

NEWSLETTER

INSPIRE ~ SUPPORT ~ ACHIEVE

Diary Dates

Christmas Assemblies with BPC	Monday, 15 th December
Choir singing in ASDA, Ballyclare	Monday, 15 th December
Christmas Party day P1-P3 (non uniform)	Tuesday, 16 th December
Christmas Party day P7 (non uniform)	Tuesday, 16 th December
Christmas Party day P4-P5 (non uniform)	Wednesday, 17 th December
Christmas Party day P6 (non uniform)	Thursday, 18 th December
P7 Choir at Creative Gardens at Logwood	Thursday, 18 th December
P7 Choir at Ballyclare Nursery School	Thursday, 18 th December
Last day of Term 1 - 12 noon finish (No healthy break or after school provision)	Friday, 19 th December
2026	
Ballyclare Secondary School Open Afternoon	Monday, 5 th January
Term 2 starts 8:45am	Tuesday, 6 th January
Ballyclare High School Open Evening	Thursday, 8 th January
Open Enrolment begins for P1 2026	Wednesday, 7 th January (12 noon)
Assessment Week	Monday, 12 th January – Friday, 16 th January
Open Enrolment closes for P1 2026	Wednesday, 21 st January (12 noon)
Healthy Living Week	Monday, 26 th January
Primary 7 parents – Application for Post Primary place opens (closes 19 th February)	Tuesday, 27 th January (12 noon)

Attendance

There continued to be lots of bugs and illness about in November but our overall attendance in school remains high at 96.1%. Well done to all our boys and girls for being such regular attenders. Do try to have your children in school by 8.55am at the latest, with doors open from 8.45am.

We know mornings can be a stressful time in many houses but being ready to start class at 8.55am is a valuable routine to establish and settles everyone for the day ahead.

I had the pleasure of visiting P3 Miss McGookin last week to present them with their attendance trophy for November, achieving an incredible 97.5% attendance. Well done to P6 Miss Harrison who came second overall and winning the Senior School trophy with 97.0%. Third place was P2 Mrs Penney/Mrs Hyndman with 96.7% attendance.

As you know, if your child is ill, it is right and proper to keep them at home. Similarly, if your child has been vomiting, please keep them at home for 48hours. This reduces the spread of any bugs around their peers and staff. Please continue to let the teacher or office know if you have a child off school.

Christmas Concerts Complete

It has been a busy three weeks, but all our Christmas concerts are now complete! Well done to all our boys and girls who excelled on stage and also behind the scenes. Thank you to all the staff who worked tirelessly to make the concerts such a success. I am sure you would agree, our pupils should be so proud of their efforts.

I need to say a big thank you to you, the parents and carers. The pupils on stage respond to the enthusiasm of the audience in front of them and you certainly played your part!

Please take a look on our Facebook page for some photos of the concerts. Feel free to comment on the posts and tell the pupils how wonderful they are. I know I am an exceptionally proud principal!







Christmas Fair

Our Christmas Fair took place last Friday and what a lovely evening it was. The school was busy as our whole school community came out for a night of fun, food and festivities. The Fair had something for everyone, with games, a glam room and movie room to keep the young ones occupied, not to mention a sweetie stand which was miraculously emptied over the course of the night! I cannot believe our pupils ate so many sweets! For the adults, there were prizes galore at the tombola, and Ballyclare's finest Christmas Chip! We still had the lights around the front of school for the festive effect, and of course Santa and Mrs Claus came to visit!

Our Grand Raffle will be drawn on Monday and winners will be contacted. A list of winners and their prizes will be shared next week in our end of term newsletter. We value the support of local businesses and the success of these events depends so much upon their generous donations, both for our tombola and our Grand Raffle. Thank you.

The evening was a great success and raised a huge amount for our PTA, money which will go directly back into the school to support your child in their learning at a time when budgets are so tight. I have to say thank you to our PTA team who organised the Christmas Fair. Thank you also to all our volunteers on the evening and to school staff members who helped set up rooms and tidy up afterwards. It is that team effort in Fairview that makes our school special.

And on the point of volunteers...well done to Miss McGookin's P3 class for producing the most amount of volunteers for the Christmas Fair. A pizza party is on its way to P3.

School Safeguarding

If you have any safeguarding concerns, then the following is the school team:

Designated Teacher -	Mrs Norris
Deputy Designated Teacher -	Miss Earls
Safeguarding Governor -	Mrs Victoria Woodside

The school's Safeguarding Policy is available to all parents on the school's website or from the school office, on request.



