

Rowandale Integrated Primary School

Newsletter May 2025



The Big Build

We are seeing progress on a daily basis now and the staff have been getting sneak previews of the new building with Mrs Hughes conducting tours on Friday afternoons. The school has also been a hive of activity with boxes being packed and lots of journeys to the recycling centre. A huge thank you to all those who are helping out with all aspects of the move - packing, sorting, recycling, moving furniture and much more.



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Preparing for The Big Move



As we all know, moving house is a mammoth task. Moving a school is even bigger! The last few months have been a hive of activity behind the scenes with a meticulous plan of clearing out, packing, labelling, moving and trips to the recycling centre! As always, we couldn't do all of this without the help of the Rowandale community so a big thank you to Suzanne, Lesley Anne and Tim for giving your time to help out. Thanks also to Patrick McCollum of Crossbows Optical, Lurgan for the very generous donation of 400 packing boxes.



Smartphones and our Children

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>



Children and Smartphones

The five schools in the Moira and Magheralin area have grouped together to start a discussion on children's use of smartphones. We believe this is a very important topic, particularly given recent items in the news on the potential dangers children can face online despite the best efforts of parents to keep them safe.

We are keen to understand parents' views on the use of smartphones and will be circulating a short parent survey across the five schools in the coming weeks. This is to help determine what information and support we can provide, with a view to potentially holding an information session for parents.

In the meantime we wanted to share an initiative and some media on the topic that has been highlighted to the schools by some parents. Please note that some of the media linked below does contain some difficult and sensitive themes.



Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement of parents who believe childhood is too short to be spent on a smartphone. The aim is to bring parents together, empower parents to wait to give their children a smartphone and demonstrate that parents are demanding change. <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>



Assignment - Ireland's first smartphone free town. This podcast follows the story of the 8 primary schools in the Greystones area of County Wicklow, which made headlines in recent years due to a pact made by parents to delay the introduction of smartphones until the age of 12. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5mss> (can also be found on usual podcast platforms)



Swiped - the School that Banned Smartphones - Two-part documentary series that see Emma and Matt Willis explore the use of smartphones by children and the dangers they can face. The program also focuses on a group of year 8 students who give up their smartphones for 21 days and the impact this had on their well-being and mental health. **Available on demand on the Channel 4 On demand player.**

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Smartphones and our Children



Five schools in the area (Rowandale Integrated PS, Moira PS, Maralin Village PS, St Patrick's PS Maralin and Meadowbridge PS) held an informative and successful information evening discussing children and smartphones on Wednesday 14th May.

We had great talks from Rosalind McClean of Smartphone Free Childhood Northern Ireland, Professor Peter Cosgrove (Paediatrician), the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Michelle Guy MLA.

On the night we heard the latest research on children's mental health, developments happening at Stormont regarding online safety and the serious, very real, and increasingly common issues the PSNI are dealing with in relation to children online in the Lagan Valley area. We also heard how Smartphone Free Childhood are bringing parents together and the work they are doing with government bodies to bring about change in schools and the wider community.

Following the evening there has been increased support for Smartphone Free Childhood in the area, through signing of their pact and an increase in their Moira area WhatsApp group for parents. Signing the pact adds weight to their movement and we would encourage parents to sign up.

With thanks to Mairead and John McManus for starting the conversation many months ago and instigating the movement in the Moira area, to the Rev Joanne Megarrell and the Parish of St John's for the use of the parish centre on the night of the event, to all the speakers for your time and commitment and to the parents, carers and grandparents who came on the night to show support for this very important issue.

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Smartphones and our Children



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Rowandale Continues to Lead The Way in UICT

Rowandale Integrated Primary school leading the way in UICT as we begin our journey with UDL



Yet again Mrs McCarragher champions the importance of making all learning accessible through the use of ICT. We are so proud of her for being successful in completing her Learning Graduate Certificate Programme at Lasell University, Boston.

Last month, Mrs McCarragher travelled to Lasell University in Boston with LANTEC Digital. Mrs McCarragher has been part of the 2nd cohort of teachers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to study Universal Design for Learning through Lasell University.



