



## Our School Prospectus

2023/24

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Adventures in Primary One!



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## Mission Statement

“St. Francis’ Primary School is a place where children are celebrated. Their natural curiosity and wonder for the world around them is nurtured and they are encouraged to reflect and improve on themselves and their learning, celebrating the milestones they achieve along the way. We believe in helping children to achieve their very best, to reach their goals and then set new ones!

We are also committed to the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of our pupils and to ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to remain safe: online and in the wider world. Our pupils will have opportunities to develop an understanding of both their rights and their responsibilities so that they grow into helpful, kind adults.

At St. Francis Primary school, our approach to our faith and ethos means that we are proud to extend a warm welcome to families of all faiths. Our Catholic faith calls us to do our very best as we endeavour to love our neighbour and live with compassion and grace. Our school’s patron: Saint Francis, inspires us to think of others and be an instrument of peace.”



# Letter of Introduction

24 Donard View Road  
Loughbrickland  
Banbridge  
BT32 3LN  
Tel: (028) 4062 8044  
Email: [info@stfrancis.aghaderg.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stfrancis.aghaderg.ni.sch.uk)

Dear Parents / Guardians

May I take this opportunity of extending a very warm welcome on behalf of myself, our staff and our Governors. We would like to thank you for all you have done as your child(ren)'s primary educator to date, and are looking forward to working with you in partnership as we help your child take the next big steps in their learning journey.

Along with our school website, this booklet has been designed to give you the basic information we believe you need to get a sense of what we can offer your family. We know that this is no substitute for visiting the school in person so parents of prospective pupils are encouraged to contact our lovely school secretary, Michelle, to arrange a visit to the school where a very warm welcome awaits you and your family.

An online application process has been introduced and our school's criteria is available to parents on the EA's website [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk). Parents who may not have internet access can request a copy through the Primary Admissions Office on 028 3741 0082. **The online admissions portal, [www.eani.org.uk/admissions](http://www.eani.org.uk/admissions) operates from 9th January to the 26<sup>th</sup> January.** Birth certificates continue to be required for all applicants and should be uploaded on to the Admissions portal. Parents may also be required to provide verifying documents (e.g. verification of address) stipulated in admissions criteria directly to the first preference school.

Yours sincerely



Sheila McKeown  
Principal

# GENERAL AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

In this prospectus the Board of Governors considers it important to state clearly:  
what the school believes in;  
what it aims to do for your children; and  
what are the values we want to nurture within them.

## **VALUES AND AIMS**

- To guide and support the intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral, social and emotional development of each pupil, recognising achievements in all of their forms.
- To provide an environment for learning that is safe, stimulating, child-centred and which will broaden horizons and optimise individual ability by mitigating barriers to learning.
- To nurture positive personal attitudes and values, to teach children to actively engage in and pursue their faith and understanding.
- To be an open and welcoming learning community where all children and adults are cared for and valued in an atmosphere of mutual respect, joy and celebration.
- To help the children to appreciate their environment, both at a local and global scale.
- To provide high quality teaching and learning that will provide young people with the ability to think for themselves, make healthy choices, engage with the emerging technologies, contribute positively to society and live independent lives in the future.
- To provide effective leadership that realises the school vision and the high expectations of pupils and their parents.
- To promote inclusion and support for those who are disadvantaged and provide equity of access and provision.
- To recognise and support the professional development of skilful and competent teachers and support staff and to support and build upon the valuable role that parents play in establishing, supporting and extending their children's learning.
- To engage in a collaborative process of continual improvement and raising of standards that will ensure high quality educational experiences for all.



