DEAR PARENT

I wish to extend to you and your child a very warm welcome to Ballymoney Nursery School.

This booklet has been written to help you get to know something about all aspects of our school.

We hope that you and your child have a happy and exciting year with us and that you will come to realize what a good start your child is receiving on the journey through a lifetime of learning.

Mrs. McClelland, Mrs Muller and I are trained teachers with considerable experience both in Nursery Education and also in Primary Education. Our staff of Nursery Assistants are fully qualified and trained to develop your child through a medium of play.

Above all we want you to enjoy your child at this particular stage and share that enjoyment with us. For this reason we place particular emphasis on developing a partnership between home and school which is vital in ensuring your child gains maximum benefit from his/her year in Nursery School.

It is my sincere hope that your child will have a happy and productive time with us in a purposeful environment which is meeting his/her needs at his/her particular stage of development.

Yours sincerely

Principal
ABOUT OUR STAFF

Mrs Martin has held a variety of teaching positions in both the Nursery and Primary sector before commencing her role as Principal here at Ballymoney Nursery School in September 2004.

Originally from Cookstown, Mrs Martin now lives in Coleraine with her husband and two daughters. When not at school she keeps herself stress free with regular family walks along local beaches, doing yoga, and, of course, no weekend would be complete without some form of retail therapy.

Mrs McClelland took up her current post here in Ballymoney Nursery School in January 1999.

Her extensive knowledge of shops, the length and breath of the country, ensures that the children are supplied with a constant stream of new resources. In her spare time, she is an accompanist for a choir.

Mrs Muller is the newest (and youngest) recruit to the team here at Ballymoney Nursery School. Having studied in England, she returned home and taught for three years in a Nursery School in Ballymena before taking up the post here.

She has proved herself to be cool, calm and collected in the classroom but away from school she is known to get herself in quite a spin - all in the name of exercise! Despite this virtuous activity we are glad to report that like the rest of the staff, Mrs Muller has a weakness for chocolate!

Mrs Simpson is currently the longest serving member of staff. After working in the Nursery for some years she returned part-time to the Causeway Institute and gained an NVQ Level 3 qualification.

Her meticulous memory for sending letters and cards for every occasion means the Royal Mail in Ballymoney are grateful to her for keeping them in business.
CURRICULUM

We provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment where there is a wealth of appropriate equipment and input by qualified staff to meet the needs of your child.

We know that young children need to be actively involved and so most of their learning will take place through the medium of play.

These play experiences are carefully planned to create a challenging environment where development can take place.

Children are given the opportunities to investigate, satisfy their curiosity, explore their environment both indoors and outside, share the world of books, music and drama, experience success and develop a positive attitude towards learning.

Through a curriculum which is broad and balanced children are allowed to make choices and are provided with opportunities through play and other experiences to develop learning associated with:

- Personal Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Movement
- The Arts
- Language Development
- Early Mathematical Experiences
- The World Around Us

There will be an Open Night held in the first term to give you the opportunity to see some of the activities your child engages in during the course of a Nursery day.

DISCIPLINE

In Ballymoney Nursery School we place a strong emphasis on positive discipline. Our aim is help the children become self disciplined, accept responsibility for their own actions and respect others and their work.

Our first aim is to make the child feel confident with us and feel accepted. We have to try to understand a child’s feelings as he/she struggles with the conflict between the desire to assert themselves and the necessity to conform to the demands placed upon them by the school. We know that for some children this is more of a struggle than for others.

We feel that a child has the right to feel any way he wishes but does not have the right to act any way he wishes.

The children are introduced to the limits set by the school when they are settling in. The limits are set to ensure their right to uninterrupted play, their safety, the safety of others, and for the smooth running of the school. A list of the rules may be seen in the school policy. The policy of the school is to try to help the children understand what they have done wrong and how the action affects others and themselves. If children persist with unacceptable behaviour they are removed from the activity or area and settled at another activity.

If children display continual anti-social behaviour the matter will be discussed with you to try to alleviate the problem. We ask you to co-operate with us so that a behaviour management programme can be worked out as it is vitally important that both home and school have the same expectations about what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

If you are concerned about any aspect of your child’s behaviour or if you feel the behaviour of another child is affecting your child in any way please do let us know.
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

We do admit children who have special educational needs to the Nursery School and during the year we may find that some children are experiencing difficulty in certain areas. We ask that you work as closely as possible with us and share any concerns you may have about your child if a problem is apparent. The more information we have about your child the more we can concentrate on providing the correct materials and activities.

All provision for special needs is co-ordinated by the Principal but other members of staff will be involved and made aware of any problems. It is the aim of the school to integrate children with special needs as fully as possible, giving them access to the same materials, activities and experiences as the other children.

If other outside agencies e.g. health visitor, social worker, speech therapist, school psychologist are involved with your child it is very beneficial that we share our information with each in the strictest confidence in order to provide the best experiences for your child.