Open Day

Last Wednesday, we held our Open Day for parents of pupils who will be starting school in September 2026. All our tickets were sold out for the tours and the morning proved to be a great success! Thank you to all our wonderful pupils who helped meet and greet the parents, and to all our pupils who were so engaging with parents and little ones, both on the tours and in classes. We are very proud of how well you represented our school; many new parents remarked on your confidence and how engaging you were.

We got a lovely email from a parent who visited our school on Open Day, saying,

“You should be very proud of your school. We felt so very welcome at every stage, notably by your senior pupils who are a credit to you. We loved the variety of all we got to see, but my daughter especially loved the woodland and getting to be a scientist in P1.”

The Education Authority publishes information on their website about the Primary 1 admissions procedure and admissions criteria for school. You can visit www.eani.org.uk/parents/admissions and then, in January, apply online. The Open Enrolment process begins on 7th January 2026. We will inform all parents who came to see around school on Open Day of details around the application process, and indeed our own parents who have siblings already at Fairview, on our return to school after the Christmas break.

Visit from the Education Minister

Last Wednesday, following our Open Day, we had a visit from our Education Minister, Paul Given MLA. We were delighted to showcase our outdoor learning environment and innovative Ballyclare History Trail. As well as this, we took the opportunity to highlight the need we have for the ten classroom extension which was promised to us back in 2019. The Minister was receptive to our needs and made it clear that he is seeking extra finance from the Executive for capital projects such as ours. We hope the visit will have prompted action and we will not be waiting too long before the project gets the go ahead. We will of course keep you informed of any developments.



Parking

Once again this week we have had local residents and some of our own parents raising concerns about parking at the school gates. Can I ask you all to be respectful of local residents, their driveways and other parents parking at school for pickups in particular? Cars should not be parked along double yellow lines or where we have placed cones. This is for the safety of all our pupils and to ease access at school gates for all our parents and carers. We understand pickup times are busy but we have to ensure our pupils are safely handed over at the end of each school day.

End of Term Arrangements

Can I take this opportunity to wish everyone in our school community a very happy Christmas. This has been a busy term, especially the last few weeks in December. I want to thank you as parents for all your support throughout. It has been lovely talking to so many of you at concerts and Christmas Fair over the last couple of weeks. Your kind words are much appreciated.

I will be in touch again next week with a final message from school as we finish for this term, but for now here are some details for our last day before the Christmas break.

School will close on Friday, 19th December for the Christmas break. There will be no canteen staff on duty that day so Breakfast Club will be supervision only. There will be no healthy break available on 19th December either. The last day for after school provision will be Thursday 18th December.

Dismissal will be from 11.45am. Please ensure someone is at the gate to collect your child at the following times –

P1 & P2 - 11.45am

P3 & P4 - 11.50am

P5 - 11.55am

P6 & P7 - 12.00



GIVE BLOOD Save Lives

Book now for your local community
blood donation session!

VENUE

Presbyterian Church Hall
Ballyclare

DATE & TIME

Wednesday 17 December
12:30 - 19:30

Northern Ireland needs 1200
blood donations per week.

That's 1 every 8 minutes.



 www.NIBTS.org

Northern Ireland
Blood Transfusion Service 





Ballyclare High School

Open Night

Thursday 8th January
2026

Principal's Welcome
6.30pm and 8.00pm

School will be open from
6.15pm - 9.00pm

Entrance through main reception or Sports Hall doors.
Parking is available at the rear of the school.

31 Rashee Road, Ballyclare, BT39 9HJ



PERSEVERANCE



CREATIVITY



RESPECT



SUCCESS



CARE



AMBITION





**BALLYCLARE
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

OPEN AFTERNOON

**Monday
5th January 2026
2pm - 4pm**

TICKETS AVAILABLE ON SCHOOL WEBSITE
YEAR 12 STUDENTS HOPING TO APPLY FOR POST-16 STUDIES
ARE ALSO WELCOME TO ATTEND.



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together

**When your child's
unwell it can be
unsettling.**

The Children's Symptom
Checker can help.



Children's
Symptom Checker



Before attending an Emergency Department
visit the Children's Symptom Checker for
advice from healthcare professionals.

belfasttrust.hscni.net/childrens-symptom-checker

@belfasttrust     



Online Safety Newsletter

December 2025

AI Chatbots and companions

A simple search of “AI Chat” within the App store highlights the number of AI apps already available, many are rated as 18+ so it is important to speak to our children about them and the risks associated with them. Examples of AI chatbots that your child may have heard of are Character.AI (18+) and My AI from Snapchat (13+).

What are the risks?

