

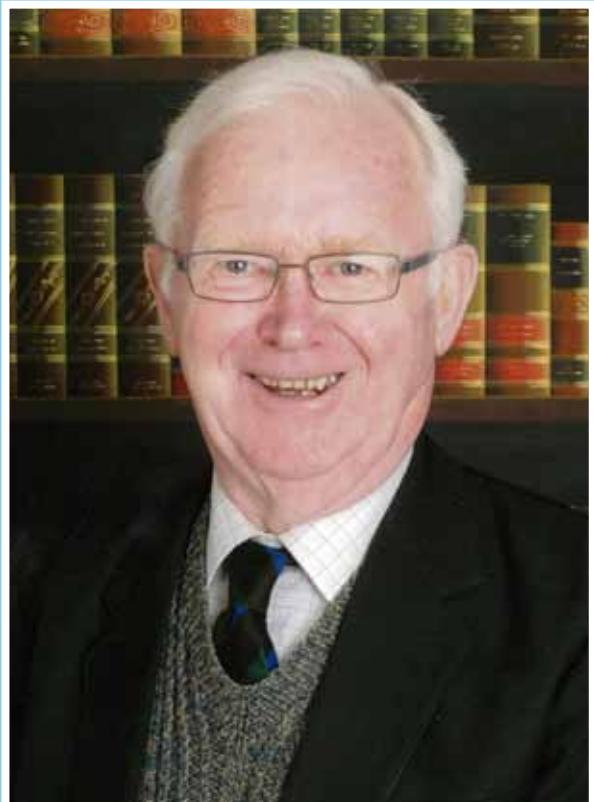


BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL



A Principal's Perspective 1974-2008

By Jack Gilpin and Morva Calvert



Retiring Ballyoran Primary School principal Mr. Jack Gilpin with his successor Miss Morva Calvert. 27-201.



Ballyoran Primary School



Foreword

As the current Principal of Ballyoran Primary School it gives me great pleasure to write the foreword for this booklet.

Ballyoran Primary School is a very special community which I have been privileged to be Principal of for the last 6 years. I join a very short list of Principals who have led the school during its 40 year history, this in itself speaks volumes about the school. The majority of staff who worked here stayed here for a very long time.

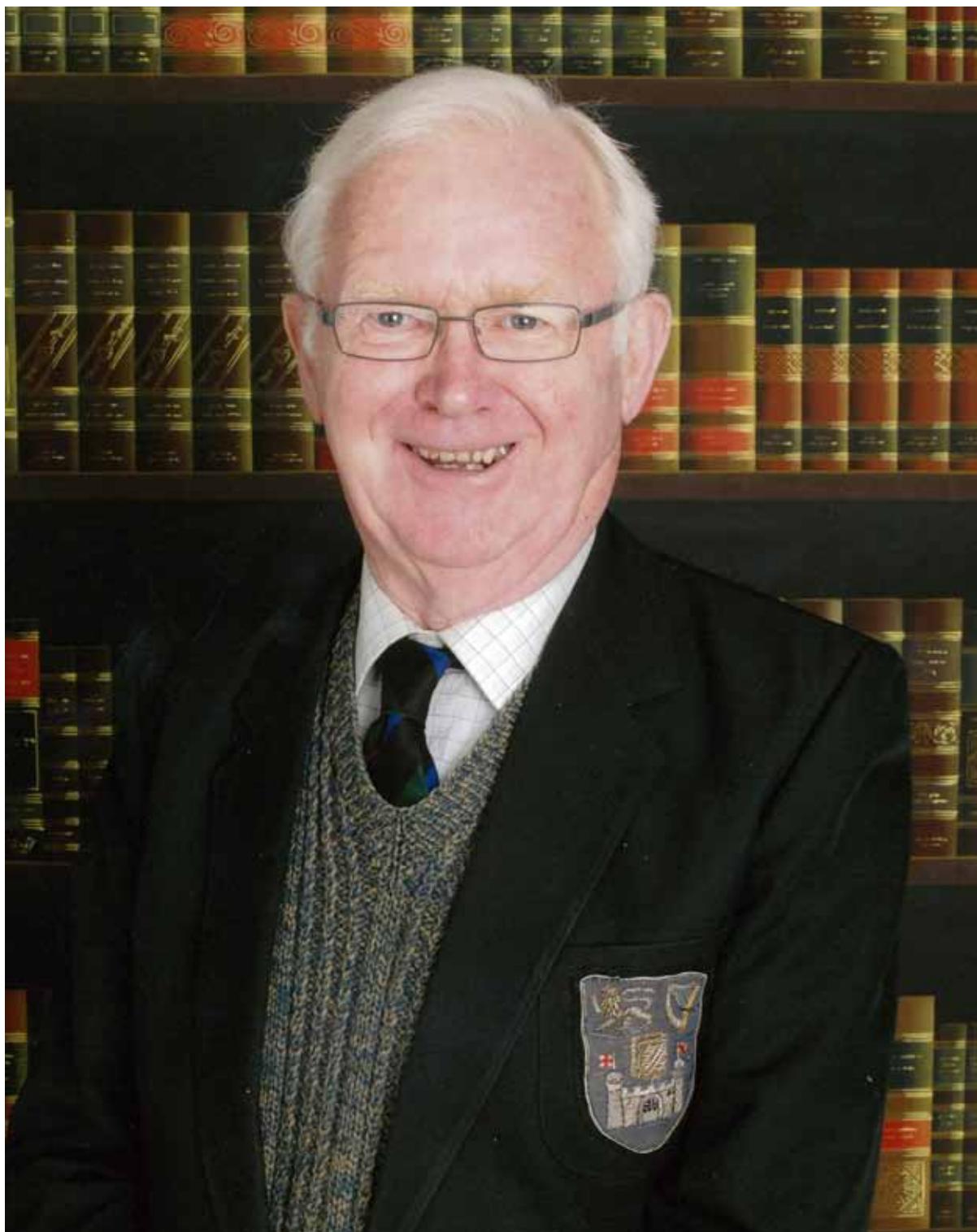
In this foreword I would like to pay tribute to my predecessors Mr Jack Gilpin, Principal from 1974 to 1996 and Miss Morva Calvert, Principal from 1996 to 2008. Both had their own unique style of leadership, were thoroughly committed to this school and the local community and both laid very firm foundations for where the school is today.

I hope you enjoy reading their recollections of life at Ballyoran Primary School.

Richard Woolsey
June 2014

Unity In Diversity

Recollections of Ballyoran Primary School



D J Gilpin BA (Dublin), MA (Belfast)
Principal 1974-1996

These brief random recollections of my years at Ballyoran Controlled Primary School are blighted by forgetfulness and begin with an apology for unintentional omissions. County Armagh Education Committee sited the School in Ballyoran Park, off Garvagh Road, intending it to cater for children from the Ballyoran, Churchill, Garvagh and Woodside Estates in North Portadown and for transfers from a number of small schools which might be closed.

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE

Various factors contributed to a difficult start. The Education Committee was not to know that, from about 1968, the Troubles would erupt and significantly alter the enrolment projections. The communities became increasingly polarized and fearful as political unrest increased. Estates became segregated denominational as people relocated to feel more secure. The result was that estimates for the School went down as North Portadown became progressively more Catholic.

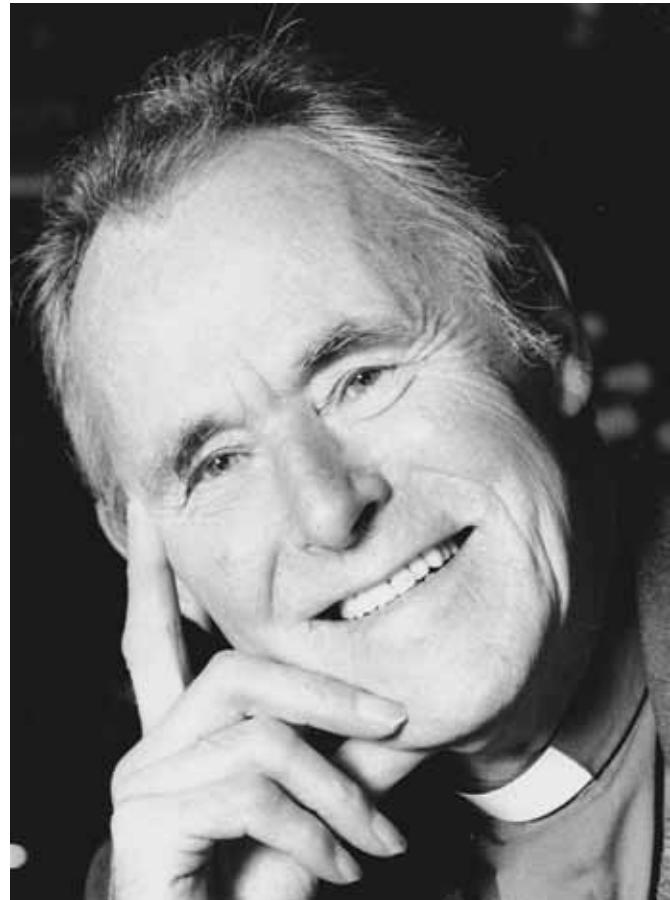
Under the reform of Local Government, effective from 1st October, 1973, the Education Committee itself was replaced by the larger Southern Education and Library Board. The Board, in the throes of its own re-organization, became seriously behind schedule. Final approval only came after suspension of the project had been considered. Thereafter the Board, particularly W J Dickson (Chief Officer), Mrs H McClenaghan (later Chief Executive) and W R Thornton (Chief Architect), gave the School total support.

MANAGEMENT

The first Management Committee, or Board of Governors, was appointed in Spring 1974. When fully constituted it had two members representing the Area Board; four transferors, representing closed schools; two parents' representatives, one teacher representative and the Principal as secretary. Twenty-six members served at various times. Clerical members were frequently replaced as they changed Churches. There were more than 100 meetings.

D Armstrong, W Baxter, B Brown, Mrs D Brady, Rev Dr J C Combe, Sr M J Corcoran, Rev G C Eyre, Rev J A Ford, J Garvey, Archdeacon FW Gowing, S Hagan, Mrs P Hagan, Rev F McBrien, Mrs H McCann, Mrs McCourt, Canon T McGonigle, Rev D Mullan, Rev C A Newell, J Palmer, Rev J A Pickering, Dr W Ramsay, S Paul, Rev H Skillen, G Sloan, G Swann and Canon W R Twaddell.

The contribution of School Governors is not fully or generally recognized and I wish to thank them for their continuous support. In particular I must mention the two Board representatives who shared the Chairmanship. Archdeacon Gowing was a member for all of my 22 years, 14 of them as Chairman. A considerable educationalist, and Chairman of the Area Board, he had the art of leading a Meeting to consensus. He was still there at the age of 78 when I retired.



