

ANNUAL GOVERNORS' REPORT

2019 – 2020



*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

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 2019 – June 2020 was unprecedented with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic and the sudden closure of school buildings on March 24th 2020. That event not only took everyone by surprise, but the onset of the pandemic created some frightening scenarios, some of which, thankfully, have not materialised. From the outset, as staff (teaching and non-teaching) prepared for children not returning for the rest of the year, there was a strong and sincere sense of needing to support our families, our community as the strange and unknown future unfolded. It is commendable how colleagues 'stepped up' and overcame IT and social media fears in order to continue to support their pupils. Later in the Summary of the Year I will expand on this but I was thoroughly heartened by the generosity of the staff. All of us discovered the true meaning of working in education when the 'normal' methods were suddenly removed as an option. We realised that **presence** really does matter.

The Governors have shown tremendous allegiance to the school and its aims and have worked tirelessly at late night meetings during Term 1 and 2 followed by numerous Zoom meetings in Terms 2 and 3 to support the procedures, practices and governance of our school. We are particularly delighted this year, that due to the early intervention of their lobbying to both the Education Authority and local MLA, Mr Daniel McCrossan and his colleague Stephen ..., councillor, Sion Mills Primary School will have a completely new boiler and heating system in place by the end of September 2020.

I thank the Governors for continued their support.

I commend this report to you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs.O McNelis
SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

We welcome our new governors

Sion Mills.

c/o Sion Mills Primary School.

Mr P McNulty

Mr S Aiken

Mrs E McMullen

Mrs L Kingh

Mrs.O McNelis (Non-voting member)

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

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

2019/2020

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

STAFFING

Staffing is largely dependent upon the number of pupils enrolled at the school and the number admitted in September 2019 was 39. 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	36hoursp.w.
	2 Full-time Classroom Assistants P1&P2	25 hours p.w.
	1 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.
	1 Senior Lunch-time Supervisor	5 hours p.w.
	4 Lunch-time Supervisory Assistants	5 hours p.w.

During the year, teachers actively engaged in weekly Curriculum Planning during 'Directed time'. Directed time operated in line with ever strengthening union directives. 2019 – 2020 continued to be a challenging year as cuts to the overall education budget continued to impact. This issue was persistently brought to the attention of the media and parents. UK politics and the lack of government in Stormont continued to create a stalemate scenario in all public services, including education. However, renewed hope for change emerged with the "New Decade, New Approach" Stormont Agreement in January 2020. Despite this being followed by the ending of industrial action

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 2019 -2020



Celebrating Robert Burns through story, song and tasting some haggis with the Primary 6 class



Friends from St Theresa's, St Eugene's and St Columba's join with Gloria Perry (Paverpol tutor) and Sion Mills PS to celebrate our Intergenerational project



Our local community PSNI officers gave a very interesting e-safety talk to Mrs King's P4 class

Summary of Year

September 2018 – June 2019

This was a very *different* year for the school with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of the school building to pupils. Despite the lockdown and physical separation from their classes, teachers and classroom assistants did all they could to keep in contact with their pupils. 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 1st September 2019 – 30th June 2020.

The year began with the semi-departure of Mrs Florence Hamilton, who had served the children in the school as classroom assistant for 21 years. Mrs Hamilton who is always known as Florence, first came to Sion Mills Primary School as a Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistant before becoming one of our P1/P2 general classroom assistants. In addition to this role, Florence served the school as a lunchtime supervisor and is continuing in this capacity. As a classroom assistant Florence was a superb asset to the school as no job was ever too much for her and her commitment to the children in her care was total. Florence always kept herself updated with any new learning and implemented what she now knew. Her support for the teachers she worked with was unswerving and often would have things ready before she was asked. So we are delighted that Florence will continue to be part of the staff through her lunchtime role and the after schools' activities she facilitates.

We were delighted to welcome Mrs Shauna McNamee onto the staff in a temporary capacity while Mrs Cunningham was on maternity leave. Mrs Cunningham welcomed little Charlotte into her family in August 2019 and returned to teaching, by then in an online capacity in May 2020.

