

Castle Gardens Primary School



Prospectus

General Info & Welcome



Castle Gardens Primary School

69 Bowtown Road
Newtownards BT23 8SH

Principal

Mr John Gray
BA Joint Hons, PGCE, PQH (NI)

General Information

Tel: (028) 9181 3827

Website: www.castlegardens.org.uk

Email: jgray246@c2ken.net

Chairperson of the Board of Governors:

Mrs Sharon Ishizaki

Welcome Message

Thank-you for taking the time to consider Castle Gardens Primary School as a suitable school for your child.

Our school mission statement “Building Together for the Future” reflects our belief that there needs to be a strong partnership between school and home. Parents play an active role in their child’s learning and development - a partnership that is greatly valued in our school. Our pupils are motivated to learn about all aspects of their life and be the best that they can be.

As much as this prospectus will give you an overview of life in Castle Gardens, you can only appreciate fully what we can do by actually visiting our school. Please feel free to make an appointment and I would very much look forward to showing you and your child around our school.

Mr John Gray

PRINCIPAL

Contents



2. Welcome
3. Contents
4. School History
5. Mission Statement
6. Admissions Criteria
7. Visiting the School
8. Daily Routines
9. School Uniform
10. Curriculum
11. Curriculum
12. Pastoral Care
13. Extra-Curricular Activities
14. Special Educational Needs
15. The School in the Community



School History



Castle Gardens is a controlled primary school on the outskirts of Newtownards with a long and celebrated history.

The origin of our school dates back to 1874 when education was provided for the children working in the flax-spinning mill. In 1897, Castle Gardens officially opened in a purpose built building on the Portaferry Road and remained there for over a century until it relocated to its current location on the Bowtown Road in 2001.

Our modern school building is set within spacious grounds on an elevated site that provides views of Strangford Lough and Scrabo Tower. Once inside you will find a modern well maintained building with underfloor heating and solar panels comprising 21 classrooms with interactive whiteboards, spacious resource areas, two sports halls, a purpose built dining hall with kitchen facilities, an ICT Suite and a library.

Whilst Castle Gardens Primary School has a proud history dating back to the 19th Century, we are an organisation that looks forward into the 21st Century. We strive to provide learning opportunities and experiences for our pupils that will prepare them for the diverse and instantly connected world in which they live.



Mission Statement

“Building Together for the Future”

In Castle Gardens Primary School we provide a safe, happy, caring and stimulating environment in which all our children are valued as individuals. Academic, emotional, physical and spiritual needs are met and our children are treated kindly and with respect.

Our ethos is to provide a welcoming and secure atmosphere for everyone in school. We nurture tolerance, respect for others and mutual support for everyone in the school community.

We endeavour to foster positive relationships between the members of our school community both inside and outside school.

It is our intention to develop a close working relationship with parents in order to elicit the best from the children in our care. This allows the teaching staff and other adults in school to take a holistic interest in each individual child.

Through a consistent and positive approach to discipline, we encourage the children to give of their best in every situation in order that they will become responsible members of the school community and society in general.



Admissions Criteria

P1 Intake

Admissions criteria are applied only if the number of applications received exceeds the number of places available. The Board of Governors will be responsible for applying the admissions criteria. Full details regarding enrolment including important dates can be found on our website www.castlegardens.org.uk.

If the school is over-subscribed children who are resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission will be prioritised according to the following criteria in the order set down from 1 to 4.

Preference will be given to those children:

1. Children who have a child of the family* currently enrolled in Castle Gardens Primary School. Please list name(s) and current class(es).
2. Children whose parent is a permanent employee or a Governor of Castle Gardens Primary School.
3. Children who attended Castle Gardens Pre-School in the 2024/2025 academic year.
4. Children who have had a child of the family* enrolled in Castle Gardens Primary School. Please list name(s) and year(s) of leaving.