Archdeacon FW Gowing

Sean Hagan was a member for 14 years, eight of them as Chairman. How he found the time to attend our Meetings and run a busy and growing legal practice was beyond me. Mrs Hagan was a parent representative for eight years. Two of their children contribute to this article.

Uncertainty and delay came haunting. The Board of Governors met on 26th April and short listed three out of the five applicants for the Principalship. The Area Board made the appointment in May.

VISION

My application was the sequel to many years of soul searching. I had noticed, as a child, that my neighbours were divided by where they went on Sundays or where they buried their dead. As a student at Stranmillis I lived on an interface area in Belfast at Election time. There my neighbours were divided by how they voted. These two divisors each diminished the relationships of a spontaneously kind people. Later, in the sixties, I found both observations analyzed in a book partly researched in Portadown. "The Northern Ireland Problem - A Study in Group Relations," was written by two Quakers, Denis Barritt and Professor Charles Carter. The shooting of a friend on 29th February 1972 was my Rubicon. Death and destruction were dehumanizing us and driving us relentlessly apart. I resolved that in my own small way I would try to encourage tolerance and respect. Ballyoran School in 1974 seemed a modest opportunity for people to come together voluntarily and I was privileged to become part of it.

One day, some time after the School opened, a tall stranger called. Denis Barritt had come to command and support us.



There were two advices from the Board:

1. The School should be open to all children without distinction.
2. No child should be actively encouraged to attend.

The 'no encouragement' clause, which may seem unusual, was supremely wise and consistently followed. It put the school beyond controversy and clarified enrolment as a matter of parental choice.

The School's philosophy was later symbolized in our School Logo, designed by Alan Kirk, and verbally expressed in our Vision Statement.

THE TREES

many years a - growing
are security, sturdy values,
traditional, time-tested, proven.

THE SUN

new every morning,
is light and learning,
encouragement and love.

THE CHILDREN

boy and girl,
are partnership and difference
together, hand in hand.

OUR VISION

is to help each child to be
and to become.

"A STATE OF CHASSIS"

It was rather difficult being Principal of two Schools simultaneously - Annaghmore, which I was sorry to leave after 22 years and the unequipped, unfinished, unstaffed Ballyoran, scheduled to open six working weeks after my appointment. Sean O'Casey would have called it "a state of chassis." Staffing was a priority. The Governors approved the transfer of Mrs M Taggart and Mrs D Hillis from Park Road. B Brown was appointed VP at the June Meeting of the Board and Miss M Calvert, Mrs J Auld and Miss C Hetherington during the summer. Other appointments were Mrs J Callaghan as part-time Clerical Assistant, Mrs A Cassidy and Mrs J Matchett as Nursery Assistants, E McCreery as Caretaker, Mrs G Scullion as Cleaner, Mrs E Campbell, Mrs K Douglas and Mrs G McBratney as Supervisory Assistants and J Whittle as Patrol Man.

The Kitchen Ladies were separate from the School and appointed by the Schools' Meals Service. Miss A Porter was the first Supervisor and Mrs M Anderson, Mrs L Bleakney, Mrs J Hall, Mrs F Rowland and Mrs L Wood her early Assistants.

Thus the School was staffed and we got down to making a go of it.

PARENTS

Interested parents visited an unfinished School on 23rd August. We had 116 children on our first day. The 50 child Nursery had a staggered intake starting a week later.

Our relationship with parents was good after understandable early unease about the shortage of teaching materials and the position of the Principal as a class teacher. It could not have been otherwise. The teachers had been appointed too late to order requisitions and the Principal was often called away from his class.

The Governors' response was the harbinger of continuous support. They had been impressed by the hastily arranged Dedication Service. They thanked the Staff for their work in getting the School up and running. They sought approval for an increase in clerical hours and teaching help for the Principal. Hours were eventually increased and Mrs H McNally appointed as a teaching assistant.

The first big encouragement, after the initial parental unease, was the Nativity Play at our first Christmas. Over 300 people attended. Plays involving the whole School, often written and always costumed by the Staff, were to become an annual feature - a bonding experience bringing together children, teachers and parents. Other schools came to matinee performances. We remember only some of the productions.

A Nativity Play, Ali Baba, The Tinderbox, Dick Whittington, Only a Baby, Cinderella, The Man from Galilee, Robin Hood, The Storytellers and The Wizard of Oz.

The Choral, Instrumental, Irish Dancing and Sporting talents of the Staff and children later found expression in entries to Dungannon and Portadown Festivals and in Inter-Schools' Soccer, Hockey and Mini-Rugby competitions.

Open Days seemed much work for little educational return and somewhat alien to our "no active encouragement" policy. Parents were more interested in talking confidentially about their children. We introduced a detailed Report and Interview system which had an over 90% response. Teachers went over reports with me before and after interview. Outside of arranged interviews their uncanny anticipatory instincts were such that I was usually in an informed position before an anxious parent came to see me. We were always available to parents at points of need. This extract from a letter to parents and police illustrates a follow-up to a stone-throwing incident on the Garvagh Road:

Dear Parent

Any major incident is investigated with the fullest co-operation from Principals of neighbouring Schools. After the stoning escapade on Wednesday the Principal of St. John's and I spent almost all of the next day interviewing boys, finally reducing the number to seven. The admitted ringleader had been involved in earlier incidents and I warned him and the six others of the serious view taken of their behaviour. Their parents were to be contacted.

The School receives enormous goodwill from the community and there is an abounding desire to live in peace. The evidence points to that peace being disturbed by a few on both sides who act outside the supervision of their parents and extend their evening disputes to mornings and afternoons.

Home is the greatest of all influences. It would be helpful were there always somebody about the house with knowledge of the whereabouts and company of children. We have always tried to

help everybody to live together, respecting each other. We just have to keep at it so feel free to come back to me again if the problem continues or another arises.

Yours sincerely
D. J. Gilpin.

The letter gave me the opportunity to acknowledge publicly the happy working relationship we had with our neighbours in St. John's and Drumcree.

Often it was thanks and encouragement. Here's a spontaneous gem from the early days.

Dear Mr. Gilpin

Just a note to thank you on ****'s behalf, also mine, for your kindness in the three years he has been with you. Maybe he wasn't a model pupil but I hope he wasn't a difficult one, at least not intentionally. I have sent in a request to the BBC programme "A Taste of Hunni" to be played Friday. I hope it will be mentioned for you all.

Please convey our thanks to Mrs. Burrows also.

Yours sincerely,

COMMUNITY

The early seventies was a time of changing attitudes when many, particularly those in authority, expected schools to remedy the perceived ills of society. Our community outreach began almost immediately. Sam Thompson opened a Youth Activity Centre which was catering for 100 children two nights a week by May 1976. The School encouraged the community to produce its own leaders and Dan Murphy and Jack O'Neill were the first of a number of local men who trained as Youth Leaders. The Assembly Hall was used by a number of organizations until the Community Centre opened on the Garvagh Road.

Spring 1975 was application time for our first of many Pax Christi resident Summer Schemes. International volunteers - American, Belgian, Dutch, English, French - were billeted in unused rooms each August. B Buckley, M James and Miss Becky Spurlock are especially remembered. A Summer Scheme mural at the station tunnel was only covered recently. They enjoyed the experience so much that they came back year after year. Mrs Beattie has reminded me of some of local folk who met annually to prepare for their coming - R Annett, Mrs K Beattie, Mrs B Connolly, Mrs S Hamill, Mrs M Hyde, Mrs J Hynes, Mrs R Judge, T Mallon, B McParland and J O'Neill.

PREMISES AND SECURITY

The School opened unfinished. It was a year before the caretaker's house was completed and two years before we had adequate shelving and display panels. Two mobiles were later erected to allow Special Educational Needs to be retained within the main building.

Security was a serious concern. The School property was sited between three estates and enclosed by a low broken-down wire fence. The all-weather pitch was an attractive

playground area and the design of the building afforded a number of hide-aways. Windows were sometimes broken and bottle-glass strewn over the all-weather pitch. When the Security Man and his Alsatian moved to Maghery I filled in by working late in school rather than bringing work home. The Governors thanked the Board when the erection of a palisade fence and pitch re-surfacing was undertaken in the nineties.

I was to learn later that contemporary Craigavon Planners favoured open unenclosed landscaping.



A Fenceless School, 1974

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The permanent Staff remained unchanged until Summer 1975 which can be regarded as the end of the beginning. Their yoke had not been easy nor their burden light. They set the tone and standards for the School. They were still together 20 years later except for the two Nursery teachers. Miss Hetherington moved nearer home in 1978 and Mrs Taggart retired in 1991.

The School is deeply indebted to them all and especially to Brian Brown, our Vice-Principal, who contributed enormously to Inter-Staff relations.



The First Of Us, Autumn 1976:

*(Back row) Mrs H Fearon, Mrs H Lynas,
Miss M Calvert, Mr B Brown, Miss C Hetherington,
Mrs A Cassidy; (front row) Mrs J Matchett, Mrs D Hillis,
Mr D J Gilpin, Mrs M Taggart and Mrs W Beggs.*

A THREE DEPARTMENT SCHOOL

From September 1976 Ballyoran was organized as a Three Department School - Nursery, Primary and Special Educational Needs. The Nursery was always full or almost full. Primary numbers more than doubled with a steady transfer from the Nursery. The SEN Department expanded but numbers varied as special classes opened in other schools. Total enrolment peaked at 394 in 1993.

The 1947 Education Act had an elephantine gestation in which the reorganization of the secondary sector preceded primary reform. Thirty years later the School was honoured by invitations from the Department of Education and the Area Board to pilot or advise on three educational issues - Special Educational Needs, Finance and Religious Education / Pastoral Care. It took up a lot of time.

PILOTING CHANGE 1: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

It was accepted by the 1970s that more needed to be done for children with learning difficulties. Board psychologists were appointed to assess such children with a view to placing them in small special classes for basic subjects. From these they would filter into primary classes where and when possible. They would have the best of both worlds. We ended up with three Classes covering the entire primary age range, 5-7, 7-9 and 9-11. Children came to us from as far away as Keady. It was a most enriching experience for the entire Staff. Our first SEN teacher, Mrs H Lynas, came with a background in Special Education.

PILOTING CHANGE 2: FINANCE

Finance was a perennial problem. The policy of funding on the basis of the previous year's enrolment meant that we were under-funded in the each of the 18 years our enrolment increased. It was obvious that the existing formula could not meet our needs. Forward planning was virtually impossible because carrying balances, whether credit or debit, was discouraged. I was keen to leave my successor in credit. When the Department and the Board came to prepare what became known as The Local Financial Management of Schools Scheme we were invited to become a Pilot School. I'm listening to the Chancellor's Budget Speech as I write about Financial Management and am diverted by the musings of a former pupil with an early interest in politics. The class had been asked to write about "A Day in the Life of ..." and Paul Hagan chose John Major, the then Tory Prime Minister and former Chancellor.

