




A small village school with teachers and staff that have the heart of a big city school! I wouldn't have wanted my children to go anywhere else!

Alexander Dickson Primary School



Prospectus



ADPS is a wonderful community and child focused school. All staff want the children to achieve their academic potential and provide exceptional pastoral care to ensure they are happy and engaged in their learning environment.

Both my children attend ADPS, we love how friendly and welcoming the school and staff are. There is a strong community feel with lots of involvement for the children to join various community events. The extra learning support that is available for pupils is an amazing valuable resource and one in which my children have benefited from. Family is a big part of ADPS and that is exactly what we feel like - we are in the school family.

Our daughter is now in her seventh year in this wonderful school. Pastoral care is second to none and the balance between academia and creativity is perfect. The school is very involved with the community as a whole and this has helped our daughter become a confident and happy child. We will be sad when this year ends.

Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers,

On behalf of the Governors, staff and pupils, it is a pleasure to welcome you to Alexander Dickson Primary School. Located in the heart of Ballygowan, serving the village and surrounding countryside, we are justly proud of our close-knit community, where every child is known and valued. We believe that all children deserve the best possible start in life and that begins with a high-quality, nurturing education.

We take pride in *“helping small people with big ideas.”*

At Alexander Dickson, we are committed to equipping our children with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to flourish in an ever-changing world, and with the confidence and understanding to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead. We strive to nurture resilient, compassionate and curious individuals who not only achieve academic success, but also grow into responsible citizens, ready to contribute positively to their community and beyond. Our pupils always come first. They come to a school where learning is engaging, standards are high, and where positive relationships, discipline and hard work are central to all that we do.

We are proud to share our grounds and facilities with Ballygowan Community Pre-School and Playgroup, and enjoy a strong, collaborative relationship with them. We also have a close relationship with Ballygowan Presbyterian Church, whose generosity in allowing us to use its car park adjacent to the school, ensures a safe and convenient drop-off and collection routine.

While our website and Facebook page offer a glimpse into life at Alexander Dickson, nothing compares to seeing us in action. I warmly invite you to come and visit - to meet our dedicated staff, witness our pupils thriving, and experience the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere that defines our school. I would be delighted to meet with you personally, discuss your child's individual needs, and answer any questions – preferably over a cup of tea or coffee.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Warm Regards,

Laura Shaw

ADPS is a place where all children are cared for as individuals and all their successes are celebrated. The school is like a little family that cheer each other on.



About our school



Alexander Dickson is a controlled primary school situated on an elevated site on the Comber Road, Ballygowan. The school draws from the village of Ballygowan and the surrounding rural areas. Current enrolment is around 100 pupils.

The school premises are bright, well maintained and modern. Accommodation consists of 6 recently refurbished classrooms, a learning support room, school office, Principal's office and staff room along with a school meals kitchen and a multipurpose sports hall which also serves as a dining hall.

All classrooms have recently had new interactive whiteboards installed. There is a well-stocked modern library, computer suite and a set of iPads to enhance learning opportunities.

The grounds have been developed to include an outdoor play area, gardens and a fantastic playground with an exciting climbing frame. A large hard surface playground provides a valuable resource for play time, P.E. and outdoor play.


The school maintains close links with Ballygowan Community Pre-School and Playgroup located in the school grounds, ensuring smooth transitions and planned progression for our children. For more information on our partnership please see page 18.

The school is grateful to Ballygowan Presbyterian Church who allow our families to use their car park, adjacent to the playground, to ensure a safe, secure and hassle-free drop off and pick up routine.

Our classes are generally small in size and most have a classroom assistant thereby offering the teachers greater opportunities to give each child individual or small group focus and support, making it easier to integrate children of varying levels of ability.

High standards are expected and actively encouraged in all aspects of school life including work, attendance and uniform.