You will be kept informed at all times and may be asked to back up at home what we are doing in school.

PASTORAL CARE

We in Ballymoney Nursery School have a Primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the children in our care. There is a Child Protection Policy in place in the school and you are welcome to read it in its entirety at any time. In our Curriculum we teach children about possible dangers by helping them to recognise and deal with unwelcome behaviour in others.

All the staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks and guidelines have been drawn up to guide their behaviour towards the children. It may be necessary for the staff to change your child if they have had an accident but this will not be done without your permission, which we have already asked for on the information form.

PROCEDURE

If you have a concern about your own or another child you should follow these procedures:

- I have a concern about my/a child’s safety
- I can talk to the class teacher
- If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal, Mrs. M Martin (Designated teacher for Child Protection)
- If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairperson of the Board Of Governors, Mrs Joanne Pethick 028 2766 6948
- And if I am still unhappy, I can contact: Northern Gateway Team 028 7032 5462
HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of your child is of utmost importance and we make every effort to maintain a safe clean healthy environment for the children. You can help us by ensuring that the following rules are obeyed.

Make sure your child is not sent to school if they show any sign of illness. A child should be kept at home until he/she is capable of joining in all activities including outdoor play. Nursery School can be a very upsetting place if you feel under the weather.

If a child has a tummy upset we recommend that they are kept at home for 24 hours after the symptoms have disappeared. Remember there are many others in the class and life in the Nursery School is very intimate so bugs are easily spread.

Do encourage your child to be independent at toileting and to wash their hands afterwards. Young children are constantly touching materials and each other during play and germs are easily passed on.

Children must always be brought in to school and settled with the teacher at the beginning of each session. On no account may they be left at the gate or the door.

Make sure that your child remains with you after he/she has been collected from class. Children can easily slip out of the door by themselves and wander off in the confusion of home time as parents stop to chat.

If someone different is collecting your child please let us know. We are unable to hand a child over to someone we do not know even if the child knows them.

Make sure all cars are parked in North Road outside the zig- zag lines. Only staff cars and delivery vehicles are allowed on school premises. This is to ensure the safety of your children and the children at the Primary School. It also makes it easier to monitor those on the school premises and draw attention to strangers.

ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

After places have been offered, parents are invited to an Induction evening in May/June where details of the Nursery Curriculum are given along with practical advice about commencing Nursery School. Subsequently an Open Day is arranged where parents can bring their children to sample the Nursery environment, meet other parents and children who will be attending the same session and become familiar with the Nursery setting.

This is part of an on-going programme to bridge the gap between home and school and to reassure and heighten expectations.

We ask you to fill in an Admissions Information form and a SENDO (Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005) form and bring these with you when you bring your child to visit. This provides staff with some background information and the more we know the easier it is to relate to the children. Young children expect everyone to know the things that are important in their lives. Some of this information is also essential for our records.

RECORD KEEPING/ASSESSMENT

The staff are constantly observing, recording and evaluating the children as they play. This helps us to plan suitable activities for them. We always welcome input from you as parents. If you have any concerns regarding your child please share them with us in confidence. You are welcome to make an appointment to see the class teacher at the end of a session. We hold meetings each term so that you have the opportunity to discuss your child’s progress.

If any of the staff are concerned about your child you can rest assured that their concerns will be shared with you.
SETTLING NEW CHILDREN

We try to make the move from home to Nursery School as smooth and trouble free as possible for you and your child.

From the beginning of the first term the children are admitted each week over a five week period in order to establish a good relationship with each child and to ensure that each child has settled reasonably well before any other children are received.

This means that your child may not start school until the end of September so please be patient and understand that we have the interests of your child at heart.

Your child’s first day will only last one hour, either from 9.30am - 10.30am, if he/she’s in the morning session, or 12.45-1.45 if he/she’s in the afternoon session. However, if your child is not ready to stay independently for an hour on the first day, it is best you leave together after a short period. When you bring your child along on the appointed day, please arrange to have any younger children left at home. It is important that you share this day with your child. Time in the Nursery will be built up depending on how well your child settles. Please be prepared to stay on subsequent days if your child is very insecure.

Children are admitted on a Tuesday in order to give those who have started the previous week the Monday to settle in again without disruption. This also shortens the first week for them.

Our aim is to bridge the gap between home and school. This should never be hurried and parents should always do as the Nursery Teacher asks during this period.

SUITABLE CLOTHING

A polo shirt in yellow/white, a sweatshirt and a waterproof fleece coat are available to order on the day you bring your child to visit.

In order that the children can become independent and enjoy all the activities in school it is essential that they wear clothes that are easily washable and those they can manage by themselves when they go to the toilet. The easiest garments are trousers with elasticised waists and upper garments with sleeves that roll up easily. Please try to avoid garments with buttons and belts.

