St. Mary's Primary School

Information Handbook for Parents

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Dear Parents,

I would like to wish you a very warm welcome to St. Mary's Primary School- probably the most unique primary school in the country. We are proud to be an Island school serving the people of Rathlin. As Principal, I want to continue to develop the values which underpin everything we do as an island school; preserving our unique identity while adapting an innovative approach to all we do.

We have a small but dedicated team of staff who endeavour to provide exciting and enriching experiences for our children across the curriculum. We value every child as an individual and we believe that our staff make a real difference – to give the very best education, both academically and socially, to our pupils.

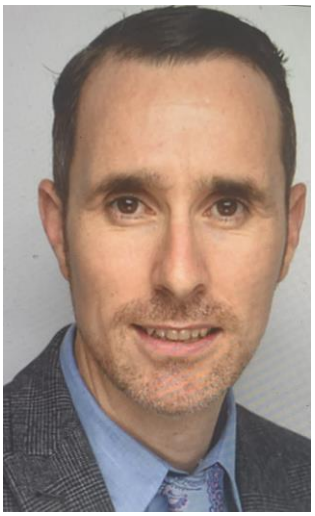
Parents and carers play a very important part of school life and we value our strong partnership with them.
Together, we share responsibility for the children's education and we work closely putting the children at the centre of everything we do. We encourage our parents to become involved in all aspects of school life, so that, as partners, we can promote high standards of learning, behaviour and attitudes to enable every child to reach their full potential.

We hope that you enjoy your visit to our website, and that you find the information you are looking for. Please feel free to contact the school directly with any queries you may have.

'Scoil Bheag, Croí mór'

Eddie McGuigan

Principal



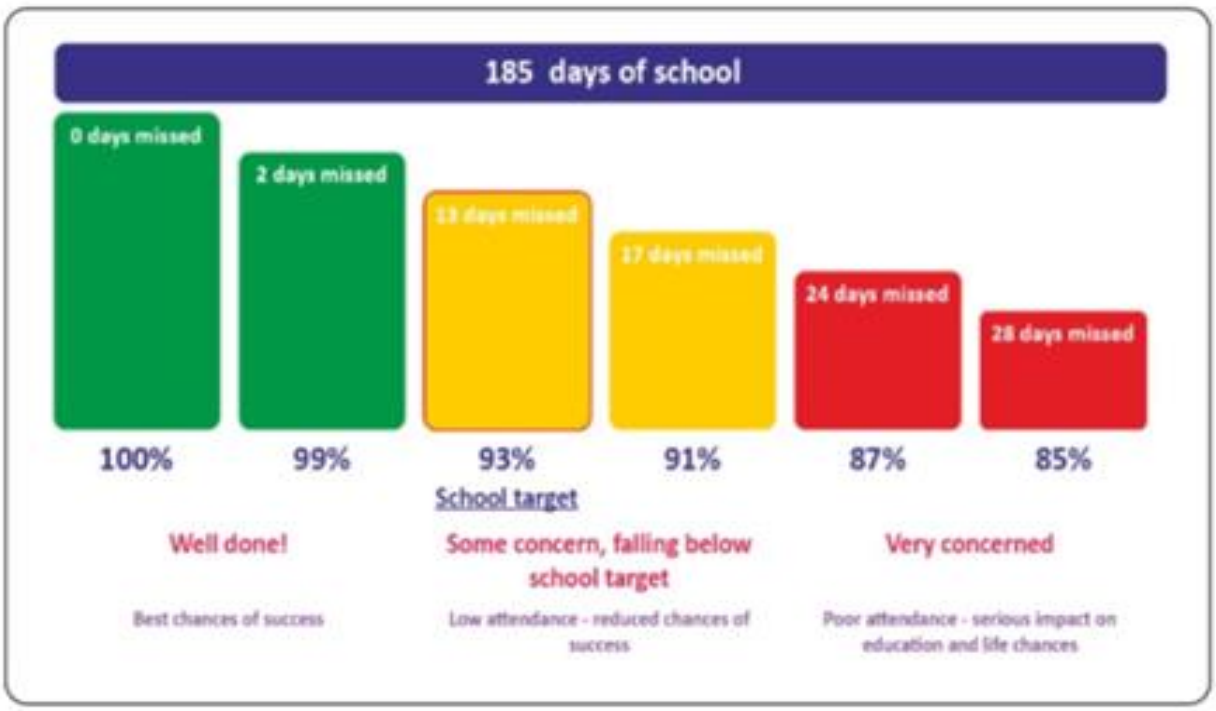
THE SCHOOL DAY

	P1 – P7
Open	9.00 am
Lessons	9.15 am – 10.40 am
Break	10.40 am – 11.00 am
Lessons	11.00 am – 12.10pm
Dinner	12.10pm – 1.00 pm
Lessons	1:00pm-3:15pm

- P1- P3 finish at 2:15pm until Easter.
- P3 stay to 3:15pm after Easter.