The course has been completed online throughout this academic year and ended last week in Boston with delivering final presentations and graduating from the Universal Design for Learning Graduate Certificate Program. As a school, we are excited to begin our journey with UDL and look forward to learning from Mrs McCarragher and seeing UDL in action in our classrooms.



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Mrs Hughes graduates in Restorative Practice



Mrs Hughes travelled to Dublin, Trinity College Campus in Tallaght on Thursday evening to attend her graduation achieving her CDI Restorative Practice Trainer status.

Mrs Hughes stated that this accreditation is enabling her to develop Rowandale as a Restorative Practice school, where true learning flourishes in a connected community, where repairing harm and strengthening relationships are integral to growth and understanding.

L to R - Yvonne Carey (CDI RP Trainer & Leadership Coach), Audrey Boyd (School Improvement Officer EA), Mrs Hughes, Roisin Doran (EA Lead for Restorative Practices), Jen Little (CDI RP Trainer CDI Quality Specialist and Coach)



Mrs Hughes says: 'I am so grateful to Jen & Yvonne for their guidance, support and expertise and to the team of colleagues I worked with - Ian, Emer, Lisa, Jean, Roisin and Jenny'

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Running for Rowandale

We did it!! Thirty-five members of the Rowandale community - staff, parents and friends - took part in the Belfast City Marathon to raise funds for IT equipment for our new school. It was a glorious day, the weather was great, the crowds along the route were amazing and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the race. Thank you so much to everyone who sponsored the runners - we raised a whopping £7,400.



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Running for Rowandale



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Running for Rowandale



The School Improvement Plan

Update

The Arts

Developing a skills approach in the teaching of Art, Music and Drama

Staff availed of 2 sessions of training with Lorna Gardiner, Thinking Matters Consultant.

Thinking Matters

Staff explored the use of Thinking Frames to encourage a transfer of thinking skills and provide a visual record of thinking.

metacognition

Play

Clare Devlin, Educational Play Consultant has been working with the school to support the development of the new Nursery and Foundation Stage Play provision.

Adaptive Practice

Foundation Staff have been creating resources to increase the power of choice as to which resources the children select to support their learning in Literacy and Numeracy.

Restorative Practice

Teachers have been implementing Restorative Circles to the weekly schedule to build stronger relationships, develop social-emotional skills and enhance conflict resolution.

Staff are also revising planning for Physical Education, improving pupil performance in the area of 'Fluency of Facts and Procedures' in Numeracy and developing strategies to improve word meaning in KSI and KS2 in Literacy.

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LCCC Schools Swimming Gala

Our Rowandale swimmers had a fabulous day at the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council Schools Gala at Lisburn Leisureplex. The kids all had a great time, swam their hearts out and came home with amazing PBs and some certificates and medals to recognise their efforts. The P4 & P5 swimmers Jonah, Aibhilin, Alex, Sophia and Erin swam in the morning session. Jonah was delighted to get a bronze medal for his backstroke in his first ever gala. Aibhilin also got a bronze for her freestyle swim. In the afternoon our P6 & Y7 kids Pippa, Fiona, Ewan and Callan took to the water. Pippa stormed home with a gold and a bronze medal for her backstroke and butterfly swims and Callan got a bronze for his freestyle swim. We would love to bring more swimmers back to this gala next year. It was great fun



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LCCC Schools Swimming Gala



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Happy Birthday Mrs Grant

Mrs Grant celebrated a special birthday in April. As is now tradition, there was the guard of honour, a whole-school rendition of Happy Birthday, cards and gifts and a delicious afternoon tea. Happy birthday, Mrs Grant - we hope you enjoyed your day.



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Playgroup Update

Rowandale Community Playgroup is a hive of activity - with the children getting ready to move to nursery school and primary schools.

Caoimhe and Jayne are also looking forward to the busy months ahead, moving to the new school building, meeting lots of new children and continuing to provide an excellent pre-school experience for the children of Moira and the surrounding areas.

Each year, Playgroup receives exemplary reports in their inspection.

Contact Playgroup on 028 9261 9325 for information about pre-School places and pre-pre-school places.