Today was the end of a long and hard day. The pensioners were complaining because of the Chancellor's idea of putting VAT on fuel and this bally old recession isn't helping. You know if it's not one thing it's the next and to think when I was Chancellor I really wanted to be Prime Minister. Next time I'll think before I stand. Personally I blame the Cabinet. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be so unpopular. It's so hard to find good help these days. I hate

the way Paddy Ashdown thinks the Tories are so bad on crime prevention. I don't like it when people blame me for everything, even it's not my fault.

Downing Street duly replied.

Dear Mr. Gilpin

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for forwarding your pupil Paul Hagan's idea on how a Prime Minister's day could be in his eyes.

Yours sincerely
Mrs J Crawley
Correspondence Secretary

Paul's interest in politics continued. He is a Parliamentary Adviser to a group of MEPs in the European Parliament.

PILOTING CHANGE 3: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PASTORAL CARE

Religious Education has long been a disputatious issue in Irish education. In theory any child could go to any school. The practice was otherwise. Controlled Schools were Protestant and Maintained Schools Catholic, each with their own RE Syllabus. The Ballyoran enrolment was multi-denominational.

It was the view of the Staff that we should respect denominational allegiances. It was years before we could claim that we provided Core Curriculum Religious Education and Denominational Instruction for both main denominations.

I remember a chat with a child with learning difficulties.

Me: "Who is the man in the picture?"
Child: "That's Jesus"
Me: "Who is Jesus?"
Child: "Jesus is God's best Man."

Maybe we hadn't done too badly.

STAFFING 1976-1996

I would like to thank and pay tribute to everybody who worked in School between 1976 and 1996. Not all records are detailed and there may well be omissions.

STAFF APPOINTED AFTER 1976 AND STILL IN POST IN 1996:

Teachers: Mrs K Barkley, Mrs S Brown Mrs W Beggs, Mrs J Carson, , Mrs A Edgar, Mrs G Garvey, Mrs B Heaney, R Hendron, Mrs E Mackle, Mrs B McGinnell, Mrs A McCreesh-West, Mrs F Mulholland, Mrs A Neely, Mrs G O'Hanlon, Mrs L Walker.

Lengthy permanent appointments were Mrs C Burrows, Mrs S Hylands and Mrs B McAnallen who served through the eighties.

Classroom Assistants: Miss J M Carson, Mrs H Fearon, Mrs R McCall, Mrs P McConville, Mrs E McCreesh, Mrs M Rodgers, Mrs H Stewart,



Most Of Us, About 1990:

(Back row) Mrs P McConville, Mrs M Rainey, Mrs J Matchett, Mrs A Cassidy, Mrs R McCall, Mr G Kelly, Mr M McConville, Mrs J Carson, Mrs R Tedford. (Middle row) Mrs E McCreesh, Mrs M Rodgers, Mrs F Elliott, Mrs L Chatterton, Miss M Calvert, Mrs L Walker, Mrs B Heaney, Mrs G O'Hanlon, Mrs A Edgar, Mrs. M Carson. (Front row) Mrs H Lynas, Mrs E Mackle, Mrs W Beggs, Mr B Brown, Mr D J Gilpin, Mrs D Hillis, Mrs M Taggart, Mrs J Auld and Mrs S Hylands.

Mrs L Weir.

Clerical Assistant: Mrs R Tedford.

Caretaker: P Creaney.

Supervisory Assistants: Miss J M Carson, P Creaney, Mrs M Forbes, Mrs D Larkin, Mrs M Rutherford.

Cleaners: Mrs M Forbes, Mrs E Hoy, Mrs N McCann.

Patrol Man: T Mallon.

STAFF, PERMANENT, TEMPORARY OR SUBSTITUTE APPOINTMENTS BETWEEN 1976 AND 1996:

Teachers: Mrs M Chew, Mrs H Dickie, Miss L Haire, Mrs J Kells, G Kelly, M McConville, Miss S McKinney, Miss R Millar, Mrs M Robinson.

Classroom Assistants: Mrs M Carson, Mrs J Donaldson, Mrs M Rainey.

Clerical Assistants: Mrs Sandra Flannigan and Mrs Sylvia Flannagan.

Caretaker: M O'Connor.

Patrol Man: T Connolly.

Kitchen Supervisor: Mrs S Mallon.

Kitchen Assistants: Mrs Bell, Mrs E Eldon, Mrs C Warnock and Mrs E McNeill.

Two Supply Teachers, Mrs F Elliott and Mrs F Ternan, worked with us when not needed elsewhere. The Area Board was always on hand: Mrs H McClenaghan (then Senior Education Officer, Miss G Fay, Mrs M Cairns and Mrs P Hall (Psychologists), D Cloughan (Maintenance and Window Man), M White (Music Advisor). Mrs L Chatterton (Speech therapist) attended frequently.

RELATIONSHIPS

Unity in diversity is made possible by good relationships. A frustrated Schools Inspector once confided in me that his next call was a penitential visit to a school where the teachers were at loggerheads. That would never have been Ballyoran. I do have reservations about one occasion when I agreed to play in a Staff football match which may have been arranged with malice aforethought. They kicked the living daylights out of me but I came out unscathed. I wore shin guards!

The blending of experienced and new teachers from the eighties onwards brought additional talents, variety and vigour to the School. The SEN/Primary filter required personal qualities, professional skills and a level of cooperation not usually demanded of teachers and classroom assistants.

School Secretaries should never be lightly esteemed. They have their fingers on the pulse of the place and know more about everybody than anybody. Mrs J Callaghan steadied the ship during our chaotic opening years and Mrs R Tedford's quiet organizational skills sustained us later when the School became more complex. Mrs Sandra Flannigan and Mrs Sylvia Flannagan served briefly in between.

As the most untidy I could never claim that I left the place as tidy as I ought. We thank the Caretakers and Cleaners for tolerating the offenders. Mrs G Scullion came in an emergency on our first day and was there 22 years later.

The playground and the dangerous Garvagh Road were relatively trouble free - a tribute to our Supervisory Assistants and Patrol Men.

I always ate more than I should. There can't have been much wrong with the meals - a credit to Miss Porter and Mrs Mallon, the Supervisors. Mrs Rowland wins a medal for long-time service.

INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT

The report of a four-day General Inspection in January 1989 could be considered as an independent assessment of how we had fulfilled our own vision and the Board's expectations.

The Inspectors felt that the School's basic challenge was its unity in diversity and how, despite its disparate elements, it functioned as a community. They concluded that the challenge had been met by responsible, representative management, the endeavours of a united, sensitive Staff and clear individual exposition to parents of the School's general policy.

The Chairman of the Governors congratulated the School on the Report which he saw as a professional comment for professional people, a search for the ideal. The Press

coverage was most generous.

The Principal thanked the Inspectors for their courtesy and understanding. What it had taken to establish the School was fully known only to those who had daily put their hands to the plough. The existence and growth of the School was their testament.

RETIREMENT, 1996

Curricular change coincided with my entry to teaching. It meant less emphasis on factual teaching and more on the creation of an educational environment where children were supposed to discover for themselves. From the nineties onwards schools were required to produce written policies on everything under the educational sun. They vary little from school to school and are easier to write than to fulfil. A quartet of lyrical ladies sang good-bye with these anagrammatic verses to the tune of Jingle Bells. "Through all the changing scenes" was a little publication I had put together some years previously.

Oh, **Policies! Policies!** they are made at will,
By men in high-up places with too much time to kill.
Oh, Policies for dying, policies for life,
Policies for school and church and all that causes strife.

P is for PROSPECTUS, get it done on time,
Rosemary, get that binding done, we're falling far behind.
O is for OTHER things, now that School is through,
Walking, cycling, leisure time is just what's right for you.

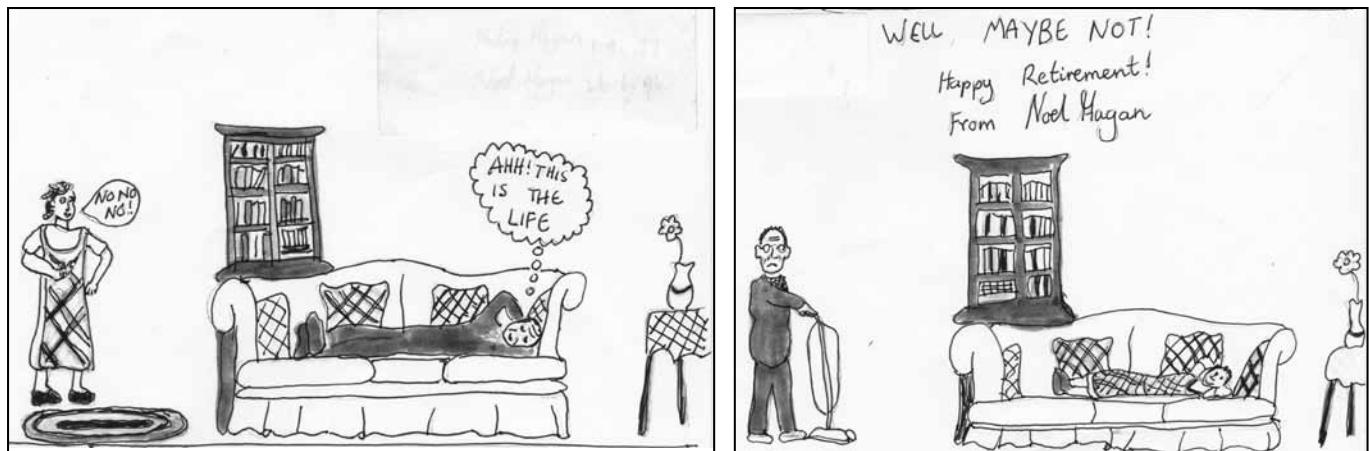
L is for LOO roll, a thing of great value
For writing a sermon or policy it's true,
I is for IT – Ruth, will you help me?
I don't mean Ruth our daughter - I mean Ruth my secretee.

C is for COPIER, useless with no lead,
When you take your leave of us we'll run off all we need.
I is for INTERVIEW, this Jack does with style.
When you hear his questions you could run a mile.

E is for EDITING now Jack is good at that,
To his latest book we all raise our hat.
S is for the STAFF, who really will miss you,
And wish you all the best in everything you do.

Oh **Policies! Policies!** flush them all away,
Now's the time to relax, enjoying everyday.
"Through all the changing scenes" you have done your best,
So it's up to you Mr G to have a well-earned rest.

