

DUNEANE

PRIMARY SCHOOL



1890–2026

DUNEANE PRIMARY SCHOOL 2026



DUNEANE PRIMARY SCHOOL HISTORY

Duneane means 'The Fort of the Two Doves' and since 1858 there has been education in the Duneane District. However there is little known about this early school except that the children were educated in an old thatched building.

Then, in 1890, Duneane Primary School, as we know it was built. The school was gifted by the colourful local gentleman, John Carey. The school was handed over as a 'free' gift to the local children. Sadly John passed away only a year after the school opened. To this day there remains a plaque at the front of the school stating 'Erected and gifted by John Carey, 1890'. John Carey was buried in the local church graveyard.

The school has served at the centre of this rural community now for over 136 years. It has seen generations of families come and go with many of the the original family names still present today. We acknowledge the high calibre of teaching, support and encouragement that the school has provided to all who have passed through its doors.

As one past pupil wrote in their History lesson, 'I think the monument on his (John Carey's) grave in the churchyard stands out above the other headstones, but perhaps the best monument to John Carey is Duneane Primary School.'

INTRODUCTION

Darren Richardson:
Chairman of Duneane Primary School,
Board of Governors

I contribute to this booklet reflecting on my role as Chairman of the Board of Governors, a member of the PTA, but most importantly as a parent who had the absolute privilege of watching my three children, Jack, Ellie and Noah, be educated at Duneane Primary School.

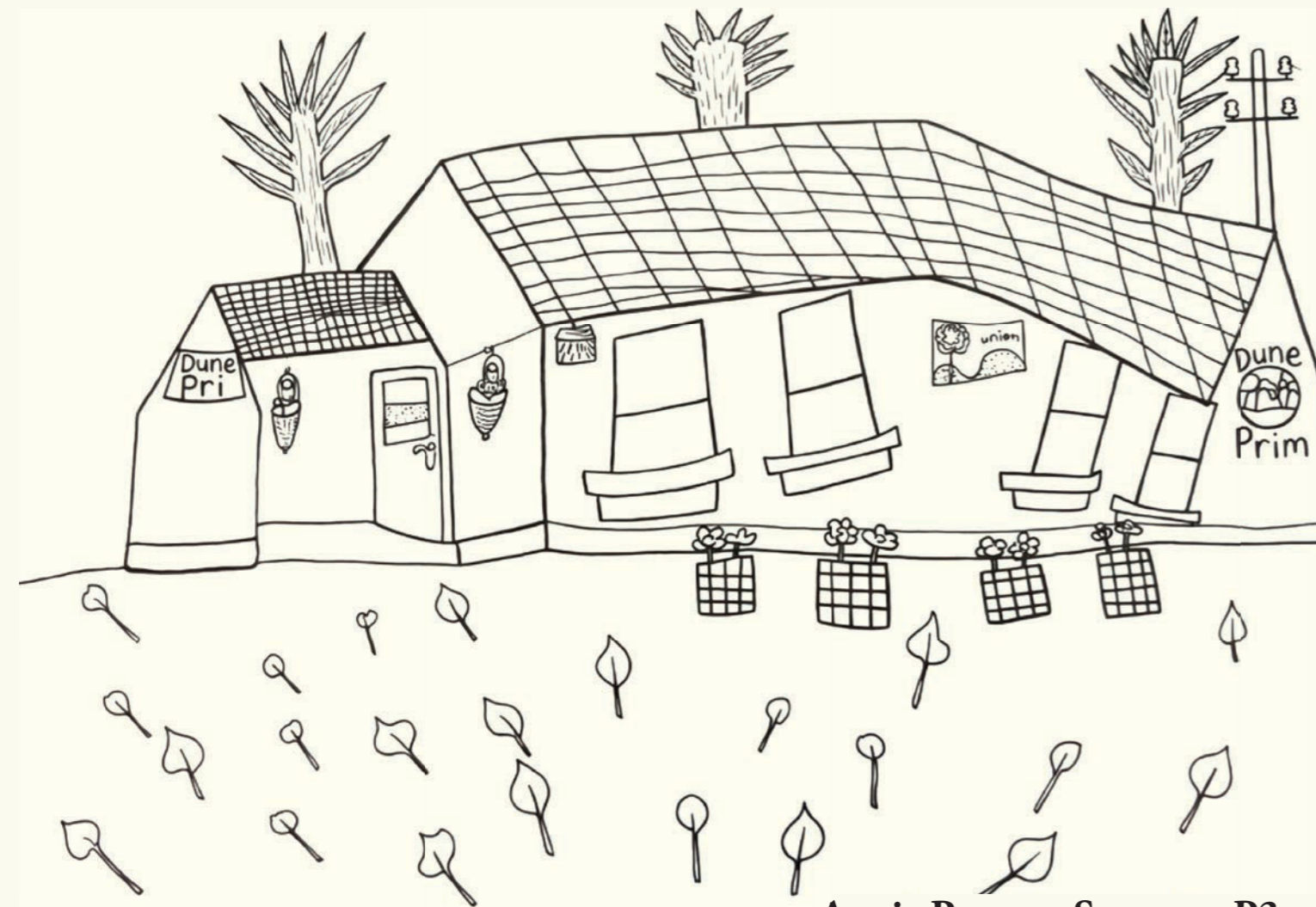
Having attended the school myself, beginning in 1981 joining my sister Paula and later my younger brother Gavin, I know first hand the strong foundation that Duneane provides. It was here that I was equipped with the education, values, confidence and leadership skills that helped shape the course of my own life. Little did I know then that many years later I would return, not only as a parent, but in roles that would allow me to give something back to a place that had already given me so much.



Some of my happiest childhood memories were formed in the playground and on the school field during sports days and end-of-term summer events. There was always such excitement in the air, the races, the cheering, the laughter, the friendly competition, and above all, the sense that everyone belonged. Years later, to stand on those same grounds as a parent and watch my own children run, smile and create their own memories was something truly special. Those moments brought life full circle and remain treasured memories I will always hold dear.