Working at ADPS is an incredibly rewarding experience. The school fosters a family-oriented atmosphere, where the supportive staff team and the principal's encouragement help everyone grow to their fullest potential. There's a strong partnership between teachers, children, and their families, creating a nurturing learning environment. With excellent connections to the wider community, ADPS is truly a place where education thrives and everyone feels valued.

Staffing

Our hardworking, dedicated and friendly staff team consists of seven teachers including the Principal and a learning support teacher who provides withdrawal support to children where appropriate. The teaching staff are supported by a team of nine classroom assistants, a secretary, building supervisor and a catering assistant. The whole team are dedicated to the education and welfare of the children entrusted to our care and together we aim to provide learning experiences in an environment which is safe, caring and happy.

Governors

The Board of Governors is elected every four years to assist the Principal in the efficient running of the school. We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated team who are highly supportive of the work of the school and work closely with the Principal to ensure that every child is happy and safe in school and is given every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

I have worked in ADPS for over 20 years. I enjoy coming to work and interacting with the children. My own children came to ADPS and had a great experience. The staff are a great bunch of people to work with and very focused on the children. The pupils are very happy in school and I am proud to be part of a great team.

Aims

Alexander Dickson Primary School aims to:

- Provide a safe, secure and structured environment.
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum to promote the development of the whole child.
- Build high self-esteem and develop healthy and respectful friendships.
- Meet the needs of the individual and encourage each child to fulfil their potential.
- Create a partnership with parents and others to enhance children's education and wellbeing.



Mission Statement

“Our school builds relationships with kindness and honesty. We encourage creativity, imagination and independence. We will develop learning for life and work through effort and collaboration”.

School Motto:

“Helping small people with big ideas”.

Key Values

- **Honesty**
- **Learning**
- **Kindness**
- **Friendship**
- **Effort**



Pastoral Care and Child Protection

The welfare and happiness of the child is central to the ethos of Alexander Dickson Primary School. The school encourages a caring commitment from all adults who come into contact with pupils. Parents are seen as a vital part of pastoral care and are encouraged to liaise closely with the school regarding all aspects of their child's welfare.

The school has robust policies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding of the pupils in our care. All staff receive child protection training annually. Pupils are taught key keeping safe messages through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding strand of the curriculum and are reminded to speak to an adult or use the worry box in their classroom if they are worried or unhappy. Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school's Designated or Deputy Designated Teachers for Safeguarding and Child Protection should they have any concerns about their child or any other child.



Positive Behaviour and School Rules

We aim to make Alexander Dickson Primary School a safe, orderly and happy place. To achieve this staff adopt a positive attitude to managing behaviour, expecting pupils to behave in a responsible manner by showing consideration, courtesy and respect to other people and property at all times. All children are asked to follow our three school rules:

1. Be Ready.

This means being ready to learn and having all of the necessary equipment in school

2. Be Respectful.

This means being respectful to ourselves, other people and our school property.

3. Be Safe.

This means keeping ourselves and others safe at all times, including online.

Examples of good behaviour and work will be recognised and commended in a variety of ways including through verbal/written praise, Star of the Week, stickers etc. Initiatives including 'I Heard a Wispa...' and 'Hot Chocolate with the Head' are used to reward pupils who have gone over and above.

A positive behaviour policy has been drawn up in line with Education Authority guidance. The emphasis of this policy is on the promotion of positive behaviour but there are clearly defined sanctions for those who find it challenging to play a positive role.

The Curriculum

Pupils are offered full access to the NI Curriculum with a broad and balanced programme designed to give every child the opportunity to experience success and achieve as high a standard as possible.

