

# *ANNUAL GOVERNORS' REPORT*

**2018 – 2019**



*SION MILLS CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL  
THE PARK  
SION MILLS*

*Principal: Mrs O McNelis*

## ***LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS***

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As Chairperson of Sion Mills Primary School Board of Governors I would like to express my appreciation to the Principal and members of Staff. Strong and dedicated leadership, good teamwork and an excellent pupil centred approach by all continue to be key features of school life. I would also like to thank fellow governors for their hard work and dedication of their time and commitment to the ongoing work of our school.

I am delighted to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all new pupils and parents and wish them a long and happy association with the school. Indeed, I wish to thank all parents and guardians for their on-going support of the school.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Governors I have pleasure in presenting this Annual Governors' Report and would commend it to you.

Yours sincerely



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T. Bradley

(CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS)

Dear Parents,

I write this Annual Governors' Report, on behalf of the governors to provide you with a summary of events and activities, which take place in school. It aims to give you some information on the organisation and its financing and how the Governors and others with responsibilities have carried out their duties.

As Principal I would personally like to thank the staff for their continued hard work and support. The year from September 2018 – June 2019 saw some quite significant changes with changes in staff, some at short notice. It is commendable how colleagues 'stepped up' and filled in gaps or supported new members of staff. The governors have shown tremendous allegiance to the school and its aims and have worked tirelessly at many late night meetings to support the procedures, practices and governance of our school. During the first term of last year four members of the Board of Governors resigned from their positions – Mr Harry Friar, Mrs Valerie Campbell, Mr Philip Miller and Mr Martin Gallagher. The staff and I are indebted to these people who performed the role of 'critical friend' and community advocate with great sincerity and respectful judgement. Mr Friar, in particular, had served on the Board for 32 years, 28 as chairperson, and his commitment to Sion Mills Primary School is unquestionable. I thank the Governors both past and new for their support.

I commend this report to you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



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Mrs.O McNelis  
SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### **WHO ARE THE GOVERNORS**

***We welcome our new governors***

CHAIRMAN: Mr.T. Bradley                      Sion Mills.

SECRETARY: Mrs.O McNelis                      c/o Sion Mills Primary School.

TRANSFEROR REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs J Browne

Mrs V Patterson

Mrs C Cronin

Mr P McNulty

EDUCATION AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Mr. T Bradley

Mr S Aiken

PARENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs G Sheen

Mrs E McMullen

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE:

Mrs L Kingh

HEADTEACHER:

Mrs.O McNelis                      (Non-voting member)

### **WHAT ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Governors are ultimately responsible for the overall management of the school.  
See: Guide for School Governors.

Some areas of responsibility include:

1. School Development Plan including Education Standards.
2. Oversight of the curriculum.
3. Promoting Equality, Good Relations and Diversity (Shared Education)
4. Oversight of the financial management of the school.
5. Selection of staff and other personnel responsibilities.
6. Admissions Policy.
7. Religious Education.
8. Child Protection & Pupil Pastoral Care.
9. Health and Safety.
- 10.School Maintenance.
- 11.Implementation of new legislation.
- 12.P.R.S.D.



## TEACHING STAFF

### 2018/2019

PRINCIPAL:	Mrs O McNelis
VICE-PRINCIPAL:	Mrs W Kee
ASSISTANT TEACHERS:	Mrs V Campbell Miss C McGeady (Nursery) Mrs G McAleer Mrs B Sproule Mrs M Hendron Mrs L Kingh Mrs K Cunningham Miss D Walsh(Speech & Lang. Class) Mrs L Lynch (Learning Support) Miss D McGinley

## STAFFING

Staffing is largely dependent upon the number of pupils enrolled at the school and the number admitted in September 2018 was 33. The school's admission number is 48 and enrolment number 333.

38 children were admitted to the Nursery Unit. There are 6 children in the Speech and Language class.

### **Staffing Complement for 2018/2019**

Teaching Complement- Principal, Vice Principal, 9 teachers and 1 part-time teacher

Ancillary Staff -	1 Full-time Secretary	36 hours p.w.
	2 Full-time Classroom Assistants P1&P2	25 hours p.w.
	2 Full-time Classroom Assistants (Special Needs)	27.5 hours p.w.
	4 Part-time Classroom Assistants (Special Needs)	25 hours p.w.
	1 Term-time Speech & Language C/A	25 hours p.w.
	1 Full-time Nursery Assistant	26 hours p.w.
	1 Full-time Nursery Assistant	6.5 hours p.w.
	3 Part time Cleaners	10 hours p.w.
	1 Building Supervisor with supervision responsibility	36 hours p.w.
	4 Lunch-time Supervisory Assistants	5 hours p.w.
	1 Senior Supervisor	5 hours p.w.