Joining the PTA opened my eyes to the dedication and generosity of our wider school family. I worked alongside an incredible team of volunteers who gave countless hours to fundraising, organising events, supporting applications, maintaining the school grounds and doing whatever was needed to support our children. It was hard work, but it was always joyful work, carried out by genuine, caring people whose only aim was to make Duneane Primary School the very best it could be for every child who passed through its doors.

Later, when the opportunity arose to join the Board of Governors, I often thought of my late father, William Richardson, who spoke so warmly and proudly of the school and of his own service as a Governor. His example inspired me to follow in his footsteps. From the moment I joined, I was met with professionalism, kindness and encouragement. There was a real sense of belonging and a shared commitment to providing the very best for every child.

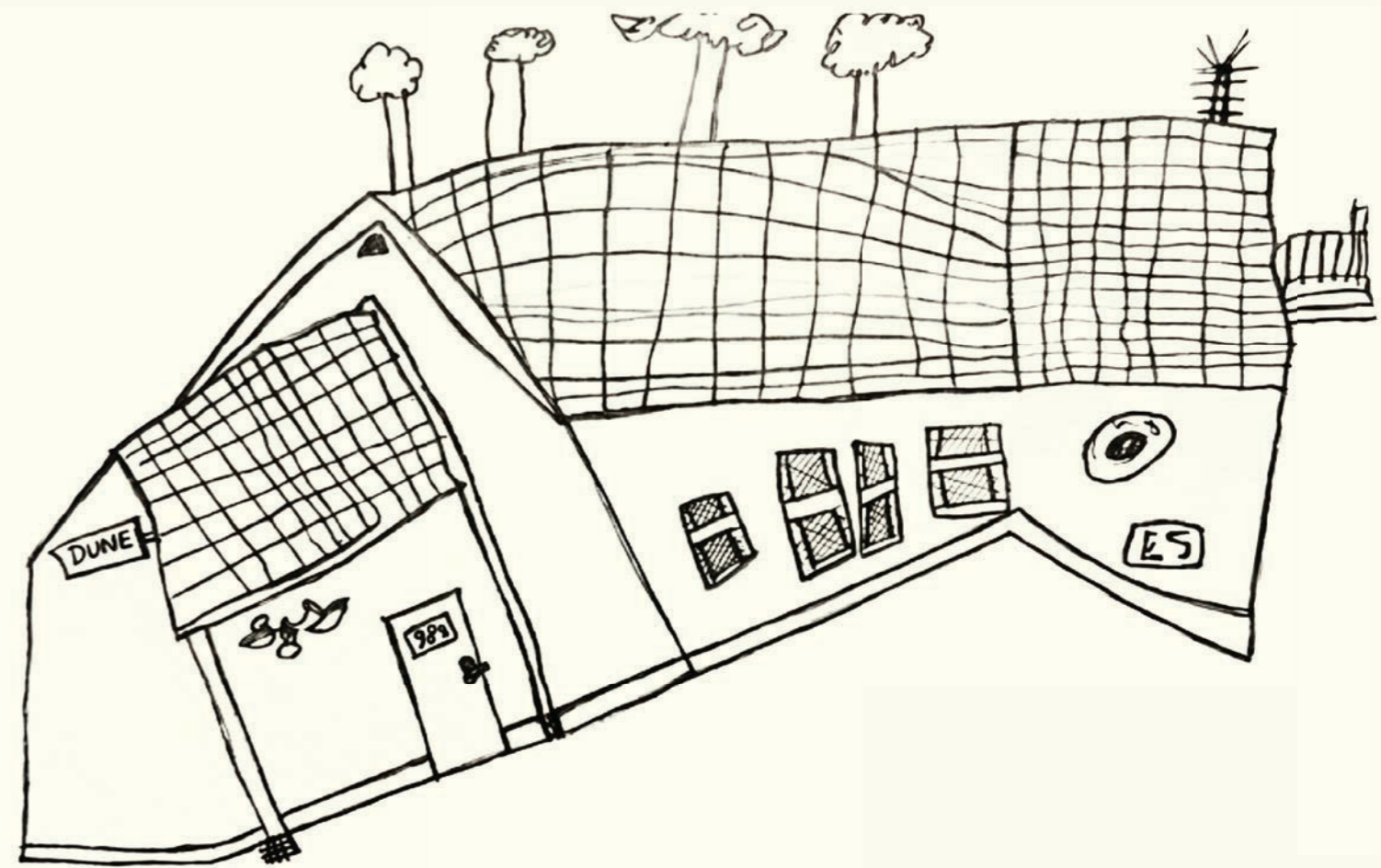


Annie Pearson Steenson P3

That commitment was always underpinned by faith, with the valued support of Duneane Presbyterian Church. Together, staff, governors, parents and volunteers gave freely of their time and talents to strengthen the school, enrich the curriculum and create an environment where children felt safe, valued and inspired to learn.

Duneane, however, offered far more than quality education. It was a community in the truest sense, a place where people cared for one another, stood together in times of hardship, and quietly supported those who needed it most. I can personally testify to that kindness. During some of the most difficult times in my life, when my two youngest children were pupils at the school, the support offered to me and my family was truly remarkable. The care, understanding, and encouragement we received strengthened my resilience, helped me find the strength to keep going, and inspired me to support others in return. I will always remain deeply grateful for that.

I remain especially grateful to Sharon French, who has been a constant source of support to me and my family over the years. Though we knew each other at secondary school, neither of us could have imagined that we would reconnect at Duneane Primary School, sitting around the same tables and watching our eldest children grow up together. Sharon's compassion, faith and kindness truly reflect the spirit of the Duneane community.



Andrew Smyth P3

To the staff, past and present, I extend my deepest gratitude. Over the years, you have given far more than education, you have given care, patience, encouragement and unwavering belief in every child who passed through the school doors. Your dedication, often unseen and always underappreciated, has shaped not only learners, but confident, kind and resilient young people. You have been the steady heart of Duneane Primary School, and we are forever grateful for the commitment and love you have shown to every child and family.

At Duneane, we were always one team, staff, governors, PTA, parents and pupils, all working towards the same purpose. That unity is what made the school such a special place. Even today, when I walk through the gates, I still feel that deep sense of belonging. I see the smiles on children's faces, hear the laughter in the playground, and am reminded of the warmth and joy that filled every corner of the school.

