to present the Annual Report from the Board of Governors for the academic year 2025-2026.

As we reflect on the past year, we can do so with a great sense of gratitude and pride. It has been a year marked by both opportunities and challenges, yet throughout it all our school community has remained steadfast in its commitment to providing the highest quality education and care for every child entrusted to us.

At the heart of everything we do in St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School are our vision, mission and values. Guided by our motto, *"Learn to Love, Love to Learn,"* we have continued to foster a nurturing, inclusive and ambitious environment where every child is encouraged to grow academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Our staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that our children receive the very best opportunities to achieve success while experiencing the care, encouragement and support that characterises our school community.

This year also saw significant changes within our staff team. We said a fond farewell to Mrs McIntyre following more than thirty years of dedicated service to St. Mary's on the Hill. Throughout her career she touched the lives of countless children and families, and her commitment, professionalism and kindness have left a legacy within our school. We thank her sincerely for her many years of service and wish her every happiness and good health in her retirement.

At the same time, we were delighted to welcome Mrs Emma Courtney as our new Vice Principal. Emma has embraced her role with enthusiasm, energy and commitment, quickly becoming an integral member of our leadership team. Her passion for education and dedication to supporting both staff and pupils has already made a positive impact across the school.

Throughout 2025-2026, our School Development Plan focused on four key priorities:

- **Curriculum Development – Numeracy**
- **Pastoral Development – Nurture**
- **Playful Learning**
- **Specialist Provision**

These priorities were carefully selected to ensure that we continue to meet the evolving needs of our pupils while maintaining our high standards of teaching, learning and pastoral care. We sought to achieve our objectives through a combination of high-quality professional learning, whole-school training, robust monitoring and evaluation processes, and a collaborative culture that encourages continuous improvement. Central to our approach has been a shared belief that every member of our school community has the potential to succeed and flourish.

This report highlights the progress made across these priority areas, celebrates the many achievements of our pupils and staff, and acknowledges the support of our parents, governors, parish and wider community. The successes outlined within these pages are a testament to the dedication, professionalism and collective efforts of everyone involved in the life of our school.

As we look ahead, we remain ambitious for our future. We will continue to build upon the strong foundations that have been established, embrace new opportunities for growth and improvement, and ensure that every decision we make is centred on the wellbeing and success of our children.

On behalf of the Board of Governors, I would like to thank the entire staff for their continued commitment to the school. Together, we will continue to ensure that St. Mary's on the Hill P.S. remains a place where children are encouraged to learn, achieve, belong and thrive.

Mr Matthew O'Brien

Principal

St. Mary's on the Hill Primary School

SCHOOL VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision Statement

"Learn to Love, Love to Learn"

This vision reflects our commitment to nurturing a lifelong love of learning within a caring and inclusive environment.

Mission Statement

At St. Mary's on the Hill P.S., we aim to:

- Create a **safe**, **nurturing**, and **inclusive** environment.
- Inspire all members of our community to develop their **knowledge** and **skills**.
- Enable every individual to **achieve their full potential**.

Core Values

We promote and uphold the following values throughout our school community:

Respect	**Kindness**	**Resilience**	**Growth**
Curiosity	**Creativity**	**Integrity**	**Fun**

Governance

Board of Governors Composition

The Board of Governors is comprised of representatives from:

- **Trustees**
- **Education Authority**
- **Department of Education**
- **Parent-elected Governor**
- **Teacher-elected Governor**
  (See Appendix 1 for full details)

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Enrolment

- Total pupils enrolled: **353** (Academic Year 2025/2026)

Catholic Ethos

- Catholic values are **integral** to teaching, learning, and daily school life.

Areas of Learning

The curriculum is delivered through the following key areas:

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

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Below you can read headings of areas of development and improvement within our school. These areas were developed by our dedicated staff (see *Appendix 4*).

- **Leadership and Staff Development**
- **Curriculum Development**
- **Special Educational Needs and Specialist Provision**
- **Outdoor Learning and Sustainability**
- **Catholic Ethos, Faith Development and Religious Life**
- **Shared Education and Community Partnerships**
- **Pupil Leadership and Participation**
- **Parental Engagement**
- **Premises and Facilities**
- **Awards, Recognition and School Successes**

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. (*see Appendix 3*)

Appendix 1

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors was reconstituted this year and elections were held for the positions of parents and teacher representatives.

