



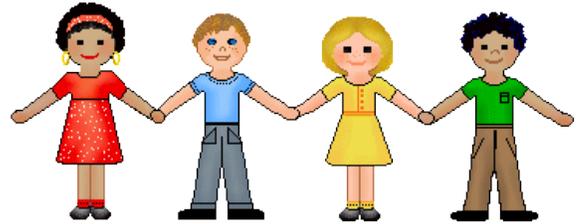
St. Maria Goretti Nursery School

A Guide for Parents

School Prospectus

Vision Statement

All children at St. Maria Goretti Nursery School shall enjoy a happy and secure environment where they are exposed to a wide range of learning experiences through a varied curriculum, thus enhancing self-esteem and confidence and laying the foundations for lifelong learning.



Dear Parent,

On behalf of all the staff I would like to welcome you and your child to St. Maria Goretti Nursery School.

For most of you this will be your child's first step in the field of education. We hope that this will be the start of a happy and rewarding partnership, with home and school working together to provide a secure and stimulating environment for your child. We welcome your co-operation and support as we recognise that this partnership is crucial to the well being of your child. Your child will be encouraged through supportive staff to achieve his/her full potential. We ask you to work with us so that your child is given every opportunity to develop happily in a safe, secure, challenging learning environment.

All of us at St Maria Goretti Nursery School place great value on the importance of Nursery Education and the firm foundations it lays for a child's all round development and future learning. We hope that you and your child will have a happy and rewarding time with us.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan McAlea

Acting Principal



Our Staff



Acting Principal:

Mrs Siobhan McAlea

Teacher:

Miss Seaneen Heaney

Teacher:

Miss Maura Keown (covering maternity)

Nursery Assistants

Full Time:

Mrs Deirdre Nuttall

Ms Evelyn Lyons

Part Time:

Mrs Gerri Burns

Mrs Felice Walsh

Secretary/Parent worker: Mrs Cathy Hawkins

Building supervisor: Mr. Michael Cash

Dinner lady: Mrs Geraldine Donnelly

Contact us:

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Phone: (028) 90234882

Fax: (028) 90319752

Address:

St Maria Goretti Nursery School

Whiterock Gardens

Belfast BT12 7PS

Website:

www.stmariagorettinursery.co.uk

Board of Governors:

Rev. Fr. Martin Magill (Trustee)

Mr Kevin Donaghy (Trustee)

Mrs Lianne McCaffery (Trustee)

Mrs. Aine Collins (Trustee)

Mrs. Donna Devenney (DENI)

Ms. Maria Herdman (BELB)

Mrs. Maura Rafferty (BELB)

Mrs Joanne Keenan (Parent Rep)

Miss Seaneen Heaney (Teacher Rep)

Mrs Siobhan McAlea (Acting Principal)



General Information

St Maria Goretti Nursery school opened in September 1983. It is built on the site of the former O'Hare's farm. It has a children's entrance path from Whiterock Gardens, and an entrance for vehicles on the Whiterock Road.

The School was purpose built by the parish of St John's and is a Department of Education Catholic Maintained School. Fifty-two children, aged between 3 and 4 years old, attend full-time (which includes a midday meal) and among those children are some who have varying degrees of Special Needs.

There are 2 playrooms in the school, 2 quiet story rooms, 1 activity hall, 1 staff room/office and a utility room. Each playroom has its own bathroom with 3 toilets and wash-hand basins. The school also has a kitchen where meals are served.

Outdoor accommodation consists of a safety surfaced covered area, a large paved path, a mini-beast garden, a large tar macadam playground and a garden with lawn. We also have a large covered sand pit, flower beds, vegetable raised beds and digging areas. There are also 3 outdoor stores and a car park.

There are 2 Nursery classes, each staffed by a fully qualified Early Years Teacher, 1 full time Nursery Assistant and 1 part time Nursery Assistant.

The Nursery day begins at 9.00am and finishes at 1.30pm.



The Nursery Curriculum

At St Maria Goretti Nursery School we believe that this time in your child's life is unique and a particularly important time in children's education. We consider it a privilege to share and participate in this part of their lives. The nursery curriculum is designed to meet the children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs at their particular stage of development. Our Programme is broad and balanced and allows the children to make independent choices. It provides them with opportunities to develop the learning associated with:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Language development
- Creative /aesthetic development
- Early Mathematical Development
- The World Around Us

St. Maria Goretti Nursery School is an integral part of St. John's Parish and the staff, together with the Board of Governors, are committed to nurturing the aims of Catholic Education.

