



ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

B A N B R I D G E



Safe. Valued. Empowered to Thrive.

PROSPECTUS 2026

From The Principal...

Welcome to St Mary's Primary School. The Board of Governors, Staff and children are very proud of our school community. The purpose of this prospectus is to help you, the parent or guardian, to make an informed and reliable decision, on the educational setting, you choose for your child.

St Mary's provides a welcoming, attractive and stimulating environment, which supports pupils' learning, and celebrates their academic and non-academic achievements. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops the skills, concepts and knowledge, necessary for future learning and living.

To assist us in our efforts, we work in close partnership with our parents. Our staff, through their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work, support the pupils, and provide effective education for **all** of them, in **all** aspects of their development. We enable our pupils to reach their full potential, irrespective of race, gender, age or ability.

We want our children to develop as confident, disciplined and enquiring learners, able to make informed choices and decisions. We promote a love of reading in the hope that children will develop a confidence with language, which will empower them to communicate effectively with others. We aim to develop the skills and knowledge of mathematics, to enable our pupils to cope confidently with everyday mathematical situations. We foster a knowledge and understanding of the world through scientific, historical, and geographical inquiry, and encourage each child to come to an

understanding of roles and responsibilities in caring for this world. We create daily opportunities for our pupils to develop their practical, creative, artistic and physical skills.

St Mary's Primary School is a Catholic school with strong links to the parish, church and local community. We aim to establish a community, centered on Christ, so that His values and gospel message permeate the whole life of our school. We are firmly committed to the aims of Catholic education and strive to establish close links with the home, our Church, and our Faith Community of Seapattrick Parish, and the wider community. As a school, we are committed to developing a positive and highly effective pastoral care system, where all of our staff, parents and pupils are supported, valued and respected.

Choosing the right school for your child, is regarded as one of the most important responsibilities any parent or guardian will undertake. We are very confident, that when you choose St Mary's Primary School, it will mark the beginning of a long and successful home-school partnership, which will enhance and enrich your child's social, emotional, spiritual and educational journey in the years ahead.

Des O'Hagan , Principal



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Mission Statement

We are dedicated to creating a **safe**, nurturing, and inclusive environment where every individual feels **valued**, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

We inspire a love of learning, foster a sense of belonging, and cultivate the skills, values and resilience needed to **thrive** in a diverse and ever-changing world.

Core Values

Family
Community
Respect
Resilience
Kindness
Tolerance
Perseverance
Responsibility



General Information

**Our School is
a Catholic
Maintained School
with an attached
Nursery Unit.**

Contact

St Mary's Primary School

Reilly Park

Banbridge

BT32 3DJ

Telephone: 028 406 62572

Fax: 028 406 26545

Email: info@stmarys.banbridge.ni.sch.uk



Website: www.stmarysbanbridge.com



Facilities

St Mary's Primary School is a maintained, co-educational school for children, aged 3 to 11 years old. In September 2017, the doors of our new school opened for the first time, offering state of the art facilities throughout, with improved classroom space, technology and improved parking facilities.

The school site encompasses a full time nursery and has two fully equipped Learning Support Classes, for children with moderate learning difficulties and a specialist Autism Specific Class.

Each classroom is very well resourced and equipped with the latest technology. Interactive panels, laptops, digital readers, iPads and digital cameras, are all used to bring education and learning alive in the classroom, and to our children's learning experiences. The school has recently invested, with the support of our PTA, in an outdoor classroom and gardening area.

The school's caring and learning ethos lends

to strong parental, Parish and community links. Our highly popular Breakfast Club operates from 7.45am each morning, our After School Club is open daily until 5.55pm.

In September 2021, Mrs J Comiskey fulfilled a dream of many years by establishing a school library. This is now a wonderful resource and story area, enjoyed by the whole school.

We are delighted to announce that we have recently received approval for four new classrooms and we anticipate building to begin in the new year.

Principal: Des O'Hagan

Vice-Principal: Miss Joan Kelly

School Secretary: Mrs Jane Russell

Chairperson Board of Governors:

Mr Pat McGarry

Nursery Admissions:
26

Primary 1 Admissions:
75



Additional/Special Educational Needs (SEN) within St Mary's P.S.

St Mary's has a vibrant SEN community. ..