# General Information

## Our Team

### TEACHING STAFF

1.	Miss N McNally	P1	
2.	Mrs McCone	P2	
3.	Mrs K Trainor	P3	Vice Principal
4.	Mrs E Macauley	P4	
5.	Mrs B Woods	P5	
6.	Mr E O'Malley	P6	
7.	Miss G O'Dowd	P7	
8.	Mrs McKeown		Principal

### ANCILLARY/AUXILIARY STAFF

1.	Mrs M Conlon/Mrs A Lennon	Secretary
2.	Mrs J McAvoy	Primary 1 Classroom Assistant
3.	Mrs M Murphy	General Assistant/ Breakfast Club
4.	Mrs F Colgan	P2 Classroom Assistant/Bus Club
5.	Mrs G McSherry	General Assistant
5.	Mrs Marta Quinn	Classroom Assistant
6.	Miss M Murnaghan	School Crossing Patrol
8.	Mrs P Hyland	Catering Manager (Cook)
9.	Mrs P Copes	Catering team
10.	Mr R Campbell	Caretaker
11.	Mrs E. McAuley	Cleaner
12.	Ms D. O'Hanlon	Cleaner

The school employs four Lunch Time Supervisory Assistants, they are: Mrs Michelle Conlon, Miss Ellen Murphy, Mrs Margaret Murphy and Mrs Marta Quinn.

The school Chaplin is the Very Reverend Fr. Conor McConville PP.

## SCHOOL HOURS

T school hours are as follows:

P1 – P3	9.00 am – 2.00 pm
P4 – P7	9.00 am – 3.00 pm

On Fridays, all pupils finish at 2pm.

The school opens at 8:00am for children attending our Breakfast Club. For children **not** attending the Morning Club the school will open at 8.45am; all children should be in the school for roll call at 9.00am. Lunch is from 12.00pm – 1.00pm. A '123 Club' operates from 2.00 until 3.00pm. A range of after-school activities operate from 2:00pm until 3:00pm for Primary 1 – 3 pupils and from 3:00pm until 4:00pm for Primary 4 – 7 pupils. Please contact the school for further details on the Breakfast Club or after school activities. Parents are asked to arrange to have their children collected no later than 3.10 pm as the staff have In-Service Training Courses and meetings after school.



## **PASTORAL CARE ARRANGEMENTS**

As a school we are committed to providing a comfortable and safe environment for learning. Each class teacher has the responsibility to look after the pastoral needs of the children in his/her class, this is made possible through partnership with parents. Parents are asked to inform the teachers of:

- any medical problems their child may suffer,
- any medication their child is receiving
- an up to date address or phone number at which they (or the child minder) may be contacted.

In the event of an emergency, arrangements will be made to have the child taken to hospital. In all cases it will be the school policy to act in the best interest of the child. In the event of a parent having concerns about a Pastoral Care or Child Protection issue the following teachers should be contacted:

**Mr E O'Malley (Designated Teacher for Child Protection) or**

**Mrs K Trainor (Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection).**

## **Positive Behaviour and Discipline**

In St. Francis' Primary School, we believe that respect and self-awareness are the foundations on which good manners and the ability to regulate actions and feelings are built. These are essential if pupils are to build strong, supportive relationships with peers and staff. Through our collaborative work on pupil well-being and mental health, they are encouraged to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, how they process these and how they react to challenging situations. This helps pupils develop the self-awareness needed to recognise challenging situations and respond to them in a safe and measured way. We also spend considerable time developing a clear understanding of our expectations for and from pupils, staff and parents. This means that our entire school community has a very clear sense of what is expected and, more importantly, why. Pupils understand that games where peers are respected and turn-taking happens are games that are enjoyed by all. Classes where pupils and teachers are listened to, where the environment lets pupils work comfortably without interruption, and where the resources they need are accessible and well-looked-after is a class where pupils have the opportunity to shine. This is how we promote positive behaviour.

These strategies are supplemented with merit and reward systems at class level to encourage positive behaviour and celebrate instances when pupils demonstrate commitment to our values, above and beyond what we expect.

Where pupil behaviour falls short of acceptable standards, where there is persistent disruptive behaviour within the classroom, disrespect through word or action for either pupil or staff member, it will not be tolerated. School is a place where all pupils and staff – and visitors – should, first and foremost, feel safe and respected. When unacceptable behaviour occurs, the necessary sanctions will be employed as detailed in the School's Positive Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

The school is proud of its approach to inclusivity for all pupils and our commitment to supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). Whilst we acknowledge that specific conditions/needs mean that pupils may manifest certain associated behaviours there is still an expectation that pupils with SEN or SEBD would show the same respect for peers and staff, and that any associated behaviours should not place peers or staff at risk of injury. If this occurs, support and intervention from the relevant agencies will be sought and a SEN support review protocol will be enacted in partnership with parents, so that staff can review and amend provision accordingly, with the full support of parents.