ATTENDANCE

Every day your child misses school is a lost opportunity. Poor attendance and poor performance are directly related. A child should only be kept at home because of illness or some serious reason. Please let the school know if your child can not come to school due to sickness on the first day of their absence. If you child is off for more than three consecutive days, a doctors' note is required.



SCHOOL UNIFORM

It is important that each child comes to school neat and tidy. We are proud of our school uniform, which reflects the individuality of our school and offers to all children a common form of dress. We expect all children to wear the school uniform and would ask parents to adhere to the uniform with the school logo. Uniforms are available locally.

Our School Uniform

We want to ensure that our school uniform represents value for money and have tried to keep items with a logo to a minimum. This allows parents a wide choice of where to purchase uniform items.

- Navy V-Neck Jumper/Cardigan with the school crest
- Navy Trousers
- Navy Skirt/Pinafore
- White Shirt
- School Tie
- Black Shoes

Optional Summer Uniform (May-June)

- Girls- Blue and White Gingham Dress
- Boys- Navy/Grey School Shorts (to the knee) and a short sleeved white shirt.

Footwear: It is school policy that children wear sensible low heeled black shoes. Plain black trainers are acceptable as they are in keeping with the smart appearance of a school uniform.

Physical Education (P.E.) Kit/ Outdoor Activities

P.E is a compulsory part of the statutory curriculum. Clothing and footwear are important aspects of safety in P.E.
P.E Kit (please note that the school logo is **not** required on items of P.E. kit)

- White polo shirt/t-shirt
- Navy/black shorts or tracksuit bottoms
- Trainers

Outdoor Activities

- Black leggings/tracksuit bottoms
- White polo shirt/t-shirt
- Navy/Black hoodie

<u>Please ensure all items are clearly labelled with your child's name.</u>

STAFF

Staff Member	Role
Mr. E Mc Guigan	Teaching Principal
Miss M Bakewell	Classroom Teacher
Mrs. JA McMullan	Classroom Assistant
Ms. Patricia McCurdy	Classroom Assistant School Administrator Building Supervisor
Mrs. Catherine Wisner-Clarke	Principal Release Teacher
Mrs Bonnie McCurdy and Miss Holly Hartley	Relief Assistants

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Rev. Fr Brian Daly - Chairperson - Trustee
Noel Mc Curdy - Vice Chairperson/The Department of Education NI
Vacant- Education Authority Ni
Mr Ciaran Mc Curdy - Trustee
John Mc Curdy - Trustee
Dr Jessica Bates - Education Authority NI
Jamie McAlonan - Trustee
Tania Mc Faul - Parent
Mr. Eddie McGuigan - Principal (non-voting)
Miss Maria Bakewell- Teacher Rep.

HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOL

St. Mary's is a health promoting school. We aim to promote a healthy lifestyle for our children by highlighting the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. Please ensure your child's packed lunch is balanced and healthy.

HOMEWORK

Aims of Homework:

- To allow time to practise and develop skills and concepts, consolidating work done in class
- To develop independence
- To help develop and extend children's language through discussion with parents
- To improve children's mental recall through the learning of number bonds and tables
- To address individual needs of children and help build their self-confidence and self- esteem
- To give parents an opportunity to discuss the Religious Programme with their children
- To encourage parents to become involved in the education of their children.

Homework may include any of the following:

- Practical activities in Foundation Stage
- Reading and spellings
- Work on Phonics
- Reading and discussion work
- Written homework across any subject
- Learning of prayers, tables, number facts etc.
- Research work

In general, the amount of homework should not exceed that which can be done in less than 30 minutes in P1-P4 and up to 60 minutes in P5 - P7 classes. If parents believe their children are struggling with either the quantity or degree of difficulty with homework, they should note this in the pupils' reading diary. Teachers will then know that parents have intervened.