- ★ We are deeply committed to making the best provision possible for children with additional and special educational needs in partnership with parents and other agencies.
- ★ We recognise the right of every pupil to a broad and balanced education tailored to his/her own ability.
- ★ Inclusion and integration opportunities with mainstream classes is at the heart of our school SEN ethos.
- ★ We aim to provide maximum opportunities for all children and to ensure that all children are valued equally regardless of disability, culture, gender or cognitive development.
- ★ We respect and value our SEN Pupil Voice and SEN Pupil Participation and seek their views and opinions of school life.



What is SEN?

In the 1996 Education Order, a child is described as having special educational needs (SEN) "if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than other children which calls for special educational provision to be made for them, that is additional to or otherwise different from that which children of a similar age receive in an ordinary school. A child has SEN if they have a disability that calls for special educational provision to be made for them."

How do we help your child?

Children do not all learn at the same rate or pace. Some may have difficulties with aspects of their learning from time to time but most children with learning difficulties do not have special educational needs. If your child is provided with different work or activities in class from that of their peers, you should not worry. All children are different.

Your child's teacher is responsible for meeting the needs of all pupils in their class. Teachers use a wide range of approaches, strategies and resources to support pupils' learning. This can include different teaching styles, differentiation, group work and reasonable adjustments. We facilitate small group teaching and learning, where additional adult assistants are available. The school is equipped with a mainstream sensory room to support pupils' physical, sensory, social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs.

Children with additional/SEN needs are identified through assessment and monitoring. We have a robust Cycle of Support to identify and monitor pupil progress and support children with additional needs. When whole school educational provision ceases to be effective and the pupil is not making progress in learning, the school would consider making special educational provision.

The class teacher and/or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) will discuss the need for additional/special educational provision for your child. If your child does not make progress over time, the school will follow the various stages set out in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo)

Mrs McArdle, SENCo and Miss Downey, Deputy SENCo, co-ordinate the provision for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school. They are deeply committed to supporting SEN children, school staff and parents. They work closely with class teachers, classroom assistants and external support agencies and services to identify, support and monitor pupil needs.



Our classes are resourced to meet the educational and social, emotional, behavioural, well-being and physical needs of the children. Two of our classes have a sensory room. Children follow the primary school curriculum which may also be adapted and differentiated to suit their learning styles and abilities.

The SEN staff have developed valuable partnerships and friendships with external agencies and professionals who support the school, our SEN children and parents. We liaise with EA support services e.g., Autism Advisory and Intervention Service and HSC therapies such as Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists. Speech and Language programmes of support are delivered weekly by HSC therapist for specific children.

If you have a child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and would like to discuss our specialist support, please contact the school and view the SEN platform on the school website.

St Mary's Specialist Provision Classes

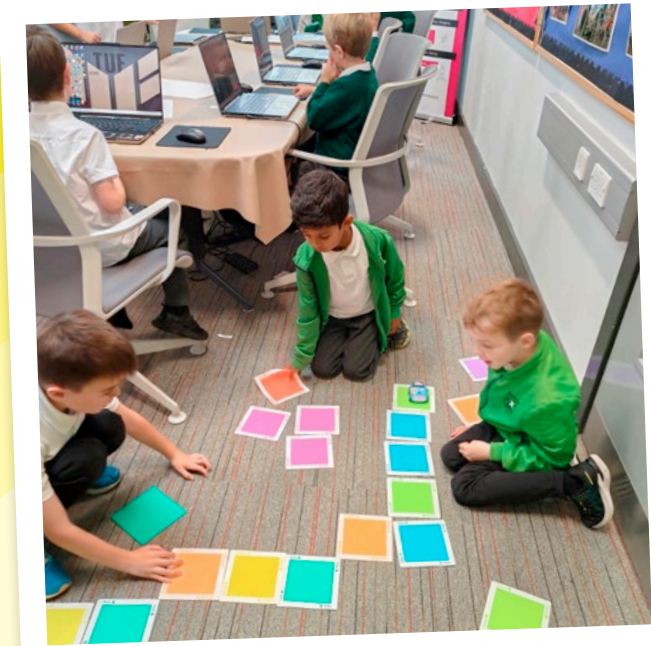
Key Stage

Learning Support/Specialist Provision Learning Class	SPL1	Foundation & Key Stage 1
Learning Support/Specialist Provision Learning Class	SPL2	Key Stage 2
Autism Specific/Specialist Provision Autism Class	ASC	Foundation & Key Stage 1

Admissions

Admissions Information

The academic year runs from 1st September to 31st August of the following year. Normally children are admitted at the beginning of the Autumn Term of the academic year in which they are five. Application forms and admissions criteria are available from the school office, or to download from the school and Education Authority Southern Region website.



