



Buick Memorial Primary School Newsletter

Friday 28th August 2026



Welcome to our new parents and carers and welcome back to all our familiar faces! We hope you all had a wonderful summer break and that the children are ready for learning, structure and routines again!

Over the past week, Buick staff have been in school to reflect on the last academic session. They have been busy organising uniforms, preparing new teaching resources, analysing Assessment data and planning ahead to meet the diverse needs of all children.

Our SEN Classroom Assistants have engaged in Alphabet Arc training, and we have worked collegiately to tailor support for those children with additional needs.

We have also participated in Child Protection Training and received updates from Social Services and Operation Encompass (PSNI).

As part of our School Development Plan, we will be embarking on the Take 5 initiative. The Education Authority's Take 5 Initiative is a wellbeing program used in schools across Northern Ireland to promote emotional health and mental wellbeing based on five simple daily steps. Please see the link for further information:

<https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/highfiveresourcehub/take-5-approach-training>

We thoroughly enjoyed Selena Ramsey's introduction to this initiative on Tuesday, and we look forward to embedding the strategies with staff and children alike over the next three years.



We hope you all enjoyed the opportunity to 'Meet Your Child's Teacher' yesterday. This initiative arose from feedback from the Parental Questionnaire which we sent out last September. It is essential that we continue to build positive partnerships to ensure each child fulfils their academic potential.

Parking

We would kindly ask parents to park responsibly and not in the bus lanes at the back of the school, or on the zig-zag or yellow lines on Main Street. Children's safety is of paramount importance, and we need your full co-operation in this matter. We appreciate that Pottinger Street and parking at the back of the school can also be difficult to navigate at times; however, it is essential that everybody parks responsibly.

Parenting

As a school, we actively dissuade children bringing mobile phone devices to school. This is in line with school policy. If any emergencies arise during the school day, we will contact you directly.

Furthermore, parents who choose to give their primary school child a mobile phone or tablet device at home, **MUST** ensure that the parental controls are locked and children are kept safe online. In Buick, we teach our children about internet safety, but we cannot monitor devices at home - this is a parental responsibility!

We actively encourage all parents to routinely monitor browser history and the apps with which your child is engaging. Primary school children should not have any Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram or Tik Tok accounts as they are far too young! Please let children be children - there is plenty of time for those social media platforms when they are older, matured and truly ready for them. Please see the Education Minister's letter attached.

Child Protection

If you have any concerns about your child's safety in school, you can speak to Mrs Shirlow, (Designated Teacher for Child Protection), or to Miss Stirling, (Deputy Designated Teacher). If you are still concerned, you may contact the Principal, Miss R Peters, who oversees the Safeguarding Team within Buick Memorial Primary School. Additionally, you may contact the Board of Governors. Our Child Protection Governor is Rev. Philip Moffett.

If you have any concerns about a child or community activity out of school hours, you can talk to a Social Worker at the Social Services Gateway Team on 0300 1234 333 or PSNI on 101. Like all primary schools, Buick links with PSNI Officers to engage in Operation Encompass. This is a legal requirement which ensures appropriate information is shared accordingly.

As professionals, we have a legal duty of care for children. As part of this, 'Notes of Concern' are completed inhouse if staff have any worries regarding a child's presentation. This presentation includes their attendance, personal hygiene, nutritional provision, growth and development, uncharacteristic behaviours and comments/worries they share about home life. If appropriate, these records may be shared with Social Services.

If your individual circumstances or family composition has changed over the summer, please contact the school to inform us. These open lines of communication will ensure each child's needs are met.

Bus Passes

On Thursday, Miss Peters distributed the bus passes which we have received for pupils. Over the next few weeks, more bus passes will arrive in school, as applications are processed by the Education Authority's Transport Department.

2-3 Club

Our After-School wraparound care will recommence on Monday 7th September. Places on this must be booked in advance via ParentMail to allow staffing to be planned accordingly. Our 2-3 Club cost is now £4 per pupil, per day and is open to all P1s (w/c 14th September), P2s and P3s in Term One. This Club is operated by Mrs Francey, Mrs Steele and Miss Lorimer.

Primary 7 SEAG Registration

Primary 7 parents are reminded that SEAG Registration is still open. Please ensure you have registered if you wish your child to sit the SEAG Transfer. Please visit <https://seagni.co.uk/> for further registration information and to gain information on the timings and contents of the assessments.

