



Safeguarding Team

Principal: Mr Woolsey

Designated Teacher: Mrs McGuire

Deputy Designated Teacher: Miss McKernan

Nursery Deputy Designated

Teacher: Mrs Mulholland

Designated Governor: Mrs Sergeant

Chairperson: Mrs Loney

Start of Year News Sheet – September 2025

Welcome Back

We are delighted to have all our amazing pupils back to school and a big welcome back to everyone for the 2025/2026 year. We trust that everyone had a pleasant and relaxing summer. A special welcome to all our new pupils, we hope that you settle into the school very quickly.

Parent Information Booklet 2025-26

This has been made available to parents already through the school app and school website and should be read carefully. It can be accessed at:

<https://tinyurl.com/5ae5ez6x>

School Holidays

There has been a change to the school holidays for this year, please see amended Term Dates and Holidays at:

<https://www.ballyoranps.com/attachments/download.asp?file=142&type=pd>

The main change is that school will be closed for a full two weeks at Easter.

Dismissal Times

- Nursery: 1.30pm every day after settling in
- Year 1: 1.55pm every day from 8th September
- Year 2: 2pm every day
- Year 3: 3pm Mon – Wed
2pm: Thurs & Fri
- Year 4: 3pm: Mon – Thurs
2pm: Fri
- Year 5: 3pm every day
- Year 6: 3pm every day
- Year 7: 3pm every day
- Caterpillar Room: Yrs 1 & 2: 8.55am – 1.50pm every day
Yr 3: 8.55am – 2.50pm Monday – Wed & 2pm on Thurs & Fri
Yr 4: 8.55am – 3pm: Mon– Thurs & 2pm on Fri
- Butterfly Room: 2.50pm every day

Staffing

We welcome three new teachers to Ballyoran this year, Miss Bettany will be covering Mrs Muldrew's Maternity Leave in Year 1, Miss Martin will be covering Year 5 and Mrs Chapman will be working on Wednesdays in Year 7.

We welcome 8 new Classroom Assistants to the school this year: Miss Graham, Mrs McCool, Mrs Adams, Mrs Grimley, Mrs Smyth, Miss Gillepsie, Miss McCrory and Miss Judge.

We also welcome two new cleaners Mrs Ruskowska and Miss McConville.

We say farewell to two Classroom Assistants who will not be returning this year. Mrs Bell, Nursery Assistant will be taking a Career Break and Miss Goodman who has worked with us for the last 3 years.

Congratulations to Miss Irwin (Caterpillar Room) who got married over the summer and returns to us as Mrs Coert.

Homework

Homework begins on **Monday 8th September**. In response to feedback from the recent Pupil Survey in which only 50% stated that they enjoyed homework activities, we have been reviewing this and have made a change. From the start of this year we are removing the written Literacy homework on a trial basis, we will consult pupils and parents on this further in due course.

Class Fund - Yr 3 - 7 classes

We are again asking parents for financial support to provide additional resources for the children in Year 3-7 classes. This contribution will allow the class teacher to purchase extra items that are needed in the classroom which are not immediately available from stock such as cooking and seasonal art materials. We are asking for £10 per child for the year and the money can be paid through ParentPay throughout the month of September. We are grateful for this additional revenue and we thank you for your support.

New Website

Our new school website has been launched and we are very pleased with how it looks. Please log on at www.ballyoranps.com Class Pages will be updated regularly giving parents a useful insight into what their children are doing in class.

New Logo

As you can see from the top of this News Sheet, we have redesigned our school logo, which we hope you will agree looks really well.

Lockdown Procedure

All schools in Northern Ireland were given Lockdown Guidance from EA recently and as a result of this have to put a Lockdown Policy and Procedure in Place. Unfortunately, schools are unable to share this procedure with parents but please be assured that the safety of pupils and staff is our number one priority at all times.

Data Capture and Consent Forms

It is vital that we hold up-to-date information on every child in school. A small number of parents did not return these in June and we would ask that these are now returned as soon as possible.

