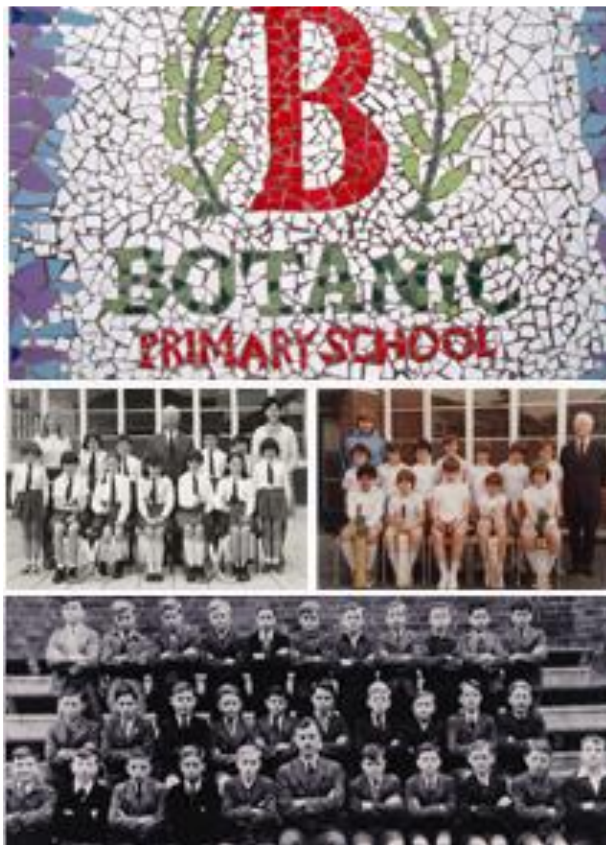


Botanic

PRIMARY SCHOOL



ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PARENTS FROM
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS



2024/25

Delighting in Effort, Achievement and Respect

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Current Board of Governors – December 2025

Chair: Mr Gordon Lucy (EA Belfast rep)

Vice-Chair: Mr Paul Bowman (Transferor rep – Fitzroy Presbyterian Church)

Mrs Helen McHugh (Transferor rep – South Belfast Methodist Church)

Ms C. Flynn (EA, Belfast rep)

Miss J Stewart (Transferor rep – St Mary Magdalene Church)

Mr P Thompson (Transferor rep – All Saints Church)

Dr J Eastwood and Ms L Sefton (Parent reps)

Mr M Douglas (Teacher rep)

Report from the Chair – Board of Governors



This has been an extremely busy year but then every year in Botanic Primary School would merit that description.

Almost as if to prove the point, we have two principals' reports this year– one from Mr Bell, the retiring principal, and another from Mrs Harper, the acting principal – which detail the year's activity.

Mrs McHugh, my predecessor, has often observed that there is a 'buzz' about Botanic and in this she is absolutely right – as she invariably is.

Farewells and welcomes are part of the rhythm of all schools. After seven years we bid farewell to those moving on to 'big school' and we are all sorry to see them go. Others leave too at other points in their educational careers.

Equally, we welcome the new intake and look forward to enabling them to realise their potential and become well-rounded individuals.

Last year Mrs Harper completed her first school full school year as our vice-principal. The school has benefitted enormously from her fresh perspectives, not least with respect to pastoral care.

This year we bid farewell to Mr Bell and Mr Douglas, our SENCO. Words are inadequate to thank them for their selfless devotion and dedication to the work of the school, and we will genuinely miss them.

In February 2026 we will welcome Mr Clarke as our new principal and a new chapter will begin in the history of our school. I know we will extend him a warm welcome and support his efforts to maintain and build upon the strong legacy of those who have gone before us.

There have been many highlights during the course of the year. For me one of these was the visit of Mr Stephen Twigg, the Secretary-General of the [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#). It gave me great pleasure to watch the wonderful interaction between Mr Twigg and the P6 and P7 classes because it brought home to me how kind, thoughtful, intelligent and well-informed our pupils are.

Our strap line as a school is 'Delighting in Effort, Achievement and Respect' and the pupils, the parents, the staff and my fellow-governors wholeheartedly subscribe to these noble aspirations; I wish to thank everybody for translating them into reality.