While it is with sadness that this chapter comes to an end, we do so with our heads held high and hearts full of pride. We reflect on every child who had the privilege of walking through that small door, carrying hopes and dreams, and leaving with memories, friendships and foundations for life. We also recognise the many sacrifices made by families, staff and volunteers who gave so much to help this school flourish.

This final year has been especially meaningful, with treasured memories of London, the Balmoral Show, and our special reminiscence celebration evening, which brought together generations of the Duneane family one last time. Those occasions reminded us that Duneane was never just a school building, it was a home, a community and a family.

In closing, I wish each child every success and happiness in the journey ahead. To all parents, thank you for your unwavering support. To our staff, I am eternally grateful for your dedication, care and love.

And to Duneane Primary School, though the doors may close, the memories, the friendships, the kindness and the love formed within those walls will live on forever in our hearts.

Darren Richardson



Holly Wolfenden P3

MRS MATTHEWS' COMMENTS

My relationship with Duneane Primary School started back in January 2007. I had just had my third baby boy in the previous June and was leaving my post as Vice Principal in Wheatfield Primary School, north Belfast, after 5 years. The contrast between these two schools could not have been more different! I was coming from an inner-city school to a beautiful, rural school in the middle of the countryside!

I will never forget my first experience of Duneane was getting lost on the way to the school for my interview. There were no 'sat navs' in 2006 and I was somewhat stressed trying to find the school on a dark winter evening! As I approached Alexander's farm and driving through the actual farmyard, I was convinced that I was well and truly lost. However, as I drove round the corner, there indeed stood Duneane Primary School.

This drive to work soon became familiar for me as I was to take it every day for the next two and a half years. Those years were such happy ones. From my first day in school, I was welcomed into the 'Duneane family' by staff, pupils, parents and Governors alike. As a Teaching Principal of the P4-7s, my days were incredibly busy as I juggled the teaching aspect along with 'learning' to be a principal. I took both roles incredibly seriously as I had achieved 'my own school' and wanted all the pupils to succeed in their own individual way. Together we even came up with the school's strapline ... Developing Pupils' Strengths. We all believed firmly in what DPS stood for and each child grew in so many ways during their time at the school.

Duneane continued to flourish in those two and a half years, and I'd like to think that our pupils had a wonderful and enriched experience of school through excellent teaching in the school with Miss Verner, Mrs Dornan and Mrs Bell who was my principal release. In addition to the teachers, we had Mrs Mawhinney as the infant Classroom Assistant and soon Mrs Small as school secretary. In the afternoon Mrs Johnston joined us and the 'team' was complete! Yes, we all worked incredibly hard, but we enjoyed our time together as a staff and as part of what is a very special school.

The relationships with the parents were second to none. We had an 'open door' policy before they were officially created! The doors to Duneane were always open and everyone was made very welcome. There was such an active PTA and every parent wanted to play some sort of part in Duneane. Maybe it was by being on the PTA, being a Governor or ensuring they all took part in the Parents' race in John Bell's field on Sports Day!

One of the most significant relationships during those years was the establishment of our Shared Education partnership with Moneynick PS. The invitation arrived in to be part of a new Primary Integrating/Enriching Project or PIEE, which was for rural schools. This initial contact with the then principal, Mrs Hughes, was to be the start of a very longstanding relationship with our neighbouring school. Many events and activities took place for pupils and staff alike. I am proud to say that connection remains to this day, with many of our pupils transferring to Moneynick following Duneane's closure.

In June 2009 I moved on from Duneane. A move to Ballyhenry PS was swiftly followed by a move to Fairview PS which I left in 2023. Little did I know that less than a year later I would return to my beloved Duneane.

I was thrilled and honoured to be asked to return to the school as Associate Principal in April 2024. At that stage the school had been informed that it would likely close, but a date had not been confirmed as Governors were seeking integrated status.

Over the course of these last two years, I have loved being in Duneane just as much as I did nearly 20 years ago. Everything which was so special about the school was still there in its fabric ... the warmth, the laughter and fun of the children, the strong Christian ethos, the supportive parents and that ever present sense of community and belonging.

The welcome from both Darren Richardson as Chair of the Board of Governors, and Mrs Anderson, the long serving teacher, was second to none. It was also so special to reconnect with Mrs Dobbin, who, 20 years ago I had got to know in Moneynick. And so, for me, my journey has come full circle. I have loved watching the pupils here learn and thrive, embrace opportunities and challenges with that same resilience and enthusiasm and grow in confidence and ability.

This final year in Duneane has been one filled with mixed emotions for everyone. The pupils and staff have all had a most memorable year with so much learning, fun and experiences. I have no doubt everyone will leave here with a deep sense of loss at our school closing its doors for the final time. However, we will also leave with a huge sense of pride knowing we were all part of that quite special school called Duneane Primary School.



Duneane Primary School



2006  2007

MEMORIES OF DUNEANE

Not last century, but the one before – eighteen ninety was the year
When John Carey had a vision to educate children far and near.
He put up the money and the church donated land,
And Duneane Primary School was born, or so I understand.

The children all were rural ones, from local farms they came
To recite the alphabet, to read and count, and learn to write their name.
They walked to school in those early days, some for many a mile.
I suppose they enjoyed the respite from the farm chores for a while.

The pupils then used chalk to practice writing on the slate,
And no doubt the cane would be used if they happened to arrive late!
For punishments were harsher then; today they're much more mild,
But teachers then believed if you spare the rod, you spoil the child.

The names of those first pupils in old registers can be found,
And many of those families, it would appear, are still around.
For the school has served many generations along the way,
And that family-friendly atmosphere is still evident today.

In early days the stove in school was the only means of heat.
The children brought in coal from home to warm their hands and feet.
And during the war the numbers rose, with the arrival of evacuees
For this was a place of safety, surrounded by fields and trees.

But times move on and progress came, with changes big and small –
A toilet block, two mobiles and mosaics upon the wall.
The garden was developed and is still tended with much pride –
A place of beauty to relax or hold summer lessons outside.

From pen and ink to computers, from chalkboards to touch screens –
Just some of the many changes that our wee school has seen.
But some things are just timeless, as they serve the pupils well;
We still call the children in from play – by ringing the hand bell!

