

Trustees of Friends of Holy Family PS Annual Report March 2023

The trustees of Friends of Holy Family Primary School Belfast submit their report and accounts for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Our aims were to:

- Promote a range of school events to bring children and families together
- Promote fun outdoor community events and projects for all families
- Promote links with the local community by collaborating with schools and local businesses, services and agencies
- Continue to promote and provide educational courses and workshops for parents and families online
- Organise fundraising events to help raise funds and support various charities and events

Outlined below are the various activities and strategies Friends of Holy Family was involved in to help develop our aims.

Programmes and services in the local and wider community

Our social media and communication platforms have proven to be highly effective with parents and families, and so, we continued to use Facebook, website, Seesaw, newsletter, telephone service and email etc. We continued to provide guidance and online links to local community services and online learning tools / resources such as Oxford Reading Owl, NESSY, Doodle, Topmarks etc. This helped strengthen family connections and improve communication, as well as, extending learning at home.

Parent Support Services

Our team continued to promote and advertise links to relevant services, webinars and posters on our social media from our local support services such as Ashton, Primary Behaviour Support, ParentingNI, British Dyslexia Association, Barnardos, Grace Family Centre, Eden Consultancy NI, Holy Family Youth Centre, Autism Advisory Intervention Service, PIPs Suicide Prevention Service etc. Our parents and families were very grateful for the additional support services made available to them.

Community Programmes and Projects

McCrory Centre and Ashton

Throughout the year our team promotes and organises a school uniform swap shop in school. We also work in partnership with McCrory Centre, Duncairn Gardens and Ashton Centre Belfast. Volunteers helped gather up the uniforms and organised them into sizes for the new school year. Ashton also helped donate to families in the North Belfast area.

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Newlodge Arts and Duncairn Community Partnership

Our team worked closely with Newlodge Arts and Duncairn Community Partnership to promote the return of their fabulous community events in Term1 and 2 – Spring Awakening, North Belfast Lantern Festival and Halloween Pumpkin Patch, all of which were outdoors at Alexandra Park. This year we also welcomed two new events; Peace in the Park and Multicultural Family Fun Day. All the events were a huge success with a wonderful turn out from our children and their families, as well as members of the local community.

Newlodge Arts continued to offer fabulous Parent and Child art classes to our children and families and Duncairn welcomed our P7 children to a performance of Mohand and Peter.

Young at Art and Arts for All

Young at Art continued to welcome our children to the Mac Theatre to learn about local artists and visit the art gallery. Arts for All offered free after school art classes for children.

Ulster Scot Agency

This year we worked in partnership with Ulster Scots Agency and got involved in some exciting new Eco projects. Children created mini micro forests which were displayed around school and our children and families were invited to take part in an Eco Day at Alexandra Park. Together they planted flowers and cuddled furry friends. These events had an extremely positive impact on our local environment both in school and in our local park.

Limestone United

Limestone United provided our P6 children with a cross community football project in the local community club. The children worked alongside Currie Primary School and together they developed their football skills.

Eco Schools

Staff, children, parents, and members of the local community worked hard to gain Green Flag status. Together they improved the variety of minibeasts, plants and wildlife in and around the school grounds. The team were invited to the City Hall to meet with the Lord Mayor and in return the Lord Mayor visited school to see the fabulous work done by all.

Belfast City Council

Staff, children, parents and FOHF worked in partnership with Belfast City Council to tackle the issue of waste. The team thoroughly enjoyed a visit to Belfast City Hall to talk and learn more about this topic.

RSPB & Mens Shed

The team also worked closely with RSPB and Mens Shed to help encourage the migration of Swifts to nest in our school grounds.

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Big Spring Clean

The Eco Council and parent volunteers had a successful day participating in the Big Spring Clean alongside Currie Primary School. Children, parents and staff all worked together to tackle the issue of litter.

Belfast Hills Partnership

The Eco Council worked in partnership with Belfast Hills Partnership to receive the Wild Challenge bronze Award. They kindly donated Cherry Blossom trees which were planted in the school grounds.

Local Sports

The Ulster GAA, IFA, Creative Coaching Belfast and Gaelfast have provided our children and staff with a wealth of locally funded sporting programmes and experiences such as Gaelic, Hurling, Soccer and Netball throughout the year. Some of our children were experiencing these sporting activities for the first time, whilst others were extending their love for the sport by joining their local club. Children have gone on to represent their teams in the Official GAA competitions. Some parents and children have now joined local GAA clubs.

The children enjoyed a very special visit from the Antrim Hurlers. They came into school to showcase the Joe McDonagh cup which the senior men recently won. They held a Q&A session and overall, inspired so many of our children to get involved in Hurling.

NMSports

NMSports and Irish FA provided a range of sporting activities throughout the year. Our members helped promote their seasonal sports camps on Facebook to help extend the children's PE skills.

Sustrans Active Travel

Our children and families continue to get involved in our active travel events such as Cycle to School and Walking Bus. FOHF continue to promote these Active Travel events through social media and by word of mouth.

Northern Ireland Fire Service and Police Service

P2 and P5 children enjoyed a visit from the local Fire Service and Police Service to learn about the importance of Fire Safety and keeping safe at home and in the local community.

