



St Patrick's Primary School, Ballymaghera

Progress Through Partnership

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope you and your children have enjoyed the glorious sunshine and well earned rest! We are looking forward to seeing everyone back at school on Monday 1st June. As we are now at the final part of Term 3, we ask that you continue to provide support to your child as they complete the last part of the school year. This term will no doubt prove to be busy with lots of learning, trips and events scheduled already.

We want to congratulate everyone for their efforts so far in completing their classwork and homework to the highest standard possible, showing lovely manners, being respectful to each other, and the adults in our school, taking pride in their appearance in wearing their school uniform on the correct days, and always being fine representatives of St Patrick's PS! Your support in helping your child is always appreciated. Thank you!

Rosary for Peace

Pope LeoXIV will lead a worldwide Rosary this evening at 6pm and calls on everyone to join in praying for peace. He will dedicate each decade of the Joyful Mysteries for people impacted by war. As a school we have been praying the Rosary in all our classes during the month of May to honour Our Lady. We have been heartened with how much knowledge our children have of the what the Rosary is and how well they can pray the Rosary! We hope you will be able to pray it with your children this evening and in the days and weeks ahead.

Sports Day 2026

All classes have begun athletics training in preparation for Sports Day. We are hoping to hold Sports Day 2026 on Tuesday 2nd June in Clonduff GAC Park, weather permitting. We will decide closer to the time whether it can go ahead, pending the weather forecast. Whilst all races will be finished by lunch time, it is not a half day. **Dinners for the Tuesday must be booked by Sunday 31st May. We will not be able to refund your money if you decide to take your child home from the club grounds, as the food will have been ordered and cooked.** The Friends of St Patrick's will be supplying a little treat when all events are finished. If the weather fails us, we will reschedule to Monday 8th June, weather permitting. In the event of the weather not being kind to us on this date then individual Year Group Sports Days will be held on days when the weather is good and classes are available. Unfortunately, due to school trips and numerous events taking place in school, this will mean over multiple days and only short notice will be able to be given.

ECO Success!

Our ECO Team have been very busy over the year ensuring our school is run as eco friendly as possible and due to their leadership, hard work and commitment we have been awarded the ECO Flag for another two years! Well done children and Mrs Austin who leads the ECO Team, assisted by Miss McGurk! Congratulations! We have more exciting news and will announce this to the children on their return to school! Keep an eye on our school website for further celebratory ECO news!

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Primary 4 First Holy Communion and May procession

Congratulations to our Primary 4 children who made their First Holy Communion yesterday, 9th May. There was great joy, with plenty of smiles and sunshine. The children participated fully in the ceremony with great reverence and respect, reading, singing, playing music, and gift bearing! Comhghairdeachas! Our thanks to Father Charles and Deacon Gerry for making the ceremony so very special. The children were well prepared under the care and guidance from their class teachers, Mrs O'Hare, Miss Fegan, and Mrs Austin. Our beautiful choir led in the singing, prepared and led by Mrs Clarke, and accompanied by Mrs Eileen Mooney, Ms O'Prey and Miss McAnulty. Thanks also to our grandparents, Mrs Marian Farnon and Mrs Ursula Murphy for being Eucharist Ministers, and Daniel and Daire, our wonderful Altar Servers! Thanks to all our team in St Patrick's who worked hard to make sure the day ran smoothly! We hope everyone enjoyed their day and made special memories!

The annual May Procession took place on Sunday 10th May and it was wonderful to see so many of our children in attendance, adorning Our Lady's altar with beautiful flowers. A credit to their families!

Diocesan Advisor Visit

Mrs Joan Aldridge, the Diocesan Advisor visited our school on Monday 10th May and reported that she felt great joy from the wonderful welcome she received and what she observed whilst visiting each classroom. She expressed her gratitude to the staff and parents for their ongoing dedication in teaching Religious Education and acknowledged the commitment to delivering a wholistic curriculum for all children, in a nurturing, inclusive environment!

Sporting News

Congratulations to the children who represented our school and won all their matches at the Cumann na mbunscol blitzes in each of the four codes. Maith sibh a bhuachaillí agus a chailíní! We now progress to the semi-final stage with football matches taking place on Monday 1st June and hurling and camogie matches on Tuesday 9th June. We wish all players the best of luck in all four codes! Maith sibh a bhuachailí!