During the nursery school day we aim to provide opportunities for your child to:

- Develop an understanding of himself/herself and others
- Make new friends, learn to share and take turns
- Become confident and independent
- Develop positive attitudes to learning through concentration, observing, listening and thinking
- Gain knowledge of the world around him/her

- Have opportunities to be creative and expressive
- Develop early experiences in maths, science and technology
- Enjoy stories, rhymes and songs
- Enjoy physical play in safety enclosed areas
- Develop skills which will provide firm foundations for future learning and for life
- Develop lively, independent, enquiring minds with the ability to question and discuss rationally

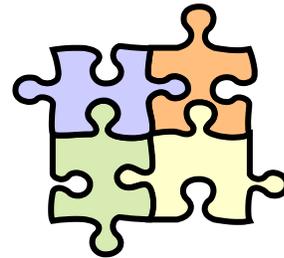


Throughout these activities we will aim to enhance self esteem and encourage positive behaviour and self motivation.

Play is the most natural way for young children to learn. Play helps children to develop skills and confidence. The play situations and experiences in St. Maria Goretti Nursery School are carefully planned and evaluated by the staff on a regular basis

Through play the children learn:

- To have fun
- How to get along
- To be active
- To explore and solve problems
- To use imagination
- To understand the world
- To discover what they can do
- Skills for learning
- To have confidence-that they can do it!
- To be independent
- Self esteem
- Social skills



Preparing for Nursery

Before starting Nursery School try, if possible, to provide similar play experiences that will be on offer in the nursery. Here are some suggestions of what your child could do or play with at home.

- Art activities using - scrap paper, crayons, glue, paint, wool, materials
- Construction toys - Lego, sticklebricks
- Play dough
- Reading books and singing nursery rhymes
- Movement games- dancing, skipping, hopping, balancing
- Dressing up and role play - develops imagination and language
- Sand and water - allows children to experiment and can be therapeutic
- Bats and balls - throw, bounce and catch activities
- Growing seeds, bulbs etc.



How you can help your child

- Talk positively about the nursery
- Take an interest in the things your child brings home
- Show your child how to respect and take good care of our library books and teaching packs
- Encourage your child to complete a task once started
- Help your child to be as independent as possible - at the toilet, when dressing and meal times
- Reward your child with praise and hugs when they do positive things
- Establish a good routine- early to bed, so your child arrives each day ready and rested for an active day in the nursery

Settling In

The "Settling in Period" is key to a successful year in the Nursery School for each child. We have a gradual admissions procedure. Intake to the school is phased over a number of weeks to give children time for settling in. Children will be admitted to the Nursery in small groups beginning with the oldest.



Each group will be introduced on their own for a short period until they are settled sufficiently to join the main class group. During this first week the children will stay for an hour. The time is then gradually extended until they are happy to stay for the whole morning session - from 9.00am to 11.45am. The length of time this transition period takes will depend on each child. This phased entry allows each child to receive valuable individual attention and helps them settle confidently into their new environment.

We ask you to stay with your child on the first day and to be available to stay with your child over the settling-in period if necessary. Children usually attend the morning session for approximately 3 weeks until they are ready to stay for the midday meal. If at any stage your child is experiencing difficulty settling in to the new routines we will slow the pace down to suit your child's needs.

Some children starting with us may have been to playgroup or another pre-school Nursery before, but for all children St Maria Goretti Nursery School will be a new experience. We hope it will be an exciting experience for them to adjust to but it may also be emotionally draining - so expect your child to show signs of tiredness after a while.



Teachers are always willing to talk about how your child is settling so please just ask!

The information for your child's "Settling in Period" is on an individual card in your pack.

Coming to school

Attendance

Make sure your child attends regularly. Please inform the school if you know your child is going to be absent or if your child develops any infectious childhood disease e.g. chicken pox. In the interests of other children, staff and health and safety please keep your child at home for the recommended period.