- Over reliance on AI companions, for example they may replace ‘real life’ friendships or over reliance on using them for homework or problem solving.
- Exposure to inappropriate content.
- Privacy/data risks.
- Misinformation as not all information shared is correct and can be biased.

How can I protect my child?

- Check age ratings of any apps or websites that your child accesses.
- Discuss the risks of AI chatbots with them and have open conversations about why they may be using them.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/ai-chatbots-and-companions-risks-to-children-and-young-people>

New Technology

As some children may be receiving new technology or related games at Christmas, here is a quick reminder of the importance of setting up appropriate parental controls.



Games/Consoles

- Check age ratings: look at the PEGI rating of any new games. *Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check to see if it has any communication elements.*
- If a game does allow your child to communicate with others, then adjust or disable the settings as appropriate to your child.
- On the device itself, set up applicable controls such as restricting spending limits. Follow the links below to find out how to set up Parental Controls for popular devices here:

Xbox: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub>

PS5: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/>

Nintendo Switch: <https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-2-Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-2873385.html>

Tablets/Smart phones

Set up parental controls on the device to prevent purchases, restrict content viewed and adjust privacy settings. Furthermore, remember to check any apps your child requests to check that they are suitable for their age. Follow the links below to find out more:

iPhones/iPad: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121>

Android Device: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738>

Further information

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

The Safety-First Smartphone

The Other phone is a new smartphone, which includes “SafetyMode” software. The software automatically blocks nudity, profanity, and bullying language in real time. You can find out more here: <https://otherphone.co.uk/>.

Smart Phone Free Childhood also list some alternatives that you could consider here: <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/alternatives>.

Please note, that the inclusion of these models does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation. While these devices may provide a ‘safer’ alternative to traditional smartphones, there are still potential risks associated with children using any type of phone.

Roblox

Following a recent ITV investigation*, which found extremist content on Roblox, we thought we would provide a reminder of what you need to be aware of. Roblox is a platform consisting of a collection of games. Players can either create games or play games that other users have created. It is free to download (however subscription options and in game/app purchases are available) and can be played across numerous devices. **A lot of the content is user generated, which means not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play.** If your child is playing Roblox, it is important to monitor what your child is accessing and set up appropriate parental controls. **PEGI rate Roblox with a Parental Guidance label, this is because it is considered a platform with a huge level of user generated content.**

What should I be aware of?

Game content – as mentioned, users create games so the content/themes may not be appropriate for your child. Roblox label content based on the type of content rather than by age. The labels are Minimal, Mild, Moderate and Restricted.

Chat Facility - Players can chat with each other (users under the age of 13 need parent permission to access certain chat features though). You can turn communication off completely or add restrictions, such as only able to communicate with friends.

Virtual Currency - Players can buy Robux (their virtual currency) to buy in-game upgrades or accessories.

How do I report abuse and block users?

This article outlines the different reporting facilities:

<https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/203312410-How-to-Report-Rule-Violations>

What else can I do?

Chat to your child regularly about what they are doing online and remind your child that if anything is worrying them, then they should talk to you or another trusted adult.

Further information

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/roblox>

[*Source: <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-11-14/mosque-attacks-and-far-right-skins-roblox-teens-exposed-to-extremist-content>]

Discord

Discord is a social networking app originally designed for gamers but is now used by lots of different people to **chat to each other online**. The minimum age to access Discord is 13. The App store rates it as 17+.

Discord is made up of servers, which are spaces for groups to chat, upload files and share images etc. Anybody can set up a server, and they can either be public or private. Users can video call and send direct messages to other individuals or groups. Children who play online games such as Fortnite may use Discord to chat whilst playing the game (**rather than using the game's own chat facility**). In-app purchases are available through Discord's subscription service called Nitro.

How can I make it safer?

Discord have created a Family Centre, which provides further information about what Discord is, as well as information about different safety settings available:

<https://discord.com/safety-family-center>

As always, we would encourage you to chat to your child to see why they use Discord and ensure that they know how to block users and what to do if they see any inappropriate content. It is important to be aware that Discord does include video/voice calling which cannot be filtered. **Discord is used by an array of users and therefore adult content can be found on Discord as well as inappropriate language.** Discord have produced this article, which answers frequent questions: <https://discord.com/safety/360044149591-answering-parents-and-educators-top-questions>

Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: <https://www.knowsleyclcs.org.uk/december-2025-primary/>

Signal Private Messenger

Signal is rated as 13+ on the App store. It is a messaging app, where users can text, send voice messages and photos plus participate in group chats and calls. There are no parental controls currently available. As with all messaging apps, the risks can include bullying and viewing inappropriate content. Find out more here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

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