During the year, teachers were actively engaged in weekly Curriculum Planning during 'Directed time'. Directed time operated in line with ever strengthening union directives. 2018 – 2019 continued to be a challenging year as cuts to the overall education budget impacted more deeply. This issue was persistently brought to the attention of the media and parents as well as representations made to the NI Education Committee at Westminster (*Education funding in Northern Ireland* published 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019). To date, these issues remain. All staff attended in-service courses, if offered, facilitated by the EA's Advisory Service, the Shared Education team and school based INSET. School based INSET is a planned programme of professional development closely linked to the School Development Plan and shows our commitment to achieving a lifelong learning community.

## Snapshots from 2018 -2019



Abanna Choir from Uganda visit the school and community.



Outdoor classroom added to the upper playground



Eco Team receive Bronze Active Travel Award from Mr Ronan McLaughlin



Planting bulbs donated by Edina Trust



## **Summary of Year**

### **September 2018 – June 2019**

This was a very busy year for the school with many achievements and lots to celebrate. I would like to thank all parents, staff and governors for their support to all members of staff.

This is a short summary of some of the highlights during the year, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

The year began with the departure of Mrs Geraldine O'Donnell, who had served the children in the school as classroom assistant for twenty-one years. Mrs O'Donnell had supported many children, during those twenty-one years, who had additional needs and enabled them to cope in the classroom effectively. In addition to this role she supported the wider school with her beautiful floral arrangements for special occasions and ensuring all the trophies and cups were ready and in place for the end of year prize giving and Leavers' Assembly.

In March 2019 we said goodbye to another long-standing, highly regarded member of staff, Mrs Ann Maguire. Mrs Maguire had been the only nursery teacher in Sion Mills Primary School until her retirement. Thirty-three years of dedicated and highly professional service to the Sion Mills community will be long remembered by so families in the catchment area. We wish Mrs Maguire a long and fruitful retirement from the role.

With Mrs Maguire's retirement, we subsequently welcomed Miss Catherine McGeady on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April to the position of Nursery teacher.

We were delighted to welcome back Miss McGinley, on her return from her secondment as Northern Chair of the INTO (Irish National Teachers Organisation).

Some much welcomed refurbishment work took place during July and August 2018 as well as an upgrade of the school's telephone system. Mrs Lynch and Mrs McNelis' offices were improved with more suitable office furniture and painted. The telephone system that had been installed in 1985, when the school was built, and included 6 connections, was replaced and now allows transfer of calls to all classrooms and other areas of the school. This has certainly helped Mrs Lynch's role be managed more efficiently.

In September the recruitment of new parent members of the Board of Governors was completed and the new Board met in October. The current Board of Governor panel is outlined on Page 4 of this booklet.

Mrs Wu Fang Fang returned for another year to provide Chinese Mandarin lessons. In June six children decided to sit the first level of exams. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019 Abbie

O'Meara (P4) was invited to South West College in Omagh, to be presented with an award for her excellence in Chinese Mandarin for her age.

**Traffic Management** This continues to be an issue at the school gates at drop-off and pick-up times. The Board of Governors and the Principal continue to lobby the EA and DENI for a long term solution to this challenge, given the space available to the school. In the meantime, the Student Council and Eco Team, ably led by Miss McGinley and Mrs Kingh, respectively, decided to contact our local councillors to add another voice to the safety campaign. In April, six of the prospective Derry City and Strabane District councillors attended a hustings event hosted by the Student Council and Eco Team. Subsequently, Roads Service NI and a PSNI Road Safety Officer visited the premises and agreed to add appropriate safety features while we await a long term solution. During the summer holidays safety barriers at the turn in, double yellow lines and a broad speed-reducing hump were installed.