The school is organised into different phases:

- **Foundation Stage – Primary 1 and 2**
- **Key Stage 1 – Primary 3 and 4**
- **Key Stage 2 – Primary 5, 6 and 7**

There are six areas of learning:



These incorporate cross curricular skills of:

- **Communication**
- **Using Mathematics**
- **Using Information and Communications Technology**
- **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities**





Religious Education

Non-denominational religious education is available to all children and is based on the Christian religion. Children participate in collective worship in the form of assemblies which are held weekly. Our bright and often lively assemblies are taken by a range of speakers and clergy with visitors frequently commenting on the children's level of engagement and participation. Parents may opt to remove their child from assemblies or religious classes if they so desire by contacting the Principal.

Accelerated Reader

Pupils in Primary 4 – 7 participate in Accelerated Reader (AR), a reading programme that aims to foster the habit of independent reading among pupils. Pupils complete an online test and are assigned a reading level. Pupils choose books appropriate to their level from the school library and read these before taking a quiz to earn points and increase their word count.

Mathseeds and Mathletics

Alexander Dickson is proud to participate in two highly engaging maths programs that support pupils' learning from Primary 1 through to Primary 7. For pupils in P1 to P3, we use Mathseeds, an interactive program designed to build foundational numeracy skills in a fun, engaging way. From P4 to P7, pupils transition to Mathletics, a comprehensive platform that challenges and enhances their mathematical understanding through interactive lessons and competitions. These programs are integral to fostering a love for maths and ensuring pupils' success in numeracy.

Music & Drama

The aim of music in the curriculum is to provide opportunities to develop the skills of appreciation, creative composition and performance. During the early years children are introduced to musical nursery rhymes and action songs. Music is also directed towards specific events such as assembly and our annual Nativity, Carol Service and school productions. In the upper school, children learn to play the recorder and their musical knowledge is further extended in rhythm, pitch and appreciation. Children from Primary Four onwards can participate in a school choir. They rehearse regularly and participate at various school and other local events.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of planning, learning and teaching in our school. The teachers use various forms of assessment including teacher observation, marking written work and assessment tasks. Pupils receive clear guidance on the quality of their work and assessment is used to inform teaching and improve learning. Pupils are continually monitored to assess their progress and celebrate achievement. We encourage pupils to become involved in their own learning through the use of Assessment for Learning. Pupils participate in drawing up success criteria with teachers and evaluate their work against it.

Pupils participate in end of Key Stage assessments, Standardised tests and computerised assessments from P3-P7.

Learning Support

We aim to support all pupils in ensuring that they can access a broad and balanced curriculum at every stage of their development. Where pupils are identified as having additional needs, they will be supported in class by means of a Pupil Learning Plan and, if appropriate, additional teaching. Through regular monitoring, each pupil will be encouraged to achieve their full potential.

The School works closely with a range of support services to help children with additional needs. Where appropriate, referrals will be made to external agencies such as the EA's Psychology Service or the Regional Integrated Support for Education (RISE) which aims to support young children to develop the foundation skills for learning i.e. speech, language, communication, sensory-motor, visual perception, social, emotional and behaviour skills.



Home Learning

Homework provides a link between home and school. It gives parents an opportunity to support their child's learning as well as consolidating and reinforcing class work. It will vary depending on the age and the ability of the child. It may consist of reading, written activities, phonic work, games or research. We would encourage parents to show an interest in their child's work by ensuring it is neatly presented and signed. We would encourage parents to contact the class teacher if there are any difficulties with home learning tasks.

We use Class Dojo to keep in contact with parents throughout the year and to share pictures, pieces of work or exchange messages with parents.



Swimming

Older pupils will visit Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex for swimming tuition.

Extra-Curricular

A wide range of clubs are available to the children in school; we actively encourage the children to become involved. Clubs are dependent on suggestions made by the School Council and have included activities such as football, hockey, arts and crafts, ICT, Scripture Union, Eco and STEM. Pupils in P6/7 are offered the opportunity to participate in the Cycling Proficiency scheme.



Educational Visits

Visits take place throughout the year; we value the input they can have to children's education.