There are many pieces of climbing equipment both indoors and outside so children must have suitable footwear in order to avoid accidents. Trainers or shoes with Velcro fastenings or buckles are the most suitable.

All sweatshirts & fleeces should be clearly labelled so as to avoid confusion or children going home with a wrong piece of clothing.

If you wish you may provide a change of clothes for your child in case of accidents. However we do have a range of clothes in school so this is not essential.
EDUCATION IS NOT PREPARATION FOR LIFE; EDUCATION IS LIFE ITSELF

TISSUES

It would be appreciated if each parent would bring along a box of tissues on your child’s first day. We go through lots as you can imagine but we find this keeps us blowing for the whole year!!

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD NOT BRING TO SCHOOL!!

We ask that your child does not bring toys from home unless there is a special toy they need for reassurance when they are beginning school. These other toys often get lost and time is spent looking for them at the end of a session, or the children find it difficult to share their possessions with others and this causes upset to both parties.

If there is something new or special they wish to show they may bring this and it can be put on the shelf and shared with the whole class at story time.

We also ask that all items of jewellery are left at home as these can also be easily lost.

COMING AND GOING

We are in school from 8.30am in the morning in order to set the room up for the children. The doors will not be open until 8.55am as the staff are involved in preparation and planning and are not available to supervise children.

In the afternoon the door is locked until 12.30pm while the staff have their lunch.

Please do not bring children to school too early. Between 8.55am and 9.15am is most suitable for the morning session, and 12.15pm – 12.30pm for the afternoon session.

At home time try to be at school in good time. Children are tired at the end of their school day and can find it very distressing when all their friends have gone. If you are unavoidably delayed please ring us so that we can reassure your child.

The staff have many commitments at the end of each session and have much preparation and tidying up to do so a persistently late parent causes a lot of stress for them.

If your child is unable to come to school for any reason please remember to contact the school before 9.00am if possible.
MILK/SNACKS

As the nursery is part of the State Education system the overall service provided is free. However we do ask for a voluntary contribution of £30.00 per term for School Funds. If you wish the full amount of £90.00 may be paid at the beginning of the school year. This money is used to provide daily snacks for the children to have with their milk, baking activities, parties, visiting entertainers, treats for the children and any outings we go on.

As the children are being provided with a snack – sweets or any other edible products should not be brought to school.

LINKS WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Please remember that your child does not automatically transfer to Primary School from Nursery School.

A system has been devised whereby parents should make contact with their first preference school in early January. You will be given an application form to complete and return by a given date.

Some schools operate a mailing list to aid this process, so it might be advisable to contact the school of your choice in October / November to check if this facility is available. Advice and information will be given on the Admissions Criteria supplied by the relevant Primary School.

During the month of June, Year 1 teachers from the local Primary Schools come along to meet the children in Nursery School. We endeavor to bring the children to visit the local primary schools in addition to you, the parents, visiting for the Induction Procedure.

LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

As well as providing services within the school such as a lending library, book clubs and fairs, charity fundraising and having individual and class photographs taken by a professional photographer, we further our links with the local community by having visits from, police officers, firefighters, librarians, nurses, hairdressers and the dentist to name but a few. In addition to this we take the children on walks and outings into the town in order to extend the work being carried out in the classroom. If there are sufficient numbers interested parenting classes can also be arranged.
HOW YOU CAN HELP

Worried children cannot learn properly. Anything you can do to help means a happier time at school for your child. Here are some suggestions:

- Explain to your child what you will be doing when they are at school. This is reassuring for them.
- Encourage your child to dress and undress easily.
- Listen and talk to your child and answer questions.
- Read to your child and visit the local library.
- Create opportunities for your child to mix with other children and adults.
- Help your child to develop acceptable social behaviour.
- Encourage your child to ‘help’ at home.
- Offer help for our lending library service.
- Let us know of any talents or skills which you could offer to our Nursery curriculum.
- Should you wish to help/support in any way in the Nursery School you will be asked to complete an Access NI Police Check form. These forms will be available on the Parents Induction Evenings and from the school office at any time. We do encourage parents to submit their completed forms before the end of June if possible as processing them is quite a lengthy procedure.

AND FINALLY…

Starting school will be a happy time if parents help to play their part. Remember you are placing your child into the trust of qualified teachers who are always willing to discuss any of your child’s problems in a confidential manner and at an appropriate time.

Parental contacts with the school are actively encouraged by the teaching staff. The parents’ support is essential in working with the school for the child’s benefit.

The school welcomes full parental participation in various ways through the issue of monthly newsletters, invitations to meetings and other events, involvement in curricular issues and informal contacts at the beginning and end of each day.

Make sure you and your child make the best of this opportunity to attend Ballymoney Nursery School.

Working together we can strive to provide the best quality education for your child.

Many thanks for taking the time to read our booklet. Hopefully you are now better prepared for your child’s entry during the new academic year.
“The best way to prepare children for their adult life is to give them what they need as children.”

Tina Bruce