

ANNUAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS REPORT



2022 - 2023

The Governors of Ardnashee School and College, in conjunction with the Principal, are pleased to present this annual report as a brief summary of the life of the school for the academic year September 2022- 2023.

The continued development of the school is in no small measure a result of the dedication and hard work of all associated with the school as they continue to strive to provide the best possible all-round education for the pupils in our care.

This report is primarily for the parents and carers of children attending the school. The Principal, by appointment, would be pleased to clarify or discuss any query parents may have in relation to this report.

School Management

BOARD OF GOVERNOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Governors receive regular reports on all aspects of the life and work of the school and meet regularly to take decisions on staff appointments, financial management as per the delegated budget, curriculum, child protection, maintenance of buildings and all the other issues that arise in the running of a successful school.

The Governors work in conjunction with the Education Authority (EA) and the Principal and staff of Ardnashee in fulfilling their responsibilities. Mr McFeeters has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. The Board of Governors have full confidence in the Principal and members of staff and, subject to any clarification, fully support decisions taken by them in relation to the on-going work in all areas of the school's life. The Governors congratulate the staff on maintaining the school's high standards in teaching, positive behaviour and care of the pupils.

The Governors also recognise the commitment of the therapy staff and other affiliated agencies in working collaboratively to meet the needs of the children.

Education Authority Representatives

Ms A Bonner (Chairperson)

Rev D Latimer

Mr M Roberts

Mrs K. Green

Department of Education Representatives

Mrs D Amor (Vice Chairperson)

Ms A Kearney

Ms N Mullan

Parent Representatives

Mrs C Gallagher

Mr R McNamara

Teacher Representative

Mrs S Crossan

Mrs Carole Vaughan-McDonald

Secretary

Mr R McFeeters

Pupils

The school has continued to grow with 399 pupils in 50 classroom bases. The needs of the pupils continue to become more complex with each year. The staff team, working in close partnership with parents/carers and other agencies strive to creatively meet these needs in a nurturing, fun and engaging manner.

Staffing

The staffing in Ardnashee consists of:

1 Principal

2 Vice-Principals

47 FTE teachers

Classroom Assistants

Therapy staff – 2 Physiotherapists and 1 Physiotherapy Assistant

2 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Speech & Language Assistant

2 Occupational Therapists.

Ancillary staff

2 Building Supervisors

11 Cleaners

2 Catering Managers

3 Dining Assistants

4 Supervisory Assistants

1 Executive Officer

1 Senior Clerical Officer

1 Clerical Officer.

REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

2022- 2023 was a very successful year as the population of pupils and staff increased and we commenced a new three-year school development plan with a revised vision shared as an outcome of staff consultation. Our new school build started in July 2023 and staff have fully engaged in the design and resourcing since the process began. The 'Ardnashee Tribe' culture gathered momentum and huge interest from the wider community through numerous initiatives and events. The year also saw the revised model for curriculum delivery and pastoral pathways embedded across the school.

School Development

2022- 2023 was the first year in the school's 3 -year development plan. In spite of the ongoing industrial action the action plans were delivered and met. The leadership team are using the ISEF model for monitoring and evaluating the targets and this is providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in positive self -reflection about school improvement.

A review of the first year of the three year plan is completed and the Board of Governors are fully informed about the progress of the school priorities for improvement.

Considerable work was done in further embedding our Curriculum and Pastoral Pathways model and ensuring that we have the very best provision to meet the needs of all of our learners.

The introduction of the 'Good Afternoon Programme' has been a huge success in addition to the Good Morning Programme from 2021-2022. Staff share best practice for the Ardnashee teachers toolkit and the sensory curriculum continues to be further developed in response to the changing needs of pupils.

The school development plan provided opportunities for continued professional development in literacy and numeracy and the researchers appointed in these roles inquired about schemes of work to improve teaching and learning in these areas. As an outcome of this work two new schemes were piloted across EYFS to Key stage 3: Maths for Life and Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle. This will lead forward to a revision of reading schemes in year 2.

All staff receive a weekly newsletter which supports staff with continued professional development and celebrates successful teaching and learning weekly. The newsletter features as a piece of evidence for many areas of the SDP.

Training and Curriculum Development

Staff training was linked directly to the School Development Plan. Staff received training through;

- Epilepsy Awareness and Administration of Medication
- Team Teach Training
- Safe Manual Handling Training
- Fire Safety
- GDPR
- Makaton
- Sensory Integration
- PECS and Makaton

- Sensory Profiling with OT
- Drum Fit for cross curricular skills
- ICT Widgit software
- Maths for Life – scheme and software
- Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle writing scheme training
- Pathways Support training on how to access the services

Many of the school development days and much of the curriculum development time was taken up with staff meeting in departments to focus on the areas listed above. Individual staff have attended external training, mostly online and have completed training records regarding their learning and next steps.

The two Vice Principals participated in the NI Catalyst Schools programme and lead the 'Belong Wall' initiative as part of their research into pupil voice in a special school setting.

The Principal completed a Diploma in Executive Coaching with the AOEC (awarding body).

In June 2023 Ardnashee School and College was awarded the Green Flag Award NI for being an Eco-Friendly School.

The Curriculum

Our Learning Pathways curriculum focuses on communication, independence and skills for life. Individual targets are set for key learning areas of Literacy, Numeracy, ICT and Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities (TSPC), agreed with parents and included within the annual report as per DE requirements.

