



St. Mary's Primary School



"Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow" Prospectus



St. Mary's Primary School

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“Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow”





Welcome to St. Mary's Primary School

Dear Parents/Guardian,

Welcome to St. Mary's Primary School. If this is your first association with the school you are especially welcome. It is our belief that school should always be a happy place for children and a welcoming place for parents.



St. Mary's Primary School is a catholic co-educational maintained school. It is located in the town of Killyleagh, occupying a 3 acre site, over looked by the majestic Killyleagh castle.

As a Catholic school the core values of respect, tolerance, honesty and inclusivity permeate all relationships and aspects of school life.

We put the children at the heart of every decision, and value the great relationships that are nurtured and promoted between staff, pupils and parents. Indeed the life and work of the school is very much supported by our Parish Priest, Governors and a wealth of external professional services.

Our school is well regarded within its local community for its strong pastoral care and positive behaviour; its commitment to raising standards, its wide range of extra-curricular and extended school activities and its innovative and forward thinking approach to teaching and learning.

Our prospectus has been designed to give you an introduction to the life of our successful school. It outlines what we stand for and what we will offer your child to ensure that he or she can develop their full potential and talents in a safe and happy environment.

Of course no booklet can convey the real atmosphere of our school. I warmly invite you to visit the school where the team at St. Mary's will be most pleased to meet you.

Warmest wishes

Dolores Miller
Principal





Ethos of St. Mary's Primary School

Here in St. Mary's the Catholic Ethos of love, care, tolerance and respect permeates every aspect of school life and our dedicated staff seeks to promote the pastoral and learning experiences for your child. We appreciate the uniqueness of every member of our school community and the fact that childhood is a special experience filled with excitement and curiosity, and that the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

Our School Vision

As a Catholic school we aim to provide excellence in learning and teaching, in an inclusive, nurturing and supportive environment. We aspire that our children will achieve personal success and develop a love of learning and life.

The staff in St. Mary's strive to make vision a reality through the high quality of pastoral care and learning experiences we provide for our children.

St. Mary's Primary School aims:

- To promote and nurture Christian values for life.
- To create a school where children, staff, parents and visitors feel happy, safe, motivated and have confidence to engage in all aspects of school life.
- To enrich pupils' lives morally, spiritually, socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally through the promotion of dignity, self-esteem and confidence.
- To set and maintain high standards.
- To deliver a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum to all our pupils.
- To encourage all our pupils to fulfil their potential by maximising each individual's talents and capabilities.
- To recognise and develop the role of parents as co-educators.
- To nurture a culture of tolerance, where people of diverse identities and beliefs are recognised, welcomed and respected.
- To provide an enriching programme of extra-curricular activities and visits.
- To strengthen partnership between home, school and the wider community.





Accommodation

The school consists of six classrooms including a large Assembly/PE/dining hall with servery, a Library, a Computer Suite with pupil laptops, a learning support room, offices and storerooms. All classrooms have computerised interactive whiteboards as well as access to I-Pads. The Primary One classroom has a spacious resource area which facilitates the children's play-based learning. Year 1 - 3 have their own safe play areas. A second larger playground is shared by Year 4 - Year 7 children. The Garden Area provides attractive and challenging outdoor education opportunities for all of the children.

The Curriculum

The School Curriculum includes the entire planned learning experience for pupils. The whole curriculum develops learners' knowledge, understanding skills and personal qualities in order that they become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Through a stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors our children are given the opportunity to investigate, explore, problem-solve and experience success.

The school provides a broad, balanced, challenging and relevant curriculum which is vigorously planned, professionally implemented and systematically evaluated by a team of dedicated and experienced staff. The intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, cultural and physical development of each individual within a happy caring environment is of prime concern. Emphasis is placed on the development of competence in the basic skills while at the same time promoting self-esteem. All pupils will follow the Northern Ireland Revised curriculum.

St. Mary's Primary School has a positive commitment to

quality and excellence for all and constantly seeks to ensure that equal opportunities for learning are available to all pupils.