Supplementary Criteria for P1 intake

In the event of over-subscription following the application of the above criteria in order, the following sub-criteria will be applied:

- A** Priority will be given to applicants on the basis of the proximity of the child's home to the school as measured in a straight line from the front door of the school to the front door of their home. Distances will be determined on the basis of measurements taken from Google maps. The measure distance tool will be used to determine straight line distances. Priority will be given to pupils living closest to the school.
- B** in the event that supplementary criteria A) is identical, the initial letter of the surname recorded on the child's birth certificate using the randomly selected set of letters below and the application of the order of these letters.

**J E B H X W S I F O A K P M
G T R C Z D N L U V Y Q**

In the event of surnames beginning with the same initial letter the subsequent letters of the surname will be used in alphabetical order. In the event of two identical surnames the alphabetical order of the initials of the forenames will be used as listed on the Birth Certificate.



Starting School



The involvement of parents in the education of their children is critically important and we want to ensure that parents are informed about their child's progress.

Before Enrolment

- All parents of prospective P1 pupils will be invited to visit the school with their child in June when they will meet their child's teacher and visit the proposed classroom.
- P1 parents are invited to induction meetings in August prior to their child starting. This gives an opportunity for the parents to meet the class teacher and ensure the settling in period is as smooth as possible, taking account of the needs of the individual child.
- Parents will also receive a P1 induction booklet which will give further detail of the school arrangements and procedures and will assist you in preparing your child for coming to Castle Gardens.

When children transfer from another school an interview will be arranged with the Principal and a suitable time agreed for the child to visit the school and meet the prospective class teacher.

After Enrolment

The school attaches great importance to the involvement of parents in their child's education and tries to offer not only the opportunity to discuss the progress of their child with the individual teachers but also to attend "curriculum" and "open" evenings to help understand the workings, aims and approaches of the school.

In addition parents will be invited into school to attend activities such as Concerts and Sports Day. Parents will be informed of these by letter and on the school website and social media.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Parents and P1 pupils are invited to meet their child's teacher during the summer term before they begin school. Parent/Teacher interviews are held for P1 to P7 children in October and February each year. At these interviews each child's progress will be discussed and parents given suggestions as to how they can support their child's learning at home. Additional interviews may be held during the year for the parents of those children who have been identified as having special educational needs.

The school operates an 'open door' policy where minor matters of concern may be discussed with the teacher. Appointments may also be made with the class teacher or the Principal.



Daily Routines

Breakfast club

Every morning we offer a breakfast club which children can attend free of charge from

8.00am to 8.45am. A selection of cereals, fruits, juices and hot breads are available to purchase.

The School Day

Doors open each morning at **8.30am** when teaching staff will be available to meet with parents in the playground or at designated entry doors.

Classes will enter the school building at **8.45am**. On days when the weather is poor, teachers will bring classes to their rooms at **8.30am**.

P1: 8.45am to 1.45pm

During September there will be a staggered intake of pupils and school will end at variable times throughout the first month.

P2: 8.45am to 1.45pm

P3: 8.45am to 3.00pm

Monday and Tuesday

8.45am to 1.45pm

Wednesday to Friday

P4-7: 8.45am to 3.00pm

Monday to Thursday

8.45am to 1.45pm

Friday only

After-school activities for P4 to P7 pupils will run on Monday to Friday afternoons from 3.00pm to 4.00pm with a selection of activities for P1 to P3 pupils running from 1.45pm to 2.45pm.

Drop-Off and Collection

Parents can make use of a large car park within the school grounds to drop-off and collect pupils before and after school. Punctuality is important as young children may become upset if they are late and the routine of the class will be disrupted.

Parents should also ensure that pupils are collected promptly at the end of the day. Pupils in P1 to P3 should be collected by a parent or other adult. Any changes to the normal routine such as Parent Interviews will be notified in writing.



Break

Breaktime is from 10.20am to 10.40am each morning.

We promote a healthy lifestyle in school and encourage pupils to bring fruit, vegetables, cereal or yogurt for their break. Foods such as pancakes, toast and fruit can be purchased from the canteen.

At the end of break pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 participate in a Daily Mile that encourages them to develop healthy habits by running, jogging or walking a mile around the school building. Pupils in the Foundation stage participate in the Daily Mile in the third term.