Summer Musical Tea Party

On Friday 22nd May we had a celebration of music with our choir and traditional musicians performing for the whole school in the morning and then in the afternoon our parents and families enjoyed a welcoming cup of tea whilst they were entertained by our very talented choir and Clonduff Comhaltas musicians. We have over 50 children in our choir and over 30 musicians performed at the concert! The talent was superb and we look forward to seeing our traditional musicians playing in the Down fleadh on 19th – 21st June 2026 in Downpatrick! We hope as many of our families as possible will be able to go to Downpatrick to support our wonderful children!

Sponsored Summer Challenge

We will have our annual Sponsored Summer Challenge on Friday 12th June. All information will be sent home this week.

Break the Rules Day

The Parents Association in collaboration with our pupil voice of the School Council are planning a '**Break the Rules Day**' on Friday 19th June. Check out the **Friends of St Patrick's Parents' Association Facebook Page** for more details. Thanks to our School Teams and to those parents who give of their time to support our school in fundraising and providing fun events for our pupils!

Irish News young News Reader Competition Winners!

Primary 7 children got to experience a wonderful trip to the Irish News HQ as well as a tour of Q Radio last week. This was as a prize in winning the Irish News Young Newsreader Competition 'Design an Advertisement to sell their school'. The children got to tour Q Radio and meet the radio presenters and went on a tour of the Irish News newsroom. Here they got an insight into the daily workings of a newspaper. They were treated to a beautiful lunch before setting off on the final part of their trip to the Award winning Interpress printing facility. A tour of the factory finished with them getting a special souvenir copy of the paper with their classes featured on the front cover of the paper. Check out the school website to view lots of photos. Congratulations Primary 7.

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Farewell

We bid a fond farewell to Miss Eve Lively who has been supporting the school in a variety of roles over the years. We wish her the very best for the future. We also send Mrs Clarke our best wishes on the commencement of her maternity leave from Monday 1st June. P6CC will be taught by Mrs S McKeivitt from Tuesday 2nd June.

Assemblies and Prayer Services

Each month a class has been leading an assembly with the whole school, and a prayer service for their parents and family members. Thanks to those of you that have been able to attend, it is great to have your support. We appreciate it is not always suitable to attend the prayer service and request that you get in touch if you are not able to attend the 1:15pm time. Well done to the classes who performed theirs already. **Miss McAnulty's P.1 Family Prayer Service will take place on Friday 5th June at 1:15pm.**

Mindful Meadow

Our garden is full of blossoms and blooms at the minute, being carefully cared for by our Rights Respecting and ECO Teams. We are having the official opening on Friday 5th June with special guest Mr Chris Quinn, the Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner, coming to officially open the garden. It would be lovely if you could take time to visit it when you collect your child at hometime on Friday 5th June. Thanks again to our many sponsors and volunteers who made it all possible @KieranGallagherGardeningforSchools for helping us bring our plan to life and help lead in the planting of our beautiful plants;

Peter Fitzpatrick Quarries who donated all the stone for our pathways and gave another £500 towards developing the garden;

CP&A Supplies LTD: Building and Landscaping Supplies for supplying bark;

Eamon Devlin Contracts and **Shaun Kilgannon** for giving hours of time and muscle power in digging out and laying the pathways, and making our garden accessible to everyone;

Thanks also to our parents for supporting our Friends of St Patrick's who matched the **Newry Mourne and Down Council Communities Leading Change Grant amount of £1000.** We are reaping the benefit of having the garden every single day! Our school values personified in every way!

What next? We aim to get a few picnic benches and summer seats installed. Can you help?

Priorities for Improvement

As you know, we completed our 3 Year School Development Plan audit with all stakeholders in autumn 2024. Using this feedback we formed our priorities in Learning and Teaching to improve comprehension by reading and thinking about what we see and read, so that our understanding of things, across the curriculum improves. We have also been focussing on improving Mental Maths and Problem Solving in Mathematics and how we think about and solve problems.

Thank you for supporting your children through listening to and talking about what they are doing in school, and assisting in the learning through completion of homework.