Religious Education

As a Catholic school, St. Mary's promotes a set of values which are universally acceptable to all. They seek the spiritual development of each child within a caring community with Christ at its centre. Our catholic ethos is an inclusive one which accommodates children from other Christian faiths within one school community.

In St. Mary's primary School we believe that religion is not just a subject to be taught, rather it is a way to live out our faith and therefore it is an integral part of the life of the school.

We use The Alive-O programme in our timetabled teaching of religion. Our children are carefully prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation by a values led and committed staff. Their work is actively supported by the school Chaplin.

The children take part in Prayer Services, Masses and assemblies which parents are always welcome to attend.





Mathematics and Numeracy

Our aim is to enable all pupils to acquire numeracy skills and to develop the abilities of each pupil to think for him/herself. The mathematics programme followed includes

- (i) Processes
- (ii) Number
- (iii) Measures
- (iv) Shape and Space
- (v) Handling Data.

Language and Literacy

Language permeates all learning. A strong emphasis is placed on the acquisition and consolidation of literacy skills. The teaching of literacy comes under the headings (i) Talking and listening (ii) Reading (iii) Writing. Our pupils participate in drama productions and in many inter school activities which provide opportunities for all aspects of literacy to be developed.

The World around Us

This subject in the Revised Curriculum unites the subjects of science, history and geography. This area of learning helps children to explore and find age appropriate answers to some profound questions about themselves and the nature of the world around them.

Through a thematic/topic based approach children's natural curiosity will be fostered and extended.



Physical Education

Physical Education is an important element of the curriculum. Pupils have an opportunity in Physical Education to develop their skills, experience success in order to reinforce a positive attitude to physical activity. Physical Education is divided into the following areas -

- Athletics
- Dance
- Games
- Gymnastics
- Swimming

Pupils in Years 4 to 7 have swimming lessons at Downpatrick Leisure Centre. The school competes with other schools in sporting events. Sports Day is a celebration for all the children. Outdoor play equipment encourages many active games. We have a number of trained coaches who visit the school on a regular basis.

Music

We have a well - resourced music room which offers pupils the opportunities to make music, compose, to listen and respond to music and to perform. Year 4 - Year 7 pupils are given tuition in recorder. Pupils from Year 4 - Year 7 are selected for piano tuition which is given by an outside tutor. There are many opportunities for children to perform with their music which includes assemblies, concerts, plays, culture days, festivals, etc. Our School Choir performs at local events and for celebrity events.





Art and Design

Art and Design allows the pupils to develop their awareness of the environment around them and respond to the things they see by recording by drawing, by modelling or painting what they observe. Art and Design work includes working with a range of materials including paint, clay and textiles. Pupils are encouraged to learn about artists and to appreciate the work of their peers.

Information Technology

St. Mary's has a fully fitted interactive computer suite. The school is networked and a number of computers are located in each classroom. Each classroom is equipped with an Interactive White Board. The school is investing in I-Pad technology and is very keen for its long term development. The Children are challenged in the CCEA Accreditation scheme for Using ICT.

The use of computers and I-Pads aids and enhances teaching and learning and encourages pupils to develop essential skills necessary for communicating in the modern world. We have an ICT Policy and Internet Safety Policy.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
We use Circle Time strategies and 'Living Learning Together' resources to help children to become aware of the world beyond their immediate environment and to learn about others from a basis of tolerance, respect and open-mindedness. We encourage our children to understand similarities and respect differences in people in the local and wider community.

Languages

Our Gaelic culture is extremely important in our school and it is nurtured through Music, Dance, Song and Sport. Prayers and songs are taught in Irish and we have an annual Irish Culture Day.

Learning Support Programme

Our Learning Support Programme consists of many forms with the child always being the central focus. We see the child and their parents as integral to our whole learning support programme. We support children in class giving advice to teachers, classroom assistants and parents on an on-going basis. Children who require more specific help are supported in withdrawal groups and on a 1:1 situation where appropriate. An Individual or Group education plan is prepared for all those requiring additional support.

