



Banbridge Nursery School

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

The partnership between home and school is of vital importance. A successful partnership enables parents to understand how they can best share in and contribute to their child's education as well as helping the staff to ensure that each child achieves his/her potential at school. Parents are the first educators of their children and, as such, can provide us with very valuable information about their child. It is critical that this link with home is established from the outset as it enables information to flow freely in both directions.

The Nursery School community is a very special one. It is unique in that it is the first year that your child will experience school-life for him or herself. We recognise and respect the vital role parents play in their children's education and the value they can add to school life. We also recognise that school can add value to the lives of all members of our families and this is why we encourage you to become actively engaged in what we do here at Banbridge NS, from supporting learning and development to fund raising and everything in between.

Throughout the year, you are encouraged to become involved in Nursery School life and to get to know each other. Some parents find great support in talking to each other and many forge friendships here which continue long after their child has moved to primary school and beyond! We know that some parents might find it difficult to engage for any number of reasons, not least their own personal experiences of school, and so we strive to develop extremely positive and effective relationships with families in a number of different ways.

Before starting Nursery School we invite and encourage families to begin to build effective partnerships with us in the ways described below.

- Prospective families are invited to our Open Evening which is usually held on the first Thursday evening in December.
- Prospective parents are invited and encouraged to make an appointment to visit the school if they were unable to attend the Open Evening OR if they wish to further discuss the provision and experiences offered at Banbridge NS.
- Following the application process, which is done on-line via the EA One "Pre-School Admissions" portal, successful applicants are contacted and invited to meet with Mrs Porter and/or Mrs McCusker in May to share important information about their children. This is a great opportunity to begin to get to know a little about our new children and enables us to plan for a successful "settling in".
- Parents and carers are invited to an Induction meeting on one evening in June.
- A 'Welcome Pack' containing useful information about school is provided for each family.
- Information including a "Welcome Book" is posted on our school website www.banbridgenursery.com. This information aims to support successful and happy settling into school and to provide relevant guidance for the year ahead.

- An admissions and settling in procedure in late August/early September involves parents and caters for the individual needs of the children.

As mentioned above, this pre-school year is very special. Being a small school setting enables a family/community ethos to thrive. This year, more than any that come thereafter, you will have unique opportunities to be as involved in school life as you wish to be. There will be bountiful opportunities for you to visit school and to become part of a team that has your children and their happiness, security and success at the very heart of everything we do.

Below is a detailed but not exhaustive list of the ways in which we nurture parent partnerships in our school community.

Parent Support Group

All parents automatically become members of our Parent Support Group (PSG) once their child is enrolled. A small number of “parent contacts” are then appointed to ensure effective communication between school and home. These people volunteer for this role and we usually have 4 parent contacts each year. All parents are invited to meetings to discuss and plan for school events, including celebrations and fundraisers, on average once per half term.

Board of Governors

There are two parent representatives elected to our Board of Governors for each four-year term. If you are interested in becoming a School Governor, please refer to the EA website for further information about the roles and responsibilities of our governors. You should also register your interest with the school principal and secretary to the Board of Governors, Mrs K Porter.

Learning Together

As our school motto “Learning Together” suggests, we view effective learning as a collaboration between children, parents, school and the wider community. All members of community are viewed as “learners” regardless of their levels of knowledge and expertise in child development and Early Years education.

During your child’s pre-school year at Banbridge NS, there will be numerous opportunities for you to support and benefit from learning experiences in school and beyond.

You will be highly involved in planning your child’s Learning Journey while she/he is at Nursery School. Parents are encouraged and expected to share any information that is relevant to the presentation, development and well-being of their children. The information and insight you can provide into how your child learns best and what interests and motivates him/her to explore, experiment and learn are critical to effective planning for high quality experiences and successful outcomes. You will be encouraged to attend meetings with your child’s teacher to discuss the progress being made across all developmental and curricular areas and to plan for future achievement.

Parents of children with additional medical and/or educational needs will be highly involved in planning for their child's learning and development and will have opportunities to meet regularly, at the very least once per half term but usually much more frequently, with the teacher and other professionals who are involved in providing appropriate support to meet the needs of their child.

In relation to adult learning opportunities, we host a number of different sessions during the course of each year. Parents are strongly advised to attend these. Information about your children's time in school, including our approach to effective teaching and learning are shared at meetings in Term 1. Thereafter, opportunities to participate in training/learning in a wide range of areas from First Aid to "Active and Energetic Learning" (and everything in between) will be offered each term.