Throughout the years the church has been a partner by our side,
A loyal friend and supporter serving the community with pride.
A venue for the Nativity play, watched by one and all,
And every time we need it, the use of the church hall.

Christmas is a busy time in school - the pupils have a blast,
And Santa came to visit and to join us for breakfast.
Parties, pantomimes, performances where the children gave their best,
By the time the holidays arrived, all were glad to have a rest!



Agnes Ford P5



Alexa Nelson P5

The PTA have always been supportive and remain so to the end
Organising events throughout the year that everyone could attend.
A tractor run, a beetle drive, a summer fair or two,
A quiz night or a bus trip, to name but just a few.

The governors work very hard to keep things running right,
With evening meetings often lasting late into the night.
And all the staff work tirelessly and go the extra mile
To carry out their duties, always with a smile.

We've lots of friends in Moneynick, the school not far away –
Joint lessons and activities help to break up the school day.
The staff from both schools work closely on policies and such,
But enjoy the chat and banter over breaktimes just as much!

Our school has lots of talent and the singing is divine!
With much success at festivals – and prizes every time!
Then there are the instruments that some pupils have been taught
Recorder, piano, violin or clarinet – they can play the lot!

And when it comes to sports events, variety is the key;
In the playground there'll be football, netball, tag rugby or hockey.
There are lots of after school clubs which the pupils always like –
Computers, cookery or eco-club and how to safely ride a bike.

A highlight of the school year is our summer term Sports Day,
Held in one of John Bell's fields, once all the silage is away.
The pupils love the activities and strive in every race.
Then it is the parents' turn – where the real competition takes place!

There have been lots of trips and visits with plenty new to see,
The cinema, a museum, the beach or to a farm, maybe.
Also, residentials, making memories to keep
With lots of fun activities - and very little sleep!

Day by day the pupils strive to get their education.
At break times in the playground they enjoy some well-earned relaxation.
The lunch is eaten quickly, then out the door they hurry
Quite often to be met with - the sweet fragrant smell of slurry!

'Small but mighty' is a phrase that describes Duneane Primary well,
With a friendly, caring atmosphere where pupils can excel.
A nurturing environment, allowing children to spread their wings
And then go out into the world to conquer many things.

'To everything there is a season', and Duneane's time is drawing near,
We wish the staff and pupils well, as new paths now appear.
May they find success and happiness in everything they try,
And may the Lord walk beside them, with blessings from on high.

Tonight we gather to celebrate everything that has gone before.
All the staff and pupils who have walked through Duneane's door,
The events and achievements, the memories we embrace
And all the things that make this such a very special place.

It's sad the school is closing and that its time is done.
The pupils, staff and families soon will all be gone.
The school bell will no longer ring, no more uniforms of red and green,
Just very happy memories of our time spent in Duneane.

Arlene Dornan



REMINISCENCES OF DUNEANE PRIMARY

Name: Cathy Anderson
Originally from: Magherafelt
Years at Duneane Primary School: Started in Sept 2013
Occupation: Teacher P1, 2, & 3



I joined Duneane Primary School in September 2013. Thanks to the support of Mrs. Winters, Mrs. Cuthbertson, Mrs. Dornan, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Devlin, I felt at home almost instantly. I never imagined that a temporary start would turn into twelve and a half years, but I can honestly say I have loved every minute of it. Duneane has always felt like a family, a warmth that remains evident in every lesson, laugh, and memory.

Fun Night was always a highlight of the school calendar. It provided a wonderful opportunity for the community to gather together at the end of each school year. On one occasion, I found myself receiving a cream pie to the face, while another teacher was 'slimed'. The pupils especially enjoyed taking part, with the chance to decorate a teacher's face adding to the fun and excitement of the evening.

The annual Christmas play at Duneane Presbyterian Church remains one of our most cherished traditions. It was a joy to watch each child embrace their role with enthusiasm, whether they were singing, playing an instrument, or sharing Bible readings. These moments were more than just a performance; they were a beautiful reflection of our strong Christian ethos.

Throughout this final year, we have maintained a sense of normality through familiar routines and activities. In doing so, the pupils have continued to enjoy a range of experiences, including their weekly Razzle Dazzle sessions, memorable trips to London and Portrush, and a visit to the Balmoral Show. These moments have provided both enjoyment and a sense of continuity during what has been an emotional time.

We have also continued valued traditions, such as our Coffee Morning and performance at Radio Cracker, a special and meaningful part of life at Duneane. Sports Day remains a cherished memory, bringing together pupils and parents in a spirit of encouragement, enjoyment and community.

It is with great sadness that we reflect on the closure of Duneane Primary School. The school holds a rich history, with generations of children who have grown, learned and thrived within its caring environment. It has been both a joy and a privilege to be part of such a special community, and I feel incredibly blessed to have shared in its life for so many years. The sense of belonging and connection here is truly unique and will remain with me always.

Name: Doreen Johnston (née Bell)
Town: Draperstown
Originally from: Lismaecoskey/Gloverstown Rd
Years at Duneane Primary School: 8 years (1959–1967)
Occupation before retirement: Civil Servant



What are your memories of Duneane Primary School?

Duneane Primary School had just two rooms, each full of character and its own special memories. In the smaller room, a black pot stove provided warmth during the winter months, with milk often heated around it which has put me off milk for life. In one corner stood a tall, coloured counting frame, while nearby rested “Long John”, the cane. The dividing door between the small room and the larger classroom brought a real sense of excitement, as moving through it felt like an important step and a sign that you had come of age within the school.

Mrs Wilson taught in the Junior room and was known for her strictness, with the hardback duster never too far away. Despite this, there were many happy and carefree moments such as playing 'tig' and skipping in the playground, singing games such as 'In and out the Dusty Bluebells' and 'Fly away Peter, fly away Paul', and using the base of the big tree as the “fire” in our imaginary houses.

The school toilets were a simple black stone building outside, with separate doors for boys and girls, very different from what children would expect today. Each day, we walked to school in all weathers, often with friends, and sometimes we were fortunate enough to get a lift along the way.