Copies of the School's Child Protection, Behaviour Management and Discipline Policies are available on the school website or, upon request, hard copies will be provided from the school office.



## SCHOOL UNIFORM

Pupils of St Francis' will be encouraged to wear the full school uniform at all times.

<u>BOYS</u>	<u>GIRLS</u>
Jumper – maroon Trousers/shorts – grey Tie – maroon / grey striped Shirt – white Socks – grey	KS 1 – Pinafore – grey KS 2 – Skirt – grey Cardigan / Jumper – maroon Tie – maroon / grey striped Blouse – white Socks / tights – grey/maroon Summer Dress – Red & White checked dress
A maroon waterproof fleece with embroidered crest is also available. An embroidered school crest will be presented on enrolment. Additional crests, at a cost of £1, can be purchased in the school.	
<b><u>FOOTWEAR:</u></b> Sensible black shoes are to be worn.	
<b><u>Suitable clothing is to be worn for PE</u></b>	
The Board of Governors recommends the following PE kit to be worn on PE days: Grey jogging trousers Maroon sweatshirt with the school crest sewn on White polo shirt Trainers	



## SCHOOL CURRICULUM POLICY

### Curriculum Policy Statements

It is the policy of the Board of governors of St Francis' Primary School that each child will have the opportunity to access the full Northern Ireland Curriculum.

"The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives"

It comprises seven general learning areas: Language and Literacy; Mathematics and Numeracy; the World Around Us; the Arts; Personal Development; Physical Education and Religious Education. At the heart of the curriculum lies an emphasis on the development of skills: (a) Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and (b) formally assessed cross curricular skills: using Mathematics, Communications and ICT. The Northern Ireland Curriculum embraces the principles of Assessment for Learning with an emphasis on improvement, raising achievement and celebrating success.



This curriculum provides a range of learning experiences children will have in Primary 1 and aims to provide children with a rich and varied life. The curriculum seeks to prepare the children for the experiences of adult life.

We also strive to promote the values associated with our patron saint: Francis. We make every effort to help pupils develop compassion and understanding for each other and those they meet on life's journey so that collectively, we leave a trail of kindness, appreciation and betterment wherever our path takes us.

St Francis' Primary School offers a balanced and broad curriculum which promotes the intellectual, spiritual, moral, cultural, emotional and physical development of pupils. We endeavour to help pupils unlock the unique learning opportunities provided by our local environment and the curriculum we deliver is designed to stimulate thinking and reasoning; to develop skills that help pupils challenge themselves; and navigate the overwhelming amount of information they can access to, in order to discern what is true and important.

It is essential that children learn to apply themselves to their school work. This is a message they will absorb, first and foremost, at home. Where children feel supported and encouraged in their learning, their appetite to succeed and excel grows and the school recognizes the absolutely essential role parents and guardians play in this. The nurturing of body, mind and soul; the establishment and nurturing of a Catholic faith onto which they can grasp in times of need or difficulty; the awareness of the gift of good health and our need to actively maintain it through food, exercise and rest; all of these steps begin at home and are built upon in school. With this solid start, staff are able to take your child(ren)'s hand and support them as they take their next steps. Staff will attend to your children's needs, their problems and confidences will be taken seriously so that they build self-confidence and are certain of their teacher's love and friendship, realizing that the love and care they first encountered in the home, exists in the wider world too.



At St. Francis PS, we believe that learning can be a source of joy and a solid basis for establishing self-belief; especially through work of a practical nature. Practical lessons include Drama in Literacy, RE and History; practical work and experiments in Numeracy, Science and Geography and field studies in the World Around Us. We believe in the power of 'growth mindsets' and helping children unlock the power of the word 'yet' when identifying what they can and cannot do.