Trips in recent years have included Streamvale Open Farm, Belfast Zoo, W5, Castle Espie and The Titanic Museum. To supplement this, visitors are invited into school; they bring a wide variety of experiences and resources to the children. Regular visitors include PSNI, Ards & North Down Borough Council, NIFRS and theatre production companies.

Children in P6 and P7 have the opportunity to take part in extended residential visits. Trips are offered to the mainland and to an outdoor centre within Northern Ireland. These trips have great benefits, both educationally and socially.



Pupils with Medical Needs

We strive to create an environment of inclusion and understanding where all children are supported to reach their full potential. We work closely with parents of pupils with specific medical needs to ensure these are managed effectively and do not impact on the child's education or hinder their ability to participate fully in school life.

Healthy Break

We encourage our pupils to adopt the habits of a healthy lifestyle from an early age. We provide regular opportunities for pupils to be active during lessons, playtime and through extra-curricular clubs. Children are encouraged to bring a healthy break and learn about caring for their bodies. We also participate in the Daily Mile initiative.

Lunch

Pupils may bring a packed lunch or they may have a school meal served in the hall. All children have outdoor play time where a range of games and activities are available for them.



Uniform

It is the policy of the school that school uniform should be worn by all children. The wearing of school uniform has a very positive effect, not only with regard to ethos, but to standards of discipline and on children's self-esteem. The uniform helps define our school community, as well as instilling a sense of pride in the children and the staff. The cooperation of parents is greatly appreciated in this respect.

Winter Uniform (Term 1 and 2)

- Navy sweatshirt
- Sky blue shirt
- School tie (available from the office)
- (Boys) Navy trousers (No jogging bottoms)
- (Girls) Navy skirt/pinafore/trousers
- Navy socks
- Black shoes
- Waterproof coat

Winter Uniform (Term 3)

- Boys - Navy shorts and sky blue polo shirt

PE Uniform

- Sky blue polo shirt
- Navy shorts or jogging bottoms when outdoors (no logos)
- Plimsolls



Home/School Links

Home/school communication is a vital element of education. Each class is set up on Class Dojo enabling parents/teachers to quickly and easily share information. Parents receive a weekly newsletter, 'ADPS Express', to keep them up to date with events that are taking place in school. We also have a regularly updated Facebook Page and website which includes information on how to share concerns or raise a complaint. Parents are invited to a Curriculum Meeting in September and parent/teacher interviews in terms 1 and 2. In addition, a parent or teacher may request a meeting at any time during the year. We encourage parents to let us know of any home circumstances that may be causing anxiety/distress to their son/daughter and to ensure we have up to date contact and medical information at all times.

Shared Education

Through our Shared Education programme, pupils engage in meaningful experiences with peers from other schools, expanding their horizons and developing a deeper understanding of different perspectives. By participating in Shared Education, pupils not only strengthen their academic skills but also build lasting friendships and a sense of community beyond their school walls.



Parent Teacher Association

We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated and hardworking PTA committee who run enjoyable events throughout the year in support of our school. These functions are always fun, well supported and help provide, through funds raised, resources and educational aids which might not otherwise be available. The various activities throughout the year not only raise much-needed funds but also help cement the excellent relationship between parents and staff within the whole school community. Recently funds were used to buy a range of equipment for the children such as outdoor play equipment, iPads, interactive whiteboards and the refurbishment of our school library and garden. The PTA are always in need of new members, helpers and innovative ideas. Please contact the school office if you are interested in getting involved.

Eco Council and Forest School

Our school is committed to promoting environmental responsibility through our Eco Council. This pupil-led group plays a vital role in raising awareness about sustainability and implementing eco-friendly practices within the school community.

Our school is proud to offer a Forest School program, which provides pupils with unique, hands-on learning experiences in a natural outdoor environment. Forest School encourages teamwork, independence, and a deep connection with nature, enhancing both personal and academic development.