Punctuality

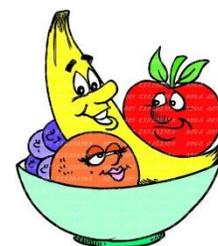
Try and collect your child from school on time - from our experience children don't like to be kept waiting and may get distressed easily.

Security

The front door is opened at 9.00 a.m. All children must be brought into the school building and handed over to an adult. In the morning help your child locate his/her peg to hang up their coat. At home time they need to be collected by a responsible, known adult. We ask parents to avoid collecting children early and keep us informed about any changes regarding who will be collecting their child.

Healthy Eating

The nursery has a healthy eating policy which is reflected in our break and lunch menus. We also participate in the '3, 2, 1' Dental Health programme and children are encouraged to brush their teeth in school daily.



Toileting

Before children start the nursery they should be independent when using the toilet. Encourage your child to flush after use and wash hands.

School Dinners

Nursery education is free of charge however a charge is made for school meals and snacks. Parents are encouraged to apply for free school meals for

their children. Application forms are available in the office. The cost of a school dinner is £2.50 per day (£12.50 per week).

Snacks/School Fund Contribution

We ask parents to make a weekly contribution of £4 per week. This will be used to help meet the cost of the daily snack, events and activities taking place in the nursery, ingredients for cooking/baking activities, additional art and crafts materials and replacement of some equipment.

For health and safety reasons we advise parents not to let children wear jewellery to school. Also, children should wear comfortable Velcro trainers as these are essential for all outdoor activities.

Safe Guarding and Child Protection

This policy has been drawn up with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. The Convention provides that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence and they must be kept safe from harm. They must be given proper care by those looking after them (Article 19). Also, Article 3 provides that adults or organisations who make decisions which affect children must always think first about what would be best for the child.

The central thrust of the Children Order is that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration which underpins the advice that follows.

Summary of Advice

- Our school has a pastoral responsibility towards the children and young children (students) in our charge, and we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety preserved. The welfare of our children is paramount and it is our policy to protect them from all types of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and exploitation.
- We have a legal and moral responsibility to report any sign of abuse. There are clear procedures in place to be followed where the school has been alerted to possible abuse, drawing, as appropriate, on the guidance and advice provided by the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC), the Education Authority and C.C.M.S.
- Our school has a designated teacher - the principal, who has specific responsibility for child protection. Procedures also provide for a second teacher to assume the responsibilities of the designated teacher in her absence.
- All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are alert to the signs of possible abuse and are aware of the procedures to be followed. As part of our Safe Guarding and Child Protection Policy we have a 'Staff Code of Conduct'. The full Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is on display at the entrance and a copy may also be obtained from the school office.

Any enquiries regarding child protection will be made carefully and sensitively. It is not our responsibility to undertake investigations or to make extensive enquiries of other family members or carers. Written records will be maintained of all available information relevant to any case and the subsequent action taken.

Educational Trips and Visits throughout the Year



Throughout the year we hope to offer a variety of educational trips to places of interest and we regularly invite visitors into the school to enhance the nursery curriculum. These may include:

- Belfast Zoo
- St Kevin's Christmas Show and Nativity Play
- W5
- Ambulance and Fire Service
- Clementsmount Farm
- Whiterock Library
- Hullabaloo Theatre Company
- Santa in his bus
- Fitness Freddy
- Jump Jiggle and Jive
- Wee Folk Irish group
- Ulster Orchestra Music Groups

Other annual events in our school include:-

- Halloween fancy dress party
- Nativity Play and Christmas Party
- Sponsored cycle for Trocaire
- Fundraising Cake Sale
- Speech and Language sessions
- Many relevant parent information and workshop sessions
- End of Year Celebrations



Holidays



First Term

Halloween: Monday 29th October - Monday 5th November (inclusive)

Christmas: Monday 24th December - Friday 4th January (inclusive)



Second Term

Mid-Term: Monday 18th February - Friday 22nd February (inclusive)

St. Patrick's Day: Friday 15th March & Monday 18th March



Easter: Friday 19th April - Friday 26th April (inclusive)



Third Term

May Bank Holidays: Monday 6th May & Tuesday 7th May
Monday 27th May

N.B. There may be a change to some exceptional closure days during the year but you will be informed in advance.