Trustee Representatives

Mrs Meyer (Chairperson)

Mr Wright (Vice-Chairperson)

Mrs O'Hea

Mr Todd

Education Authority Representatives

Dr.Donaldson/Mr Grehan

Department of Education Appointee

Mr Turner

Governor Elected by the Teachers

Mrs Prendergast

Governor Elected by the Parents

Mrs Lynch

Principal

Mr O'Brien (Secretary)

The full Board of Governors met five times during the period 1st August 2025 and 31st July 2026

Appendix 2

Teaching Staff and their Additional Responsibilities

Class	Teacher 2025/2026	Curriculum Responsibility
P1GB	Mrs Brady	Literacy Co-ordinator , Early Years Co-ordinator, , Playful Learning Team, SLT member
P1MMA	Miss McAnallen	Early Years Team, ICT/Numeracy Team
P2AW	Mrs Wilson	The Arts Co-ordinator, Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Playful Learning team
P2MM	Mrs Magee	Designated Teacher for Child Protection Co-ordinator of Religion, Shared Education Team Early Years Team, School Council Lead
P3KR	Mrs Ross	Forest School Lead, Playful Learning team
P3EL	Miss Leonard	PTA link, Playful learning Team
P4MMC	Mrs McCluskey	ICT Team, Nurture Team
P4AOB	Mrs O'Brien	Playground Pals Co-ordinator
P5EC	Mrs Courtney	Vice Principal, SLT Member, SDP Lead
P5MD	Mrs Dempsey	Autism Advocate lead, Numeracy Team
P6SR	Mrs Reddick	Shared Education Lead, Numeracy Team
P6SMC	Mrs McConvey	WAU Co-ordinator, Playful Learning Team
P7JP	Mrs Prendergast	ICT Co-ordinator, SLT Member, Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection/ Numeracy Team
P7JOK	Mr O'Kane	PE Co-ordinator, Nurture Team
DME	Mr McEvoy	Specialist Provision Teacher P1 – P4, Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection
EMN	Miss McNamee	Specialist Provision Teacher P5 – P7
Learning Support Co-ordinator	Mrs Thompson	Numeracy Co-ordinator Student Placement Co-ordinator, SLT Member.

Non-Teaching Staff and their Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Mrs L Mason/Mrs C Carson (Job Share)	Executive Officer
Mr Martin	Building Supervisor
Miss Hunter	Foundation Stage (FS) Classroom Assistant (P1), Supervisor of the
Mrs Prendergast	FS Classroom Assistant (P1), Classroom Support, First Aider, 'Waiting Class'
Mrs Roberts	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P2)
Miss Dempsey	Special/Additional Educational Needs (SP)
Mrs McAllister	FS Classroom Assistant (P2), Classroom Support, Breakfast Club Supervisor, First Aider
Mrs Beggan	FS Classroom Assistant (P2)
Mrs Strain	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P3)
Mrs O'Hagan	FS Classroom Assistant (P2) Supervisor of the 'Waiting Class'
Mrs Dougan	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P3)
Miss Smylie	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P5)
Miss Kearney	Special/Additional Educational Needs SP
Miss McAllister	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P5) Supervisor of the 'Waiting Class'
Mrs Dowie	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P5)
Mrs Ashe	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7)
Mrs McNally	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7), First Aider, Breakfast Club Staff
Mr Ashe	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7)
Mrs McMaster	Special/Additional Educational Needs (P7)
Miss Gribben	Special/Additional Educational Needs SP
Mrs Turner	Special/Additional Educational Needs SP
Mr Mageean	Special/Additional Educational Needs SP
Mrs Turner, Mrs Kennedy, Miss Smylie, Mrs Beggan, Mrs McAlister Mrs McNally, Miss Kearney, Mrs O'Hagan, Mrs Tierney	Lunchtime Supervisory Assistants
Mrs Butler	Head Cook

Mrs McKinstry Mrs Russell Mrs Hynes	Canteen Staff
A N Other Mr Mousa Mrs L Kelly	Cleaning Staff

Appendix 3

Voluntary Fund (01.09.25-31.08.26)

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.

Developments and Improvements Across the School 2025-2026

Leadership and Staff Development

- Successfully welcomed Mrs Emma Courtney as Vice Principal, strengthening leadership capacity within the school.
- Further developed distributed leadership through coordinator, curriculum and priority teams.
- Enhanced monitoring and evaluation processes through PRSD, book looks, learning walks and data analysis.
- Delivered extensive professional learning for staff in Playful Learning, Mental Maths, Flourish RSE, Nurture, Assessment and the Learning Journey.
- Developed stronger use of assessment data to inform planning and intervention.