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There were many school and sporting activities enabled through **Extended Schools** funding; such as football, netball, ball handling skills, parent programmes, breakfast club, dance classes, sculpture making, speech and language, art club, and homework club. All these programmes are reviewed and we try to enhance our provision annually. Thanks to one of our classroom assistants, Mr Ryan Catney bringing to the co-ordinator's attention some courses being provided by NWRC locally, a number of staff attended training in Mindfulness and this is now offered to the children through Extended Schools. All these have been very successful and enjoyed by children and parents alike. Well done to the children for their sporting success in outside matches against other schools.

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Sure Start programmes continue to flourish. The Sure Start Room was completely refurbished during the year and now houses its own toddler-friendly toilet facilities. Baby Yoga, Baby Massage and a Health Promoting Homes programmes are some of the supports on offer to families of young children. There is a 3 day a week Crèche facility. However, due to the refurbishment the Friday, Play and Stay programme for 1 and 2 year olds has moved to the Presbyterian Hall in the village.

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## **STEM**

Since 2016, through the School Development Plan, an emphasis has been on the enhancement of STEM related subjects. Staff have endeavoured to link with outside agencies wherever possible to add interest and 'real life' connections to this important area of the curriculum.

In 2018-19 the girls in Primary 5 were offered a learning programme facilitated by All State. This was a three session learning event with female employees of this global company and was based on a beautiful book entitled 'Great Women Who Changed the World'. All the girls were given a copy of the book as well as a workbook.



STEM Aware have supported a number of projects to enhance our Science and Technology based provision.



On 21<sup>st</sup> November, through the generosity of a parental contribution, when her son left in June 2018, we had a Whole School event when Paul Crawford kick started the programme with some exciting Science based activities. This was followed up by some in-class professional development for the staff from P3 – P6 over two sets of four week periods. This support was funded by grants from the

Edina Trust. We are most grateful for this funding in the current stringent times. Next year our Nursery class will benefit from similar sessions from this same funding and focused on outdoor learning.

We were delighted to be able to engage parents in one of our STEM related events when a parent/child Lego Challenge evening was facilitated. It is hoped to further encourage this kind of session into the future.

The EA have provided us with an outdoor classroom on the upper playground during 2018-19. This area has a twofold provision. It can be used as a base for outdoor learning but it also allows the children engage in creative play with natural objects, sticks and logs in way that can be safely supervised at lunchtimes. This is an activity that many of the children absolutely love, building pretend log-fires, huts, dens and just simply digging with sticks and with the extensive area was impossible to supervise safely, so we are extremely grateful to now be in a position to facilitate a healthy activity.

During 2018-2019 the following excellent support programmes continued to strengthen.

**Families Together**, a five-year initiative, continues to embed as a superb resource to the pastoral care needs of the school population. This programme is facilitated by Dr Maria Herron and offers a range of support to parents and children including counselling, workshops for parents and /or children. We continue to benefit from the weekly presence of an on-site support worker and the Walking Group. In August 2018 the staffs of all the Strabane area schools involved in the project were provided in some awareness-raising of the issue – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and the impact this can have on a child's ability to engage with learning.

**Getting Ready to Learn** – This is an ongoing initiative from the Department for Education that provided funding for the purchase of books and support materials to encourage adults to read with Nursery children. Mrs Maguire ran support sessions to promote ideas on making sharing books fun. In 2018-19 Mrs Maguire extended her provision to include the 'Healthy Kids' section of the programme.

Both programmes facilitate parenting programmes.



Visitors to the school included theatre companies; Konflux Theatre who work with Mrs Cunningham's class to write, learn and perform a Play-in-a-Day on a theme chosen by the school. This year it was UNICEF children's rights to link with our Rights Respecting Schools Award journey.

**UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA)** In May the school was awarded the Bronze Award, which is the first step to becoming a Rights Respecting School. Mrs Sproule, who leads the programme has now appointed a team of ambassadors (steering group) from each class who will be supporting her with next year's action plan to achieve the Silver Award.

This was an interactive production that was thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils.



Choir takes part in EA Springfest  
in the Millennium Forum



RRS Ambassadors receive  
the Bronze Award

The children were responsible for putting on excellent Christmas Shows which were highly supported by parents, carers, grandparents and wider family circle. Other visitors taught the children about drugs, alcohol, puberty awareness, safety in the community, fire safety and water safety awareness. 2018-2019 saw the introduction of a formal six week Relationships and Sexuality Education programme introduced to the PDMU Learning Area. Our clergy visit the school regularly and are most welcome guests.