We live in extremely challenging times and education is not insulated, but let us face the future with confidence.

Gordon Lucy

Chair, Board of Governors

Working Together in Botanic Primary School

The Staff 2024 - 2025

Principal:	Mr P. Bell	BA (Hons), PGCE, MEd PQH
P1	Ms R Irvine	BTh (Hons) PGCE
P2	Ms E. Murray	BA (Hons) PGCE
P3 (Vice Principal)	Mrs Harper	BA (Hons) Primary Education
P4	Mrs G. Lonyai	BSc (Hons) PGCE
P5	Mrs Gunn-Savage	BA (Hons) PGCE
P6	Miss McKay	BEd
P7	Ms H. Barnes	BEd
Nursery	Ms R. Dickson	BA (Hons) PGCE
SENCO	Mr M. Douglas	BA (Hons) PGCE CCET PQH

Classroom / General /

Nursery Assistants

Mrs S. Ireland
 Mrs N. Kelly
 Ms N. Rowntree BA
 Ms L. Sharratt
 Ms C. Stockman BA (Hons)
 Ms C. Clegg BA (Hons) MA - TESOL
 Ms M. Mulhern
 Ms S. Howard
 Ms Y. Otto
 Ms C. Sweeney BA (Hons)
 Ms LD. Rice
 Miss C/ Ohara
 Mr F. Robinson
 Miss S. McKenna
 Mrs Miskelly
 Mis Batool

Executive Officer

Mrs. K. Gordon

Clerical Officer

Mrs. I. Witkowska

Building Supervisors

Mrs M. Wosinska
Mrs. I. Witkowska
Mr S. Niedbal
Mr K. Witkowski

Kitchen Supervisor

Mr E Conway

Kitchen Assistants

Mrs P. Neeson
C. Stitt
Mrs P. Kavanagh

Supervisory Assistants

Mrs N. Kelly
Miss L. Sharratt
Mrs E. Massey

Mrs S. Ireland
Ms M. Mulhern

Botanic Primary School Mission Statement

Ethos

At Botanic Primary we aim to provide a positive, supportive and stimulating environment for all our children.

We aim to provide an environment where children are:

- **Encouraged**
- **Seen**
- **Valued**

Children are encouraged

We wholeheartedly encourage children to take pride and put forth their best efforts in everything they do. We believe that when students strive to do their best, they not only achieve success but also contribute positively to our school community and their wider community in the long term.

Children are seen

We see the children for their strengths, personal qualities and individuality. We notice and celebrate their achievements, not only with learning but also with personal growth (no matter how small something may seem). Every child's accomplishments matter – we ensure that our recognition is diverse and inclusive. By recognising both academic and personal achievements, we inspire our students to reach their full potential and become well-rounded individuals

Children are valued

Botanic PS can be described as 'naturally integrated' with our school community representing a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. **We foster a welcoming ethos where everyone is valued. Mutual respect is**

paramount at all levels of our school community. Botanic Primary is a 'Controlled School.'

Mission Statement

With our school ethos at heart, it is our aim at Botanic Primary that our children:

- **Delight in effort**
- **Delight in achievement**
- **Delight in respect**

Botanic PS School Uniform

It is our aim at Botanic Primary that our children:

- **Delight in effort**
- **Delight in achievement**
- **Delight in respect**

We believe that a consistent school uniform policy is vital to promote the ethos of our school and provides a sense of belonging and identity for all our pupils. We require and appreciate the support of parents/ carers regarding uniform, ensuring that children are wearing their proper school uniform with pride every day. All uniform with Botanic logo can be obtained from the school office. Official Botanic PS schoolbags for P1 – P3 children can also be bought from the office - these are sold at cost-price (£5) and still considerably cheaper than other traditional schoolbags.

Uniform

- Navy Botanic sweatshirt with Botanic logo
- Light blue polo shirt with Botanic logo
- Grey, navy or black bottoms (no denim)
- Plain black shoes or trainers (shoes should not have laces until children are able to tie them independently)
- Optional blue gingham dress for girls in summer

All articles must be marked with the child's name and class.