This Is The Life



Noel Hagan's Interpretation Of Retirement



RETIREMENT PRESENTATION 1996:

(Back row) Dr W Ramsay, Archdeacon FW Gowing, Mrs D Hillis, Miss M Calvert, Mrs J Auld, Mr J Garvey, Mrs P Hagan, Miss R Gilpin, Mr S Hagan, Mrs R Tedford and Mr B Brown.

(Front row) Mrs G O'Hanlon, Mrs W Beggs, Mr D J Gilpin, Mrs V Gilpin, Mrs E Mackle and Mrs H McClenaghan.

Archdeacon Gowing used to tell me how much he depended on his wife. The teachers sometimes wondered how my wife put up with me. They might more accurately have asked how she put up without me. I didn't have the many talents Ballyoran School required. My only gift was time and I was amply rewarded for giving it. I welcome the opportunity to thank Violet publicly for her patience with me and for the sacrifices she made on my, and on Ballyoran's behalf.

**“Civilization’s citadel is the school;
its custodian the teacher,”**
(Professor DWT Jenkins).

BEST WISHES TO BALLYORAN SCHOOL

Ballyoran Primary School - An Educational Community

Recollections



Morva E Calvert MBE, MEd
Principal 1996-2008

TIME FOR CHANGE

Ballyoran Primary School opened in 1974 and I, as a newly qualified teacher, was pleased and excited to commence my teaching career in the Infant End of the school. I had no idea then that I would teach Primary 1 pupils in the main for the next 22 years under the leadership of the Principal, Mr Jack Gilpin, and certainly never imagined that one day I would follow him as Principal of the school when he retired. From January to March 1996 I had been seconded from school to Stranmillis College and inspired to move on in my Teaching Career to being the Principal of Ballyoran. Having taught so many of the pupils, I was greatly encouraged by their support and more especially, that of their parents and of course the staff in my new role. I quote from my First News Sheet to parents;

"Expressing my thanks to you for your support and encouragement to me in my new role. It is with that support behind us that the Staff and I seek to provide a caring environment where your children are educated and recognise the immense value of co-operation one with another."

Ballyoran School was a special place where the Staff were very supportive, always looking out for each other as well as for the children. All staff were valued no matter what their role in school. Events such as School Plays, found all involved far beyond the school day as well as after-school clubs of Choir, Dancing, Cookery, Gymnastics and many Sporting Activities such as Soccer, Gaelic Football and Hockey.

As I commenced as Principal in September 1996, there were also some sad and challenging times for us as a school and as a community. Mrs M Carson, Classroom Assistant in the SEN1 Class, had been killed in a car accident in the summer holidays and Mrs W Beggs, P5 Teacher, had to take early retirement because of ill health - both were a loss to me. As well, there were troubled and unsettling times in the community, especially in relation to the 'Drumcree' situation but within the context of the school we sought to meet the needs of the children and provided a secure and caring environment for them.

Our Ethos in Ballyoran was built upon having respect for one another and our aim to live by The Golden Rule: "Do to other people what you would want them to do to you" (Luke 6v31). A poster reminding us of this was displayed in each classroom and despite our failures at times, this thought was kept to the fore.

STAFFING

Ballyoran Primary School opened in 1974 with seven members on the Teaching Staff. Year on year the number of pupils grew until it reached its climax in December 1997 with 397 pupils on roll in Nursery, Mainstream and SEN classes. In 1996 when I became Principal, the Teaching Staff had grown to twenty-two. Thank you to all staff for your dedicated work in Ballyoran School during my time



Members of Staff in 1997:

(Back row) Mrs A Edgar, Mr R Hendron, Miss H Hetherington, Mr G O'Hagan, Mrs H Lynas.

(Second row) Miss Á McCreesh, Mrs B Heaney, Mrs L Walker, Mrs R Tedford, Mrs J Carson, Mrs E Mackle, Mrs G O'Hanlon.

(Third row) Miss F Marley, Mrs M Rainey, Miss A Johnston, Mrs G Garvey, Mrs R McCall, Mrs L Weir, Mrs D McCreedy,

Miss R Millar. (Front row) Miss S Dillon, Mrs B McGinnell, Mr B Brown (VP), Miss M Calvert (P), Mrs D Hillis,

Mrs J Auld and Miss E Holmes.

as Principal. There are so many staff but I have aimed to mention as many as possible, both those in post in 1996 and others appointed thereafter.

Teachers in post September 1996: Mrs A Edgar, Mrs J Carson, Mrs G Garvey, Mrs E Mackle, Miss F Marley, Miss M Litter, Mrs D Hillis, Mrs J Auld, Mrs G O'Hanlon, Mrs B McGinnell, Miss S Dillon, Miss A Johnston, Miss R Millar, Miss K Bailey (Career Break), Mr R Hendron, Mrs L Walker, Mrs B Heaney, Mr B Brown (Vice-Principal), Mrs H Bridgett, Miss A McCreesh and Mrs H Lynas

During my time as Principal other teachers appointed:

Mrs E Blacoe, Mr G O'Hagan, Miss H Hetherington, Miss J Creaney, Mr C Monaghan, Mrs K Andrews, Mrs H Boyd, Miss R Sweeney and Mrs C Breen - some full time, others in a job share. Mrs D McCready, Mrs A McKimm and Mrs C Hughes covered the SEN1 class while it was temporarily reopened for a few years.

Nursery and Classroom Assistants:

Mrs P McConville, Mrs H Stewart, Mrs M Rainey, Mrs R McCall and Mrs L Weir, Miss J Carson, Mrs J Beggs, Mrs L Webster, Miss C Henry, Mrs S Hesketh, Mrs J Huddleson, Mrs S Glavin, Mrs A Thompson, Mrs J Breen, Miss C Fulton, Mrs C McKeever, Miss R Finlay, Mrs J Glynne, Miss I Hamilton and Miss C Garvey

Secretary: Mrs Ruth Tedford

Librarian/Administration: Mrs L Armstrong, Mrs K Spence and Mrs J Glynne

Caretaker: Mr P Creaney

Cleaners: Mrs G Scullion, Mrs M Forbes, Mrs G Hoy, Mrs N McCann, Mrs P Brown, Mrs P McGeough, Mrs J Gorman, Mrs C Freeburn, Miss J Davis and Mrs D Griffin

Supervisory Assistants: Mrs M Rutherford, Mrs M Forbes, Mrs D Larkin, Mr P Creaney, Mrs C Carvill, Ms J Reid, Mrs S Glavin, Mrs M Cusack, Mrs C Dunbar, Mrs P Kinghm, Mrs L Larkin and Mrs J Donnelly

Patrol Man: Mr T Mallon and Mr W McQuade

Work Experience: We regularly welcomed former pupils back to school for experience or work placements. We were very proud when our first former pupil, Damian McCourt, came to teach in Ballyoran covering a maternity leave and our first former pupil appointed to teach in school, Joanne Creaney.

Kitchen Staff: These staff were appointed by the SELB, separately from the school so I cannot name them all but Mrs S Mallon, Mrs D Campbell and Mrs M Noble headed up the team providing nutritious school dinners both for us and other schools in more rural areas. I appreciated how they worked and related to school staff and especially their support and flexible approach in working the dinner hall routines with me.

SCHOOL INSPECTION

In January 1999, Ballyoran Controlled Primary School had a Focused Inspection. Members of the inspectorate visited the Nursery and Special Educational Needs Units as well as all the Mainstream classes. It was a very positive report although it identified some areas requiring improvement. An Action Plan was drawn up and implemented the following year. What it did highlight was the special learning environment of the school - they found "the excellent relationships and welcoming atmosphere in the school as

notable features" and recognised the emphasis of the Staff on "creating a secure, settled atmosphere for the children." The Report affirmed the Staff, concluding with the following words: "The Principal is in her third year in post. Her commitment to the care and well-being of all involved in the life of the school has helped secure an ethos which encourages both staff and pupils to give of their best. Morale in the school is high. There is mutual respect and confidence between the Principal and the Staff; they all display a high degree of commitment to the school and to the children." It was important to aim to have a settled environment within the school at a time of unrest in Portadown and challenging times for children living in the Garvaghy Road and Drumcree neighbourhoods.

SCHOOL PLAYS

What an exciting time for the pupils to be involved in the bi-annual School Plays! All the Primary 6 and 7 pupils had their opportunity to be on the stage and they always did exceptionally well, rising to the occasion and every one a 'star' in their own right. Over the twelve years, the performances presented were 'Jack and the Beanstalk' (March 97), 'Hosanna Rock' (December 98), 'Alice The Musical' (December 2000), 'Wizard of Oz' (April 03) 'Scrooge' (December 04), and finally 'Stable Manners' (December 06). Each one involved a phenomenal amount of work by both staff and pupils over a limited period of time so as to cause as little disruption as possible to the ongoing curriculum. Headed up by The Producer (Mrs B Heaney) and Musical Directors (Ms A McCreesh-West and Mrs D Hillis in the early days), all staff contributed by using their many talents - some up front and others in the background, but each one valued and appreciated. Music was a key part and linked the Play together with songs by the choir and soloists as well as instrumentalists and dance.

FUND RAISING

When you consider one year's fundraising, I was always amazed, but reviewing twelve years, well it definitely has the 'Wow Factor! An incredible amount was raised by the pupils, their families and staff in the following charities:



'Little Treasure' Shoeboxes for Children in Africa

Received by William Carson of MMS Container Ministry

Cancer Research (June 97), Meningitis Research (June 98), Disability Action (Oct 98), Help The Aged (Jun 99), Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (Oct 99), NSPCC (Jun 2000), Chest Heat and Stroke - Active For Asthma, (Oct 2000), Leukaemia Research (June 01), Barnardo's (Nov 01), Children in Crossfire (Malawi Africa (Oct 02), Little Treasure Shoeboxes for Children in Africa - MMS Container Ministry (Oct 03), Action Cancer (June 04), Help The Aged (Oct 04), Meningitis Research (June 05), Tsunami Appeal (Jan 05), Autism - PEAT (Oct 05), Arthritis Research Noddy Appeal (June 06), Special Olympics (Oct 06), Cancer Research (Jun 07), NSPCC (Oct 07), and finally, Local Alzheimer's Society (June 08). The October Fund Raising took the form of an Annual Fun Day just prior to half-term - an inflated assault course stretched from one end of the Assembly Hall to the other, bouncy castle and small equipment in the dinner hall, each class planting bulbs in the window containers, 'beat the buzzer' or hoopla in the Library and with thanks to all the teachers, lots of fun and games in the classrooms. All these activities were timetabled so everyone had their opportunity. It was an exhausting, but worthwhile event. The May Fund Raising was energetic for a few who ran the relay of the Belfast Marathon and Mr Brown, Mr Hendron, Mr Monaghan and Mrs Neely were regular key relay-runners while the pupils headed up the sponsorship.