The connection between school and church was an important part of life at Duneane. The annual Sunday School social was always a special occasion, where we walked to the hall to practise, performed for others and received our prizes. Sports Day was another highlight of the year, with McLarnon’s van arriving and rewards of ice cream or a lollipop for those who won a race. These events were shared with neighbouring schools in earlier years, bringing even more life and excitement to the day.

We also took part in charitable collections, walking along the local roads with a net bag to raise money for Barnardo’s and charities for the blind. There was a strong sense of care and support within the school community, particularly during difficult times, such as when a classmate was seriously ill and we all wrote letters to show our support. Even visits from the attendance officer remain a vivid memory from those days.

I left school when I was 12; however, I remember pupils staying until the age of 16. If there was a wedding in the church all the girls from the school got up to see it, standing along the hedge. Sometimes children forgot their lunch and one person was sent to Mrs French who made up a lunch for the person who forgot it. When I was in the small room, the older girls were taught by Mrs Wilson how to cook in the big room (but we never got to eat what they made). Mrs Wilson taught us how to knit with 3 needles, and she would have turned the heel.

I was delighted when my eldest child, Jayne, began attending Duneane Primary School. On her very first day, my late mother, Dorothy Bell, lovingly prepared her lunch which was a selection of sandwiches, a banana and a yoghurt. However, it seemed someone else had different tastes, as Jayne took Lorna Walker's lunch and ate it instead!

Looking back, these experiences reflect a school life rich in community spirit, shared traditions and simple joys. Memories that have remained with me and continue to be treasured.

These have all been such happy memories for me and I will always hold them dear.

Name: Simon McCullough
Town: Moneynick Road (later moved to Hertfordshire, England at age 18)
Years at Duneane Primary School: 1980–1987
Occupation: Civil Servant

What are your memories of Duneane Primary School?

Duneane Primary School played an important part in shaping my early years. Miss Chesney, in particular, had a strong influence on my life, while I have fewer memories of Miss Robinson. I remember moving from the portacabin into the main school building, which felt like a significant moment at the time. In P4, I had my seat closest to the blackboard, and with only five or six pupils in each year group, it was a close-knit environment.

Growing up in a rural school gave me a deep sense of community. Many pupils travelled in from surrounding farms, and school life extended beyond the classroom. My brothers, Gary (two years older) and Ian (a year younger), also attended Duneane, which made it a shared family experience.

Miss Chesney, who lived on a farm on the Portglenone Road, was one of three sisters and taught at the school for forty years. Her dedication left a lasting legacy, and I was saddened to learn of her passing.

There were many memorable moments during my time at Duneane. I recall the visit of British and Irish Lions rugby player Willie John McBride in 1985 when we all dressed up for the occasion, and it created great excitement. School facilities were very different from today: the toilets were outside and often freezing cold, and with no kitchen or canteen, everyone brought a packed lunch each day.

The school bus journey was memorable in itself, as it travelled far and wide to collect pupils, often meaning you could spend longer on the bus than it would take to walk.

Looking back, my time at Duneane was shaped by a strong sense of community, shared experiences, and dedicated teachers. These are all memories that have stayed with me over the years.

Simon McCullough with brothers Gary and Ian



Name: Sharon French
Parent: 2009–2023
Governor: 2009–2023
PTA: 2009–2023

There have been so many memories made at Duneane over the years, from first days and Sports Days, to school performances and final farewells. A number of events will always stand out, particularly the much-loved Breakfast with Santa. The early morning preparations in the kitchen were always filled with laughter and camaraderie. One year, when we had to move the event outdoors, the wind and rain certainly made it memorable — but, as always, it went ahead in true Duneane style.

End-of-year Fun Nights were another highlight, with the Queen's Jubilee garden party being especially memorable. The school garden was always a special place, enjoyed by all. One year, however, heavy rain brought concern when we received a call from Heather Walls to say the water was approaching the top mobile. Thanks to the swift support of neighbours, parents, staff and pupils past and present, along with a few slurry tankers and plenty of hard work, the situation was resolved. It was a powerful reminder of the strong community spirit at Duneane.

There have also been many other memorable occasions, including Tractor Runs, whole-school trips for pupils, staff and parents to places such as Portrush, Carnfunnock and Funtasia, as well as a wide range of fundraising events. From drenching and gunging staff to the ever-popular Beetle Drives, these events brought people together and created lasting memories for all involved.

I have often heard it said that you don't fully realise how special Duneane Primary School is until you become part of it and I can certainly testify to that. Having not grown up in the area, I did not attend Duneane as a pupil, but instead experienced it as an adult and through my children's eyes.

There are many aspects that made the school so special - its size and rural setting, its strong Christian ethos, the care and dedication of the staff, the high standard of education provided, and the beautiful garden and outdoor spaces to be enjoyed. These qualities fostered a strong sense of community among the children, which was evident long after they had left. Many returned to school events, eager to take part, lend a helping hand, and even join in with practical tasks such as school clean-ups. This lasting connection speaks volumes about the impact Duneane had on all who were part of it.

Being a parent at Duneane was a joy. Being a member of the PTA was equally rewarding, though often very busy, and serving as a Governor brought both its challenges and its rewards. In all three roles, however, it was truly a privilege to be part of such a caring and dedicated community, where the school and its children meant so much to everyone involved.

It is sad we have come to this day, but Duneane Primary will always hold a special place in my heart, and no doubt all those who walked through its doors. Thank you to the present and past staff, parents and governors who helped to make Duneane Primary School so special but above all, to all the pupils who walked through its doors, you were the heartbeat of Duneane.



Left: Sharon French holding baby Matthew French.

Right: Louise Richardson holding baby Ellie Richardson. June 2012

Name: Leslie Bell
Town: Toomebridge
Originally from: Lismacloskey
Years at Duneane: Started school 3 years old 1950/51 and left at 12 years old

I have many happy memories of playing football with friends in the playground, using the small grass area we had. Sports Day, shared with Staffordstown and Ballydunmaul, was always a highlight, with plenty of friendly but fierce competition.