Due to Health and Safety concerns, it is the policy of the school that **children are only permitted to wear a watch (note no 'smart' watches or watches with recording functions) and stud earrings. No other jewellery will be permitted.**

Children will be asked to remove any items that do not conform to our policy. False nails are not permitted as they impact children's ability to write and complete their schoolwork. Again, it is vital we have the support of parents with this.

Botanic PS School Uniform Policy



Light blue polo shirt

All items labelled with name and class

Plain black shoes or trainers

Navy Botanic PS jumper (available at reception)

Black, grey or navy bottoms (no denim)

No jewellery other than a watch and 1 pair of stud earrings



Financial Statement

The total allocated budget for Botanic Primary School for the financial year April 2024 to April 2025 (including carryover and Extended Schools funding) was **£ 1, 358, 221**

From the figures below it can be clearly seen that the major part of the school budget is staff costs. These costs include not only salaries for all staff, teaching and non -teaching, but also national insurance contributions and superannuation payments.

ALLOCATION: £ 1, 358, 221 – inc Extended Schools Funding and carry over

EXPENDITURE: £ 1, 241, 908

Staff Costs £1, 023, 737 (teaching and non-teaching)

Other Costs £ 116, 313 (includes operational costs, building and maintenance capital/ non-capital and purchases)

School Fund

School fund consists of money raised by pupils and staff for use within the school and for the annual charity supported by the school. (Includes money for ring -fenced projects / educational trips etc). Last year our chosen school charity was NSPCC – we donated £995.51 during 2024/2025

Opening balance £ 25,752.47

Closing balance £ 40,676.03

Contribution to swimming costs, shows / productions, gifts, music costs, crafts, money for projects etc. are all paid for from this fund. It also includes money from City Council Grants, School Trips etc.

Attendance

The overall figure for attendance (P1-7) during 2024/25 was 89.2%

Results 2024/2025

Key Stage Results were not quoted etc due to Industrial Action over a protracted period.

This industrial action has since come to an end and has resulted in changes to how key stages results are reported. No results are available for school year 2024/2025 at this time.

For an extended evaluation of the school's performance please see our most recent ETI report at:

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/sustaining-improvement-inspection-botanic-primary-school-belfast-101-6499.pdf>

Please also see the findings of the Education and Training Inspectorate in their Sustaining Improvement Inspection during June 2015. Due to this being a pilot project – revisiting all 'Very Good' Schools within 3 years , it is not published on the Department of Education website - but is available via our School Website – www.botanicprimaryschool.com

Conclusion (of the 2018 Published Report)

Botanic Primary School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Principal's Report

Mr Bell (Retired Principal)

I am delighted that Mrs Harper has given me the privilege of contributing to her report. I am enormously appreciative as I look back to June 2025 with so many fond memories of your kind words and gifts as I retired after just over 17 years at the school. Thank you to each and every one of you.



Thanks to

- the staff I served alongside – some for extended periods. Unfortunately, if I were to go into detail it would take several pages – but many went far and beyond to develop BPS and make it the exciting place it is today. That is NOT just the teaching staff – it's all the staff right from those who greet you when you arrive and those assistants who go running in their spare time to develop school resources - to give you but one recent example of the way they serve the school tirelessly.
- the Governing Body led by Mrs Sloan (2010 – 2016) and Mrs McHugh (2016-2024) both of whom I learned a lot from and for the wise counsel of the current Chair, Mr Lucy who has managed a transitional phase remarkably well.
- the whole school community in all its forms – who worked so hard in varying ways for the good of the.....
- Children. They will always be what Botanic Primary is all about and it was a pleasure to serve them. To say I was humbled by the messages they wrote when I left would be a massive understatement.

This report covers the academic year 2024-5 and as I reminded us all for several years in these reports, we are a school and the focus must be on academic progression. This year was no exception with 84% making the expected level of progress in Literacy and 85% making the expected level of progress in Numeracy. These figures include all pupils – including those pupils with very poor attendance and other challenging circumstances.

The standout figure for me was the 45% who made GREATER than the expected level of progress in Literacy and the 37% who made GREATER than the expected level of progress in Numeracy. These are in nationally accredited tests that measure progress from year to year (from P4 to P7).