The fundraising was carefully planned each year to cover a variety of Charities, encompassing different ages, home or overseas groups or sometimes they were chosen in relation to Staff Family Members or Pupils (past and present) who had associations with a particular circumstance. School families and their neighbours and friends gave generously every time. We were always touched by people's generosity and everyone's contribution was recognised. When we added together the amounts which were raised over the twelve years, it was in excess of £22,000 - how amazing is that!?

Ongoing as well was the annual Earl Haig Fund appeal and also each September, Staff attended a short Break-Time Coffee Morning to support Southern Area Hospice. Over £1,000 was raised for these charities as well.

COMPETITIONS

Opportunities for competitions were constant throughout the year - writing, art work, quizzes, and public speaking as well as in the regular sporting demesne. Taking part was always good and encouraged but extra special when a team or someone won a prize.

Art: Some of the competitions were annually anticipated such as the Credit Union Poster Competition looking for illustrations for their calendar - this was a favourite and many pupils received generous money prizes. Mainstream and Special Needs classes participated. Exceptional years were in 2002 when Matthew Hendron won the All Ireland Special Section (Highest Level of the competition) and as well as receiving a prize, his poster was displayed as one of the months in the Calendar. Liam Quinn also got through to the All-Ireland Special Section Level in 2005.

There were also many poster competitions to promote special events. Patrick Stuart was a winner on the NIE 2000 Calendar competition to celebrate the new millennium and had his design printed on it. Annually Craigavon Council produced the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle Calendar and several pupils got their design into print on it. In June 1998, Michéal

Judge won 'Shaping Our Future' Poster competition and received his prize at Stormont along with £1,000 Eason's Voucher for Books for the school library. This was timely as we had recently refurbished the library and celebrated with an Official Opening by Mrs W Beggs who had been very involved in literacy while teaching at school.

Art was of a very high standard in school and many of the pupils' pictures were framed and proudly displayed throughout the premises, including my office. Mrs Lynas, who headed up the art programme, was inspired one year to have our own Art Gallery when every pupil made a picture, then they were framed and displayed in the Assembly Hall where parents and friends were invited to view them and later purchase their children's pictures - it was a great success!

Although not a competition, a mural was made in school by some P7 pupils and was presented to and displayed at Shamrock Park, Portadown Football Club. On another occasion, the school's art work was displayed in Portadown Library. Several of the staff were very gifted in art and glorious backdrops were painted by a few (Mrs Walker and Mrs McConville helped by others) for the different School Plays.

Writing: In some years pupils wrote stories for Mahon Hall Care Home and several won prizes but it was positive in that they went to the Home and read their stories to the Residents. Other writing took the form of Poetry and several children had their poems published in 'Seeds of Thought - a Portadown Schools Anthology' and 'Walk on Words', a local anthology. Another special prize was won by Shannon McCrory in the Oxford Poetry Writing Competition in 2002 - a UK National Competition.

Public Speaking: Road Safety Public Speaking was another annual competition, when specific topics were set and groups of three pupils took part. One team won the local level but it was very tough competition when they went on to compete at Northern Ireland Level in Belfast - we were very pleased with their performance.

Quizzes: Quizzes also were a regular feature. In the earlier days, schools were paired together to compete in the Portadown area Community Relations Quiz. Millington PS and Seagoe PS were two of our links. Annually the Credit Union organised a quiz where the team was



Tree Dressing Competition on an African Theme

made up of two P6 and two P7 pupils from each school. Ballyoran often did well and on two occasions winning to go on to the next round, representing the local chapter. Again the local Credit Union were generous with their monetary prizes.

All these things were woven into a busy curriculum but gave many pupils an opportunity to excel in a variety of ways as well as in sport. We were asked to participate in a Science Competition at Queens University - Mrs Walker prepared the Team of P6 pupils and although didn't win, they presented their findings and information extremely well - we were very pleased. Following the Shoeboxes Project for children in Africa, Mrs Walker and Mrs Lynas were inspired to enter their classes in a local Tree Dressing Competition focusing on an African Theme; they won the first year and were runners-up in the next - a totally different and unusual type of competition.

Dancing: Friday afternoons and the music coming from the Assembly Hall was lively Irish Folk Dancing music for reels and jigs - a very popular after-schools club for those who didn't attend outside Dancing Classes. Many girls and a few boys attended enthusiastically. Each year many entered the Portadown Dancing Festival, Primary Schools Section, often winning individual medals and in March 2000, won the Overall Cup. It was a thrill for Mrs Heaney, their teacher, to start our very own Ballyoran Dancing Festival in June 02 with Claire McKee, a former pupil, as the adjudicator - we were always proud to have former pupils return to school. This festival continued on as a key part of the end of year activities.

Music: The choir often entered the Portadown Music Festival as well as recorder groups and individuals when it didn't clash with other school events. The SEN pupils did exceptionally well winning the Ballyoran Cup for SEN Percussion Group, several years in a row (March 98 through to March 01).

Sports: Physical exercise is critical for the development of children and although it often is part of everyday life, in the school setting it was planned. At Break time there was always free play and for many years also at dinner time with the option of football for both boys and girls on the pitch. This was thanks to Mr Creaney and then when he finished as a lunchtime supervisor, the other supervisors continued to accept the challenge. In 2006 we developed the Playground Friends and Positive Playground Programme (see Initiatives) and so the exercise was more structured. Sports Day tended to be very competitive despite our aim to make it fun, just by taking part. In June 06, Mr Woolsey tried out a new format at the KS2 Sports Day where events were zoned and the pupils rotated to each activity. There was more of a focus on the celebration of sport and parents took part. There were also exhibitions of gymnastics, soccer skills and Gaelic skills as well as competitive races - it was a great success.

Although we didn't shine at the local Schools' Swimming Gala, we believed that each pupil should learn to swim if at all possible, so we offered a budget funded (free to the pupils) Swimming Programme throughout the year to P6 and P7 pupils.

There was a variety of success in the sporting area winning North Armagh 5-aside Gaelic football and in June 01 winning both Park Rangers Boys and Girls Football

Tournaments. Individually there were selections to represent the wider community beyond Ballyoran. Gavin Cusack (June 97) was selected for Portadown District School Boys' Football Team. Rory Grimley (April 98), Conor Morgan, Marc Davidson (March 03), Shea Skelton and Gavin McMahon were selected for Mid-Ulster Schools football team. Mr Brown, Mr Hendron and Mr Monaghan were very good coaches and I appreciated their positive encouraging approach with the pupils. Some years pupils did well in the local cross country competition.

BEST KEPT SCHOOL

In the Spring of 2004 we entered the Super Value Best Kept School Competition for the following reasons: to raise awareness of the grounds of our school premises; to encourage everyone connected with Ballyoran School to take pride in their premises and do their best to raise standards; to increase awareness of environmental issues. It involved the whole school. The competition relates to the outside school premises and to the various environmental projects of the pupils.

New Litter Bins were purchased, classes P5, P6 and P7 operated a rota of litter picking, to which they were regularly encouraged to adhere more rigidly to, and garden areas were given more attention. Each year the children planted window boxes to make the school more attractive and additional bird tables were placed to attract more wild birds into the garden.

The Price's Trust supported the school in helping clear the football pitch (an area where sadly things were often dumped over the fence) but more positively, they helped create a small sensory garden in the nursery playground.

In 2004, we were encouraged when we received a "Highly Commended Certificate" - the Judges recognising that it is difficult to deal with litter which was continually blowing into the grounds as the school is surrounded by shops and housing.

I appreciated that the SELB Grounds Maintenance Team helped as well as the ongoing daily work of pupils and staff - it was hard work trying to maintain the 'tidy' appearance but



Ballyoran Primary School

Best Kept Medium School in the Southern Board 2006

we made it a daily target and persevered in entering each year. We were thrilled and honoured when we were awarded the “Best Kept Medium School in The Southern Board” in June 2006. What an achievement and I am so grateful for all that hard work. The presentation of the Trophy by the Chief Executive, Mrs H McClenaghan, took place at Board Headquarters and the ‘banner’ is proudly displayed at the entrance to the school.

We were recognised with a ‘Commended Certificate’ in June 2007 and then in June 2008 we were delighted to be invited again to the Presentation to receive the ‘Runner-Up Award for Best Kept Medium School in the Southern Board’ - what a very lovely retirement bonus.

CHOIR AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

From the very first day of Ballyoran School, music has played a key part. Mrs Hillis (then Miss Dickson) on the first day got together a choir for the Dedication Service of the school which was held in the first week of September 1974. So even at that early stage when more than fifty per cent of the school was under the age of seven, there was singing. Music was a valued part of the curriculum for all classes with singing, percussion and music appreciation. All pupils learned to play a musical instrument from Primary 4 - the recorder - a delight I’m sure to the families who listened to their practising! It was important for everyone to be able to play an instrument. Opportunities were given to join the School Choir and for some to learn a musical instrument such as flute or violin with tuition being offered through the SELB Music Service. Ms McCreesh-West continued on the high calibre of music and spent a lot of time preparing the Recorder and Ensemble Groups and providing appropriate music for them.

The Choir and Recorder Groups were very special in the life of the school participating in many services at St John’s Church - leading the First Communion Service and taking their turn in leading the Joint Confirmation Service of St John The Baptist, Ballyoran and Presentation Primary Schools. Occasionally they led in some funerals where there was a school connection. They sang in the community, at local Care Homes for the elderly and many shopping centres. They performed at a Christian Aid Concert in the Town Hall (December 96), and represented Ballyoran at Portadown Music Festival. Of course the choir and recorder groups led in the School Plays, all musicals. It was lovely for Mrs Tedford and me, while in our offices, to hear the lovely music drifting along the corridors as the choir practised on a Tuesday afternoon.

There were poignant occasions too when we had special visitors to assembly, or at our Final Assembly in June or when a member of Staff was leaving. The singing often brought a tear to my eye, especially when they sang the hymn “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky, I have heard my people cry” - “Here I am Lord ... I will hold your people in my heart”*. It helped us think of others and we adopted it as our special song. The whole school always joined in enthusiastically, with the choir beautifully blending the descant.

*Daniel L Schutte, New Dawn Music

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Celebrations were on-going throughout the year, usually as part of the school day. We recognised achievements of the individual child or groups or teams and so encouraged development of self-worth and growth. The Vision of the school was “to help each child to be and to become.” This affirmation happened in the classroom and in assemblies or with visits to other members of Staff or to me as Principal. It was always a pleasure to award a certificate, spontaneous or planned, for a Focus of the Week or Month. Pupils were encouraged to celebrate and acknowledge the success of their peers and the other pupils across the classes.