Xiaojing Zhang became our Chinese Mandarin tutor in September 2020 and even though it was a short year, she managed to teach us a lot about Chinese culture. One of our pupils, Amirah Deazley, Primary 4 was highly commended in a Northern Ireland wide poster competition celebrating the Chinese New Year. Amirah and her family were invited to a superb two-hour Chinese concert, in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast in January where she was presented with her award. Xiaojing followed this up by inviting several of her friends to our school to facilitate a Chinese cultural day for the whole school on 24th February.



Amirah is presented with her poster, in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast (18/01/2020) by Mr Peter Weir, Minister for Education

Sure Start programmes continue to flourish even though many had to move online during 2020. Baby Yoga, Baby Massage and a Health Promoting Homes programmes are some of the supports on offer to families of young children.

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. Unfortunately, the Walking Group that had relocated to Strabane was forced to stop during the strict lockdown and our Family Support Officer had to work remotely with families she was supporting. A small number of children were able to access online counselling support through the Time for Children facility even during lockdown.

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.

Visitors to the school included theatre companies; Konflux Theatre who work with Mrs McNamee's class to write, learn and perform a Play-in-a-Day on a theme chosen by the school. This year it was Children's Mental Health issues.

UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) We were well on our way with the help of our fantastic ambassadors to achieving the Silver Award when Covid-19 struck and halted our progress. We continue the journey and have Elmer the Elephant reminders all over the school as well as an enormous poster in the assembly hall, designed especially for our school.



P1 - P4 The Innspectors



Strings students entertain as the audience arrive for the senior school show.

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.

In September Miss McGinley's Primary 7 class presented an assembly that was attended by local and national media to raise awareness of Climate Change. This assembly coincided with 'Vote Earth Day' organised by Greta Thurnberg 15th November was World Diabetes Day and two children from our school, Owen Doherty P7 and Ami-Lee Britton P3 presented an assembly on Diabetes. Owen was recently diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and he and his mother put together a fantastic awareness raising assembly on the subject.



P7 Blood Donation Awareness Raising Assembly



Owen & Ami-Lee's World Diabetes Day Assembly.

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. Unfortunately, our summer events were cancelled but we still managed to have a fun ice cream day on a beautiful day in June when the children, with their families returned to school for the first time to collect their belongings and End of Year reports.

We were most grateful to the PTFA Facebook page which enabled teachers and support staff stay in regular contact with their children during lockdown. Mrs Sheen set each class up with a private Facebook Group page where some online interaction could continue with families.

My thanks to all parents and from the staff, Mrs Hendron and Mrs Sproule for their hard work in liaising with the PFTA.

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. These programmes assumed a very important part

of our curriculum since March 2020 as a means to continue supporting our children's learning.

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. Primary 1 joined the group of classes who now partake in Shared Education activities.

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 acting building supervisor, Mr Jonny Martin. At the time of writing our school has been successful in a bid to the Department of Education for a complete replacement of the school's heating system, so we look forward to warm water and better heating next year.

ATTENDANCE

TOTAL DAYS ATTENDED BY ALL PUPILS ON ROLL, AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POSSIBLE DAYS ATTENDANCE: 94%

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 Safeguarding and Child Protection is Mrs Kee and the deputy-designated teachers are Mrs McNelis and Mrs McAleer. In the Nursery Miss McGeady is the Designated Teacher. 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



School Council 2019-2020

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.

Mrs Laura Pierce, (3rd from left) one of our excellent Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistants was a finalist in the Families First Awards in The Titanic Centre, Belfast. Laura was nominated by the parent of a child she had supported from Nursery – Primary 7.



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. Huge appreciation must go to Mrs Kingh who supports and encourages her team year after year.

Eco Team 2019-2020



June 2020

Being the year it was, our Leavers' Assembly was forced to go online. Here are some of the participants in the extravaganza. The video can be found in the News archives of our school website – www.sionmillsps.com

2019 2020 was a most unusual year. Below is a photographic overview of some changes to the school - March – June 2020



No Entry for Deliveries



Makeshift Sanitising stations



Bring Your Own Disinfectant



Assembly Hall with social distance marking for staff meeting



Home School packs to be collected



Classroom prepared for key workers' children



Created by key worker children



P7s received a cupcake and photograph of their class as part of the Leavers' Assembly. Delivered to their home by staff



Final staff noticeboard of 2019/20. March 9th – 13th!