FOREST SCHOOLS

As part of our commitment to outdoor learning, both our teachers are Forest school trained. Forest School is an outdoor learning approach based on a philosophy of learning through play, exploration and experience in *natural environments* (woodland, green space, school grounds). Typically, we set aside the first Friday of every month for a day of forest school activities. Pupils are expected to wear the appropriate clothing for outdoor learning. Advance notice will be given.

SCOIL SPREAGTHA

At St. Mary's we are a proud Scoil Spreagtha school. This is an accredited school-based programme designed to encourage, support and recognise English-medium primary schools that actively promote the use of the Irish language (Gaeilge) across the whole school community. As part of the programme we:

- Integrate Irish into classroom greetings, assemblies, and daily interactions.
- Organise Irish language, songs, poems, games and cultural celebrations.
- Use resources and support materials supplied by the programme.

All pupils in P5-7 are taught timetabled Irish lessons and younger pupils are encouraged to embrace Irish in their everyday routines.

PARENT/TEACHER CONTACTS

It is the aim of St. Mary's to support and enhance the development of the children, valuing the contribution parents make towards their child's learning and providing support and guidance to parents as educators. We also aim to involve parents in the education of their children and to inform them as fully as possible about their children's progress. We do this through:

- A monthly newsletter is published informing parents of forthcoming events.
- At least one annual interview will be arranged to discuss pupils' progress in Term 1
- At least one annual written report will be sent home to inform parents of children's progress in Term 3.
- Notes may be appended to pupils' homework/reading diaries for the attention of parents.
- Teachers are always keen to meet parents to discuss a child's progress, subject to an agreed appointment made through the school office.
- Parents should not contact teachers at home- please only email during school hours.

CUMANN NA mBUNSCOL

We are a member of Cumann na mBunscol Antrim and take part in events organised for local primary schools. Cumann na mBunscol is part of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). It organises sports such as Gaelic football, Hurling, Camogie, athletics and cultural events for primary school children. Every year we try to attend events relevant to the size of our school such as skills days, cross country and their annual quiz.

ETHOS and VISION

St Mary's Primary School together with its faith community will endeavour to inspire the gospel values of faith, hope, love, peace, justice and truth by:

- Ensuring that each child will develop their full potential, spiritually, intellectually, morally, emotionally, physically and socially in a caring, loving and supportive environment.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of each child's progress.
- Building strong relationships between school, pupils, parents and the parish community and neighbourhood to help prepare our children to live harmoniously and with equality of opportunity.
- Staff will share their gifts in the fulfilment of these aims for the benefit of the school community and share responsibility for the wellbeing and discipline of all pupils

It is the vision of this school that all involved will be instrumental in providing a catholic education which sustains each individual's needs for mental, spiritual and physical development by bringing a distinctive standard of care to all involved, building upon the teaching which starts at home. Maintaining a wide and balanced curriculum which fosters the diverse abilities and talents of all pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, forming a caring partnership of co-operation with the parents, parish and local community and throughout affirming and to be seen to affirm the dignity of each individual who is involved in these processes.
Above all this school's vision is team work encouraging all staff and children to share their gifts for the benefit of the school family.

ADMISSIONS TO PRIMARY ONE

In selecting children for admission to St. Mary's, the Board of Governors will apply the criteria as set out by our school on the EA Website.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

A list of school holidays is given at the beginning of the school year. This hopefully enables parents to make plans for those days when children are not at school. In the event of an emergency closure, information will be posted on our school WhatsApp, website and social media page.

PROSPECTIVE PUPILS

- Parents of prospective pupils may contact the Principal to arrange a visit before enrolling pupils.
- Parents wishing to transfer pupils from other schools may contact the Principal to arrange individual visits before enrolling pupils.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

St. Mary's places the child at the heart of the curriculum. Over the course of the school year it provides a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum which is relevant to the individual needs and abilities of each child.

The development of our pupils intellectually, spiritually, socially and emotionally takes place within the school's happy, caring environment.

Confidence, self-esteem and discipline within each child are actively promoted and encouraged and the development of basic skills is given special focus in our classrooms.