Registration for SEAG is a parental responsibility and the school cannot complete such applications.

SEAG 2026/27 Timeline

18

September
2026

Registration Closes

Final date for Parents/Guardians to submit Pupil Applications and Access Arrangements Applications.

09

October
2026

Pupil Cards Available

Pupil Cards are available for parents to download, review and print off.

14

November
2026

Assessment Paper 1

Pupils attend their selected Assessment Centre to sit the first SEAG Entrance Assessment paper.

21

November
2026

Assessment Paper 2

Pupils attend their selected Assessment Centre to sit the second SEAG Entrance Assessment paper.

23

January
2027

Outcomes Issued

Dining Centre and Lunches

Tuesday 1st September is Week 1 of our new Lunch Bunch Menu. School dinners remain at a cost of £3.10 per day. Any pupil with a food allergy **must** complete the relevant Special Diet form (on our website) before availing of food from our Dining Centre.

We would like to remind parents that they should clearly name packed lunch bags too as they can easily get misplaced or swapped in a school environment! Also, please do not send food to school which your child cannot open or does not like! It is important that children have enough food and drink to sustain them for the full day.

Parents are encouraged to be mindful about sending in big bags of sweets as lunch. Nutrition is essential for growth and brain development, please carefully consider the content of your child's packed lunch.

Free School Meals

We have a number of children enrolled within the school who would be entitled to free school meals but are not registered as such. If your child is not currently on the 'Free Meals Register' and you feel that they could/should be, please visit www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals to make an application. It is in the school's best interest to have all children who are eligible registered, as this impacts on the budget allocated for this academic year.

Parents who have applied should not presume their child will receive a free school meal immediately. Only parents who have completed the registration process and who have received written confirmation from EA will be on our list. The Education Authority has stated that pupils who are awaiting processing should pay £3.10 per day, if availing of a school meal, until the registration process has been completed.

Assessment

From Tuesday 1st September we will be conducting Baseline Assessments in P1-P7. These inform teaching and learning experiences and opportunities. Your child's class teacher will carefully monitor and track your child's progress throughout the academic session. In May, we will complete our End of Year PTE / PTM Assessments and evaluate the individual progress made.

The data from these Biannual Assessments, alongside professional judgement, is utilised to identify specific children who require additional support in Buick or further assistance from external agencies.

In house, despite a challenging budget, we have Mrs Kennedy (Learning Support Co-ordinator) in place. She works with specific children who are encountering Literacy, Numeracy and Social, Behavioural, Emotional & Wellbeing difficulties in Early Years. This tailored support is wonderful to have within our staffing complement, but we must be clear that pupils who are not completing the additional work sent home or who are failing to benefit from the extra help, will no longer receive it.

Parental partnership is more important than ever to ensure your child fulfils their educational potential. Our Assessment Co-ordinator, Miss Stirling, evaluates the trends and considers the learning journey of all children, throughout their time at Buick. Over the Summer holidays she has analysed all assessment data and we are delighted to see the remarkable results of high-quality teaching and learning at Buick.

Our Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators, Miss Stewart and Mr Maybin have also been reviewing trends and therefore we will be focussing on Spelling and Handling Data this year in their respective subjects.

Music Lessons

Our peripatetic Music Teachers will be in school to deliver string and woodwind tuition. Please ensure your child has their instrument with them on the correct day. Additionally, we would like to thank parents for paying for the deposit for their child's tuition in advance.

Miss Hall will be holding Choir auditions over the next few weeks. Please see ParentMail for further details of dates and how to audition.