Resilience, accepting challenge and being able to reflect and improve are all important skills that begin with the acceptance that, at our core, we can always get better and that we should give ourselves the chance to get better by keeping going.

Pupils are offered a range of extra-curricular activities, either within the school day or after school. Participation in these activities is voluntary but we would encourage our families to avail of every opportunity to widen children’s breadth of learning experiences.

Activities offered change throughout the year and include; Gaelic football, camogie/hurling, tin whistle, fiddle, choir, Irish dancing, languages, and art. Music tuition is also offered by the EANI Music Service. After school activities on offer in previous years include: drama, soccer, Gaelic football, ukulele and yoga.

Have a look at our gallery on after-schools provision and our school calendar to see what is currently on offer.



## Religion at St. Francis' Primary

St Francis' is a Catholic primary school which teaches our pupils in accordance with the rites, practices and observance of the Catholic faith. We would ask that children who join our school community take a full and active part in the religious life of the school through prayer, acts of kindness and compassion both in and outside of school and striving to reflect the values, held so highly by St. Francis, in daily life. Christian belief and values inform our teaching and our conduct. These are not just confined to the Religion lessons but permeate the whole school curriculum. Formal religious education takes up at least 10% of teaching time and is based upon the Grow In Love religious scheme. Prayer is part of the daily school life and school masses, confessions and other religious services are part of the yearly programme.

We extend an equally warm welcome to families of other faiths and none. In fulfilling our commitment to 'Love our Neighbour', we celebrate opportunities to learn and teach pupils with differing beliefs, be that through our broad curriculum; participating in Shared Education or recognising signs of our differences in everyday life. These opportunities to reflect and consider what makes a tradition unique help our pupils to grow in understanding and compassion, building on the progress made and forging a sense of community between differing traditions and faiths.

In this way, we live out our own faith, fully.

We recognise the parental right to withdraw their child/ children from religious instruction and collective worship on the grounds that they wish to make their own provision. If parents wish to do so, they should contact the school to make this request in writing, and we will arrange a meeting to discuss any questions and concerns held and make appropriate arrangements.



## Education for Safeguarding and Child Protection

St Francis' Primary School, Aghaderg is a caring, responsible school with the children at the core of our endeavours. We strive to respond to the personal, emotional, social and educational needs of our pupils daily.

Preventative education is a key aspect to our pastoral care, our child protection and our safeguarding strategies. As part of this preventative education, pupils learn about the dangers of misusing alcohol, tobacco, medicine and any other drugs the children are aware of. We work in collaboration with the Police Service of Northern Ireland in order to give our pupils a clear sense of the risks associated with all of these and how to keep themselves, and those around them safe if they are faced with a challenging situation. Our approach is measured and appropriate to the experiences of children in our school, where emergent concerns arise, our approach adapts to meet the needs of our pupils. Further detail is available in our Drugs Education Policy.

The school also uses the CCEA programme "Living. Learning. Together" to support teaching on what healthy relationships look like. This is the key tenet of our approach to Relationship and Sexual Education. From an early age pupils are taught about healthy boundaries, personal space and permission, all of which form the basis upon which pupils can build an understanding of healthy relationships with peers, friends and family look and feel like. Pupils are taught about the ways they can reach out for support or help if they find themselves feeling unsafe and they are taught to never suffer in silence. We are currently updating our Relationships and Sexual Education Policy to reflect updated guidance from the Department of Education, in consultation with parents of families in the school.

Underpinning our education in all of these areas, is the partnership between the school and parents, where we work together towards educating and preparing our children for each stage of their lives. It is important that pupils receive consistent, clear information from both home and school so that they have a clear sense of their rights and responsibilities; they have a well-established moral compass that will help them find their True North in any situation; and that they find themselves living well and helping others to do the same.