Final Awards Ceremony

Our Final Awards Ceremony at the end of each school year, recognised academic, aesthetic and sporting achievements and the most prominent award was the Hagan Award for “Contribution To Ballyoran School” (presented by the Hagan Family after all their children had completed their Primary Education in Ballyoran). P7 pupils were nominated by the staff in relation to the criteria: encourages others; gives of best in all areas; caring approach; good example to follow; good ambassador for Ballyoran; displays initiative; positive approach to life; contributes to extra-curricular activities; prepared to have a go and try new things; listens to others and respects other pupils’ achievements. It was an honour for a pupil to be nominated (they received medals in recognition) and thrilling for the winner and family. Mrs Heaney, Mr Brown or Mr Woolsey, depending on whose class the pupil was in, managed to inspire us all with a poem written about the pupil! With similar criteria but on a smaller level, pupils were encouraged to see these attributes in others and all classes voted for the ‘Star Pupil’ in their class, each one receiving a small plaque. Academic success was always a focus but life and social skills were also a high priority to be encouraged. Education for life was the context of our teaching.

25th Anniversary Celebrations

The 25th Birthday of Ballyoran CPS was celebrated with a Big Party Day on 28th May 1999. Pupils and staff wore Fancy Dress and special visitors, ‘Early Staff Members’, judged the Fancy Dress Parade. Horace Mac presented a Magic show and an extra-large Birthday Cake provided slices for everyone!

Archdeacon FW Gowing (Chairman) and Mr D J Gilpin (Principal 1974 -96) planted Acer Trees at the Entrance to the Car Park to mark the occasion. It was a happy celebration and each pupil, member of staff and governor received a Memorial Book Mark.



Ballyoran Primary School following the Millennium Celebrations

Millennium Celebrations

We celebrated the New Millennium by enhancing the school grounds, planting 2,000 bulbs around the trees, in flower beds and also in window box containers. These were planted during the Fun Day at the end of October and the colourful display was appreciated throughout the Spring. Another lovely thing about it was the legacy of this event as the daffodils and other bulbs bloomed thereafter each spring and the planting of the window boxes became an annual event in the October Fund Raising Fun Day. The planted daffodil figure of '2000' on the grass bank entrance was visible for years to come!

30th Anniversary Celebrations

A Day of Fun celebrated Ballyoran CPS's 30th Birthday at the end of June 2004. A tree was presented and planted by Rev J N T Campbell (Chairman of the Board of Governors) in the centre of the flower bed alongside the Senior Playground. Dr W W Ramsay (Vice-Chairman) cut the enormous Birthday Cake which was then offered to everyone. Horace Mac presented a Magic show for the whole school and parties were held throughout the classes.

Teaching Awards

In the spring of 2006, Mrs Myrtle Rainey was nominated for the Teaching Assistant section of the annual Teaching Awards. She was selected as a finalist and the judges then visited the school for observations and interviews with some of her colleagues and parents. We were delighted that she was invited to the Waterfront Hall as one of three finalists and received a Certificate of Commendation, presented by Donna Traynor of BBC Newsline, a great and well deserved honour. Two teachers, Mrs B Heaney and Mrs F Mulholland were also nominated the following year in The Teaching Section and received certificates at our own Prize Presentation.

CONFIRMATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

CONFIRMATION - Many Primary 7 pupils were thoughtfully prepared for Confirmation throughout their Primary 7 year. This involved weekly classes, services at St

John's Church and the climax towards the end of the year of a joint Special Confirmation Service with the Bishop or Archbishop present. The three schools worked well together with pupils from each one participating and either St John's PS or Ballyoran PS and Presentation PS together taking their turn to lead, with the choir and instrumentalists making beautiful music. Writings of the pupils were displayed each year which were inspiring and it was important to see the collaboration of the three schools.

As well as the 'Alive O' programme being taught in school in preparation for the Sacraments in the Catholic Faith, the programme was extended over the last couple of years to include other shared celebrations at St John's Church throughout the year. Parents participated in these celebrations which were organised by Father O'Dwyer. He also visited the pupils in school on occasions as Chaplain and was most welcome. In my final year at Ballyoran, we were privileged when Father O'Dwyer arranged for Cardinal Sean Brady to visit our school after a shared service with the other local schools at St John's Church. It was a very special visit, though informal, as it was during the children's time in the playground so that is where we met with him.

FIRST COMMUNION - Each year many of the Primary 4 pupils were prepared for their First Holy Communion. The School Choir and Instrumentalists trained by Ms McCreesh-West and earlier also Mrs Hillis, led the Special Service and Mass in St John's Church. Following the service, many of the pupils and their families and friends came back to Ballyoran School for a party in the Assembly Hall before going on to continue their celebrations. The school also provided an opportunity for a photo-shoot with the photographer to mark the occasion.

Mrs Mackle, Mrs O'Hanlon, Mrs Garvey, Mrs Mulholland, Mrs McGinnell and Mrs Heaney were particularly involved in the teaching and preparation for Confirmation and First Communion and this was very much appreciated by the local parish.

SCHOOL TRIPS

Every year each class went on at least one school trip and these provided excellent opportunities for learning and inspiring the children's interest and work when they returned to school. These were funded by the school budget along with a contribution from the family to a variety of destinations linked with the classes' curriculum: farms, Parkanaur, W5 at The Odyssey, Springhill, Eco Centre, Ulster Folk Park at Cultra, Transport Museum, Omagh Folk Park, Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Tannaghmore Gardens, Moira Demesne, Loughgall Park, Ardress House, The Argory, Chapmans, Tayto Factory, Teddy Bears' Hospital, Enniskillen Castle, Ulster Museum, The Stables, Armagh, St Patricks Trian, Armagh County Museum, Armagh Planetarium. I'm sure there may have been others. The SEN Classes regularly went on a wide variety of outings providing diverse experiences through which they were inspired to learn in areas across the curriculum. On some of these, they went on their own but often were integrated along with other classes.

One Special Final Residential Trip was planned each year for the Primary 7 School Leavers at Shannaghmore Outdoor Pursuits Centre! This was always a fantastic time to participate in new activities. For some it was the first time to stay away from home without their family. It didn't seem

to matter what the weather was like (it usually happened in the Spring Term) because Shannaghmore is geared for activities all the year round and they had a marvellous time. I always enjoyed my visit to see them on one of the days - they were having such fun and embracing the very different environment compared to their usual classroom! In later years, the Primary 7's also enjoyed a Day Trip across the Irish Sea - this one was sometimes linked as a reward for good behaviour.

Before the Lyric Theatre in Belfast closed, the entire Mainstream and SEN classes went to some shows there, travelling in the train to Botanic Station, which was just across the road from the theatre. You can believe there was some excitement at Portadown Railway Station those mornings as the children gathered there. In January 1999, we went to see the Sleeping Beauty which was a historical moment in that it was one of the final shows at the Lyric before it closed a few weeks later.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ballyoran Primary School was always welcoming to pupils and visitors from other countries, as was the local community. September 2002 was for us the beginning of a new era in the arrival of families from Europe and for whom English was a second language. We were proud to have Tiago Pereira as our first pupil from Portugal when he started in Primary 2. Many children from Portugal were enrolled over the next six years as well as pupils from Lithuania and Poland. A few also came from Latvia, France and China.

In the first three years, the SELB provided some peripatetic support for these pupils in order to meet the challenge of providing education for the pupils for whom English was a second language (EAL) but in 2005, as the numbers had grown, a full-time teacher (Mrs G Garvey) was designated to provide extra support for them and their teachers, thanks to additional funding from the Department of Education.

The cultural diversity within the school community was welcomed and highly respected although there were many challenges as well as joys. It was so encouraging in assemblies or Christmas Concerts to have some of the ethnic minority children perform from their culture and in their mother tongue as well and also on occasions, locally born children singing along with them which was for them a foreign language. Each year in September, all the classes celebrated European Day of Languages and this often involved parents as well, especially in the Nursery.

In January 2007, the BBC broadcast a Documentary entitled "Tiago and the Tunnel"! This programme had been filmed the previous year when Tiago was in Primary 6. It featured him and his family and included many aspects of school life highlighting the integration within the school and commenting also on some of the challenges he faced as well. Tiago's younger brothers all followed him to be educated at Ballyoran School.

In Sept 2003 - we had a visit from representatives attending the European Inter-visitation Programme Conference. The theme was 'Diversity' and the three areas which I outlined to them in relation to Ballyoran school were Religion, Special Needs and Nationality. The group had representatives from Finland, Hungary, Germany, Slovenia

and Dublin. Following a time of discussion in the Staff Room, they toured the school, visiting the pupils in their classes and asking many questions. Time was too short but it was a profitable visit. The following year, in reciprocation, I was invited to spend three days visiting some schools in the Athlone/Roscommon area and it was interesting to learn from their approaches.

I had previously had an opportunity to attend a conference in London with other Principals in the SELB Learning Forum and it was very encouraging and interesting to visit two entirely different schools. One school had pupils with 30 different first languages, and inspired me with new ideas to implement in our own school. Education is both giving and receiving. Teaching and learning from others was very much part of education in the new millennium.

CURRICULUM PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

We live in a changing world so needless to say there were many changes in approaches, content, support programmes and initiatives throughout the curriculum in my twelve years as Principal. Prior to taking on my new role in 1996, we were implementing the changing curriculum with focus on Literacy, Maths and Science and also newly introduced Educational Themes. By the time I was retiring the curriculum was dramatically changing again with the introduction of The Revised Curriculum. I was pleased and proud that we were chosen as a Pilot School for the introduction of the *Enriched Curriculum* in P1 and on into P2 (Foundation Stage). The teachers; Mrs Barkley, Mrs Mackle, Mrs Mulholland and Mrs O'Hanlon and classroom assistants all worked very hard and disseminated some of their programmes to staff from other schools. For me, I felt the young children appeared to display more confidence, increased independence and improved verbal expression in what they were doing. I was also impressed at how their organisational skills were greatly extended. The programme focused on developing good basic skills on which to build for life-long learning. I suppose, in the early days, it did seem that children wrote more independently but at the expense of neatly formed written work, so how that is developed was still to be worked through.

Opportunities were grasped to introduce programmes to support children beyond the classroom, one such being *Reading Recovery*. This intensive reading support programme was offered to selected Primary 2 pupils who were not reading at an expected level. It was a full-time post to 2pm each day and many pupils benefitted from this one-to-one teaching. Mrs Auld was our first reading Recovery Teacher and after four years, Mrs Mackle continued until lack of funding forced us to discontinue it.

High/Scope Pilot: Primary 1 pupils were part of a High/Scope Programmes. The approach emphasises learning as a decision making, problem solving process. Mrs Barkley and Ms McCourt were key in setting up this programme in P1. They trained and worked hard, implementing many changes in the classroom and did very well. It had many positive aspects but was thought-provoking for some of us as it partly conflicted with our way of thinking in relation to encouragement.