Term 1A

Tuesday 1 st September	Buses in Operation Dining Centre in Operation Baseline and Start of Term 1 Assessments Commence Citizenship - please bring in cups/trophies
Monday 7 th September	Primary 1 - 1pm Finish
Thursday 10 th September	Coaching For Christ in Buick 1/12
Friday 11 th September	1:15pm - 2:15pm - Primary 1 Information Session for all P1 Parents
Monday 14 th September	Primary 1 - 2pm Finish Board of Governors' Meeting at 6:30pm
Thursday 17 th September	Coaching For Christ in Buick 2/12 3pm - 4:15pm - Football Training for P5-P7 Boys 1/12
Thursday 24 th September	Coaching For Christ in Buick 3/12 P6 Swimming 1/10 3pm - 4:15pm - Football Training for P5-P7 Boys 2/12
Friday 25 th September	Buick Closed - TransformEd. Staff Development Day
Monday 28 th September	P7 Transfer Interview with Mr Beattie - times TBC
Wednesday 30 th September	CS Moments Photographer in School for Individual and Family Pictures
Thursday 1 st October	Coaching For Christ in Buick 4/12 P6 Swimming 2/10 3pm - 4pm - Eco Club 1/2 3pm - 4:15pm - Football Training for P5-P7 Boys 3/12
Friday 2 nd October	Learn With Lauren's Sensory Stories with Primary 1 pupils 1/3
Thursday 8 th October	Coaching For Christ in Buick 5/12 P6 Swimming 3/10 3pm - 4pm - Eco Club 2/2 3pm - 4:15pm - Football Training for P5-P7 Boys 4/12
Thursday 15 th October	Coaching For Christ in Buick 6/12 P6 Swimming 4/10 3pm - 4:15pm - Football Training for P5-P7 Boys 5/12
Friday 16 th October	Learn With Lauren's Sensory Stories with Primary 1 pupils 2/3
Monday 19 th October	School Nurses in Buick for Nasal Flu Spray
Tuesday 20 th October	
Wednesday 21 st October	Pupils Finishing at 1pm for Parent Interviews Face-to-Face
Thursday 22 nd October	Coaching For Christ in Buick 7/12 P6 Swimming 5/10 Pupils Finishing at 1pm for Parent Interviews by telephone
Friday 23 rd October	Learn With Lauren's Sensory Stories with Primary 1 pupils 3/3 Pupils Finishing at 1pm for Parent Interviews by telephone

We look forward to an exciting year ahead. Have a lovely Bank Holiday weekend and we will see everybody on Tuesday 1st September.

Kind regards,
R. Peters,
Principal



£5

minimum donation
to cover costs

Breakfast

FUNDRAISER

**HIGH KIRK CHURCH
BALLYMENA**

**19 SEPTEMBER
9 am 12.30 pm**

Proceeds in aid of the Francina Foundation
and Radio Cracker Ballymena


**RADIO
CRACKER**
Ballymena



THE FRANCINA FOUNDATION



Gracehill SCARECROW FESTIVAL 2026

*Saturday 26th &
Sunday 27th*
SEPTEMBER 2026



 FUN FOR
ALL AGES!

 CREATIVITY
COMMUNITY

 AUTUMN
ADVENTURES



MORE
DETAILS
TO FOLLOW




IT'S TIME TO
GET CREATIVE
AND PLAN YOUR
SCARECROW!


GRACEHILL SCARECROW FESTIVAL



Set in the UNESCO World Heritage Site

26th & 27th September 2026 11am to 5pm

SCARECROW REGISTRATION

The Gracehill Scarecrow Festival is a community event designed to bring the whole village together for a weekend of creativity, fun and celebration. As well as providing an enjoyable experience for residents and visitors alike, the festival raises valuable funds for **Gracehill Moravian Church** and the **Gracehill Village Environmental Committee**.

During the Harvest Weekend, a marked Scarecrow Trail will guide visitors around the village to discover the displays. Scarecrows will be exhibited in front gardens, along pavements and in the Village Square, ensuring they are visible for everyone to enjoy. The trail will begin in the Village Square. The remainder of the route will be planned once all entries have been received and their locations confirmed. If you don't live in the village, we'd still love you to take part. We have a number of additional display locations available and hope these will be filled by participants from the surrounding areas.

We warmly invite individuals, families, community groups, schools and businesses to create a scarecrow, or a group of scarecrows based on any character or theme of their choice. Whether your design is traditional, humorous or imaginative, we encourage you to let your creativity shine.

If you would like to take part, please complete and return the registration form by **23 September 2026**. Registration costs **£5.00** and includes entry for either one scarecrow, or a group of scarecrows displayed together as part of the same theme. There will be prizes awarded for the best scarecrow displays, so start planning your masterpiece and join us for a fantastic community celebration! *(Schools and youth groups are free of charge) (Please note only paid registrations will be included in the competition)*

Do's & don'ts rules to inform the applicants:

- Please bring your Scarecrow/s on Friday 25th September between 12 noon and 8pm;
- Keep your Scarecrows family friendly;
- No politically incorrect Scarecrows;
- The Festival Committee will have the right to refuse a Scarecrow if deemed inappropriate; and
- All Scarecrows must be removed 1 week after the event.