Lunch

Lunchtime is held in three sittings, P1 & P2, P3 & P4, P5 to P7. All pupils will eat their lunch in the canteen. All school dinners are prepared in our kitchen and pupils are offered a choice on most days. Menus are available on the school website as well as being sent home at the start of each term.

Parents of children with allergies or specific dietary requirements are encouraged to meet with the kitchen staff to discuss menu options at the start or at any time during the school year.

Before and After School Care

In Castle Gardens we can offer before and after school care for your child.

In addition to the breakfast club before school, every afternoon we have an after-school child minding service onsite known as School's Out NI. They offer a waiting service until 6pm each day as well as during holidays.

More information about School's Out NI can be found on the school website **www.castlegardens.org.uk** or on the School's Out NI Facebook page.

School Uniform



We encourage all our pupils to wear school uniform and we very much appreciate the parental support in this area. Uniform gives pupils a sense of pride and belonging, as well as looking smart in their personal appearance.

Physical Education

Primary 1:

Black slip on gym shoes

Primary 2 and 3:

Black slip on gym shoes and PE kit if required.

Primary 4 to 7:

We would encourage pupils to wear a sky blue t-shirt and black shorts/track bottoms for PE lessons however it is more important that that a pupil participates than wears a specific colour of clothes so alternative colour tee-shirts and shorts/track bottoms will be permitted.

Primary 4-7 pupils will take part in swimming lessons for a term each school year.

All items of clothing including shoes, should be clearly marked with child's name.

Hair

Hair should be kept neat and tidy and long hair should preferably be tied back. Appropriate cuts and natural colours of hair are required.

Jewellery

In the interests of safety jewellery should not be worn to school. The only exceptions are a watch and small ear studs, for those who have pierced ears. Children wearing other earrings or jewellery will be asked to remove them during school. Ear-studs should be removed during PE activities.

BOYS

Winter

Burgundy School Sweatshirt with logo
Blue Polo Shirt with logo
Grey trousers
Grey Socks
Black School Shoes

Summer

Grey Shorts

PE Kits P1, P2 and P3

Sky blue t-shirt
Black shorts
Black slip-on Gym Shoes

GIRLS

Winter

Burgundy School Sweatshirt with logo
Blue Polo Shirt with logo
Grey skirt
White/Grey knee socks or Grey tights
Black School Shoes

Summer

Blue checked-cotton dress
White knee length or ankle socks

PE Kits P1, P2 and P3

Sky blue t-shirt
Black shorts
Black slip-on Gym Shoes

School uniform can be purchased from the following providers:

Signature Schools: Balloo Drive Bangor.
www.signatureschools.co.uk

David Crawford: Frances Street, Newtownards.

School Days: High Street, Newtownards.



Curriculum

The Northern Ireland Curriculum provides children with opportunities to develop in all areas of their education. The curriculum encourages children to become more independent through problem solving and practical activities.

The Primary curriculum is delivered to our pupils in three phases:

- **Foundation Stage P1 and P2**
- **Key Stage One – P3 and P4**
- **Key Stage Two – P5, P6 and P7**

The pupils of Castle Gardens study the full breadth of the six areas of learning within the NI Curriculum:

- 1.** Language and Literacy to include talking and listening, reading and writing.
- 2.** Mathematics and Numeracy focusing on the development of mathematical concepts and numeracy across the curriculum.
- 3.** The Arts including art and design, drama and music.
- 4.** The World Around Us focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in geography, history and science and technology.
- 5.** Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) focusing on emotional development, social skills, learning to learn, health, relationships and mutual understanding in the local and global community.
- 6.** Physical Education focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding through play and a range of physical activities.

At the heart of the curriculum lies the emphasis on the development of core skills and capabilities to produce lifelong learners.

Cross Curricular Skills

The three cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using mathematics and Using ICT are embedded within the curriculum and our children are encouraged to manage information, communicate, work with others, think, problem solve, decision make, self-manage and be effective and creative in the use of ICT.





Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

At Castle Gardens, we promote a wide and varied programme of learning experiences for our pupils. At all times we seek to foster positive attitudes dispositions in our children whilst developing skills in decision making and problem-solving.