School Attendance – Every School Day Counts

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning. Sometimes attendance percentages can be misleading – as a whole school in 2024/25 we had an average attendance of 92.1%. We are pleased that this is an improvement from last year but from the Department of Education guidance detailed below you can see that this still falls into the 'Poor' to 'Satisfactory' category. While we appreciate that illness was a major factor in this, we would like your cooperation in improving our rate of attendance and in turn reducing the days of lost learning. Please note that rates of attendance are reviewed monthly with the Educational Welfare Office (EWO) and those children falling below 85% are automatically referred to the EWO for intervention. Thank you for your help in this matter. The Department of Education booklet '*School Attendance Matters - A Parent's Guide*' is available on the school website at <https://tinyurl.com/36zrv5e>.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

- Due to Department of Education Guidelines, a present mark can only be given if a pupil is in school.
- Just as Attendance is important, Punctuality is also very important. Children who arrive after 9am will be marked as late.

Traffic Management Scheme

Thank you to the vast majority of parents who use our Traffic Management Scheme properly. A reminder that we operate a one-way system, with the only vehicle access to the school being the Ashgrove Road entrance, exiting via Ballyoran Park. A small number of parents are still driving up Ballyoran Park in the mornings and afternoons to collect pupils and we would appeal to them not to do this as it disrupts the smooth flow of traffic. A small number of parents are also parking on the double yellow lines in the car park which makes it difficult for other parents to get out of the parking spaces. Parents are asked to drive carefully in the school grounds adhering to the 5mph speed limit to ensure the safety of all members of our school community.

Breakfast Club

The Breakfast Club is open from Day 1 to all pupils in Nursery – Year 7 daily in the Dinner Hall from 8.15 – 8.45am. The cost remains **£1.00** per day. Payment for Breakfast Club has moved to Parent Pay this year and we would be grateful if bookings for the week could be made before midday on the Friday of the previous week to allow us to plan each week.

School Start Time: 8.55am

It is vitally important that your child is in school on time every morning. All pupils should be in school for **8.55am** ready to start work at the 9am bell. A reminder that the gates open at **8.45am** and no pupil should be on the school grounds before this as there is no supervision. If a child arrives after 9.00am they will be marked as late. Teachers will monitor punctuality and parents will be contacted if their child is persistently late.

Parent Pay

A reminder that we are a cashless school and all payments must be made using Parent Pay. All school dinners, free and paid must be booked on Parent Pay.

Breaktime Snack

Nursery and Foundation Stage (Yrs 1 – 2) parents are asked to contribute £10 a month per child towards the daily snack and toy fund. **Please note that this money should be paid at the start of each month on Parent Pay.**

Year 3 – 7 pupils must bring their own healthy snack of fruit, vegetables, yogurts or breads. No fizzy drinks, chocolate, sweets or crisps are allowed as part of our Healthy Breaks Policy.

Suitable healthy break snacks	Not allowed at break
Pieces of fresh fruit	Any type of confectionery, eg chocolate products and sweets
Fruit pots of sliced or chopped fresh fruit	Crisps and crisp-like products such as tortilla chips, potato sticks, corn chips, prawn crackers, puff crackers
Canned fruit in natural juice	Cakes, buns or pastries
Salad pots	Cereal or fruit bars
Raw vegetables such as tomatoes, carrots, celery, peppers and cucumber	All biscuits
Bread, pancakes or scones with a thin spread of butter	Fizzy drinks
Breadsticks or crackers with cheese	Dried fruit that has been sugared or coated in yogurt or chocolate
Sandwiches, bagels, baguettes, pitta bread, tortilla wraps or rolls	Pretzels
Yogurts	Nuts

School Meals

The EA have not informed us of any changes in school meal prices so prices remain as follows:

Nursery - £2.50 per day; £12.50 per week

Primary - £2.60 per day; £13.00 per week

We would encourage Dinner Money to be paid for the whole week **on Parent Pay**.

A reminder that school dinners must be paid for in advance.

Free School Meals/Uniform Allowances

A reminder that eligible parents must apply online for the new school year, even parents who were already in receipt of this last year.

Making an application does not automatically entitle you to Free School Meals and you will have to pay for dinners until the application is approved by EA.

If you do not make an application or put your application in late, your child will have to pay for dinners until the EA approves the application.