The three Key Stages in Primary School are:

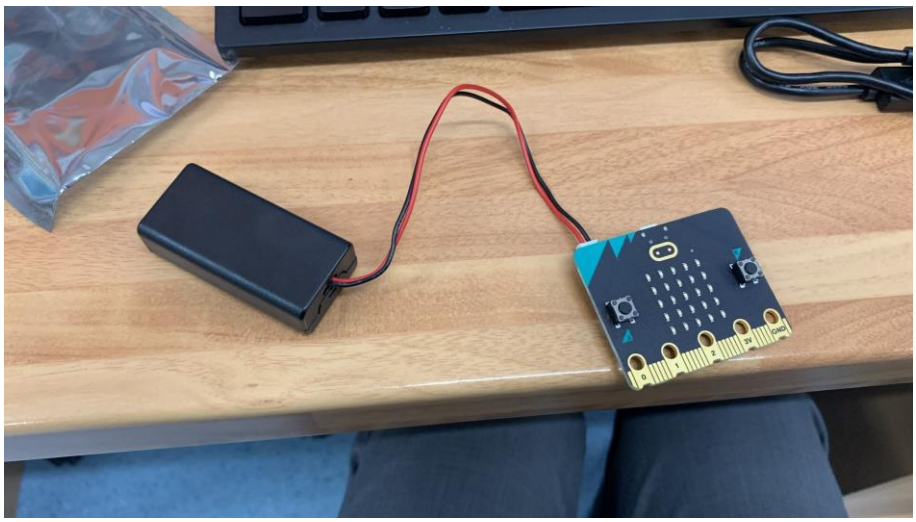
Foundation Stage:	Reception, P 1 and P2
Key Stage One:	P3 and P4
Key Stage Two	P5, P6 and P7

The Northern Ireland Curriculum comprises of:

- Religious Education
- Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using ICT
- The World Around Us, incorporating Geography, History and Science and Technology.
- The Arts including Art and Design, Music and Drama
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU)
- Physical Development and Movement (Foundation Stage)
- Physical Education (KS1 and KS2)

ICT

At St. Mary's all pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their skills in ICT and to apply these throughout the curriculum. We have a set of school laptops which accommodates whole class activities and pupils take these home also.



MUSIC

Music is a part of our pupils' experiences within St. Mary's. It promotes the development of self-confidence and independence, providing a feeling of achievement and satisfaction. Music is delivered primarily within the classroom setting.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The aim of Religious Education in St. Mary's is to help our children to know, understand and appreciate the spiritual and religious dimension of life and develop within them a personal relationship with God.

The development of the whole child and a respect for the diversity of other cultures

is central to the ethos of St. Mary's. Accordingly, we seek to promote and foster values such as truth, honesty, tolerance and loyalty.

The presentation of the 'Grow in Love' programme focuses on helping the children to develop and grow in their faith through their home, school and community.

SCHOOL REWARDS

In St. Mary's we pride ourselves in the relationships within the classroom and within the school between:

- Staff and pupils
- Pupils and pupils
- The whole school community

Our aim is to create an ethos based on Christian principles and values, where effective teaching and learning can take place.

Rewards
In St. Mary's we apply a system of rewards which are intended to be fair and effective for all our pupils. These rewards contribute to the ethos of the school and involve all teaching and non-teaching staff. They are aimed at promoting and reinforcing good behaviour and promoting self-esteem. They encourage each pupil to take responsibility for his/her actions and to have their actions recognised and rewarded. The school operates a 'Star of the Day', 'Star of the Week' and 'Star of the Month' (Golden Tie) system through which the children's self confidence and self esteem are nurtured and positive behaviour is encouraged and publicly rewarded.

We have a Discipline Policy operating within the school which has specific class rules for each Key Stage which have been formed and agreed by the children.

Responsibilities

Each class teacher is responsible for discipline within their classroom.
Both the teaching and non-teaching staff have a shared responsibility for the general discipline of the children in the school.
The Principal has overall responsibility for the discipline within the school
Supervisory Assistants have a responsibility to safeguard the children's welfare over the lunch period and to report any serious incidents to the Principal.
Parents have a responsibility to support the school's discipline policy and to ensure adherence to the rules by their children.

REMOTE LEARNING

Given the unique island setting of our school, on occasions we must switch to remote learning at short notice due to weather disruption. When ferries are cancelled, and no teacher is on the island, pupils will receive a mixture of live sessions and paper-based activities- these activities will relate to the curriculum area they are working on in class. All live sessions will be conducted through Microsoft Teams and all pupils will be taught how to use that platform during ICT lessons in school. Our detailed remote learning policy can be viewed on the school website. Pupils are expected to attend remote learning in full school uniform and complete their activities in the same way as they would in school. Attendance will be marked accordingly.

