



Whiteabbey Primary School

Board of Governors

Annual Report 2019-2020

(Abridged due to Covid-19 Protocols and Lockdown during the academic year)

INTRODUCTION:

The academic year 2019-2020 has been like no other experienced by our school due to the onset of the Covid19 pandemic. The work of Mr Wysner, the Senior Management Team and all teaching and support staff at this traumatic time were deeply appreciated by myself and our governors.

Throughout the lockdown period the teachers and their classes continued to work on the curriculum, albeit through remote learning. This was not always smooth, but everyone learned from the process and steps were quickly put in place to improve our remote learning provision should another lockdown occur.

I am disappointed to report little has changed in the past year with the education budgets facing increased pressures due to Covid requirements and still requiring large cuts. However, a lot of minor works were completed before and during lockdown thanks to the efforts of the Education Authority, our PTA, our wider parents, staff, governors and willing volunteers with the skills needed. Our more substantial plans for the proposed Senior School extension, to replace three mobile classrooms and a temporary toilet block, are progressing positively, albeit much too slowly and greatly reduced for our liking and overall needs.

Despite lockdown our school has enjoyed another year of achievement and progress in the classroom. Levels of academic success remain high and our pupils well motivated. AQE results met and exceeded our expectations.

Enrolment remained positive in January 2020 with us once again being oversubscribed with applications. Proving the popularity of all that Whiteabbey Primary School continues to offer to our children and their families.

Throughout the period of this report, much of the discussions at Board of Governors continued to focus on finance, covid, staffing, Special Needs provision and various correspondence from parents and outside bodies.

The Staff Development and Exceptional Closure Days have been well used by staff to cover a wide range of topics including on-line learning and assessment, literacy, especially Accelerated Reading and writing. There has been a numeracy and special needs review to both policies and practise. The vast majority of our teaching and non teaching staff undertook First Aid training and there was a short course in Autism awareness training, although we are intending to develop this in 2020-21 by partnering with Middletown Centre for Autism next school year to develop our whole school's understanding of Autism and how we can support our children with the condition. This may be postponed due to covid but will offer six weeks of training for both staff and our parents.

The Christmas concerts promoted the talent amongst our pupils and highlighted the dedication and commitment of our staff, both teaching and non-teaching to provide our pupils with opportunities to have fun and excel. I record our thanks to Mrs Linda MacCormack who retired at the end of August 2019 and thank her for many years of exceptional service to her alma mater in not only teaching well into the thousands of children but also leading literacy and, for a time, music in our school. We wish her and Patrick a long, healthy and happy retirement together. We also bid fond farewell to Mr Ross Coulter in December 2019 who resigned to take up a Head of Prep. Department's post.

Our day care facility, **Buddies** continues to thrive and play an integral part in the life and success of our school. The facility offers morning supervision and after school wraparound care and homework support.

The new "normal" for schools during this ongoing pandemic is constantly changing and stressful, and far from what the staff, pupils and parents are used to. Whilst school life has changed some things remain constant; the public often overlook the greatest resource a school can have; that is its staff. Principals, Teachers, Classroom Assistants and non-teaching staff are often the forgotten victims of the current pandemic. So I record with appreciation the professional and dedicated performance of our staff under continuing difficult circumstances. Every day they are working in the best interests of our pupils.

Concluding, I take this opportunity to thank once again my fellow governors who have given so generously of their energy, time and talents, in the interests of our school, staff and pupils. We owe each of them a great debt for this service.

Mr K Swarbrick Chair

COMPOSITION OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS Sept. 2018-2022

Transferors' Representatives:

Mr K Swarbrick (Chairperson)
Dr N Blair
Mrs S Boal
Mr M Chambers

Parents' Representatives:

Mr I Gray (Vice Chair) & Mr D Orr

Teachers' Representative:

Miss S Kidd

Education Authority Representatives:

Mrs P. Barr & Mrs B. Gilliland

Secretary to the Board (non-voting):

Mr K Wysner (Principal)

Responsibilities of Governors

- 1 Finance
- 2 Management and appointment of Staff
- 3 Admission of pupils
- 4 Curriculum
- 5 Resources
6. Child Protection, Health & Safety and Security

Responsibility for the day-to-day management of our school rests with the Principal who advises the Board on issues arising.