Arrangements for Admissions

Once your child has been offered a place in Primary 1, he/she will be invited into school for an induction visit in the Spring Term preceding your child's start at the school. An induction meeting for parents will take place towards the end of July when parents are given the opportunity to meet the Principal, school staff and members of our Parent Teacher Association.

Similar arrangements will be made during the summer term for children to be admitted in Nursery Class.

School Uniform

The school requires all its pupils to adhere to the uniform requirements of the school.



- Grey Trousers
- White shirt
- Green pullover or jumper
- Red, yellow and green tie
- Black, flat shoes. Grey socks
- Tracksuit for PE

- Grey skirt, pinafore or trousers.
- White blouse
- Green pullover or jumper
- Red, yellow and green tie
- Black, flat shoes
- Grey tights
- Black, flat shoes. Grey socks
- Summer Term: Green and white checked dress
- Tracksuit for PE



Children in the nursery and early years may choose to wear the sweatshirt and jogging bottoms.

We would ask you to buy your child flat black shoes which he /she can open and close by himself/herself e.g. Velcro fastenings.

For P.E. children in P1 - P3 should bring soft-soled shoes or plimsolls. A tracksuit for PE can be purchased through the school.

The school uniform is available from all local suppliers.



Safeguarding & Child Protection

Safety

The safety and security of our children is of paramount importance to all at St Mary's.

Adults are requested to refrain from entering the school building. With this in mind, we ask anyone arriving in the school to report to the office first.

If a visit requires taking a child out of school for a medical or dental appointment, a signed slip will be given from the school office which can be presented to the teacher. No child will be allowed to leave school premises unless collected by a parent.

Children walking to and from school should come straight to school in the mornings and go straight home when school finishes. Children are reminded at various times throughout the year about keeping safe outside school and about 'Stranger Danger' procedures.

Watches and jewellery, particularly earrings, should not be worn during PE lessons or games lessons. The wearing of rings and earrings is a particular hazard in school, especially in the hall or playground. Children should wear only small stud earrings.

Please visit our website to download a copy of our Child Protection Policy. A printed version may also be obtained, on request, from the school office.



Designated Teacher: Miss J Kelly

Deputy Designated Teachers: Mr D O'Hagan

Children are reminded at various times throughout the year about what they can do to help them feel safe.

PATHs Programme
Safeguarding Assemblies
NSPCC Assembly
NSPCC Workshops
PSNI - Online Safety
Use of Circle Time
EA P7 Transition workshops
Anti-bullying Week
Internet Safety Week



Dropping off and Collecting Children

In the interests of our children's safety and to avoid traffic congestion on the Scarva Road, parents are requested to use St Therese's car park.

St Mary's operates a staggered start time from 8.45am to 9.00am, to help avoid congestion. Parents who wish to escort their child to class each morning should use St Therese's car park, as there is no parking available in the school car park.

Pupils with mobility difficulties or pupils who require EA transport are not subject to the above. Parents are encouraged to take extra care while driving or parking at all times. Please note; the area to the right on entering the school grounds is designated for taxis and deliveries only. Parking is not allowed in this area.

Pastoral Care

St Mary's provides a comfortable and safe learning environment for all our children. We aim to maximize the potential of every child and recognise that without strong pastoral care academic success cannot be achieved.

At St Mary's we believe giving our children a voice is important and their participation in the school decision making process is vital. **Our School Council and ECO Council** have been established for a number of years. Both Councils are made up of pupil representatives from Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. The Councils meet on a regular basis to discuss issues raised at Class

Councils and to agreed areas for development within our school.

The **ECO Council** organise our Gardening Club and Greenhouse on a daily basis as well as Fair-Trade events during the year.

Digital Leaders are established from P1 to P7. These children are trained in using and caring for iPads, laptops and other IT equipment and are tasked with ensuring that all equipment is set up each morning and is stored safely and securely at the end of each day. They also lead Internet Social Media Safety Awareness sessions in the school. All our P7 children receive First Aid training. First Aid training is also made available to parents annually.

P7 Playground Buddies are trained by our Pastoral Care coordinator each year to support our younger children throughout the school. Children from P5, P6 and P7 have recently formed an **Anti-Bullying Team** and have been trained accordingly.