ASSESSMENT REPORTING AND RECORD KEEPING

In St. Mary's we have integrated Assessment for Learning into our classroom practice. Assessment for Learning focuses on the learning process and attempts to improve learning, helping to inform the teacher of how the learning is progressing. Assessment for Learning is carried out during day-to-day classroom practice and takes place during learning. It also gives the pupils an active role in the assessment process.

In accordance with legal requirements there will be two stages of Formal Assessment in Literacy and Numeracy.

End of Key Stage 1 – Primary 4
End of Key Stage 2 – Primary 7

The outcomes of this assessment will be reported to parents at the end of June.

Parents are invited to discuss their child's progress at the annual parent teacher meeting held in the first term for primaries one to seven. Other meetings can be arranged by mutual request and by appointment.

All parents will receive an end of year written report on their child's progress throughout the year.

GENERAL AIM OF OUR PASTORAL CARE POLICY

We aim to promote a caring school which values all who are part of it, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect in which the children feel secure and happy and all staff work together as a team, supportive of one another and sensitive to each other's needs.

Objectives

- We will foster Catholic values and beliefs through our 'Grow in Love' programme and in our day-to-day relationships with the children.
- We recognise and respect that every child is unique with different gifts and talents and we will value every child.
- We will encourage values such as honesty, forgiveness, loyalty and concern for others.
- We will promote an environment where pupils' learning is developed within the context of their individual needs and attributes.
- We will promote the development of positive relationships where children and staff have respect for each other and the opinions of others.
- We will be aware of the specific needs and circumstances of individual children, families and members of staff and take account of this (medical/emotional/social/economic).
- We will value all staff and children and give support when necessary e.g. new staff members, new children to school.

- We will ensure that parents and visitors are made feel welcome in the school and we value the role of parents in the education of their children.

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

In St. Mary's Primary School the care, welfare and safety of the children in our care is paramount. We recognise that we have a pastoral responsibility towards our pupils who have a fundamental right to be protected from harm i.e. all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse by those looking after them.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety preserved.

In St. Mary's the designated teacher who has specific responsibility for child protection is Miss Bakewell. Miss. Patricia McCurdy is deputy-designated and principal Mr. McGuigan is also part of the safeguarding team. Dr. Jesscia Bates is the governor responsible for child protection.

All our staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have been trained:

- how to identify the signs and symptoms of possible abuse
- what the relevant child protection procedures are
- school procedures on who talks to children and how this will be done
- who the designated teacher is and to whom they can refer if she is unavailable or the subject of complaint
- what the reporting procedures are.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

"A child is identified as being of special educational need if his/her need is significantly greater than that of his/her peers"

The class teachers identify children with special educational needs as early as possible. When this identification has been made, the teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) will work together to decide on how best to meet the child's needs. The teacher may draw up an Personal Learning Plan (PLP), setting targets for the child, a copy of which will be forwarded to the parents. The Special Needs co-ordinator works closely with the teachers, supporting the children either within the class or on a withdrawal basis. Communication between the SENCO, the class teacher and parents is vital to the success of any support programme.

THE SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY

The school recognises the need to promote effective community links especially in the unique island community that we are based. We endeavour to bring the school out into the community and to use the local areas to enhance the various topics.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We have a Parents' Teachers Association which is involved in fund-raising events and has raised money to pay for many extra resources and help part fund school trips.

We appreciate all the help and support given to us from parents and friends in the past, and we are continually seeking to involve parents in the life of the school. There are many ways in which parents can help within the school and we would certainly encourage them to consider how they could contribute to this. Parental involvement and views are sought on many policies and school issues.

CHARITIES

The school seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of people in need, both locally and in the underdeveloped countries of the world. Raising money for charities and the awareness raising associated with this is a very important feature of the school.

AVAILABILITY OF POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

School policies can be found on our website or can be made available at the school for viewing by parents.
Other documents, including inspection reports and Department of Education circulars, can also be made available on request.

SCHOOL WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

Our school website is kept up to date on a regular basis. You can view the work of the school and access information about the school by logging onto:

www.stmaryspriscrathlinisland.co.uk

Social Media: Twitter/X and Facebook - @StMarysRathlin