We have built up a very strong working relationship with our other partners e.g ASCET, SpLD(Specific Literacy Difficulties) Team, School Medical Team and the Education Psychology Team and work closely with them when necessary.

There is on-going training available for teachers in several aspects of Learning Support both within school and delivered by outside agencies e.g. ASD Support, Dyslexia Training and Behaviour Support.

Learning Support is a vital part of our school and our Learning Support Team will work in partnership with all professional bodies to support your child in their need.

St. Mary's also caters for meeting the needs of gifted children. Work is differentiated and challenging.



English as an Additional Language

We are fully inclusive and welcome all students to St. Mary's Primary School. Students whose first language may not be English are supported by the school's EAL Co-ordinator. As a school we are lucky to be involved with the SEELB Inclusion and Diversity Service and have an advisor assigned to our school to ensure the needs of our EAL children are fully met.

We welcome the cultural diversity that our EAL children bring to our school.

Homework

Homework in St. Mary's is an enjoyable way in which children can consolidate and build upon the learning which has taken place during the school day. Our homework policy seeks to accommodate the age learning needs and abilities of all children via the differentiation of tasks and outcomes. However the success of home learning depends on the supervision and interest of parents in their children's work. The tasks and teacher comments help parents monitor their children's progress. If parents have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school. We try to vary homework tasks and encourage children to use a variety of learning styles.

Assessment

In St. Mary's Primary School we understand that assessment lies fundamentally at the heart of the learning and teaching process. The key purpose of assessment is to move children on in their learning. It provides opportunities for pupils to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding and skills they have acquired. It enables teachers to reflect, evaluate and interpret individual pupil's strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is on-going and can be informal or formal. The children are assessed right from entry into school and throughout their year groups and key stage. Year 4 and Year 7 pupils are assessed in Communication, Using Mathematics and (ICT from Sept 2014) against the levels of progression. This is in line with NI assessment arrangements. Each child from Year 3 to Year 7 complete standardised tests in Literacy and Numeracy.

The School Council

The school council has the very important task of representing the views, concerns and ideas of St. Mary's pupils. Pupils, through the council can present the issues that are most important to them. The council meet on a regular basis with Mrs McCabe to discuss these views, concerns and ideas.





Partnership with Parents

In St. Mary's Primary School we are privileged to work in partnership with parents to ensure the best learning opportunities for your child. St. Mary's school is a welcoming place for parents. We encourage your active participation in the life of the school and we are always most appreciative of parental support on a voluntary basis, e.g accompanying school excursions, supporting curricular initiatives - reading partnership, art, music and gardening clubs etc. Throughout the year you have many opportunities to meet the teacher, for advice on pupil's progress, for information on curriculum and pastoral matters and pre-sacramental meetings.

New parents will find our PI Induction Meetings in June informative and supportive. Our Key Stage I team are experienced professionals who will reassure you that you are making the right choice for your child. Special assemblies, liturgies and concerts are also a feature of the school. Parent curriculum Meetings/Workshops occur when appropriate throughout the year. Other opportunities to meet the teacher can be arranged by mutual request. Please telephone the Principal or secretary to arrange an appointment. We strive always to keep parents informed and use a monthly Newsletter to communicate effectively with our parents.

St. Mary's Primary School shares information on pupil progress on an annual basis. Comments and information reported reflects the learning experiences the pupil has had over the course of the year.

In addition Parents of each pupil in Year 4 and Year 7 are provided with a numerical level outlining how the child is progressing in Using Mathematics, Communication and Using ICT.

Each Year 7 child also receives a Record of Achievement. Further reporting procedures also include:

- Parent/ Teacher interviews in November and April.
- Annual report to parents.
- Reporting on Individual Educational Plans.
- Comments on written work including homework.

Parent Support Group

St. Mary's Primary School is proud to enjoy the support of an excellent group of Parents known as 'The Friends of St. Mary's.' The group arrange social and fund raising events designed to allow parents the opportunity to come together and at the same time provide additional funding for the school. Parents are invited to participate in all functions. Recent purchases include Picnic benches for the Playgrounds, iPads and Musical instruments to name but a few.





Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviour

Our school places Pastoral Care at the top of its agenda. We set high standards for our children in raising their own personal targets and we recognise that our pupils will not achieve these unless they are surrounded by a nurturing environment where they feel safe and cared for with friends who take care of them and adults who are committed to teaching as a vocation. We work tirelessly to make our pupils happy in every way so that their young minds can flourish and they can go forward and contribute positively to their own lives and the lives of others within this world.

We therefore have very strong and positive procedures for Pastoral Care throughout our school. A visit to St. Mary's will show this security and happiness on the faces of our children.

All our policies on Pastoral Care, Discipline, Anti-Bullying, Child Protection and Positive Behaviour are up to date and shared with our pupils and parents regularly.

We are honoured to be entrusted with the care of all our pupils and therefore have an open door policy whereby we encourage parents to ring or call in if they have a concern about their child. The class teacher, Vice Principal or Principal will always endeavour to meet with parents as soon as an issue is raised.

We put many procedures in place throughout the school and we discuss these procedures with all children weekly at assemblies.

Our Designated Teacher for child protection is Mrs Hagan and in her absence Mrs Miller resumes this responsibility. Our approach to discipline is a positive approach. Staff recognise, praise, encourage and reward positive behaviour, good work, good efforts and self-discipline. Every teacher keeps a Pastoral Record for their class

where any concerns are documented and a proper record kept of how it was addressed. The Vice Principal and Principal review these Records regularly to ensure that all issues are dealt with and that the children are continually progressing.

Health Promoting School

St. Mary's Primary School is fully committed to the health promotion of its children. Healthy lifestyles and habits develop from a very young age and can have a lifetime impact.

Each child in St. Mary's is encouraged to bring water for consumption during lessons. Parents are encouraged to support our healthy eating policy by providing 'brain friendly' food at break and lunch time for children. School dinners provide a nutritional, well balanced meal in the middle of the day for many children. They are also very good value at a cost of £2.40 per day. Menus are available. We would encourage parents to pay for their child's dinner on a Monday.

We are a Nut Free School.

We encourage all of our children to get active, get involved in sport and develop healthy habits. We have a major whole school focus on Health Education every January with all of our School Community.

Drugs Education

Our policy states that the children at St. Mary's will be encouraged to develop a positive attitude towards drugs education. They will be taught about staying safe and will be encouraged to know how to react in situations in which they feel at risk. They will also understand the importance of looking after themselves and having a healthy life style.



Curricular Concerns

Parents have access to a procedure if they have concerns about the delivery of the curriculum in the school. In most cases concerns should be solved at stage 1 or stage 2. In the case of further concerns, these should be specifically detailed in writing and sent to the secretary of the Board of Governors, in order that the matter may be investigated and a reply made.

The stages to address concerns are as follows:

Stage 1 contact the class teacher

Stage 2 contact the Principal

Stage 3 contact the Board of Governors

Stage 4 request that the issue be considered by the SEELB complaints tribunal for curriculum Matters.

Curricular and Pastoral Policies are regularly updated and available for parents.

Extended School Provision

We offer the children in St. Mary's a wide variety of extra - curricular activities to further enhance their social, physical and emotional well-being. They include the following activities:

Year 1 and Year 2 classes have the opportunity of staying from 2.00 - 3.00pm each day and participate in our extended schools programme which includes: Legoland, Games, ICT, Puzzle Club, Construction, Story Time, Film Club, Parachute Games, Table top activities, Art & Craft, Tumble down

Year 3 - 7 classes have the opportunity to stay from 3.00-4.00pm each day Monday - Thursday and participate in all

the above and Gaelic, Soccer, Cookery, Gardening, Netball.

Educational and residential visits are encouraged and are considered an integral part of the school's curriculum programme.

Many of these activities run outside school hours under the guidance of our staff and we welcome the support of our parents in helping with these activities and providing transport when necessary. Parent helpers will be vetted in line with the Child Protection procedures.

Breakfast Club

This opens each morning from 8.00am - 8.45am. Children can choose their breakfast (cereal, fruit, toast) and are supervised until school opening time. There is a charge of 50p per day.