It was great to also see a number of pupils with very high centile scores in the SEAG tests. This measures progress in centiles with anything over the 75th centile being in the top 25% of pupils who sat the test in Northern Ireland. We have previously had pupils attaining the 99th centile and whilst we didn't quite make that this year – we were very, very close!! Well done to those pupils concerned.

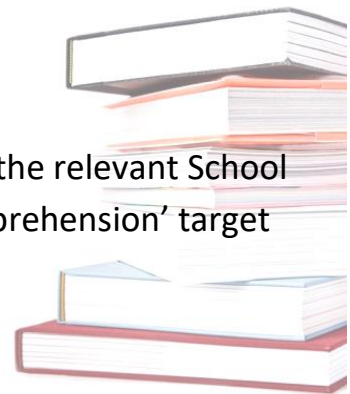
Curriculum Development

The school continued to develop the curriculum with special attention being paid to ICT, Literacy and Numeracy. There are always other subjects receiving attention and to that end Coordinators all have individual action plans.

Of the pupils who transferred to Post Primary school for Sept '25 entry. 21 (81%) of the 26 got their first choice of school and 9 went to Grammar School.

Literacy

Staff, continued to use a focused action plan, as set out in the relevant School Development Plan. Following evaluation our 'reading comprehension' target was met.



Numeracy

Staff, continued to use a focused action plan, as set out in the relevant School Development Plan. Whilst targets were not realised – Governors are aware that with up to 25% of the pupils changing each year, then this will not always be possible as we compare two very different cohorts of pupils sometimes. The individual results of pupils in maths have already been alluded to.

ICT

Staff development continues in this area. Staff continue to work on planners in an effort to keep pace with this ever-evolving area and it is clear, when liaising with other schools, that Botanic is well served by the very competent staff and their skill set in this regard. It continues to also be well resourced.

EAL

Activity within this area remains mostly class based. Miss Clegg assists us in this area. Not as evident this year around the school has been the ever-youthful looking Mr Tandon who sadly has been unwell. Botanic Primary School and indeed the schools served by the former Belfast Education and Library Board owe much to his vision and quiet competence in this area. It was great to see him in presenting his award in June.

SEN

Mr Douglas continued to develop this evolving area on a full-time basis. He too has retired in 2025, and it is great to have this opportunity to pay tribute to someone who worked tirelessly for over 30 years at Botanic PS. I often made comment that if I personally had a child with additional needs, then it was Mr Douglas that I would have wanted to be their SENCO. He fought hard, to get those children that needed it, the support that was their due – and might not always have been forthcoming without his interventions.

I'm going to pass back to Mrs Harper, who as current Acting Principal has the delightful privilege of covering everything I have omitted! Mrs Harper has certainly hit the ground running – we were writing about her arrival mid – year in the last report. She has quietly developed pastoral aspects of the school as well as generally having a full-time class commitment and has had to lead the school since Sept. 2025 – but that's for the next report!!

Mr Bell

Mrs Harper (Acting Principal)

It has been a privilege to complete my first full school year as Vice Principal, under the leadership of Mr Bell.

The children at Botanic Primary are an absolute credit to the school, and whenever teachers or I have the opportunity to be with them in public, they make us immensely proud.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the children, parents, and staff for the warm welcome I've received. Serving as Vice Principal here truly feels like an honour.

One big milestone last year was taking our office cashless—a challenging task that our incredible office team handled brilliantly. Thanks to their hard work, most of our parents are now using the school app. We're still fine-tuning the process for booking dinners, but we're well on our way!

We've all learned so much and shared plenty of fun along the way. I'm deeply grateful to our dedicated PTA for creating so many wonderful memories for our children during their time here. As I often remind them, when I think back to my own school days, it's not the worksheets I remember—it's the magic and the special events in-between that made the learning come alive.

Last year, our PTA treated us to an amazing calendar of activities, including a Halloween disco, festive jumper day, Shrove Tuesday pancakes, an Easter



bonnet parade, Children's Mental Health Week events (with a sponsored Zumbathon), a scavenger hunt, and a fantastic summer fair.