## Supporting Learners of All Abilities

Some of the children attending the school will have particular educational, social, physical or emotional needs. These may arise from developmental, physical or specific learning challenges they navigate and work to overcome, daily. St. Francis PS is an inclusive, welcoming school and as such we will make every effort, within our resources, to meet each pupil's needs. Concerns may be raised by either teacher or parents and both will collaborate for the best interests of the child in question. Where additional support is required, the appropriate steps of the Code of Practice will be followed in order for the Education Authority to determine and secure the appropriate level of support or intervention required. This path will begin with class/school-based support (differentiation of work or support through resources/ small-group work) and may require the involvement of other agencies (RISE/ AAIS/ Educational Psychologist/ OT).

Ultimately, our approach to supporting learners with overcoming particular challenges is guided by where the pupil is, where they wish to go and what they need to get there. We rely on the support and engagement of parents throughout this process, and throughout each child's learning journey, in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for our pupils.



## HOMEWORK

Homework is a useful part of the learning process. It is a means of revising work done in class, extending work done in school and accessing information, which is not available in the school. Homework may be done in booklets or online; this involves the parents in the learning process and is a means of keeping parents abreast of the curriculum that is being taught. Homework will be based on one or more of the following: Reading, Spellings, Literacy, Numeracy, other curricular areas or personal research. The amount of homework should generally not exceed that which can be done in:

- 15 minutes in Primary 1 and 2
- 20 minutes in Primary 3
- 40 minutes in Primary 4 and 5
- 60 minutes in Primary 6 and 7.

Normally homework will be set each week night, though this may be relaxed for holidays and other special occasions.



Knowing how your child is performing at school is important. Monitoring progress has always been a key responsibility for teachers. The main purpose of assessment is to:

1. Establish through a variety of means the progress that each child is making.
2. Assist the teacher in planning appropriate tasks for each child.

Formal assessments are carried out at the end of Key Stage 1 (P4) and Key Stage 2 (P7) and the results of these are included in the child's end of year report. A written record of achievement will be provided for each child transferring from the primary school to a secondary school. Information on the school's end of Key Stage results is available on request. Parents will be informed of their child's general progress at the November Parent – Teacher meetings and through the annual report which is issued in June. The Principal or teacher can arrange a special meeting for an individual parent if there are particular matters of concern. Children on the Special Education Register will have Individual Education Plans or Personal Education Plans, parents will be invited to review their child's progress on these plans with the class teacher or SENCO.

### **Questions, queries and complaints.**

In St Francis' PS Aghaderg, we take complaints seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all that we do. For this reason, we would encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. We believe that if concerns are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved promptly, to the benefit of all. Many issues can be dealt with simply by talking to the relevant staff in the school who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the school staff, parents/guardians and other school users is vital to the effective management of the school. We welcome open communication with our staff; you can contact our staff by phoning the school or messaging the teacher to request a meeting. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised directly with the Principal.

Where parents feel that their concern has not been satisfactorily resolved they should follow the Two Stage Complaints Procedure by firstly writing to the Principal; if the parent feels the outcome is unsatisfactory or that the school has not followed due process, then they should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. Further information is available in the school's Complaints Policy.



## CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

Education in St Francis' Primary School is provided free of charge for all lessons and activities connected with the child's entitlement under the Education Reform Order. In the event of a school trip or music tuition (not statutory lessons), payment is required.

The Morning Club, Bus Club and various After School activities are in addition to statutory requirements; these are voluntary activities and donation towards running costs is required.

The school may appeal to parents for voluntary contributions but no child will be disadvantaged if parents choose not to make a contribution.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

It is hoped that this prospectus has given you the information that you require. However, more detailed information is available on the school website [www.stfrancisahaderg.com](http://www.stfrancisahaderg.com), the school app, from the Principal or in the various school policies that have been produced. Parents will also be kept abreast of any changes that may arise during the year through letters and a school news sheet issued every half term.

Parents of prospective pupils, particularly those who are new to the school, are encouraged to contact the school for further information or for assistance with the completion of the application form. We are happy to accommodate visits to the school by appointment this year.



Thank you for taking the time to get to know us a little better!  
We hope to see you soon,  
The St. Francis' PS team.