St Mary's takes the welfare of our children very seriously and has engaged in **Mindfulness** classes throughout the school. The school also has a **Counsellor** who attends the school one day per week to work with children and parents. The school is also engaged with the *I Can Centre* to develop ways of looking after the mental health of our children, parents and members of staff. A summary copy of the school's

Pastoral Care arrangements is made available to parents at the beginning of each academic year.

A full copy of the school's Pastoral Care Policy is available, on request, from the school office or may be downloaded from the school website.



Learning for Life...

"Child participation in the school decision making process is vital."

Being Heard...

At St Mary's we believe giving our children a voice is important and their participation in the school decision making process is vital. Our School Council and ECO Council have been established for a number of years now. Both Councils are made up of pupil representatives from Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. Both Councils meet on a regular basis to discuss issues raised at Class Councils and to agreed areas for development within our school.

Shared Education Programme

St Mary's is involved in Shared Education projects with Abercorn Primary School and Donard Special School.

School Council...

Our School Council members represent the needs of their peers to the Senior Leadership Team while our ECO Council organise our Gardening Club and Greenhouse on a daily basis as well as Fair-Trade events during the year.

Life Skills...

As a registered Heartstart School we aim to equip all our children with emergency life support skills.

Children are taught to recognise The Chain of Survival and to act appropriately. Children are taught various skills from how to dial 999 in an emergency to providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

The Curriculum

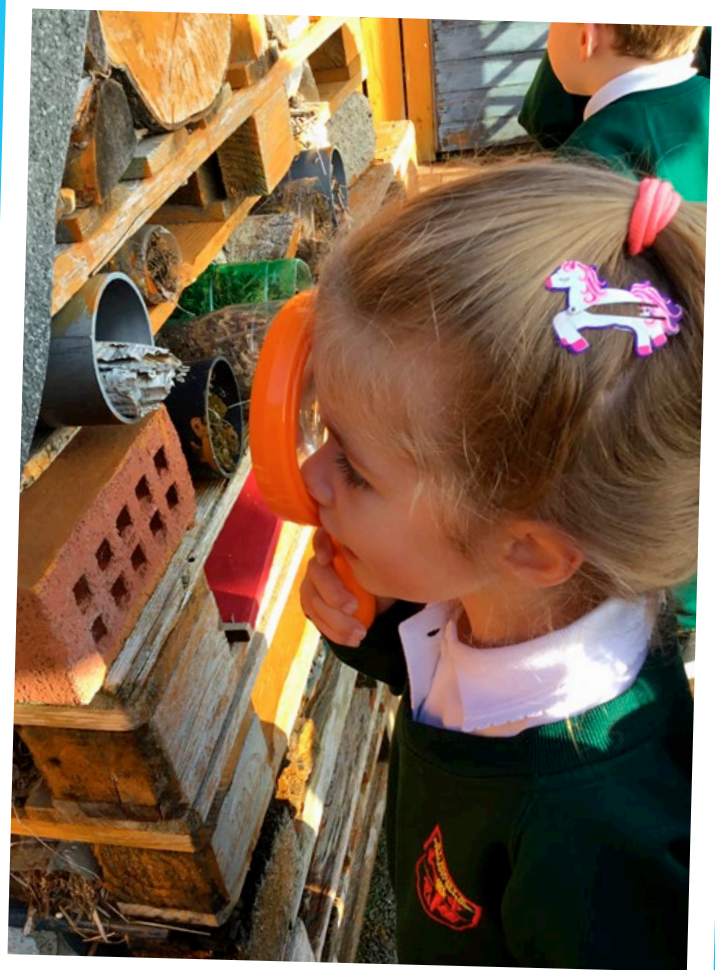
St Mary's offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of all our children. The curriculum seeks to prepare children for second level education as well as for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adulthood.

We encourage every child to fulfil their potential, to develop self-confidence and promote a spirit of tolerance and respect for others. The acquisition of knowledge and skills is vital for every child's development and this is placed in the context of positive attitudes to learning and the development of sound moral values based on the Catholic religion.

St Mary's will:

- Provide each child with a broad, balanced curriculum suited to his/her needs.
- Promote a caring nurturing environment in which all parents and other community members are welcome.
- Develop respect for the beliefs, culture and opinions of others.

The Education Authority provides us with specialist support for children with literacy difficulties. While the school employs additional members of staff to work directly with children who encounter difficulties with literacy or maths.