Application Form to Register Your Scarecrow/s

Print Name	
Home Address	
Tel Number:	Email address:
Name of your Scarecrow/s:	
Preferred location for your Scarecrow to be placed:	
Are you happy for the Festival Committee to select a suitable location for your scarecrow to be placed: Yes / No (please circle as appropriate) If no please advise:	
How do you wish to pay: Payment attached / Will pay on the Saturday (delete as appropriate)	
Signature:	Date:

Please return this form by posting it in the Moravian Manse at 25 Church Road, Gracehill or email a copy to gracehill.scarecrow@hotmail.com or simply pass it onto a member of the Festival Committee.
If you require any further information please phone Raymond Kitson 07879 435134

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of
Education

www.education-ni.gov.uk

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

27 August 2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES IN SCHOOLS AND EOTAS CENTRES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

As we move into a new academic year, I am writing to inform you that the Department of Education has published updated [guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools and Education Otherwise Than At School \(EOTAS\) centres in Northern Ireland](#). The guidance sets out the Department's clear expectation that all schools and EOTAS centres should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with access to personal mobile phones and other similar devices during the school day permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

I know that this is an issue that many parents care deeply about. Over recent years, parents across Northern Ireland have raised concerns with schools, governors and the Department about the impact that mobile phones are having on children and young people's learning, wellbeing and safety. I would like to thank parents for continuing to engage constructively on this important issue and for the support many have shown in promoting healthier and safer approaches to technology use both at home and in school.

The updated guidance reflects a growing body of national and international evidence about the impact of unrestricted access to mobile phones during the school day. It has also been informed by findings from the [Department's Mobile Phone-Free Schools Pilot](#), associated evaluation activity, engagement with schools and stakeholders, and a survey of schools and EOTAS settings across Northern Ireland. Collectively, this evidence points towards the benefits of school environments where pupils can focus on learning, build positive relationships and engage fully in school life free from unnecessary digital distraction.

The Department's position is straightforward. Pupils should not have access to personal mobile phones, smartphones, smartwatches or other internet-enabled devices during the school day. This applies during lessons, break and lunchtime and while pupils remain under the school's supervision. Any exceptions should be limited, clearly justified and regularly reviewed. These may include circumstances relating to medical needs, special educational needs, disabilities, safeguarding requirements or other agreed exceptional circumstances.

This guidance has been developed because of increasing evidence that unrestricted mobile phone use can negatively affect concentration, learning, behaviour, social interaction and wellbeing. Schools have also highlighted concerns about cyberbullying, online conflict, inappropriate content, filming or photographing without consent and the disruption that can occur when issues arising online spill into the school day. At the same time, evidence suggests that reducing access to mobile phones during the school day can help create calmer, safer and more focused learning environments.

Importantly, this guidance is not about preventing children and young people from learning how to use technology. Digital technology has an important role to play in education, employment and everyday life. Our schools will continue to use technology to support teaching and learning, including school-owned devices, digital learning platforms and other educational technologies where these improve outcomes for pupils. The guidance distinguishes between the educational use of technology and pupils' personal access to smartphones and similar devices during the school day.

I also recognise that many parents, particularly those of post-primary pupils, want their child to be able to contact home while travelling to and from school. The guidance recognises these concerns and does not prescribe a single approach for every school. Responsibility for individual school policies remains with Boards of Governors and school leaders, who will consider what arrangements are most appropriate for their school community while ensuring that a mobile phone-free environment remains the default position. Schools may also make appropriate arrangements for pupils with specific medical, educational, disability or safeguarding needs.

As schools review and update their policies, I would encourage parents to engage positively with their school and support efforts to establish clear and consistent expectations. Experience from schools that have successfully introduced stronger restrictions shows that the greatest benefits are achieved when schools, parents and pupils work together and share a common understanding of the reasons for the policy. I also encourage parents to continue discussing the safe and responsible use of technology with their children. Restricting access to phones during the school day is only one part of the wider support that children need to navigate the online world safely. Schools will continue to play a key role in developing digital skills, online safety awareness and responsible digital citizenship.

[The Safer Schools NI App and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Online Safety Hub](#) provide a range of practical information and resources for parents and families and may be helpful in supporting conversations at home about screen time, social media and online safety.

These are important issues for all of us. By working together, parents, schools and the Department can help ensure that children and young people benefit from technology while also being protected from its risks. Most importantly, we can create environments that support learning, wellbeing, positive relationships and the best possible outcomes for every child.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Givan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education