We are continuously learning from our own observations and experiences and welcome insight from children, parents and the wider school community to support this. You will be invited to participate in research in the form of focus groups; interviews and questionnaires during the course of the year. We strive to make this highly relevant to the needs of our very young children and their families and the information provided is vital in enabling us to plan for continued development of and improvement in our approach to supporting your children to fulfil their potential as enabled, confident, highly effective and valued learners and contributors to society.

Stay and Play sessions

Further to our vision of "learning together", you will be offered many opportunities to come to school to "stay and play" during the course of the year. These opportunities will come in the form of invitations to join us during our Forest School sessions; on shopping trips to the local supermarket; to dine with us; to make music; to play indoors and to play outdoors. This is not an exhaustive list and we will make sure that all opportunities are communicated effectively via newsletters; website; email; Facebook posts and on notices on our information board in the hall. Parents are asked and expected to check regularly for communications from school.

School Trips

These experiences are essential to supporting the children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which we all live. Our trips generally take advantage of the wonderful facilities and opportunities in our local area. With the cost of transport being so high, we try to walk to places of interest in the local area but occasionally, we will take trips further afield. Parents are essential in enabling these educational visits. Children learn best when there is a supporting adult there to share and talk about the experience with them. With security and safety of your children always being our primary concern, parent helpers are required to ensure appropriate levels of supervision.

Although we plan our trips around the needs and interests of our children, parents can really benefit, learn from and enjoy these experiences too and we welcome and encourage your participation.

All parents are invited to volunteer to join us on every trip. Obviously, not all parents can avail of these opportunities for a variety of reasons, e.g. work; childcare; mobility etc but we strive to ensure equity for all through the provision of good notice about upcoming trips and of a wide range of trips that require parents to offer their support for short, e.g. an hour or two, or longer, e.g. full days, periods of time.

When travelling by bus, we are more limited to the number of parents we can take with us and our policy is to draw names in the first instance and then create a “waiting list” of interested parents who will be contacted in the case of withdrawal by another parent OR who will have first refusal on our next trip. A caveat to this policy is the need to consider the type of trip we are making, e.g. parents with mobility issues may not feel it is appropriate to travel if the trip entails a lot of walking/climbing.

Celebrations

Celebrating is a very important part of learning and building on strong foundations. Parents are invited to join us in celebrating achievements through keeping us informed about their children’s achievements, out of school, and sending in photos or certificates for discussion and display in school.

There are a wide number of festivals to celebrate during the course of the school year too. These include the very familiar Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter but we also enjoy and benefit from families sharing and celebrating festivals from other religions/cultures including Eid and the Chinese New Year.

We have a number of key celebrations during the year including our Christmas Concert, Art Exhibition, Sports’ and Family Fun Day and our Summer Sing-Along. These are extremely popular with children, staff and parents and are always very well supported.

Celebrations are shared with the wider community too through press releases and social media posts but we never publish photographs without the expressed permission of parents and we ask parents to respect this principle by adhering strictly to our Photography and Social Media Policy.

Caring for the Community

A great emphasis is placed on developing, valuing and serving our community. It is never too early to start teaching our children about respect and responsibilities; for themselves, those they share their community with and for the local and wider environment and it is the role of the adults in their lives to teach them these values.

To this end, our programme of learning includes Forest School and ECO School activities; school visits to local primary and nursery settings and also lots of fundraising activities for local and/or worldwide charities. Parents are instrumental in helping us to plan for and action all of these events. During the course of the year, parents; aunties and uncles; grandparents and even great-grandparents are all welcomed to school to share their knowledge and skills and to ensure that a strong sense of community spirit is instilled in our youngest children.

Lending Libraries

Parents have access to our lending libraries in school. These are stocked not only with books but also a variety of puzzles, games, physical play equipment and story boxes which can be shared with families on a weekly basis. These are super resources to promote social interaction, communication, learning and well-being.

There is no charge for this service but in order to ensure the highest quality provision, parents are asked to complete an evaluation sheet when borrowing items other than books from the library and games. This helps us to effectively monitor and review the resources in terms of quality and condition.

Continuing the partnership after your child moves on to P1 is something that we encourage our families to do. Not only does it strengthen relationships within the local community but it can really help your children to settle happily into the “big” school knowing that their pre-school adults are still invested in their life and continue to encourage and support them to settle happily and love learning with their new friends and adults in P1.

Communication is key. We communicate through face-to-face interactions; newsletters; emails; Seesaw and Facebook posts and notices on information boards. If there are any barriers to accessing these communications, please inform a teacher as we will do everything we can to ensure that all our parents have equal access to the information and invitations we share.

Please, remember to check in with us on a regular basis and GET INVOLVED! The rewards for your children; for you and for the entire community will be worth reaping.