The areas of the curriculum include:

Language & Literacy
Mathematics and Numeracy
The Arts
The World Around Us
Physical Education
PDMU

PATHS

We introduced the PATHS Programme in September 2024

It is a programme for educators and counsellors designed to facilitate the development of self-control, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The programme consists of a variety of lessons, and additional materials and charts to be used with primary school children.

The purposes of the PATHS® programme are to enhance the social competence and social understanding of children, as well as to facilitate educational processes in the classroom.

The PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK Version) has been adapted for a UK audience by Barnardo's UK.

Religious Education

Religious education at St Mary's is based on the *Grow in Love* programme. It prepares our children for participation in the liturgy and sacraments and pervades the whole life of our school. Our Chaplain visits the school regularly and supports our children in their preparation for the Sacraments.



Our School Policies...

Parental Concerns

If a parent has an issue relating to his/her child, the class or as a wider school issue in general please follow the steps below:

- Contact the class teacher who is available at the beginning and end of the school day or by prior arrangement. Simply telephone the school office and an appointment will be arranged.
- Contact the Foundation Stage Coordinator (P1 - P2), Key Stage 1 Coordinator P3 - P4), or Key Stage 2 Coordinator (P5-P7), the Head of Nursery
- Contact the Principal or the Vice-Principal.
- Contact the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, Mr Pat McGarry, through St Mary's School.

All matters will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

School Attendance

Full attendance is expected from all children at St Mary's. Only in cases of medical or other exceptional circumstances can pupils be absent. A Certificate of Attendance is awarded to any child with 100 percent attendance in the academic year.

The overall attendance rate for St Mary's from September 2024 to June 2025 was 94.9%.

The school's target for attendance is 95%.

Healthy Eating

Our school is a health promoting school and operates a Healthy Eating Policy as habits formed in the early years stay with us through life. We actively promote

a healthy lifestyle and encourage our children to avoid eating chocolate, sweets, sweet drinks during school hours.

It is important to note that poor eating habits will not only cause tooth decay among children but could lead to obesity and even coronary disease in later life. Healthy foods such as milk and fruit provide children with essential nutrients and vitamins for growth whereas high sugar foods do not. Our school dinners provide an excellent balanced meal for your child.

Packed Lunches

We encourage parents to provide a packed lunch that is healthy and sensible. Children are asked to take home any uneaten food so that parents will know if their child is eating their lunch. **Any food containing nuts is not allowed as we have a growing number of children with nut allergies.**

A copy of the school's Healthy Eating Policy and Lifestyle Policy is available on request from the school office or to download from the school's website.

Positive Behaviour

In common with many other schools, St Mary's maintains a written policy on Positive Behaviour and Discipline in School as part of the school's pastoral care arrangements.

A copy of the school's Positive Behaviour and Discipline

Please note: St Mary's is a Nut Free School

in School Policy is available on request from the school office or to download from the school's website.

The school's policy on positive behaviour and discipline reflects the basic Christian ethos of the school which, as a Catholic Maintained School, seeks to foster the genuine Christian values of respect for, and tolerance towards, others, the ability to forgive, gentleness, honesty and politeness. In creating and developing these attitudes and values, the major influences are undoubtedly the home background and wider parish community. Good manners and courtesy are taught in every home and we expect the children to practise these same qualities whilst in school and on the way to and from school. We also expect that parents, in the best interest of the child, will support sanctions imposed in school.

The school builds on the foundation of good manners, politeness, respect and care for others which is cultivated and nourished in the home.

School Buddy System

Our School Buddy System has been in place for a number of years. Playground Buddies from P7 are on duty each day and help set-up and put away play equipment in our three playgrounds. They have also been trained to interact with other children, particularly our younger children to support them with their play activities and help resolve any problems fairly.

Homework

Homework is seen as an important part of the learning process. Children are encouraged to extend their school work into their homes, to expand on and organise their own work, to search for information and to solve problems. As the children become older, their work should be viewed as a form of preparation for

secondary education. We would not expect a child to spend much more than forty minutes uninterrupted working time at home. We would stress at the outset that homework does not always involve written work. In Primary 1 and 2 Reading forms the basis of homework.

In all other classes reading, spelling, mathematical concepts and the learning of tables will form the basis of homework most evenings. Reading, particularly leisure reading, reading for pleasure and for information as well as the reading of popular children's books, annuals and newspapers are all excellent forms of non-written homework which deserve and indeed require your encouragement.