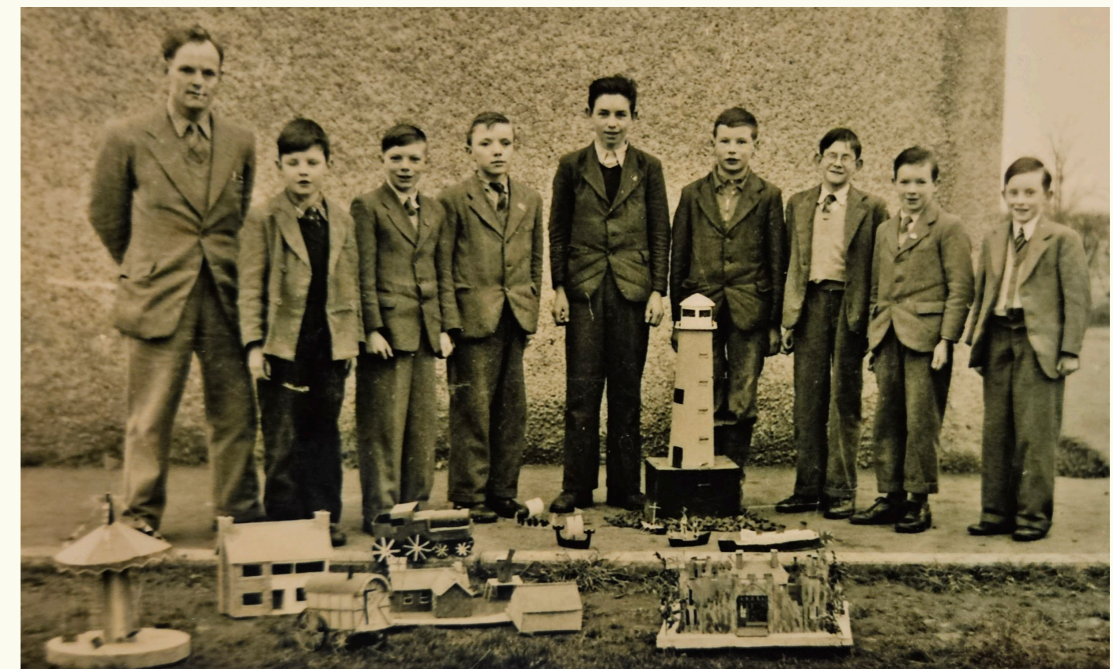
I also remember when Master Johnston organised a football match against Ballydunmaul. I played against Robin Foster, whose boots seemed enormous at the time. I decided it was safest to step aside! Norman Porter was our goalkeeper, and we played in a field opposite the school, with no marked pitch. Master Johnston refereed, and although we were beaten 2–0, it remains a fond memory.

Mrs Wilson taught in the Junior classroom and made a great commitment, cycling to and from Randalstown each day before later bringing pupils to school in her car after gaining her licence. Like many others, I walked to school in all weathers, with especially good memories of snowy days.

During my time at the school, I was taught by Master Giffin, Mr Johnston (Principal) and Mrs Wilson. Each played an important role in shaping our early years.

It is with great sadness that I reflect on the closure of Duneane Primary School. The school gave so much to the local community, and I feel very privileged that my three sons Alexander, Peter and Michael were all educated there. I would have loved to see my grandchildren attend Duneane too, but this was not possible following the announcement of its closure.

I often think of the many individuals who worked so hard over the decades to make the school such a special place. Their dedication, along with the strong sense of community, is what made Duneane truly unique.





Name: Clare Pearson

Town: Randalstown

Originally from: Randalstown

Years at Duneane Primary School: 1984–91

Occupation: Works at the school as the Building Supervisor and dinner lady.

What are your memories of Duneane Primary School?

I have many happy memories of my time at Duneane Primary School. Being left-handed, I particularly remember being made to write with my right hand because otherwise, the ruler might have appeared! Despite this, I made many memories and friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

School trips were always exciting, particularly the year we visited the Causeway School, where we dressed up and learned about Victorian times. Sports Day, held in the field behind the school, was another highlight, with egg and spoon races and three-legged races creating plenty of fun. I also remember the task of cleaning the dusters against the trees, a simple but familiar routine.

Facilities were very different then. The toilets were outside and often freezing cold, with condensation running down the walls in winter. Milk was brought in from outside, and we felt fortunate if the birds hadn't pecked through the lids. We ate our lunches in the classroom before heading out to the playground, where playtime was carefree and enjoyable.

There was a real sense of community where everyone knew everyone, and many families had long-standing connections with the school. I remember Mrs Robinson bringing us to school each day. She and Miss Chesney were both strict, but also kind and caring teachers who left a lasting impression.

In P7, we welcomed a new Principal, Mrs Whyte, who was warm and kind. There were also occasional days off for potato picking or trips to the Balmoral Show, which added to the unique rhythm of school life.

One particular memory stands out for its humour was the year when we collected tadpoles before the Easter holidays. When we returned, the classroom was full of baby frogs, as we had forgotten to return them to the pond! I have fond memories of school tidy-ups, where the whole community came together to help, along with BBQs, Fun Nights and the ever-popular Breakfast with Santa.

Looking back, these memories reflect a school life filled with friendship, laughter and a strong sense of belonging and experiences that have stayed with me ever since.

In more recent times I started working in the school and it has never really felt like work as there was always something to bring a smile. I remember pet lambs being brought into the school and the joy of releasing butterflies, moments that captured the unique spirit of Duneane so well.

It is so very sad to see the school closing, especially knowing that the children currently attending will soon begin new journeys in different schools. From both a past pupil and parent perspective, Duneane has been such an enriching experience for us all. Our children are thriving and have enjoyed every minute of their time at Duneane, just as I did, all those years ago. It will forever hold a special place in our lives.



Clare Pearson with school friends in 1988

What we Loved doing in Duneane by the Reception - P3 Pupils

Annie Pearson Steenson (P3) - My happy memory is that we had our school water fight. I tried to hide behind Ms Murray but when she moved I got soaked!

Andrew Smyth (P3) - I loved the tractor run, It was so much fun and we had a special visit from Donkey from Grassmen. My daddy brought extra tractors to school so everyone could join in.

Susanna-Rose Donnelly (P2) - I love Art in school. My favourite thing to do is paint lovely pictures.