Rowandale Community Playgroup



- Is your child going to be **2** years and **10** months old by September?
- Are you looking for an excellent pre pre-school setting to send your child to?

If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then why not avail of a place in our Playgroup?

A choice of 1 to 5 days in a dedicated educational setting with highly qualified staff.

Call us on 028 9261 9325

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Farewell Philly

We were all so sad to bid farewell to Philly, who has been the Rowandale Bursar since 2017. Philly's Rowandale journey had started in 2008 when her son Malachy joined Year 1 and Philly became involved in school life. By the time Bronagh and Maeve had started school, Philly was a regular feature at school events serving teas and coffees, helping to organise the Christmas Fair and the Summer Fete, taking on the mammoth task of sorting and selling pre-loved uniform, volunteering as a Reading Partner and then volunteering in the office.



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Forewell Philly



When the Bursar's position became available in 2017, Philly was an obvious choice and she took on that role and made it her own. Never was a job more suited to a person! She managed the school finances meticulously leaving no stone unturned when it came to getting the best value for money and providing the best resources possible. She carried out her duties with patience and humour and was a font of knowledge, advice and support to all.



Philly announced earlier this year that she would be emigrating to the US and we immediately set about organising a fitting farewell. Over the past few weeks there have been various farewells, dinners, outings and get-togethers. Philly's last hurrah was at a tea party in school where she was presented with a specially commissioned painting by Louise Lennon, her favourite Northern Irish artist, a token of gratitude from the entire Rowandale community - parents, staff and governors. The painting was presented by the artist herself and Philly was absolutely delighted! Philly, we wish you the very best of luck in your new home in Wisconsin - we will miss you!. Don't forget to visit any time you're in Moira.



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In Focus - Philly Bayston (Bursar 2017-2025)



How long have you worked Rowandale?

I started working at Rowandale in 2017, but I've been involved with the school as a parent & volunteer since September 2008 when Malachy started Year 1. I brought him to one of the Saturday morning art clubs earlier that year and fell in love with the place - just a couple of portacabins in a farmyard in those days.

What is your favourite memory Rowandale?

I have so many...as a parent, the one that really springs to mind was watching Frances lead a conga of pupils around the playground when we found out that we had won the Wicksteed competition. Such joy. And as Bursar it would undoubtedly be our ski trip to Folgaria. It was the most fantastic experience: seeing the kids come out of their comfort zones and achieve things they never thought they were capable of, getting to know a brilliant group of parents, and as a bonus enjoying some really excellent skiing.



What did you enjoy most about your work?

I loved being part of the Rowandale team - it is such a special place and one that I will miss so much.

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In Focus - Philly Bayston (Bursar 2017-2025)

What do you enjoy doing outside school?

For as long as I can remember all I have wanted to do is travel. I have a really early memory of sitting up in bed with a globe, writing a list of all the places that I hoped to visit. Since then I've been to over 100 countries and had some great adventures along the way, and I won't be stopping any time soon. I've always got a trip or two in the pipeline.



What is your favourite food?

Pretty much anything with cream in it!

What is your favourite country?

That is a hard question...I don't have just one. Japan is very special to me because I spent a year there teaching English and loved every minute (and it is the best place in the world for buying stationery).



Thailand I would go back to again and again because it has an unbeatable combination of food, beaches, sights and scenery. Closer to home, I really love Belgium and The Netherlands. They both have beautiful architecture, and between them I think they have the finest beer, cheese, chips and chocolate in the world. Azerbaijan & Qatar are two maybe less well-known countries that totally blew me away, both really worth visiting. Finally I couldn't answer this question without mentioning the USA - it's the country that I have been to the most often, I love it, and I am very excited that it is about to become my new home.

If you could do anything....what would that be?

Emigrate to the USA...?

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Extra Curricular Activities & Achievements



Ruby McGreevy and Amelia Adams winning First Place with their Lyrical Duet at The Aaron Dwyer Belfast Heat on Sunday 25th May. They have made it straight through to the All Ireland Final which will be held in Jan 2026 in Dublin. Well done - we can't wait to see how you do in January.