Religious Education

All pupils take part in Religious Education and assemblies unless parents specifically indicate in writing, that they do not wish their child to participate.

Assessment

At Castle Gardens PS each child's progress will be closely monitored and recorded throughout the year. Through the on-going assessment of pupils' work, teachers plan and organise lesson content to suit the needs of all learners. We use a range of assessment tools such as class assessments, teacher observations and standardised tests.

Children are an integral part of the assessment process and become involved in their own learning through 'Assessment for Learning'. Children are actively involved in both self and peer assessment and work together with the class teacher to share learning intentions and success criteria.



Pastoral Care

In Castle Gardens we have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children. We will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential.

Members of staff are not only concerned with academic progress but also with the personal and social development of the pupils. We aim to have a close relationship between school and home and assist in the pastoral care of all the children and ensure that your child feels safe and secure in the school environment.

Emphasis is placed on positive reinforcement and praising good behaviour. Children are encouraged to be independent, kind and thoughtful towards others and responsible for their own behaviour.

Teachers explain classroom and school rules to the children in their own class. These are reinforced at school assemblies and on other occasions. All staff in the school are involved in maintaining the agreed standards of discipline within classrooms, the school buildings and grounds.

To celebrate, reward and enhance the high standards of good behaviour, attendance and effort demonstrated by our pupils, monthly award assemblies are held for the whole school. We also operate a House System for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes to encourage and acknowledge good behaviour.

Inappropriate behaviour is addressed by way of discussion with and self-reflection by the child. If necessary the teacher will refer the matter to the parents or Principal. Parents are expected to co-operate with the school in order to maintain acceptable standards of behaviour.



Child Protection

The safety and well-being of our pupils is paramount.

A synopsis of our Child Protection Policy is displayed in school and is available on request.

The designated teacher is Mrs P Harbinson. The deputy designated teachers are Mr R Graham, Mrs D Turtle and Mr J Gray.

Any issues will be dealt with sensitively and Education Authority guidelines will be followed. Staff members are committed to building open and transparent links with home, school and outside agencies such as social services, education welfare and the school nurse.

The flow diagram below outlines the procedure for any parent who wishes to highlight a concern.

I have concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned I can talk to the Designated Teacher (Mrs P Harbinson) or the Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection (Mr J Gray, Mr R Graham and Mrs D Turtle)



If I am concerned I can write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mrs S Ishizaki) Or to the Designated Governor (Mr H Clarke)



Extra-Curricular Activities

The fun, experiences, challenges and learning experiences that are offered by extra-curricular activities are an important part in any child's education. At Castle Gardens we aim to provide a broad range of opportunities for children to further their skills or interests outside the classroom

Activities for pupils in Primary 1 to Primary 7: football, netball, athletics, badminton, tennis, judo, gymnastics, cross-country and cricket. Our school teams participate in local leagues and cup competitions as well as in friendly fixtures with other schools in the local area and beyond.

The creative clubs that we offer include: choir, languages, cookery, art and gardening.

Music and Drama

The school has a very strong tradition in music and drama. We also offer music tuition primarily for strings and woodwind working towards gradings and participation in local festivals. At Christmas the school presents carol services for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and a nativity play for the Foundation Stage.

The school choir makes regular contributions to the life of the community, including participation in church services and visits to residential homes.

Drama productions have included Frozen, The Sound of Music, The Boat Factory, Annie and Joseph.



Sports

In Castle Gardens the pupils have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of team or individual sports. Our football team plays in the local schools' league and hockey blitzes held once per term for boys and girls. Opportunities to participate in cross-country, athletics, netball and cricket fixtures are also offered to all pupils.

Eco Team

The Eco Team consists of pupils from P3 to P7 who meet regularly throughout the year. They discuss environmental issues relating to school life and have implemented many recycling initiatives that have made Castle Gardens a greener school. In June 2016 we achieved Green Flag status.

School Council

Pupils from P2 to P7 get the opportunity to elect their own class representatives that sit on the Castle Gardens School Council. The councillors have an important voice in planning how our school moves forward, suggesting initiatives and events that the pupils would like to see introduced.