While being involved in a 'Countering Bullying Working

Group', I had the opportunity of visiting schools and one such showed a positive playground in operation which in turn led to less incidents at lunchtime. Following this, staff received training and in 2006, the Vice Principal, Mr Woolsey, took responsibility for developing the two playgrounds at lunchtime using the *Positive Playground* guidelines. These focussed on: raising self-esteem, developing a caring and positive attitude, developing social skills and relationships within the playground, giving pupils responsibility, encouraging more physical exercise and exploring innovative ways to encourage a positive playground experience for all, where pupils would recognise and understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Part of the programme trained some P7 pupils to act as *Playground Friends* who took responsibility for setting up and managing activities in the playground on a rota basis. It certainly made life much happier at lunchtime for the pupils, classroom assistants and Lunchtime supervisors and reduced the incidents requiring follow-up by teachers. A few challenges still came from the football pitch as football remained on offer and was popular for many. Mrs Larkin and Mrs Carvill continued to persevere in this demesne.

Primary schools always encourage children from a young age to have responsibilities and involvement in their class or school. At the top end of the school, P7's have been encouraged to enjoy having extra responsibilities. A new development in this area was the establishing of *Pupil Council*. Mr Woolsey, Vice Principal, set this up in the 2006/07 school year. The rationale behind the forming of this council was to give pupils a say in what happens in their school, to give them a chance to put their opinions or ideas forward and to give them responsibility. Several of their ideas were gradually implemented such as more activities in the playground including a wall-mounted blackboard, more after-school clubs and a new school website.

The *Extended Schools Programme* commenced in August 2006 with training and preparing Action Plans for a variety of clubs and activities beyond the school day. The funding supported a daily Breakfast Club and two after-schools clubs - one for P2 and the other for P3 on different afternoons. Both these programmes were very popular. The funding also provided for a Polish Book Club, P4 Folk Dancing and Girls' Gaelic. All these activities were new to school as stipulated by DENI but worthwhile and the funding was welcome. The following year a Portuguese Homework Club was started.

Many innovative ideas came through *The Learning Forum* and several of the *Accelerated Learning* approaches were put into practice in different classrooms. Ms McCreesh-West P5 explored 'Music in School' and 'Brain Gym'. Mrs Walker P6 and Mrs B Heaney P7 had both piloted the ACTS Programme which developed Thinking Skills.

In 2005, we aimed at improving many aspects of a *Health Promoting School*. I accompanied some pupils to Armagh to celebrate being a Health Promoting School in June 06. One of the promotions was to follow the 'Water is Cool in School' programme where pupils were encouraged to develop the habit of drinking water regularly throughout the day and have their water bottle ready to hand on their desks keeping them well hydrated. Several other health aspects were developed including 'healthy breaks'.

PASTORAL

The pastoral dimension for pupils, staff and parents was a basic priority in school. Everyone's welfare is to be encouraged by all members of staff regardless of their role. It is important to be a caring school. For some pupils it was general and woven into the daily school day by staff and supported by the Principal. For others with emotional trauma in their lives, it was more specific and had support from other groups in the community as well. The Rainbows Programme was run by local Nuns and took the form of group therapy with children who had suffered bereavement or loss of some kind. It supported children in the community and not just those who attended Ballyoran School although it was based there. The programme lasted for a period of about ten weeks and took place after school.

Bullying is something addressed by all schools and ongoing throughout the school year but we always had special emphasis each year during Anti-bullying Week. My Master's Degree at Queen's University Belfast was entitled, "*Perceptions of Bullying and Bullying Intervention in an Urban Primary school: A Case Study*". The most natural school for me to choose was Ballyoran although the school and people remain anonymous throughout. The experience of a local school was a helpful focus within the bigger picture as it included interviewing many children, staff and some parents. I had used Circle Time as my approach with the children and found it very beneficial for providing a safe and confidential place for children to share, so in 2002 it was decided to have Circle Time incorporated into the weekly class routine. The staff received training and it became part of the weekly opportunity for children to share in their secure environment.

The caring ethos of the school had been part of Ballyoran from the beginning, and the pastoral dimension was continually being reviewed and updated as it is possible to do things better with pupils who are growing up in an ever-changing world.

We also piloted a '*Moving On, Moving Up*' Programme to help pupils in their transferring to Secondary Education, recognising that for many this was a very big step.

In recent years there was a lot of outside support for pupils' personal development and safety awareness programmes. The PSNI organised the Streetwise Programme and a Citizenship and Safety Programme. The SELB facilitated a Drug and Relationships programme with Love for Life. PSNI Community Affairs Team visited school in relation to Firework Safety and Internet Safety for both pupils and parents. Cycling Proficiency was carried out in school by Mr Brown (VP), as many children rode their bikes to school.

Ballyoran Nursery Classes were very highly thought of in the Southern Board and many children attended from outside the local area. The staff, Mrs Edgar, Mrs Carson, Mrs Stewart and Mrs McConville had very strong links with parents and time for them as well as caring for and providing a balanced educational programme for the children. They were very patient and worked well with the parents in settling the young pupils into school.

COMMUNITY

Two Primary Schools were at the heart of Ballyoran and the Garvagh Road area - St John The Baptist and Ballyoran

Controlled Primary Schools. Within the community these schools were linked through the '4-Schools Project' and also through shared Confirmation Services (see under appropriate headings). Any opportunity to share in some programme was welcomed and P7's from the two schools together made a model of the community for a development project.

Drumcree High School was the Secondary School and Ballyoran also had strong links with them, especially through music. At Christmas, Drumcree College Orchestra presented a very enjoyable concert for us in school and it was encouraging to see several former pupils developing their musical abilities. For a few years, Drumcree hosted an annual Talent Show 'Stars in Their Eyes' and invited some of our classes to attend. Again it was great to see some former pupils' talents, progress!

For several years, an international programme called Project Children was organised by a Drumcree Teacher, Mrs M Teggert, involving selected pupils from her school along with the two Primary schools. This was a wonderful opportunity for pupils to spend six weeks living with families in the USA. For a few, being away from home was a challenge, but in the main they had an exciting time and many family links were formed with some personal exchanges taking place in later years.

Pupils from Ballyoran moved on to several different schools for their Secondary Education, but Drumcree College was the main one and their Annual Prize Giving was a highlight for me. I was always made very welcome and it was a joy to celebrate the achievements of former pupils and meet up with them and their families over refreshments.

In latter years, the SureStart programme for pre-school children commenced in the community and this was a big plus for us. It provided speech therapy for many of our young pupils and training for Nursery Staff with many opportunities for visitors to give additional support. They also provided most of the funding for the new Nursery Soft Surface Play Area, the rest being raised by the nursery children. It was so much safer and we were delighted when it opened formally in June 02 with SureStart Representatives and Governors in attendance.

I have the highest regard for the community of Ballyoran and the surrounding area and admired their welcoming support in the main for the arrival of foreign families. It made it so much easier for us in school knowing that the community were of a similar mind.

Pupils occasionally performed Irish Folk Dancing in the Community Centre on St Patrick's Day. They also performed for the Deaf Club. Christmas provided opportunities to reach out into the community, often with the Choir singing for local community groups/residential homes. On alternate years, the pupils nominated members of the community to receive a Christmas Food Hamper. Mrs McGinnell, assisted by Mrs Brown, organised this and pupils throughout the school, including nursery, brought a wide selection of produce for the hampers. Upwards of fifty hampers were made up in school and distributed mainly by the pupils. We received some lovely 'Thank You Notes' from recipients, so it was good to know that as well as the joy of giving, they were appreciated.

Delta Programme - this was an excellent Parenting programme which was held for six weeks in the evenings on alternate years, reaching out to parents of Nursery and Primary 1 pupils. It was organised by Nursery and

Primary Staff (Mrs Edgar, Mrs Carson, Mrs Mackle and Mrs Mulholland) with the support from the Delta Team and despite numbers being small, it was always extremely valuable for those who attended and they were pleased to receive some educational materials for use with their children.

Time To Read Project was an initiative of 'Business In the Community' which provided lots of extra books for additional reading, although only targeted a few selected children. It originated in 2001 with links with the local Ulster Carpet Mills Factory who donated £1,500 of lovely books over two years, and then, after training, three of their employees visited school once a week for an hour and each read with a few the pupils from Primary 5. The same pupils received the programme through P6 and P7. It was a big commitment from the Business community and eventually the link changed to NI Housing Executive and continued for another few years. It was another positive programme for the pupils who attended enthusiastically.

Reading Partnership was initiated through the SELB who trained three volunteer parents. They visited school three days a week and supported reading with a few P3 and P4 pupils for fifteen minutes each. All volunteers were in the same classroom although each one was working individually with a pupil. The programme lasted for ten weeks and was then repeated in another term. The volunteers and teachers were encouraged to see the children's 'reading' progress.

4-SCHOOLS PROJECT

In January 2000, the 4-schools Moving Forward Project was formally launched. It had started with the vision of some of the Principals of the four schools - Millington PS, St John The Baptist PS, Hart Memorial PS and Ballyoran PS - to meaningfully move forward in cross-community links beyond the existing EMU links. Many Principals' meetings led to the official launch in January 2000 when the Staff from the four schools and some of the Governors gathered in the Carnegrove Hotel one evening for a Table Quiz. It was a significant moment in the midst so much unrest in Portadown and we were pleased that this was recognised in that Mrs H McClenaghan, the Chief Executive of SELB, attended the launch.

Throughout the year, each school focused on 'The Learning Game' a programme which promotes raising of self-esteem and positive thinking, areas I believe which are critical for children's development. There were shared outings for P7 pupils to "The Living History Exhibition" in Cultra. It was also the start of valuable links with Upper Bann Institute for Further Education. P5 pupils attended UBIFE for three sessions of computer studies along with one of the other schools and at the end of the year, the parents from the four schools attended a Special Prize Giving held in Upper Bann for the presentation of their certificates. Each school also presented one entertainment act as part of the programme. It was encouraging to see so many parents from the four schools attending the same ceremony together.

Further development, in the area of Information Technology through the Project, enabled additional funding for each school to set up a ten PC Computer Suite and a Shared Technician was appointed and funded for each school to have him/her one day a week to support this development. Other links were P5 Power Point/Hospitality,

P6 Construction/Electronic and P7 Catering/Science Courses.

For three years the Programme was very active and funded by 'Dissemination of Good Practice' but as often happens, this came to an end. The project was recognised to be extremely valuable and so continued for a further year funded out of the School Budget.

Each year saw more developments. The Four School Staff shared training at a Whole Day Conference entitled, "Citizenship, Tolerance and The New Curriculum". It opened up opportunities for pupils to visit each other's schools - Ballyoran went to a show in Millington, St John's came to see our school play and Hart Memorial P5 put on their Play on 'Thomas Edison' in our assembly hall. The Nursery also participated in the linked-schools programme going each year on an outing with the Hart Memorial Nursery to Parkanaur.