Every child has access to *Mathletics* which enables them to review and practise maths concepts they have been learning in school. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in and contribute to online learning.

Indeed we would hope that our pupils would make increased use of the local libraries. Many of our pupils have access to computers in the home and the use of these should be encouraged where appropriate.

Transition

As part of the school's Transition Policy we may decide to mix classes within a year group to develop friendships throughout the year group as well as ensuring appropriate balances of gender and need.



Sporting Aims

St Mary's places a very strong emphasis on the value of sport and the contribution it can make to the education of pupils at St Mary's.

St Mary's Primary School provides an extensive range of sporting activities for all children. All pupils are required to participate in Physical Education each week and be full participants in the school's swimming program. In recent years St Mary's reached the Northern Ireland finals of the schools 7 a-side soccer competition while the girls reached the Ulster Finals in Netball.

The aims of sport in St Mary's are:

- 1. to promote physical, social and emotional development of pupils through directed extracurricular sporting activities;
- 2. to enable pupils to experience a wide range of games and physical activities;
- 3. to create an awareness of and the benefits of team participation;
- 4. to experience the enjoyment of physical activity;
- 5. to develop a foundation for continued participation in physical activities in later life;
- 6. to enjoy healthy competition.



Sports Facilities

St Mary's has a large assembly hall and two large playgrounds with a variety of physical education equipment. The school regularly uses Banbridge Leisure Centre for swimming, football and netball as well as the facilities at Clann Na Banna, St. Patrick's 4G Pitch and Cheney Park.

- The sports available at St Mary's include:
- Athletics/Cross Country
 - Gaelic Football
 - Netball
 - Soccer
 - Swimming
 - Table Tennis
 - Girls' soccer



Extra Curricular Activities

At St Mary's we believe it is important for all pupils to stay active. The school offers a wide variety of extra-curricular activities considers which provide a valuable dimension to the education of children.

- Irish Dancing

Coding Club

Swimming

School Choir

Cycling Proficiency

Netball

Music Tuition - (Guitar, woodwind, African Drums, brass)

Football

Gaelic Football

Girls football

French
- Athletics

ECO Council

Gardening Club

Astronomy Club

Speech and Drama

Chess

Table Tennis

School Council

Fun Fit

Ukulele

First Aid - P7 children

Mindfulness

Archery



Wrap Around Services

Breakfast Club

Our Breakfast Club operates each morning from 7.45am serving a nutritious breakfast.

Afterschool Club details are available from the school office

The After School Club and Breakfast Club are registered to accept childcare vouchers.

Our established **Summer Scheme** operates during the summer holiday and is organised by staff from our Afterschool Club and school. Children have opportunities to participate in various sporting activities

including; swimming, tennis, football, basketball, volleyball, archery and water sports at Craigavon Water Sports Centre. To take part in trips to the library, farm and zoo; as well as take part in art and craft, ICT and various learning activities.

Details of the financial benefits to parents, how the scheme works and how parents can apply to the scheme are available at:

www.employersforchildcare.org



Music

St Mary's has a strong tradition of extra-curricular musical activities.

All children from P5 have an opportunity to audition for the School Choir. All children from P4 up have an opportunity learn to play the guitar, the recorder, receive violin, brass, ukulele, flute tuition or learn to play percussion instruments such as the African drum. Over previous years the Pathways project has greatly enhanced music participation and experience in P4. If your child is interested please contact Mrs O'Hare or Mr O'Hagan for information.

Parent Teacher Association

St Mary's has a very strong and active Parent Teacher Association. Our Parent Teacher Association generally meets twice per term and produces an annual Newsletter to inform parents of fundraising events and parental activities.

Over the past number of years our PTA organised school discos for all our children, Quiz Nights for parents and staff, a Parent Teacher Football Match, a Car Wash fundraiser, Family Bingo, a number of school Coin Drives, Coffee mornings for charities, Movie Nights, school lotto, Seapatrack 10Km and a fundraising Tesco Bag Pack to name but a few. Our PTA also supports the school with Sports Day.

St Mary's PTA always welcome new volunteers.



This year our PTA donated over £12,000 to our school and provided £11,000 in successful grant applications.





www.stmarysbanbridge.com



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Fax: 028 406 26545

Email: info@stmarys.banbridge.ni.sch.uk



SCHOOL WEBSITES: WWW.SCHOOLWEBDESIGN.NET