Mrs Kingh's P4/5K class were involved in the Diwali Festival show in the Alley Theatre and the children especially enjoyed the Indian dancing classes provided by the Strabane Ethnic Minority members.

We continue to support local charities and this year raised money for the Shoe box appeal, Trocaire and Christian Aid and Water Aid. This all requires great effort so well done to all involved.

The **P.T.F.A.** continue to support the school in many ways both by buying equipment, supporting subscriptions to excellent websites that support learning and running events such as the Hallowe'en disco, the Teddy Bears picnic and providing tea/coffee and snacks on Sport's Day. An addition in December 2018 was a Cinema Day in the Assembly Hall on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December. In the summer of 2019 the PFTA hosted another super Summer Fair 'Spring



into Summer' in aid of school funds. This event required much planning, legwork and sponsorship. It was a wonderful community event that many villagers enjoyed as an opportunity to renew acquaintances in the school grounds.

My thanks to all parents and from the staff, Mrs Hendron and Mrs Maguire (until her retirement), for their hard work in liaising with the PFTA.

Trips included, Alley Theatre, Strabane, Redcastle, Londonderry/Derry, Strabane Library, Cinemas in Lifford and Omagh and the P7 residential trip to Dublin.

We continue to develop our skills and knowledge as a staff. Our Accelerated Reading and Athletics programmes continue to strengthen adding a technological dimension to reading and Maths.

### **SHARED EDUCATION**

The D.S.C. Shared Education programme, facilitated by Mrs Cunningham continues to grow and expand. The main thrust underpinning this funding is "Better Together" so teachers are required to provide programmes that improve the learning for children because they do it together with new people. Mrs McAleer's P3/4 class have now teamed up with their peers and have developed a joint topic to supplement those already ongoing in the other classes. This year saw teachers from the two schools attending courses together and curriculum leaders met to share policies and practice that all feel has enhanced the provision in both schools. In June the entire staff of both schools had the opportunity to share a training session with Shane Martin on managing stress.



Collaboration with St Theresa's P.S., Glebe, St Columba's P.S., Clady and St Eugene's P.S., Victoria Bridge continues to strengthen as part of an Extended Schools' Cluster Group. The four schools work together to provide joint opportunities for parents and children to work together.



## **PREMISES**

After a recent inspection of the school premises, the Governors expressed their satisfaction at the standard of maintenance and cleaning. They wish to thank the caretaker Mr. Malcolm Alexander and the cleaning staff for their continued good work. This excellent standard has been kept up to expectations by Mr Jonny Martin, who has been acting caretaker in Malcolm's absence. The entire staff and governors wish Malcolm well for a speedy and full recovery.

## **ATTENDANCE**

TOTAL DAYS ATTENDED BY ALL PUPILS ON ROLL, AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POSSIBLE DAYS ATTENDANCE: 94.6%

**The Governors strongly encourage families to take annual holidays during the school holiday periods.**

## **LEARNING SUPPORT**

Mrs Louise Lynch was responsible for Learning Support in this year. This help has been expanded to include small group support for aspects of Literacy and Numeracy. We continued Maths is Fun after school classes.

## **SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION**

A Safeguarding & Child Protection policy operates here in Sion Mills PS and this is reviewed yearly and approved by the Board of Governors. All parents received a copy of the parents' leaflet. The care, welfare and safety of each child is our overriding concern. Therefore the school shall refer any concerns about the well-being of any of its pupils to the Social Services Department and to the Education Authority, Western Region (EA,WR) to protect pupils in its care and to comply with the Department of Education (NI) regulations. The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs Kee and the deputy-designated teacher is Mrs McNelis. In the Nursery Mrs Maguire is the Designated Teacher. Since Mrs Maguire's retirement, Miss Catherine McGeady has assumed this position. Due to the increase in workload of this area of the school's Pastoral Care, it was deemed prudent to invite another member of staff to join the team. Mrs McAleer undertook training in April and is now a deputy-designated teacher for the main school. If a parent has any concerns in the area of child protection, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Kee. Parents will receive a summary Safeguarding & Child Protection helpsheet or can access the policy on the school website. Flow diagrams of how Child Protection procedures operate are on display in all entrance halls, with photographs of the relevant personnel, including the Chair of Governors, Mr Tom Bradley and Mrs Carmel Cronin.