Another priority for our 3 Year School Development Plan is to improve Parental/Guardian engagement. To this end we encourage you to attend workshops and meetings, and to support your child with homework. Please continue to support your child's learning through checking and signing homework every night and please get in touch if there is ever an issue with this.

We are also focusing on behaviour and would like to commend our children on how they are learning to manage their big emotions, displaying high standards of respect and good manners to all in our school, and through living our School Values of being Respectful, Inclusive, Caring and Hardworking. Well done children, you are a credit to your parents, guardians and families! In assembly each week we celebrate our pupils' achievements from inside and outside of school, and we also celebrate a pupil and member of staff who have demonstrated and lived our school values in a very obvious way. Our children and staff are selected by the children, and it is heartening to see the nominee boxes so full of nominations at the end of each week. Congratulations to all who have received this much sought-after nomination each week! Star Pupils are also recognised and celebrated every week for their effort, behaviour, positive attitude to learning and for upholding our school values on a weekly basis. Check out these wonderful children on our school website every week!

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Math Seeds and Mathletics Success Lexia and Accelerated Readers

Pupils are working hard and making great progress while using Math Seeds, Mathletics, Lexia and Accelerated Reading!! Congratulations to all those who have received certificates!

School Books Missing

In recent years, a substantial amount of money was used to buy textbooks for the whole school. Unfortunately, many of these books are not being returned. These books are expensive and we are politely requesting that you please look at home and send in any school books. Our school budget is depleted, and we have no money to replace these books.

After School Clubs

We have ten different afterschool clubs to choose from this term. Soccer, Tennis, Art, Bee Active, Lego Engineers, Minecraft, Camogie, Girls Gaelic and Boys Gaelic and Running Club are all up and running.

Breaktime Snacks/Water Bottle/Lunches

St Patrick's follows a Healthy Breaks Policy – this consists of water (**not flavoured**) and pieces of fruit/vegetables. No juice is allowed in class. We ask you to be mindful of the amount of sugary treats included in lunchboxes and please remind your children they should not share or swap food items because of allergies! Several children have severe nut allergies. **Please do not send any food with nuts into school.**

Attendance and Punctuality

Our overall school attendance for last year was 96%. It is our aim that this will increase to above 97% by the end of 2025-2026. There will be a special award for those children whose attendance is above 98% at the end of year awards ceremony! We look forward to rewarding many children this year!

Please ensure your child attends school when they are well enough to do so. Missing school means your child is missing out on forming relationships with friends, staff, and of course learning. Therefore, it is extremely important that your child does not miss school unless they are ill or have an exceptional reason.

All absences must be reported on the first day, either to the general office or by email to info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk. When a child returns to school, they should have a written note explaining the reason for absence. The Education Welfare Service will be contacting parents of children whose monthly attendance is below 90% where a valid reason has not been given to the school. Every effort is being made to assist in developing your child's experience of learning, with a focus on wellbeing, from when your child enters the school, therefore it is vital your child arrives punctually. The buzzer gate opens at 8:00am for breakfast club and 8:30am for all other children. Children are brought to class at 8:50am and learning commences at 9:00am. The school gate closes at 9:00am sharp.

Health and Safety and Traffic management

Thanks to all those who park safely in the church carpark when leaving and collecting your child to/from school. At all times your child's safety is our number one priority. The Board of Governors has been made aware that, despite repeated reminders, some parents continue to use the staff car park (site of old Parochial House) and the bus layby during drop-off and pick-up times, without legitimate reasons.

We need to be absolutely clear: this is a safeguarding issue. We are deeply worried that a child could be seriously injured due to vehicles entering an area that is not intended for parent/carer use.

We are asking every parent to play their part in keeping our school community safe. Please respect the restrictions on the staff car park and bus layby, and use the designated areas only. The safety of our pupils is not negotiable.

Electric Scooters

It has come to the attention of the school that a small number of children have been using electric scooters in the local area during the evening. We would like to remind families that privately owned electric scooters are not legally permitted to be used on public roads, pavements or cycle lanes, and the legal minimum age to ride an electric scooter is 16. This means that children of primary school age should not be using them under any circumstances. From a health and safety perspective, these scooters are high-powered, capable of reaching significant speeds, and we are very concerned about the risk of serious injury. We would not want to see any child from our school hurt as a result of an accident. In addition, children using these scooters have been observed without appropriate safety equipment,

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including high-visibility clothing, which further increases the risk. We kindly ask parents and guardians to speak with their children about the dangers and legal restrictions surrounding electric scooters, and to ensure they are not being used. Thank you for your continued support in keeping all our pupils safe.