Applications must be made at <https://tinyurl.com/mrxms8bc>

Dinner Menu

<https://www.ballyoranps.com/attachments/download.asp?file=140&type=pdf>

Mentoring/Counselling

The Mental Health and Well Being of our pupils remains a high priority and again this year we will have a number of interventions available for our pupils who are experiencing social, emotional or well-being difficulties:

- Links Counselling
- Reach Mentoring
- Solas Mentoring
- Music Therapy – This is a new intervention this year

Teachers will be identifying and referring pupils who they feel would benefit from these interventions and if you feel that your child might benefit from one of these please contact your child's class teacher.

Smoking/Vaping

As you are aware, it is School Policy that smoking is not permitted within the school grounds. Please note that this Policy also includes e-cigarettes and vapes.

Year 1 Induction

- A reminder that Year 1 pupils have been divided into two groups on Friday 29th August for induction: 9am – 11am and 11.30am – 1.30pm. Please check your Induction Pack for details.
- Monday 1st September and Tuesday 2nd September, all Year 1 pupils will start at 8.55am and finish at 12noon.
- Wednesday 3rd to Friday 5th September, all Yr 1 pupils will stay for lunch and finish at 1pm.

- From Monday 9th September all Year 1 pupils will be in school for a full day, finishing school at 1.55pm.

Children will enter and leave school at the red Nursery gate. Year 1 parents are welcome to walk their child into school in the early days but we ask that you encourage your child to walk into school on their own as soon as possible.

Cycling to and from School

Only pupils in Years 4 – 7, wearing a cycling helmet and who have returned a consent form are permitted to cycle to school and park their bikes at the front of the school.

Nuts

A reminder that Ballyoran Primary School has a **No Nuts Policy** to protect pupils with nut allergies. We ask all parents to respect this when sending food into school.

Clubs

We are in the process of organising after school clubs for term one and information will be sent to parents via the App as soon as possible.

Sensory Room Update

As you know we reached our target to install a new Sensory Room in school for our pupils, this was down to the generosity of parents and friends through a number of fundraising events over the last year as well as a very generous gift from the Cherry family which we are very grateful for. We are delighted to inform you that our new Sensory Room is now in place and pupils will be able to start using it this year.

Medication

If your child requires any medication to be taken in school for any reason, a Consent Form must first be completed. These are available at the office or can be downloaded from the school website.

Dogs on School Premises

A reminder that dogs (other than Guide Dogs) are not permitted on the school grounds for Health and Safety reasons.

Swimming

Year 5 – 7 pupils will go to South Lakes Leisure Centre again this year on a rota basis. Swimming is a vital part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum for PE and therefore is not optional. We do not charge for swimming as many schools do. Please complete the consent form which will be sent home and return to school immediately.

Speaking to Teachers

If you need to speak to your child's teacher, you should contact the office in the first instance and a suitable time will be arranged. Unfortunately, it will not be possible for

parents to speak to teachers in the morning as they are busy preparing for the day and supervising pupils. If you do need to pass an urgent message to the teacher in the morning, please either send a note or email in or speak to the secretary who will pass the message on.

Term 1 Diary Dates – Advance Notice

- 29th September School Closed for Staff Training
- 20th October Flu Vaccinations
- 20th – 24th October Parent/Teacher Meetings – school closes at 1pm
- 27th – 31st October Half Term
- 10th – 14th November Anti Bullying Week
- 17th November School Photographs – Individual & Family Groups
- 2nd December Yr 3 – 7 Trip to ‘Beauty & The Beast’ Pantomime in Armagh

- 5th December Canteen Christmas Dinner
- 10th December Nursery Christmas Performance
- 11th & 12th December Primary School Christmas Performances
- 19th December Last Day of Term 1 – School finishes at 12noon, no uniform and no dinners

School App

It is important that all parents are using the school app as this is our main method of communication. A number of parents have still not downloaded it and are missing out on vital information. If you are not receiving messages or have any problems setting it up, please contact the office.

Thank you for your continued co-operation and support and wishing the entire school community a positive and successful year ahead.

Richard Woolsey
Principal