Local Businesses

FOHF have worked hard to involve and seek support from local businesses in our community. Freak Treats provided free ice cream vouchers for pupil rewards in school. Throughout the year Morelli's Ice-Cream provided ice-creams to our children during school events i.e. Sports Day, Sacraments and Fun Days. North Belfast Food Bank provided a complimentary BBQ during KS2 Sports Day and Summer Scheme. Bryson provided a complimentary Christmas event to all the children in our school and nursery. Pizza Works provided our Primary 7 leavers with complimentary pizzas for their leavers party. Tesco sponsored our nursery and school Sports Day with complimentary fruit and water. FOHF are grateful for this support.

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Local Art Competitions

Throughout the year our children joined in fabulous art competitions provided by local businesses including Newington Credit Union, Property People, Texaco and Cityside. The competitions were a huge success with a large number of participants and winners.

School and parent events

Nessy

We continue to grow our fabulous partnership with NESSY to support children with their reading in school and at home. Each child in the school now has their own online learning account. We hosted our very first Nessy Fair and welcomed P1 parents and children to get involved in a fabulous interactive workshop.

Shared education

Our children, staff and parents continue to work in partnership with Currie Primary School. Together they got involved in art, music, eco and sporting events.

Home - school projects

We continued to build relationships with parents and families by involving them in the learning at home. Many year groups completed home learning projects which were showcased at year group assemblies. Projects included – P7 Belfast, P6 Rainforest, P5 Pyramids, P4 Volcanoes and P3 Space and Safari.

Additional family events

Our team has thoroughly enjoyed reconnecting with our parents and welcoming them back into school. Some successful events included Parent Curriculum events, PJ Parties, Play and Stays, Christmas concerts, Nessy fair, sacramental events, Sports Days, Book Fair, Play and Stays, Shared education projects etc. We thank all the parents and FOHF who supported the running of these events.

Clubs

Children thoroughly enjoyed being able to attend afterschool clubs again. Many children availed of clubs such as Art, Drama, Netball, Gaelic, Soccer, Hurling, Homework, Multisports and Irish Dancing.

Cultural events

Catholic Schools Week

We held various cultural events to celebrate diversity and inclusion within our school community. During Catholic Schools Week we celebrated the theme 'Living Life to the Full' and ended the week with a lovely tribute to Grandparents in the local church. Grandparents were invited and songs, stories and poems about their grandparents were enjoyed.

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Black History Month

During this month the children learned about inspirational black figures who have made global history such as Bob Marley, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. The children enjoyed listening to music, reading stories and watching dramas to mark the event. Our members used social media to mark this historic month.

Festival of Diwali

The children celebrated this special festival by making lanterns as a symbol of triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and good over evil. The event was welcomed by all and shared on our social platforms.

European Day of Languages

We had a wonderful day celebrating the diversity in our school with fun activities in class as well as a lovely continental breakfast at the Breakfast Club. Children, staff and parents enjoyed learning words in a new language. The event was extremely positive and welcomed by everyone.

Sacraments

Children, parents and their families together joined in the sacrament celebrations with the easing of COVID restrictions. It was a happy day for all, and the events were promoted on our social platforms.

Mental Health and Well Being

We continued to promote the counselling service 'Time for Me' provided by Barnardos for our children and advertised support services available to parents and families such as AWARE, Women's Aid. Parents and families had access to free online mediation sessions.

We promoted Mental Health Awareness Week and together we took part in the Let's Connect programme in school and at home. In addition to this, our children enjoyed a variety of activities provided by EA and Action Mental Health. The children have a deeper understanding of their feelings and emotions and use strategies such as Nurture in 5 to help them to feel calm, positive, and ready to learn.

The Nurture club has been extremely successful for children with additional emotional needs availing of the service each day. The children enjoy breakfast or snacks together, play games and join in circle time activities. The nurture room provides a calming and stimulating environment with mood lighting and sensory objects on display.

We continued to promote the health and wellbeing of our children by offering sporting activities such as Jump, Jiggle and Jive sessions, active travel and sporting events.

Questionnaires

Parents and staff completed an online survey to give their views and offer ideas and suggestions on school affairs. The children completed a PASS survey to indicate their feelings about school and learning. These surveys are extremely valuable in helping us to support and provide for members of our school community.

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Fundraising and Charity Events

Our members worked hard to organise and promote a variety of fundraising events at school.

Many members of the school community got involved in the Lisburn 10k and 3k run. We fundraised for the event and school staff, FOHF, parents and children came along to cheer on our wonderful runners.

The school held a Halloween and Christmas Fun Day. FOHF organised a Tuck Shop. The children dressed up and enjoyed a visit to the school tuck shop.

During Christmas our families kindly made cash donations in replace of teacher Christmas gifts. Donations were made to two chosen charities – North Belfast Food Bank and St Vincent de Paul Society. FOHF supported this school venture.

The P7 children kindly donated food items to make up Food Hampers for our Christmas Hamper Appeal. All Christmas Hampers were donated to the Morning Star Hostel.

During Lent the school held a non-uniform day and children brought in sweet treats for a class party. Donations were in aid of the Trocaire campaign. FOHF supported these fundraising events.

Fare Share Charity

We continue to benefit from The FareShare charity. We support our children and their families by offering some food items at low cost on a weekly basis. FOHF benefited from a grant to buy new freezers and a fridge last year. This has enabled us to increase the quantity of fresh and frozen food available. The FareShare Hub is well supported by parents and FOHF volunteer their help to run the Hub on Fridays.

We have had a very successful year of projects and events for our children, parents and members of our local community. We have built strong links with local businesses and groups and look forward to building upon these wonderful partnerships in the future.

Accounts

Our previous year's closing balance for April 2021- March 2022 was £3,186.63

Our closing balance for April 2022 - March 202 is £4,347.93