STAFF AND CLASS STRUCTURE 2019-2020

Principal: Mr K Wysner

Vice-Principal: Miss S Kidd

Head of Foundation Stage & Keystage 1: Mr I Hanvey

Head of Senior School: Mr Coulter till January then Mrs V Miller

Classes:

P1 Mrs J Beggs / Mrs D Bradshaw

P1 Mrs M McCallan

P2 Mrs N Gray / Mrs L Houston

P2 Mrs H Halliday (Mrs R Berry covering prior to arrival and during maternity leave)

P3 Mr I Hanvey

P3 Miss S Wylie

P4 Mrs C Ashe

P4 Miss H Glasgow

P5 Mrs V Miller

P5 Mrs B Stirling / Mrs D Bradshaw

P6 Mrs L MacCormack / Mrs L McCormick

P6 Ms J Moge

P7 Mr R Coulter up to December / Miss R O'Neill covering from January 2020

P7 Miss S Kidd

Part Time Learning Support: Mrs E Blacoe

Classroom Assistants: Mrs J Huntley, Mrs K McCullough, Mrs H Graham, Mrs G Butler, Mrs A Adams, Mrs A Davidson, Mrs E McAuley, Mrs H Nixon, Miss A Nicholl, Mrs S. McFeeters, Mrs T Dixon, Mrs L McConnell, Miss E Harris and Mr J. Creighton.

Secretaries: Mrs L Johnson.

Buddies Daycare Staff: Miss J. Thompson and Mrs S. McFeeters

Caretakers: Mr Mark Boradhurst & Mr Gary Oldham

Head Cook: Mrs Jean Stronge

School Activities 2019-2020

- Breakfast Club from 8.00am
- Buddies Daycare Centre operating until 6pm throughout the school year
- Our range of extra-curricular activities included music, sports (football, hockey, athletics, badminton, netball, judo, jujitsu, rugby and cricket), cycling proficiency, Miniversity & various coding computer clubs, cookery, and our Eco-Gardening Group also continues to serve as a great resource for teaching and learning. Unfortunately, sporting, musical and residential events were greatly curtailed due to Covid restrictions from March 2020.

Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

Our PTA continued to prosper and provided a vital service for fund raising and the integration of pupils, parents and teachers, despite activities being curtailed by Covid. In May 2019 their Strictly Dance competition raised over £30,000 and this with additional school funds helped renovate, refurbish and extend the provision in our new Digital Hub. During 2019-2020 this work was completed and over £3000 was also spent on additional reading resources for children throughout our school. We are greatly indebted to our PTA and all our parents who support them every year. They provide much of the now necessary resources and additional extras that our children love. By organising social events and fundraisers they also give us a reason to draw together as a community socially throughout the school year and for this we are also continually grateful.

Teaching & Learning

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is fully implemented. Revised annual reporting and planning formats are working well. Teachers have spent many hours revising curriculum notes and restructuring schemes of work, with a focus on Literacy, ICT and Assessment for Learning. End of-Key-Stage testing also remained contentious in 2019-20 due to action from teachers' unions.

The school has started to implement online assessment and this will be increasing over the next two years. Our new Digital Hub will help with the successful full delivery of this during 2020-21

The Literacy curriculum is being revised to take into account best practice and available resources, particularly in reading and writing. Our new Literacy coordinator Mrs McCormick and Learning Support Coordinator Mrs Halliday will be working closely with our staff to further develop all our understanding of conditions like dyslexia and autism and how these impact on our children's learning approaches and how our staff can best provide for this in the modern classroom.

In ICT, development of iPad usage has continued, as monies become available we continue to invest in iPads, as their usefulness as a learning tool continues to grow. We hope that Activpanels will start to replace Interactive Whiteboards in our classrooms. This will be major investment over a period of time limited by available funds and the prices of this technology. Continued School Development priorities in 2019-20 included aspects of Literacy, Numeracy and Special Needs. These were amended and overtaken by our pandemic and included remote learning and online provision for learning. The mental health of our children and staff is also vital since the lockdown and we will continue to endeavour to focus on positive mental health well-being and outdoor activity based learning.

Academic Statistics:

End of Key Stage Assessment (P4 and P7) 2019-2020

Due to industrial action and also lockdown we were unable to publish End-of-Key-Stage assessment result for this period. The majority of NI primary schools have now refrained from engaging in this process due to concerns over the educational validity of the system. Parents can be assured that our internal assessment and reporting systems are as robust as ever and that every child continues to have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.

Attendance and Enrolment:

On Roll 412. Annual Attendance: 96.9% with 204 children achieving full attendance (excluding covid lockdown). The Governors and management still discourage the practice of children being taken out of school for non-essential holidays during term time. Lateness and poor attendance was insignificant but is dealt with as per school attendance policy.

Finance & Accounts:

Financial summaries have not been included this year due to Lockdown and limited access to EA Financial Services. However, all accounts (FMS and Private Income) can be made available for audit by EA at any time if necessary. School bank accounts are externally audited on an annual basis and monitored by the Finance Committee of the school's Board of Governors, reconciled by the school's secretary and signed off annually by the Chair of Governors. Income derives from wraparound care and extra-curricular activities, community services and use of premises. Delegated budget funds are allocated by DENI annually and are managed by our governors through the accounting offices of EA (Local Management of Schools: LMS)

Maintenance of Child Protection Records:

Concerns, referrals and contacts with outside agencies maintained and documented as appropriate. Staff received annual Child Protection Training and class teachers received updates throughout the year on a need to know basis. Mr Coulter, now Mrs Miller, serve as our Designated Officer for Child Protection. Mr Hanvey and Miss Kidd serve as Deputy Officers for Child Protection. This team supports our Principal and School Safeguarding Team in all day to day matters of Child Protection and Safeguarding.