School Day

Early Birds with Breakfast		8.00am – 8.45am (bookable)
School starts:		8.55am
Break time:		10.30-10.45am
Lunch time:		12.30-1.15pm
Home time:	P1	2.00pm (12.30pm for the first month)
	P2 & P3	2.00pm (3pm Tuesday & Thursday after Easter)
Late Birds		2.00pm – 3.00pm (bookable)
	P4 – P7	3.00pm Monday-Thursday 2.00pm (Friday)

Drugs Education

In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education our school has a Drugs Education Policy in place and is available on our school website. Drugs Education is taught as an element of PDMU and RSE.

School Council

Children are encouraged to contribute to the running of school by getting involved in the school council. Elections are followed by monthly meetings chaired by the P7 chairperson. They have achieved much in the last number of years.

Wraparound Care

As part of our extended day, we have an Early Birds' club which runs each day from 8.00am. Children enjoy the relaxed environment where they can share breakfast, participate in art and computer activities, play with construction toys or board games. We also operate a Late Birds' club to allow parents to ensure their child is cared for in a safe and stimulating environment beyond the school day.

Links with Post-Primary Schools

We maintain excellent links with our neighbouring schools, for example, with Saintfield High School where children have had the opportunities to participate in workshops in the areas of modern languages, sport, technology and design and food science and nutrition.

Induction

Parents whose children have been accepted for enrolment into PI will be invited to attend a meeting during the summer term prior to starting school. This is an important opportunity to learn more about the daily routines and the types of learning the children will experience. Children will also be invited to spend part of an afternoon in school during the month of June to meet the PI teacher and to spend some time exploring the classroom and meeting their classmates.

Charging and Remissions Policy

Under the provision of Education Reform Order (1989), the school is no longer able to charge for certain activities or certain parts of activities such as school education visits. In the future, the cost of these trips/visits/activities will have to be met by voluntary contribution but unless a satisfactory level of contribution is forthcoming, the activity may not be viable and would therefore be cancelled. We are confident that parental support in this respect will remain at its usual generous level.

Policies

The school operates a wide range of policies and procedures including in areas such as Special Educational Needs, Addressing Bullying and Child Protection. Copies of policies are available on the school's website or by contacting the office.



When we ask for help there is always someone there for us.

I love Alexander Dickson because I learn a lot everyday.

I love going to board games club because I like to play with my friends. We play chess and Uno. It is very fun.

I like Accelerated Reader because there are prizes for reaching your target. You get to do a lot of reading.

I like going to Alexander Dickson Primary School because my teachers are really nice and help me with my work. I have lots of friends to play with, and we do fun things like art and PE. My school is small, so everyone knows each other, and it feels like a big family. I love learning new things, and my teachers always make it exciting. It's a happy place, and I feel safe and cared for every day.



Ballygowan Community Pre-School & Playgroup

We are proud to share our grounds with Ballygowan Community Pre-School & Playgroup, an independent care setting offering a maximum of 26 funded places for both Pre-school and Playgroup each year.

At Ballygowan Community Pre-School & Playgroup, the aim is to advance the development and education of children and to provide a safe and satisfying way of learning through play in a parent-involved, community-based group.

Through their ethos of "helping little minds to grow" they aim to enable the children to learn through play and help them develop and thus make a smooth transition from the setting into school.



Contact Details

E-mail: ballygowancommunityplaygroup@hotmail.co.uk

Tel: 028 9752 0800

What the Education and Training Inspectorate say:

- A strong collaborative working relationship exists across all staff.
- The staff know and understand the needs of the children very well. Through carefully considered approaches and strategies and tailored group and individual support they meet effectively the needs of all children.
- The behaviour of the children is exemplary. They engage positively with each other, settle quickly to learn, are confident and have well developed self-management and independence skills.
- The children have a great sense of pride in and belonging to their school and all stakeholders are committed to building and fostering a community of learning.



Alexander Dickson Primary School Prospectus



Alexander Dickson Primary School

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