## **DRUGS EDUCATION**

The school has a commitment to educating children about the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse. The school follows the Hope Drug and Alcohol programme. Should any parent wish to receive a copy of these policies please contact the office. There is a continued commitment to overall health and well-being which was reflected in previous years by our Health Promoting Schools (Gold Awards). Although this award is no longer available to schools we have achieved three consecutive awards and continue to promote healthy choices amongst our pupils. Our Extended Schools programme offers extra-curricular activities many of which are sports/health related.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

(As per section 7:5 of the 1998 N.I. Act)

This school operates an equal opportunities policy where there will be no discrimination regarding race, gender, religion, mental and or physical disability.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The school will provide, within reason, equal access to all parts of the building and all aspects of the curriculum for pupils with disabilities. There are three disabled toilets with all the required disability access. The school is entirely a single storey building with no steps and therefore wheelchair friendly. There is a ramp in the car park for wheelchair access. All external doors are locked and require an alarm system release button or an adult to open from inside the building. This alarm system was upgraded during August 2018.

## **CURRICULUM POLICY**

The school produces plans and schemes of work in line with the Northern Ireland policy document.

## **S.E.N.**

The school works closely with the Educational Psychology Service to support the children with special educational needs. There are 71 children on the SEN register and this includes the children with Speech & Language difficulties. Mrs L Lynch works two days a week with groups of children from P4 – P7 some of whom are at Stages 1 or 2 of the SEN register. These groups engage in extra Literacy and



Numeracy and education plans are drawn up and agreed with parents, teachers and children. Children on Stage 3 of the SEN register are referred to the Education Authority (E.A.) for specific support.

### **SCHOOL COUNCIL**

Our School Council overseen by Miss McGinley had a very successful year with some very competent boys and girls from P1 - P7 ensuring that the pupils' voice was heard and information was fed back to the pupils. The school council meets regularly and has two representatives from every class. The boys and girls look very smart as they carry out their duties, wearing specially designed t-shirts. The group organised a number of events in school. As already mentioned the Student Council were instrumental in organising the hustings event that saw the profile of our traffic management issues raised to local government level. This culminated in enhanced safety measures at the school gates.

### **ECO COUNCIL**

The children of the Eco Committee, led by Mrs Kingh, continued their work on recycling and reusing. They continued to work with Ronan McLaughlin on the Active Travel programme. Later in the year the Ninjas, as the Eco Team call themselves, were involved in the Big Spring Clean Up around the school and village. In the autumn term the Eco Committee team ran a 'Cash for Clobber' programme which raised funds that they then used to purchase plants for every classroom and for the raised beds outside. We are extremely proud of our active Eco Team Ninjas who keep us actively involved in important environmental issues and were rightly proud of them and Mrs Kingh when they were awarded with the school's THIRD consecutive Green Flag by the Northern Ireland Eco Schools Committee. The assessor was delighted with all the 'green' work she saw going on in the school. This is not an easy award to retain as every two years the Eco Team must prove that they have not only retained existing environmental activities but added to these. Huge appreciation must go to Mrs Kingh who supports and encourages her team year after year.



**June 2019**



**SCHOOL FUND ACCOUNT 2018/2019**

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Opening Balance	13,805.08	Books & Equipment	1,273.11
		Fees/Refunds	139.88
Donations	1,914.20	School Trips	1,283.85
Trips	1,745.00	P7 Dublin Trip	1,300.00
Sports	2,008.90	Sports	2,794.20
Books & Equipment	98.00	Services	149.52
Xmas Show	2,648.00	Taxi Swimming Gala	16.50
Hospitality	225.56	Advertising	416.24
Charities	776.00	Gifts & Flowers	154.00
Photos	549.80	Receipts	1,547.13
P7 School Trip	1,530.00	Charities	237.00
		Licence Fees	324.77
		Stamps	241.00
		Hospitality	535.70

SUB TOTAL £10,412.90

TOTAL	£25,300.54	Savings C/F 2018/19	£14,887.64
			£25,300.54

Prepared by: Mrs O McNelis & Mrs I Lynch

Dated: 05.07.2019

*Ita Lynch* 6/9/19

Approved by: Mr Tom Bradley (Chairman of Board of Governors) Dated: 05.07.2019

*Tom Bradley*  
05.09.2019

*Bonagh McNelis* 6/9/2019