Samuel Smyth (Rec) - My favourite thing is playing with our train set. I love playing with my friends.

Mia Lennox (P2) - I love writing my weekend news on a Monday and telling my friends all about it.

Myla McAuley (P3) - I love our school as we ride bikes and scooters in the playground with our friends.

Jack Houston (P3) - I love doing Literacy in our classroom. My favourite part is reading.

Holly Wolfenden (P3) - I loved taking part in Jump, Jiggle and Jive and Razzle Dazzle. We sang lots of songs and danced to music. It was so much fun!

Margot Ford (P1) - I love Duneane because I get to play with my friends. I like playing in the playground.

Bella Murray (P3) - My favourite memory was being an angel in our Christmas play. I loved singing songs. I really liked our Christmas dinner too.



What we Loved doing in Duneane by the P5 - P7 Pupils

Alexa Nelson (P5) – I really enjoy swimming. One time I jumped on Kathryn’s back and she swam with me like a dolphin.

Kathryn Wolfenden (P6) – I loved the Jungle NI trip. The steering broke on our paddle boat in the middle of the lake and we had to be rescued by another group.

Carson Loftus - Forsythe (P6) – London was my favourite trip. I enjoyed being on the plane even though my ears popped! I loved seeing all the different places we visited.

Charlie Houston (P7) – The Chocolate Factory was my favourite thing. I loved making and eating the chocolate.

Henry Pearson Steenson – I love all the sports we get to do at Duneane. In football I turned the wrong way and I randomly kicked the ball backwards and it went in!

Agnes Ford (P5)– I loved the Paddington Experience in London with my friends. It was amazing and we even got a surprise from the characters.

Jackson Donnelly (P5) – I really enjoyed going to Stormont as I found it very interesting. I particularly liked the centenary coin we received.

Alex Murray (P6) – I love being out in the playground playing all the different sports. I kicked the football right into the basketball net and I couldn’t believe it!





Name: James Pedlow
Town: Dundonald
Originally from: Duneane
Years at Duneane Primary School: 1995–2001
Occupation: NI Railways, Fleet Tech

My mum was a teacher at Duneane, and I grew up in Randalstown alongside my twin sister. From an early age, the school felt like a special place. I have many fond memories, from school dinners and receiving our daily bottles of milk, to the strong sense of community that existed; everyone was local, and there were only a small number in each class, growing from three to five pupils.

After leaving Duneane, I went on to Ballymena Academy. Now, my own daughter is starting P1 in Dundonald PS where there are around 800 pupils — a very different experience compared to the small, close-knit environment of Duneane, where I was one of just 27 in the entire school.

There are so many vivid memories from my time there. I remember speaking to Willie John McBride when he visited, and Mrs Bell coming in on Fridays to take PE, which I always enjoyed. The Beetle Drives, Sports Days held in John Bell's field, and trips to places such as Greenmount, the Zoo and Navan Fort all stand out. The Nativity plays were particularly special, with every pupil playing a part.

Some memories are a reminder of how different school life was then, the outside toilets, for example, which seem quite surreal now. I also remember once having to close John Bell's gates to stop the cows wandering into the school grounds!

There was a strong sense of community running through everything. My father was actively involved in the PTA, and many families had long connections with the school. Growing up, I always hoped that my own children would attend Duneane too. It offered a very personal education, with its own unique character and traditions — a place you were proud to say you had gone to.

The school, which dated back to the late 1800s, was truly at the heart of the community. I even remember visiting graveyards to see the founders of the school. It feels very much like the end of an era, with generations of families, grandparents, parents and children all having passed through its doors. My own cousins attended, despite living further away, simply because of the school's reputation.

I was taught by my mum, Mrs Pedlow in P1–P3 and Paula Whyte and Jenny Houston in P4–P7. Having the same teacher for several years meant they really got to know you and support your development. There are many smaller memories too. Thursdays when we went swimming, the excitement of chips for lunch, summer BBQs in the Church Hall, and playing football with friends. I also remember accidentally breaking a toilet window one day!

In the early years we were taught in the mobile classroom, before moving into the main building for P4–P7. Uniforms changed during my time from navy to green and red, and I still remember the familiar sight of bottles of milk arriving each morning.

Looking back, my time at Duneane was filled with friendships, opportunity and a true sense of belonging. It is very sad to see the school close, but I feel incredibly fortunate to have been part of such a special and unique place.

Name: Gavin Richardson
Town: Duneane
Originally from: Duneane
Years at Duneane Primary School: 1983–1990
Occupation: Service Manager

What are your memories of Duneane Primary School?

I have such fond memories of my time at Duneane and it really was a special school for me and my family.

I distinctly remember the bottles of milk which was sometimes ice cold, and at other times warm. Despite the variation, it remains a vivid memory of school life.

Sports Day stands out with particular fondness, especially the egg and spoon races and the involvement of both staff and parents, which added to the sense of fun and community.

I was taught by Miss Robinson and Miss Chesney, both of whom played an important role during my time at the school. With only five other children in my class, it was a very close-knit environment.

Moving on to Rainey Endowed in Magherafelt was a significant change and came as quite a shock after the small, familiar setting of Duneane.



1989

Name: John Samuel Stewart
Town: Toomebridge
Originally from: Cloughogue
Years at Duneane Primary School: started at 6 years old in 1950, left in Christmas 1959
Occupation before retirement: Farmed at home (arable and beef)

I have many vivid memories from my time at Duneane. In 1955, I remember moving from the “wee room” into the big room after our summer exam. We hadn’t realised there was a prize for doing so well, and I was delighted to receive a book called 'Marlow of the Mounted'.

On another occasion, Master Giffin asked us to paint six autumn leaves. I was sure I had used the wrong colours and was very worried about getting into trouble, so I was surprised when he was so impressed. Those moments have stayed with me over the years.

Simple experiences often became lasting memories. I remember seeing potato crisps for the very first time at a Sports Day which was a real novelty then. On my final day at school, I travelled home on the back of a scooter driven by my brother-in-law. I never went on to senior school, so these early years at Duneane were especially important.