Curriculum Development

Numeracy

- Implemented a whole-school Mental Maths framework to improve fluency and confidence.
- Provided staff training in Mental Maths methodologies and resources.
- Improved STAR Maths outcomes and consistency of practice across year groups.
- Continued participation within the local Numeracy Cluster to share effective practice.

Literacy

- Continued targeted literacy interventions for identified pupils.
- Further embedded Accelerated Reader and data-informed target group support.
- Strengthened assessment and monitoring arrangements to support pupil progress.

Playful Learning

- Implemented the Playful Learning Continuum across the school.
- Redesigned classroom environments to support play-based approaches.
- Established dedicated Playful Learning Pods and enhanced learning spaces.
- Increased pupil engagement, independence and enjoyment in learning.
- Developed staff understanding of playful pedagogy through high-quality training.

Nurture, Wellbeing and Pastoral Provision

- Continued development as a Level 3 Nurture School.
- Embedded whole-school Morning Meetings to support pupil wellbeing and relationships.

- Expanded Theraplay-informed practice and Nurture approaches across the school.
- Implemented the Flourish Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme.
- Strengthened pupil leadership through House Leaders, School Council, Eco Council and Digital Leaders.
- Achieved Take 5 Level 2 Award recognising the school's commitment to wellbeing.

Special Educational Needs and Specialist Provision

- Continued development of both Specialist Provision classes.
- Increased opportunities for meaningful integration of Specialist Provision pupils into mainstream school life.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces and specialist resources to support pupils with Social and Communication Needs.
- Maintained Autism NI Impact Award status, recognising high quality inclusive practice.
- Strengthened provision mapping, intervention programmes and support pathways for pupils with SEN.

Outdoor Learning and Sustainability

- Expanded Forest School provision across all year groups.
- Increased opportunities for curriculum-based outdoor learning.
- Further developed the school garden and outdoor learning environments.
- Successfully retained Green Flag status.
- Continued progress towards achieving the Sustrans Gold Award.
- Promoted environmental responsibility and active travel through the work of the Eco Council.

Catholic Ethos, Faith Development and Religious Life

- Continued to embed the school's vision, mission and values across all aspects of school life.
- Successfully introduced the Flourish RSE Programme within the context of Catholic values.
- Strengthened links between home, school and parish through preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- Continued Mass in the Class and a wide range of faith-based celebrations and prayer opportunities.

- Promoted Catholic Social Teaching through charitable support for Trócaire, the Developing World Group and the Daughters of Charity.
- Celebrated Catholic Schools Week, Grandparents' Day and other events promoting faith and community.
- Received recognition through nomination for the Aisling Award for Excellence in Education, reflecting the strength of the school's Catholic ethos and pastoral provision.

Shared Education and Community Partnerships

- Further strengthened partnership with Carnmoney Primary School through the Shared Education Programme.
- Secured PeacePlus funding to support collaborative learning opportunities.
- Expanded opportunities for pupils to engage in cross-community learning experiences.
- Developed community engagement through the Building Bonds Programme.

Pupil Leadership and Participation

- Developed pupil leadership through School Council, House Leaders, Digital Leaders, Eco Council and Playground Pals.
- Increased opportunities for pupil voice and participation in school improvement.
- Enhanced pupil engagement in decision making and school events.

Parental Engagement

- Expanded curriculum workshops and information sessions for parents.
- Strengthened communication through monthly Sway updates, Facebook and the school website.
- Developed the Building Bonds Programme through external funding.
- Continued strong partnership with an active and supportive PTA.

Premises and Facilities

- Installed additional modular accommodation to support expanding provision.
- Improved Specialist Provision outdoor facilities and play areas.
- Continued investment in health and safety improvements across the school site.
- Enhanced learning environments to support inclusion and pupil wellbeing.

Awards, Recognition and School Successes

- Autism NI Impact Award maintained.
- Eco Schools Green Flag Award achieved.
- Take 5 Level 2 Award achieved.
- Nominated for the Aisling Award for Excellence in Education.
- Outstanding success at Belfast Feis with all participants achieving placing awards.
- Significant sporting success across Gaelic games, camogie, hurling and soccer.
- Seven pupils successfully achieved graded music examinations.

Overall Impact

- Improved quality of teaching and learning.
- Enhanced pupil wellbeing and pastoral support.
- Greater inclusion for pupils with additional needs.
- Stronger partnerships with parents, parish and community.
- Increased opportunities for pupil leadership and participation.
- Continued development of St. Mary's on the Hill as a nurturing, inclusive and faith-filled learning community


ST. MARY'S ON THE HILL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Learn to Love, Love to Learn