Volunteers received Child Protection training in school in May/June 2019 and this will be updated on an annual basis.

Additional Needs:

Mrs Halliday now serves as our Learning Support Coordinator (Previously called our SENCo). Mrs Blacoe continues to assist with Learning Support on a part-time basis. A number of volunteer helpers (parents, grandparents and friends of the school) have undergone training and provide excellent support for a number of children. The Time to Read project also continues to operate in school supported by Business in the Community. These activities were also curtailed by Covid restrictions in 2019-20. There is always a constant need for volunteer support as the demand for support always far outstrips available support. If any parents or grandparents are willing, we can offer all training and vetting in order to help drive continual improvement and support for our children.

Mrs Halliday's role is to coordinate and advise on the identification of our children who may have from time to time or permanently an additional educational need and to liaise with class teachers, parents, educational psychologist and outside agencies to ensure best possible provision, and to supply and maintain appropriate documentation in a timely manner. The Learning Support Coordinator's role also includes maintaining SEN and English as an additional language records for Department of Education, maintaining our school policies relating to areas of Learning Support and keeping staff informed of best practice in the world of primary education. Our Learning Support Policy has just undergone major review and is published on our school website.

Our school works with EA psychologists, EA Peripatetic services and other agencies who provide individual assistance for children.

All children with an identified additional need (academic or behavioural) are internally assessed for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which is constructed and reviewed twice yearly in consultation with the teacher, child and his/her parents/guardians.

In-Service Training 2019 / 2020:

Aside from statutory in-house and EA-facilitated training in Child Protection, Special Needs and First Aid, our training and development programmes were curtailed by Covid. Our Principal and willing staff successfully completed PRSD (Performance Review and Staff Development) cycle for 2019 / 2020.

Five 'Baker Days' and five 'Staff Development Days' utilised for developing schemes and policies, six weekly notes and IEPs adapted to reflect changes made to practice. Dissemination of new practice, Assessment, ICT, Special Needs and Child Protection updates, team development and Key Stage meetings.

School Security:

Main front doors are locked. Access to visitors is granted by office staff, who release door remotely. All exterior doors facing the car park are locked during school hours (can be opened from inside.) In non covid times we have internal foyer

doors in place that are locked and staff hold key-fobs which can release these locked doors. Most of our school site is covered by CCTV. The school has security risk-assessments in place and an emergency action plan for evacuation, lock-down and an off-site 'place of shelter.' All visitors and contractors are signed in and briefed by our office staff, caretaker or principal.

Community Links:

Our school maintained strong links with the community and continued to provide opportunities for our children to be involved in events throughout the Council and wider Belfast and Newtownabbey area. We endeavour to support projects organised by the community close to the school and those arranged by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Through participation in various events organised within school and by outside agencies, the children made contact with the wider community.

We are a government controlled school and by virtue established as a school with Christian ethos and values. These values and ethos shape our policies and decision making. We are however not exclusive and encourage our children of other faiths and none to follow a spiritual pathway of their choice. Regular visitors in 2019-20 to our Christian Assemblies have included representatives of the following churches and organisations:

- Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church
- St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Jordanstown
- Whiteabbey Methodist Church
- Monkstown Baptist Church
- Child Evangelism Fellowship of Ireland
- Abbots Cross Congregational Church
- Stand By Me
- Scripture Union
- Hope 365
- Sustrans
- Past Pupils
- Hope 4 Life

Further to this, but not part of our normal assemblies, we continue to foster close relationships with the local Loughshore Parishes and we host preparations for our children in P3, P4 and P7 who are participating in the Roman Catholic sacraments.

Covid

Our school entered lockdown in March 2020. Online Learning was adopted by all teachers and CAs. For resumption in September, many Covid related risk assessments and new practices were undertaken. All staff demonstrated great resilience, teamwork and diligence in adapting to the unique and very challenging circumstances. All pupils have continued to have access to online learning. Vulnerable pupils, pupils with statements of additional needs and families on our Child Protection and Social Services registers received additional contact and interaction.

Governors maintained socially-distanced and online contact with the Principal, as already noted in our Chairman's Introduction, our teaching and support staff deserve to be highly commended for all aspects of their work during unprecedented and very challenging circumstances professionally and personally. We look forward to a return to normal schooling as quickly as safely possible.