The use of multi-sensory methods and active learning techniques allows pupils to practise their skills in a variety of settings and prepare them for life beyond school.

Ardnashee introduced a live TV programme through ASC Youtube to share 'sign of the week' using Makaton and verbal communication reaching up to 5000 views. This addition to the curriculum enables staff to engage learners with a total communication approach.

During 2022- 2023 staff were provided with opportunities to share best practice in teaching and learning. In January 2023 the VP for curriculum became a member of the FLC Teaching and Learning team and commenced an inquiry into adaptive teaching methods when delivering the curriculum.

The leadership team presented the model for curriculum delivering to the Department of Education and EANI Assistant Director.

The Roots of Empathy programme continues in its fourth year and in addition to the primary phase director as tutor for KS2, we have a post primary senior teacher offering the programme for KS3 pupils.

School Security, Disability Access and Child Protection

The Governors place great importance on the safety and protection of all pupils in Ardnashee. The school provides the majority of accommodation on ground level and is fully accessible for pupils and visitors with disabilities.

Specialist equipment is fitted as required in order to meet pupil needs and facilitate learning. Consistent procedures and policies are established in school and are followed by all relevant members of staff.

The current buildings present many challenges with regard to health and safety and this was highlighted in the ETI inspection in April 2021 however some improvements were made in response to this. The Governors and management of the school continue to ensure that all possible measures are taken to provide a safe environment for our pupils and staff. Further fencing and improved class spaces to accommodate the increasing population of pupils commenced in June 2023.

Ongoing safety measures are in place including:

- Testing and maintenance of fire and security systems
- Electronic entrances/exits are kept locked at all times
- Regular maintenance and quick repair of equipment
- Vetting of all members of staff, substitute staff, students and volunteers following DE requirements
- The appointment of Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection
- Regular training for staff in Child Protection procedures and policies
- Close links with External Agencies such as; Social Services, WHSCT, Behaviour Support Team
- Excellent communication with parents and families

Links with the Community

For many years Ardnashee has shared positive links with the local community. During the last two years this has had to be much reduced due to the pandemic and restrictions. As the year progressed we were able to continue to have successful links with:

- Schools in the Foyle Learning Community
- NWRC for post 16 provision and KS4 Outdoor Pursuits
- Greater Shantallow Area Partnership
- The Three R's
- Foyle Family and Friends
- The Nerve Centre
- The Community PSNI and Fire Service
- Tuned In (pilot of after school programme)
- Millennium Forum Theatre
- Derry and Strabane City Council facilities including pools and climbing wall facilities
- In Yer Space Theatre Company
- Derry City Football Club
- Ulster Scott's Pipe Band
- Jazz Festival

- Choral Festival

Pupils making great use of many of the local community resources including parks, cafes and local businesses. One pupil has secured a regular work placement in a local café.

Special Events

Ardnashee hosted an original musical 'Tribe' which engaged all pupils in the Conquer Pathway with complex needs. This was a joint event with Foyle College choir and professional musicians from across the city. The project was funded by Spark Opera through the Arts Council for NI and we hope to re-stage this production in June 2024.

Ardnashee staged our first (post covid) whole school production 'The Night Before Christmas' which was devised and produced by staff and pupils and funded by Friends of Ardnashee (FOA) school based charity. The production included schools from the Foyle Learning community, professional musicians and local artists as well as 150 pupils from ASC.

The choir of 80 pupils performed at the annual Derry – Strabane City council International Choral Festival in St Columb's Hall (September 2022) and the annual 'Derry Colmcille Feis' in April 2023.

Additional Ear Marked Funding

2022- 2023 saw a reduction in additional funds from EA and DE however SEND, Engage scheme and Family Links funding did continue until June 2023. Funding was provided as follows:

Extended Schools - £24,523.00

Engage - £23,135.00

SEND - £30,000.00

Entitlement Framework - £25,982.00

DE Family Links Fund - £40,000.00

Friends of Ardnashee

In 2022-23 the 'Friends of Ardnashee' achieved charity status and continue to support school events and pupil resourcing. The Board of Governors greatly appreciate the hard work and dedication of the members of this group and thank them for their on-going support.

The Governors want to extend their appreciation to the parents of the school for supporting the efforts of the school and The Friends of Ardnashee throughout the year in raising much needed additional funds.

Conclusion

Ardnashee continues to lead the way in special education through planned research projects to ensure all children and young people's needs are met. Through annual consultation with all stakeholders we receive feedback enabling us to promote a culture of self-reflection to enable school improvement.

In spite of all of the challenges of recent years, the pupils have continued to thrive and learn. This is in no small part due to the unwavering loyalty and dedication of the staff who have worked with resilience and empathy and who welcome the new school build in the near future.

If you have a question or comment with regard to any aspect of this report then please feel free to put this in writing to the Acting Principal, Mr McFeeters.

Appendix 1 Summary of delegated budget 2022- 2023

Delegated Budget Budget Allocation: £304,831.00

Appendix 2 Summary of Expenditure for Private Account

Balance at 01.04.22 £22,633.10

Balance at 31.03.23 £ 12,473.00

Donations were received from:

E Doherty & Sons Ltd £500.00

Loretta McCarron £320.00

Derry Midweek Cricket League £450.00

Ronan Doherty (AXA Insurance) £100.00

William Begley £1,000.00

Julie Brolly £230.00

Kevin O'Doherty £300.00