Summer Camps

We introduced a 2 week summer camp in June / July 2014. It proved so successful that we plan to extend the Summer Camp to run from the end of June until the 11th July (2 weeks) and then a further 2 weeks from end of July to early August. A full programme of activities are organised for all children from Year 1 to Year 7. These programmes normally run from 9.00am - 1.00pm each day.





Admissions

Statutory enrolment forms will be available in December of the year your child is due to start school. The admissions criteria are published in the open enrolment Booklet (SEELB) available at the school. Please ensure that you return a completed official form to the school by the end of January.

There is an induction programme for new parents in June each year. We will proudly show you our school. In addition if you would like to meet the Principal or see for yourself the quality education available at St. Mary's Primary school please phone the secretary, between 9.00am and 1.00pm, to make an appointment.

The School Day

Year 1 - 2	9.00 - 2.00 pm Year 1 will finish school during the month of September at 12.00 noon
Year 3	Monday - Wednesday 9.00 - 3.00 pm Thursday - Friday: 9.00 - 2.00 pm
Year 4 - 7	9.00 - 3.00 pm

- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.45 am, but are expected to arrive in time and be in their line by 8.55 am ready to start the day at 9.00am
- In the interests of safety, pupils are not allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours without first obtaining permission from the Principal.
- Parents are requested to arrange to collect their children promptly at the end of their school day. This is particularly important in relation to the early years children and to pupils engaged in after school activities.

The school should be notified of any change in collection arrangements.

- Appointments for pupils to attend doctor, dentist etc should, where possible, be arranged outside school hours.

Attendance and Punctuality

Both attendance and punctuality are the legal responsibility of the parent. Good school attendance and being on time for school are important factors for the consistency and progress of learning.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking family holidays during the school term. A holiday absence form must be completed if parents do take holidays during term time. This will be included in your child's record file. If a child is not at school parents are required to phone the school before 9.00am and let the secretary know the reason for the child's absence.

Absenteeism

Written or verbal explanation of a pupil's absence is essential for school records.

Uniform

We are particularly proud of our school uniform and it is the policy of the school that it is worn by all pupils. A school uniform has a positive effect; not only on discipline but also on the child's self - esteem and provides our pupils with an identity. If a pupil is unable to wear their uniform an explanation should be forwarded. For safety reasons, jewellery should not be worn. Only stud earrings may be permitted. All items of uniform should be clearly marked with the pupil's name.



Foundation Stage

GIRLS

Royal Blue school sweatshirt with Logo
 White Polo shirt
 Grey skirt / Pinafore
 Black shoes
 School Dress (optional for summer term)

BOYS

Royal Blue school sweatshirt with Logo
 White Polo shirt
 Charcoal trousers
 Black shoes

P3-P7

GIRLS

Royal Blue school jumper with crest
 White shirt
 School tie
 Grey skirt / Pinafore
 Black shoes
 School Dress (optional for summer term)

BOYS

Royal Blue school jumper with crest
 White shirt
 School tie
 Charcoal trousers
 Black shoes

PE White polo shirt, Navy/black shorts, Black Plimsolls

Visiting Arrangements

New parents are most welcome to visit the school and enjoy the friendly learning environment. Please contact the secretary to arrange a mutually beneficial time to do so. An open night is arranged for new parents at the beginning of December.

An Induction programme for new parents takes place in June, where the Principal, Vice-Principal, Year One teachers are delighted to meet new children and introduce them to their new classroom.

Concluding Remarks

I hope you have enjoyed reading this Prospectus and that it has given you a flavour of the rich and varied experiences on offer in St. Mary's Primary School. However no prospectus can convey the real atmosphere and opportunities available within our school. We invite you to come and visit the school, attend the Open Night, talk to other parents or the children who are presently attending the school.

Every journey begins with a first step. We hope you will make that step in the right direction by choosing St. Mary's for your child's Primary Education. We look forward to meeting with you and your child.







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for a
Better Tomorrow”***



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St. Mary's Primary School

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