Other events that we enjoyed last year includes (to name just a few):

- All classes, from nursery to P7 enjoyed visits to the play centre
- P6 produced some impressive pieces of independent writing as part of a 'Fighting Words' workshop with QUB
- P5 performed drama with '4 Corners.'
- Some children from P2 + P3 recorded educational Science videos at Botanic Gardens – they can be seen on www.BCBCBitesize.com
- Anti-Bullying week in November, kicked off with odd socks day (to remind us that we are all of a kind)
- Vikings visited P6 in our school hall
- Eco-club cleaned up our local area during winter and spring
- #We all enjoyed Holyland Winter Festival in December (organised by Forward South)
- P1 – P3 impressed with their Nativity; 'Whoops-a-Daisy Angel'
- Our annual Christmas Carol service at Fitzroy Presbyterian Church
- P7 enjoyed QUB's Professor Fluffy Programme – inspiring them to aspire
- Nursery enjoyed getting 'bendy' at 'Monkeynastix' (gymnastics)
- Thrive Academy delivered online safety to children, staff and parents
- P6 + P7 built an actual bridge in the school hall
- We celebrated World Book Day in March, which included writing a whole school shared story
- Sustrans taught lots of boys and girls to cycle and delivered a cycle workshop to KS2
- Lyric drama workshops for P7
- P6 + P7 joined friends at Holy Rosary for our Shared Education Partnership
- Our annual Sports Day at PEC
- Nursery took part in the 'Big Bedtime Read.'
- Lots of school trips, inc:

-P3s made kites and learned how to fly them

-P4 went to History Museum

- P5 toured Belfast on the open top bus
- P7 toured Tayto Factory

In family news, Miss Irvine, our P1 teacher, welcomed a beautiful baby boy and is currently enjoying her maternity leave with her family. We send them our very best wishes.

During 2024/25, we proudly supported the NSPCC as our chosen school charity, raising almost £1,000 through fundraising efforts. In return, the NSPCC delivered valuable sessions teaching our children about staying safe and how to access Childline.

To top it all off, we were thrilled to be recognised as an accredited *Kindness Ambassador School*. While kindness is something we see every day, it's wonderful to have this official recognition. Our acts of kindness ranged from big gestures—such as visiting elderly residents and offering free hot chocolate to passers-by, to countless small moments, with so many children 'caught being kind' throughout the year



As Mr Bell mentioned, I am writing this report in my current capacity of Acting Principal—but more on that next time...

Mrs Harper

Awards - ongoing



Other Developments

Staff completed various aspects of training with the Education Authority and other providers as appropriate.

Some staff completed EPD training and all other teaching staff were involved in the PRSD – Performance Review / Staff Development Scheme where targets were set at the start of each year, and each member of staff completed this.

A number of policies were worked on and a summary of this is available in the School Development Plan.

Summary of Professional Development (Baker Days) / Exceptional Closures

In addition to the 'Baker Days' – 5 holidays where the staff work on professional development during holiday periods, DENI permitted schools to close to pupils for up to 5 additional days in 2023-24 to facilitate development in relation to the Revised Curriculum / ongoing staff training. Here is a summary relating to how these were used by the staff at Botanic Primary.

26th Oct ICT: SEN

27th Oct: Literacy

25th Mar: ICT / Maths

26th Mar: Literacy, SEN, Behaviour

25th May: Review Lit/ Num / ICT / results

Professional Development (Baker Days)

These were 5 days held in August 2024 and among the areas developed were;

23rd Aug: Personal PRSD Dev / EA

22nd Aug: Literacy, Pupil profiles

25th Aug: ESIF, Profiles + ICT

29th Aug: Maths, SEN, Play

30th Aug: CP, PASS, Pupil profiles

As always - a busy year!

School Holidays 2025-26 (All dates are inclusive)

Exceptional Closures Included

	Starts	Ends
Halloween Holiday	24th October 2025	31st October 2025
Christmas Holiday	22nd December 2025	2nd January 2026
Half Term Break	12th February 2026	16th February 2026
St. Patrick's Day/Exceptional Closure	17th March 2026	17th March 2026
Easter Holiday	30th March 2026	10th April 2026
May Day Holiday	4th May 2026	4th May 2026
Spring Holiday	25th May 2026	26th May 2026
School will Finish on Tuesday 30th June 2026		