P7 Buddies

P7 pupils act as buddies throughout the school, assisting younger children in the classrooms, the canteen and the playgrounds.



Supporting Additional Needs

In Castle Gardens we aim to support all children in accessing the full curriculum at every stage of their development. Our school Special Needs Policy ensures that children who are experiencing learning or other difficulties are identified as early as possible. Parents of children who are identified as having Special Educational Needs will be kept fully informed and invited to discuss their child's progress at parent interviews and when appropriate, individual education plans will be discussed.

We have two Special Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo) for the school who ensure close liaison is maintained with various external agencies. Mrs N Alcorn is SENCo for P1-P7 mainstream classes and Mrs H Hutchinson is SENCo for the Social Communications and Speech and Language provision classes.

Parents who have concerns about their child should make an appointment to speak with the class teacher, the relevant SENCo or the Principal, Mr J Gray.

We aim to support all pupils in ensuring that they can access a broad and balanced curriculum at every stage of their development. Through early intervention approaches, the school works closely with the child and parents in actively supporting the child's needs.

(A full copy of the Special Needs Policy is available on request).

Speech and Language Provision in Castle Gardens Primary School

We are proud to have specific speech and language provision in Castle Gardens Primary School. The inclusive nature of our school ensures that all children work and play together at every opportunity.

The first Speech and Language class opened in Castle Gardens in September 2016 with the second class opening the following year. Speech and Language therapists that are based in our school provide specialised teaching for pupils in P1 to P3 who have been placed into the classes by the Education Authority. These classes that have a maximum of 12 pupils, enjoy integration opportunities with our mainstream classes in all aspects of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

The unit aims to create a caring, secure and happy environment where learning experiences can be maximised and where children can grow and develop intellectually, socially and emotionally.

Our provision seeks to improve the pupils' skills



in communication and social interaction and their awareness of appropriate behaviours. It also aims to increase their ability to work independently with every opportunity taken to integrate the pupils into everyday school life and mainstream curriculum. Afternoon classes, play activities, assemblies, performances and curriculum when appropriate are some of the occasions when integration into the mainstream takes place.



The School in the Community

We believe that our school should be at the centre of the community. With that in mind, every year group seeks to develop links with various groups in and around our locality, and further afield.

To enhance the learning experiences of our pupils we have regular visits to school by representatives of the emergency services, local businesses, charities and churches. We also offer our pupils opportunities to participate in trips to places such as the Armagh Planetarium, Mount Stewart, W5, Newtownards Airport, the Ulster Museum and Stormont. Pupils in P6 and P7 are offered residential trips to outward bound centres in County Down.



Parent Teacher Association

The main objective of the PTA is to raise funds to enable the purchase of educational and recreational equipment for the benefit of the children in Castle Gardens.

Whilst events such as discos, fairs, movie nights and treasure hunts are geared towards fundraising, some social events are organised to provide an opportunity for parents, children and teachers to meet and socialise informally.

In recent times, the fundraising efforts of the PTA have enabled the purchase of jungle gym play equipment, iPads, sporting kits and equipment as well as other valuable resources that have enhanced the learning experiences of the pupils in Castle Gardens.

Communication Between Home and School

We offer communication with parents via text, social media and Class Dojo.

We seek to provide parents with up-to-date and accurate information about what is happening in Castle Gardens and send home a newsletter on Friday afternoon each week.

We are keen to embrace new technologies so regularly communicate with parents via text, email and social media. Find us online at www.castlegardens.org.uk, or on Facebook and Twitter. We can also be found on the Schools Ni app on the app store or Google play.

There are many different ways of communicating between home and school and parents are able to select the methods of communication that best suits them. It is vital however that school has up-to-date contact details for you and your named family members so please keep us informed of any changes in address, telephone numbers or email addresses. These will ensure that we can care for your child effectively especially should an unforeseen emergency situation arise.





Castle Gardens Primary School

69 Bowtown Road
Newtownards BT23 8SH

T: (028) 9181 3827

E: jgray246@c2ken.net

www.castlegardens.org.uk

@CastleGardensPS