This was one of the most valuable links for me as a Principal with other schools and their Principals and I appreciated the insight and support of Mr M Gribbon, Mr D Holden and Mr S Harrison who initiated it.

VISITORS TO SCHOOL

It was to its credit that Ballyoran was recognised as a welcoming school by both staff and pupils and the children just loved visitors coming to the assembly hall or to their classrooms. There was such a variety of visitors and for so many different reasons. Examples of entertaining visitors were Magicians, Story Tellers, Theatre Groups, Birds of Prey, Water Bus, Bible Learning Programmes. These were mostly fun but educational. One particular Theatre Group presented shows addressing science topics so we had them several years in succession focusing on a different topic each time and for each Key Stage. Other visitors included authors, Sections of the Ulster Orchestra, SELB Tutors' Ensemble and 'Young at Art.'

Many came to encourage physical fitness and developed skills including local footballers, Gaelic, hurling and mini rugby players, Samba soccer and skipping programmes.

Visitors also came to assemblies including a North American Indian Group as well as representatives from each Charity we were supporting. They would come before the fund raising to inform and inspire us and afterwards to receive the cheque.

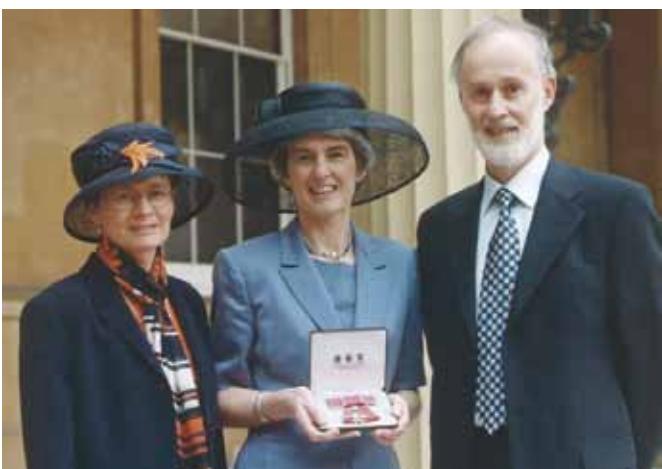
There were many promoting safety for the pupils such as the Fire Authority, Dental Hygienist and Community Police. They addressed different topics like fireworks and road safety.

The Nursery in particular regularly had visitors to school like Jo-Jingles and Fire-fighters but many came from the local community such as the hairdresser and postman.

Each year some of the Diocesan Advisors visited. They were always welcome, especially Sister Attracta who had a special way of helping the pupils recognise their own worth, giving me such positive feedback. Her visit always made me feel I had grown so much taller - such a blessing and inspiration! In January 2001, we also had an encouraging visit from the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev S K Todd and his wife Frances. They spoke at assembly and then toured the school visiting the pupils in their classrooms.

MBE

A big encouragement in my role as Principal came very unexpectedly when totally out of the blue, I got a telephone call from Downing Street to school one day in December 2000, asking me if I would accept an MBE. Normally that would come in the form of a letter so you can believe that the person had great trouble convincing me that this wasn't a wind up! The letter didn't arrive for another week as it had got lost somewhere! I do not often refer to it but it would be wrong of me not to acknowledge that some unknown people thought to put my name forward. I was both humbled and flabbergasted by the honour. However it really helped to spur me on and to appreciate how much the work and effort of the team involved in Ballyoran School was recognised. It was exciting and a great honour to go to Buckingham Palace to receive the award along with some family members - my brother and sister-in-law.



*Receiving an MBE at Buckingham Palace:
Mrs Margaret Calvert, Miss Morva Calvert and Dr Roy Calvert*

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

I knew little of the vital role of the Board of Governors in running a school until I became Principal. I was so grateful to have such supportive Governors but who took their role conscientiously while appreciating the insights and manner in which I chose to lead the school. In particular, I valued the wisdom, integrity and guidance of Archdeacon Gowing, Chairperson for my first five years. I had been a little in awe of him prior to my appointment but found him to be not only respectful but very humorous. I was very saddened by his sudden death in June 2001 as he had been a very faithful Governor of Ballyoran School for twenty-seven years and Chairman for most of those. His interest, support and commitment to Ballyoran School was of the utmost importance to him. Some of our pupils represented the school at his funeral along with Mr Brown (VP) and myself.

I equally valued Rev J Campbell who followed as Chairperson for the next seven years. He was always wise in giving guidance without interfering. He was a particular support to me in my last couple of years before retirement.

I am very grateful to all the governors over the years and I often was particularly humbled by their trust and belief in me and their support, especially when difficult decisions had to be made. We all had the greatest respect for each other and all advice was heard. In the latter years, although the role remained voluntary, Governors had to take on a lot of training, so this and their ongoing time given to meetings was immensely appreciated.

Members of the Board of Governors who served at various times between 1996 and 2008:

Ven FW Gowing (Chairperson), Dr W Ramsay, Rev D Mullan, Rev Canon Twaddell, Sr M J Corcoran, Mrs D Livingstone, Mr J Garvey, Mrs P Hagan, Mr B Brown, Mrs A Mallon, Mrs G Matchett, Rev J NT Campbell (Chairperson), Mr C Heaney, Mrs W Fearon, Mrs J Stewart, Mrs F McKinney, Mr B Carville, Mr E Fleming, Ms A McCreeesh-West and Mrs J O'Connor

RETIREMENTS

We were always sorry to lose staff but many of the following had been in Ballyoran School for many years and we wished them well on their retirement. Like myself, Mrs Auld, Mrs Hillis and Mr Brown, had all been there from when the school opened in September 1974.

Mrs J Auld retired in August 2002 having taught for 28 years in Ballyoran PS

Mrs D Hillis retired in August 2003 having taught for 29 years in Ballyoran PS

Mr B Brown (Vice Principal) retired in October 2005 having taught for 31 years in Ballyoran PS

Mrs H Lynas retired in August 2005 having taught for 29 years in Ballyoran PS

Mrs S Mallon retired in October 01 having been Head of Ballyoran School Kitchen for 22 years - Mrs D Campbell was her successor

Mrs G Scullion retired in May 07 having been a cleaner for 31 years in Ballyoran PS

Miss H Hetherington retired (due to redundancy) in August 2000 having been a teacher

Mrs J Beggs retired in August 2003 having been a Classroom Assistant

Mrs M Forbes retired in 1997 having been a cleaner and Supervisory Assistant for many years

Mrs G Hoy retired in 1997 having been a cleaner for many years

My own retirement came in August 2008 after thirty-four years in Ballyoran PS, my entire teaching career. The leaving process was made easier with occasions celebrating special memories. The Farewell Assembly in school was perfect with so many pupils participating in the varied programme and full of fun and the presentation of very special gifts. I am always so pleased to show visitors at my house the stunning water



Presentation of Gifts at Farewell Assembly in June 2008

fountain which I enjoy so much in the summer, the pretty tree growing well and the extra special plate hanging up which is embossed with each child's thumbprint. I was also grateful to those pupils and parents who gave their personal good wishes. The evening meal in the Seagoe Hotel with Governors and so many Staff, past and present, was a delight and made special by some of my family being present. Again I appreciated the many beautiful gifts.

On the last school day in June, there were particularly touching moments as members of the local community expressed their good wishes to me with surprise gifts from Drumcree College, St John's PS and Ashgrove Community Centre. Their thoughtfulness meant so much to me.

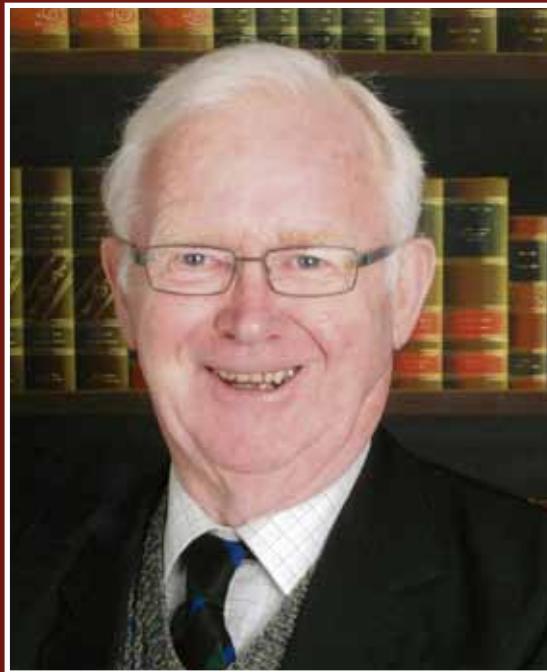
CLOSE

This booklet contains many initiatives, projects and programmes, all of which were valuable in their own way and which sought to enhance the day to day teaching of each child whatever their abilities, talents, needs or social circumstances. Each child is of equal importance and each is at the centre of the school and the reason for the dedication of the teachers and the many support staff who care for them and seek to develop their potential. I trust we made some impact towards that end. My belief is that 'motivation' was a very important key to unlocking that potential and in finding that for each child, was when teachers were at their best.

I am so grateful to all the Ballyoran Staff who, over my twelve years as Principal, stood by me and showed me such respect. When I visited other educational institutions or courses, I would return to school and tell them that we had the best Staff! I particularly want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the school secretary, Mrs Ruth Tedford who was ever so discreet, patient, unflustered and was always there, often for long hours beyond her allotted times, without complaint. How would I have managed without her? All the staff were good at going the extra mile but I want to mention Classroom Assistants Mrs McCall, Mrs Weir, Mrs Rainey, Mrs Huddleson and Mrs Beggs who time and again were invaluable in helping me out in many different ways not related to their job description, not even at the Principal's discretion!

There were many changes in education over my years as a teacher and then Principal but my basic belief remained the same - each child is a child brought into the world by others and to be valued no matter what their background or start in life. I believe education should address the development of the child as a whole but never losing sight of a solid grounding in reading, writing and mathematics and it has been a joy when I hear of pupils, now many grown into adulthood, who have gone on to do so well.

I hope those who read this are inspired by what is remembered. I apologise for the persons and areas I have omitted. I acknowledge that on occasions we fell short of the perfection we were striving for in education. I sometimes think how pleased my Father would have been to have seen me follow on from Mr Gilpin and I greatly valued the uncomplaining support of my Mother. Yet it was always the grace of God that inspired and strengthened me each and every day of my years as Principal and I am so very grateful. As I often said, despite its challenges, it really was the best job and Ballyoran will always be a special place for me.



D J Gilpin BA (Dublin), MA (Belfast)

Principal 1974-1996



Morva E Calvert MBE, MEd

Principal 1996-2008



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