Uniform

Thank you for your effort in ensuring that your children are wearing the correct school uniform on the correct day. Please ensure your child is wearing their PE uniform on PE days only.

Please see the PE timetable below. This is posted in the Parent Area of the school website for each half term. ***For After School Clubs, children should bring their PE uniform in a bag for changing at the end of the day.**

PE TIMETABLE					
P.1LMcA	P.1/2MMcN	P.2OR	P.3UK/KA	P.3/4SO'H / KA	P.4KF
Tues & Thurs	Tues & Thurs	Tues & Thurs	Tues & Wed	Mon & Wed	Tues & Wed
P.5NM	P.5AMcG	P.6CC	P.6SF	P.7SO'P / KA	P.7PMcC
Tues & Fri	Tues & Fri	Tues & Thurs	Mon & Tues	Mon & Thurs	Thurs & Fri

Summer uniform

For P.1 and P.2 pupils this is shortened tracksuit bottoms/school (not sports branded) shorts with their PE sweatshirt and yellow t-shirt. Girls may wear a bottle green and white gingham summer dress, with school cardigan.

Pupils in P.3 to P.7 may wear:

- Boys may wear the yellow school t-shirt with the school V-neck jumper, along with bottle green school shorts (not sports branded shorts). No other colour of shorts will be allowed. An old pair of tracksuit bottoms can be shortened to suit.
- Girls may wear a bottle green and white gingham summer dress, with their school cardigan, or as listed above for the boys.

Please be mindful the weather is very changeable and usually on the cooler side, therefore, please send your child to school appropriately dressed as we spend a lot of time outside this term and your child will be cold if they are not dressed appropriately.

If for any reason your child does not have a full school uniform, please contact the school office as we have quite a selection of unclaimed jumpers, sweaters etc. and we will ensure your child has the correct uniform for school.

Child Protection, Safeguarding Concerns and Age-Appropriate Apps

Please ensure that you are aware of the content of the apps/games your child is using and make sure you have the correct parental controls on your devices and that you know what your child is experiencing online. Please download our **Safer School App** at <https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/parent-carer/> and use our school website to look at <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> for guidance on parent controls and age limits.

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) has developed an Online Safety Hub

<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/social-media-and-apps/>. The Hub brings together advice and resources from a range of partner organisations so that parents, carers and young people can easily access advice and resources in one central place. We strongly recommend time spent on non-educational activities on devices should be **limited to weekends only, fully supervised** and restricted to a **one-hour maximum** time limit. As a school we are experiencing a rising number of cases of online misuse, and it is causing great distress to a number of children. **It is parental responsibility to know what their children are involved in at all times when they are online!** As a school we are consulting with the CPSS on matters of safeguarding.

If you have any concerns regarding Safeguarding and Child Protection, please remember to call the school or email info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk to request a callback. The safeguarding team consists of: Mrs. Reavey, Ms. McNeill, and Mrs. Smith.

Communication with school

Please check that you have redownloaded the school app to ensure you are receiving up-to-date information. Please check the relevant information on the Parents Area of the school website.

Classroom queries: If you have any general queries, please contact the office on 028 40630061 or email the school at info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk. Teachers will not be able to respond during teaching time or where they have meetings to attend after school, therefore it may be a few days before they can reply. If the matter is urgent, please state this when you are calling the office, and we will prioritise getting back to you.

As a school family, we want you to know we are here to support you in any way we can. If there are occasions when issues, activities or events become a problem, please contact a member of the School Leadership Team and we will work together to ensure every child gets the best opportunities in school.

It would be much appreciated if any complaints were brought to the attention of the School Leadership Team so that we can work together to come to a resolution. The school Complaints Policy is available on the school's website, or a copy can be obtained from the school office.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued help and support in the education of your children. It is very much appreciated.

Yours in partnership

Plunkett McConville
Orla Reavey
Geraldine Smith

School Leadership Team