School life was full of characters and moments of humour. Jamesy Johnston would hear a tractor passing and rush to the window every day to announce that it was John Henry Stewart, much to Master Giffin’s annoyance. There was also the time the school flooded, surrounded by water, even making the Ballymena Observer with the headline, “Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.”

We spent time playing in the stable known as the “four corners”, which was used by the church when people travelled by horse and trap. Despite its condition, we loved it. Winters brought their own challenges as smoke sometimes filled the school when the chimney blew down, but we were also given warm tea to have with our lunch.

I remember the ice cream man arriving, and being carefully reminded about road safety, even though traffic was scarce. Heavy snowfalls also brought excitement, as we knew Master Giffin, who travelled by Hudson autocycle, might not make it to school.

The boys took part in handicraft, and I remember making a model of the school with Eric Bell but we had to make it twice, in fact, as the first one was eaten by mice! During the June exams, I was awarded a prize book titled '12 Marvellous Men', although I later discovered it had been given in error. Even so, it still remains a fond memory.

Teaching was led by Master Giffin, Mrs Wilson and Master Johnston, all of whom played an important role in shaping our early education.

Looking back, these memories capture a time that was simple, challenging at times, but full of character, humour and experiences that have stayed with me throughout my life.



Name: Willie John McBride
Originally from: Moneyglass, Toomebridge
Years at Duneane Primary School: 1945-1951
Occupation before retirement: Bank Manager



What are your memories of Duneane Primary School?

I remember gathering sticks at lunchtime to keep the fire going in the stove, and walking to and from school each day in all weathers - two and a half miles there and the same again home. Occasionally, if we were lucky, we might get a lift on a passing horse and cart.

If you brought peat to school, you were allowed to sit nearer the fire, which was always welcome on cold days. We were given free milk, and I often took the chance to drink any that was left over.

I remember my best friend, Harper Doole, with great fondness, though sadly he passed away at a young age

During my time at the school, I was taught by Mrs Graham, Mrs Wilson, Miss McLarnon and Mr Giffin, all of whom played an important role in those early years.

Looking back, these simple routines and shared experiences remain strong memories of a time spent at a very special school.



Name: John P. McBride
Town: Toomebridge
Years at Duneane Primary School: 1939-1945
Occupation before retirement: Farmer

I began school on the very day the war started, alongside eleven other pupils. I can still remember soldiers walking past the school on their way to Dunmore Park. A sight that has stayed with me over the years.

I usually walked to school each day, although on occasion I was fortunate enough to take a bicycle, which felt like a real treat at the time. I also remember bringing my brother, Willie John McBride, to school on his very first day, a moment that remains very special to me.

During my time at Duneane, I was taught by Miss Stewart, Miss Morrison, Miss McBride, Mrs Graham and Miss Duffin, all of whom played an important role in my early education.

Looking back, these memories reflect a different time, shaped by simplicity, routine and a strong sense of community, which has stayed with me ever since.

A MILLION DREAMS

I close my eyes and I can see
My primary school, wee Duneane
Through the gates and through the doors,
Where many more have been before,
A garden we all helped to tend, and
Its playground where we all made friends.

I'll remember what my teachers taught,
About my world, about you and me,
About Jesus, God, and family,
Inspiring me to be who I was meant to be.
I knew someday Duneane I'd leave,
An inspiring school with long history,
But a million dreams is what I take away,
A million dreams from my wee Duneane.

Duneane's my school that helped to shape,
So many children through the years.
Buddies I've gained, some will last forever,
From across ages, classes and other schools too.
Respecting rights we've learned real well,
And people who meet us can always tell.

With sharing across the community.
Producing rugby players like Willie John,
And farmers with their slurry pong,
And the famous kids with 'Hit the Diff' song.
As I grow up, through my life I'll remember,
I learned about my world at Duneane.
I learned to get along with friends of all ages,
And I learned to get along with adults too.

However rural, however small,
Duneane Primary School was always for all,
Its Christian ethos brightly shone.
It taught the best, was the friendliest,
Duneane brought out the best in me.
With Christian love and family,
A kinder, safer world it would be,
If everyone could only see,
My million dreams of my wee Duneane.

Margaret Doole

DUNEANE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS



DUNEANE PRIMARY SCHOOL 1913

At the back from the left are Hammy Bell, George Warden, William Stewart, William McMillan, Johnny Doole, James Stewart, Adam Gilbert, Johnny Percy and Alex Bell.

2nd row has teacher Miss Millan, Lizzie Doole, Aggie Stewart, Essie Doole, Ethel Stewart, Dora Dale, Meta Stewart, Lizzie Gilbert, Lizzie Wolfedan, Mima Gilbert and Tilly Doole.

In the 3rd row are Mary Doole, Doreen Elliot, Doreen Stewart, Lelia Elliott, Maggie Stewart, Eva Warden, Agnes McMillan, Emma Wolfenden, Maud Wolfenden with baby brother Sam Wolfenden in her arms and Agnes Woldenden.

Seated are David Perry, Henry Stewart, Fred Stewart, Adam Stewart, Cauldwell Gillespie, Jean Gilbert, Susan Gilbert and Dorothy Gilbert.

On the ground in front are Robin Elliott, David Wolfenden, George Wolfenden and William Doole.



1933



1941 - Including War Evacuees



1957



1959



1963



1967



1980



1982



1997



2006



2001



2009



2012



2015



2021



2025

THE LAST YEAR



THE LAST DUNEANE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH, 2026

Back Row (left to right)

Mrs P. Matthews, Mrs L. Bruton, Mrs S. Wolfenden, Miss E. Ross, Kathryn Wolfenden, Carson Loftus, Andrew Smyth, Myla McAuley, Mrs R. Dobbin, Mrs J. O'Kane, Mrs C. Anderson

Middle Row (left to right)

Susanna-Rose Donnelly, Jack Houston, Charlie Houston, Jackson Donnelly, Alex Murray, Bella Murray, Annie Pearson Steenson

Front Row (left to right)

Holly Wolfenden, Henry Pearson Steenson, Alexa Nelson, Thuli, Agnes Ford, Samuel Smyth, Margot Ford



Reception - P3



P5-P7



Final Nativity 2025



World Book Day 2026



London Trip 2026



Portrush 2026

DUNEANE

PRIMARY SCHOOL