Grace Scott Y6M Completed her first attempt at Preliminary level in dressage at Wheatfields Equestrian Centre Warrenpoint in May. Grace was delighted to complete the more difficult test and even more delighted to win her class - a great surprise.



Alexander (Yr2) and Sebastian (Yr 1) were delighted to receive the blue 'Man of the Match' cards at the football fun factory. Congratulations to you both!

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Extra Curricular Activities & Achievements



Flynn Seth achieved his yellow belt for taekwondo in May. Amazing stuff, Flynn!



Dean achieved not only his 800m badge but his 1000m badge in swimming! Fantastic, Dean!



Rafa and the Belfast Boys Contemporary Dance group performed at Unanimous at The MAC in April and have qualified to participate in UDance festival. They will be dancing at London's Sadlers Wells in July! What an amazing achievement, Rafa and friends.

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Extra Curricular Activities & Achievements



Evie (Yr 4) has had a very successful run performing at festivals and competitions this term, with lots of first place awards and trophies for her Musical Theatre solo performance of Macavity from Cats; including winning first place at the Portadown Music Festival and the Aaron Dwyer Dance competition. Well done, Evie!



Daire (Yr6M) won the MUYL trophy with Oxford Sunnyside. The game finished 1-1 after extra time so went to the dreaded penalties. Daire calmly stepped up to score the winning penalty for Sunnyside!

Domhnall, yr4R played the role of Baby Shrek in the MADS! production of Shrek Jr in Portadown Town Hall.

Such talented brothers - well done to you both!



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Confirmation 2025



In May, some children from Yr 7, along with children from Magheralin PS and Meadowbridge celebrated their Confirmation at St Patrick's and St Ronan's Church in Magheralin.

As always, there are many people who make these events happen and we would like to thank the following: to Fr Maciej for celebrating the Mass and the Confirmation ceremony and to Denise and Caitriona from the Parish Council for their help.

To the Confirmation children who are members of the Rowandale Choir and sang the hymns and performed the solos - you were amazing. To the rest of the Confirmation children who did readings, prayers of the faithful and the offertory procession - you did a wonderful job.

To Mr McHenry for preparing the children for the sacrament, thank you for your hard work. To Mrs McCarragher, for the musical accompaniment and for guiding the Choir throughout the ceremony - thank you so much. To Keira, Jodi, Sharon, Claire and Fiona S for helping to set up the parish hall for refreshments, for serving the refreshments and for helping to clear up afterwards - we couldn't do any of this without you volunteering your time.

The children and their families had a great day and we wish them all well.

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Baby news



Mrs Galway-McAteer welcomed Autumn Ophelia Rose to the world in May. A beautiful healthy baby girl who weighed in at 7lbs 10oz. Congratulations!



Yr 7 Hoodies



Year 7 were delighted to take delivery of their Leavers Hoodies.

A BIG THANK YOU...

...to our amazing Kiss & Go team who brave
all weathers
to help keep the traffic flowing.

Aisling, Alison, Brenda, Bronagh, Caroline, Christina, Christine, Dana, Deborah, Emma, Jodie, Julia, Kseniia, Laura C, Laura D, Laura G, Laura K, Lesley Anne, Lorna, Maria, Michaela, Nicky, Nicole, Ruth, Sian, Susanne, Ursula, Niall, Frances and Fiona.

We are all so grateful for your time.

If you would like to
volunteer for Kiss & Go,
Reading Partnership or
any aspect of school
life, please send a
WhatsApp to
Fiona on
07725 355 899



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Coming up before the end of term:

Tuesday 17th: Yr 7 Residential to Corrymeela

Tuesday 17th: Joint Board of Governors and Parents Council AGM

Wednesday 18th: Yr 6 Residential to Kilbroney

Wednesday 18th: Sports Day (Yrs 1, 3 & 4)

Thursday 19th: Book Packing day in the school hall

Friday 20th: End of Year Assembly (Yrs 3 & 4)

Monday 23rd: Sports Day (Yrs 6 & 7)

Tuesday 24th: Yr 7 Leavers' Barbecue

Wednesday 25th: School's Out Parade

Thursday 26th: End of Year Discos

Monday 30th: School Finishes.

Contact Information

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