Annual Report of the Board of Governors 2025-2026

The Governors of Hill Croft School, in conjunction with the Principal, are pleased to present this annual report as a record of the life of the school for the academic year September 2025-June 2026.

The continued development of the school is in no small measure a result of the dedication and hard work of all associated with the school as they continue to strive to provide the best possible all-round education for the pupils in our care.

This report is primarily for the parents and carers of children attending the school. The Principal, by appointment, would be pleased to clarify or discuss any queries parents may have in relation to this report.

School Management

BOARD OF GOVERNOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Governors receives regular reports on all aspects of school life and operations. They meet routinely to make decisions regarding staff appointments, financial management (in line with the delegated budget), curriculum development, child protection, building maintenance, and other matters essential to the effective running of the school.
The Governors work closely with the Education Authority (EA), the Principal, and the staff of Hill Croft to fulfil their responsibilities.
Mr. Doherty is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. The Board of Governors has full confidence in the Principal and staff, and—subject to any necessary clarification—fully supports the decisions made in relation to the ongoing work across all areas of school life.

The Governors congratulate the staff on maintaining the school's high standards in teaching, positive behaviour, and care of the pupils.

The Governors also recognise the commitment of the therapy staff and other affiliated agencies in working collaboratively to meet the needs of the children.

The Board of Governors reconstituted in February 2025

Education Authority Representatives
Mrs E Hawthorne – Vice-chairperson
Ms K Tonkin
Mr D Lewis

Department of Education Representatives
Miss C Bell - Chairperson
Mr J Marley

Parent Representatives
Mrs S Cummings
Mrs C Taylor

Teacher Representative
Mrs G Clotworthy

Secretary
Mr E Doherty

Pupils

The school population has remained steady with 246 pupils in 33 classes with one senior pupil accommodated on an individual placement with three male members of staff. There is a significant need for us to provide more places, but currently, we are above capacity. The needs of the pupils continue to become more complex with each year. The staff team, working in close partnership with parents/carers and other agencies, strive to creatively meet these needs in a nurturing, fun and engaging manner.

Staffing

Hill Croft has an establishment of 1 Principal, 1 Vice-Principal
34 full time teacher positions (44 teachers)
100 Learning Support Assistant positions (115 LSAs)
30 staff are working temporary or permanent flexible working patterns which is proving increasingly difficult to manage.

Therapy staff comprising – 2 Physiotherapists and 1 Physiotherapy Assistant, 3 Speech & Language Therapists, 1 Speech & Language Assistant, and 1 Occupational Therapist.

Ancillary staff – 1 Executive Officer, 1 Senior Clerical Officer, 1 Building Supervisor, 1 Assistant Building Supervisor, 12 Cleaners, a Catering Manager, 3 Dining Assistants, and 5 Supervisory Assistants.

Leadership structure

Recruitment took place during the year to fill the positions of acting principal, acting vice-principal and senior teacher to cover the secondment of Mrs McFeeters to EA. Further recruitment will be required early in the next academic year to fill the post of Senior Department HOD.

Principal Roz McFeeters		Senior Leadership Team		Vice-Principal Eamon Doherty (Behaviour Lead)		
Senior Teacher Jonny Miskelly TA3 Permanent				Senior Teacher Gillian Clotworthy TA3 Permanent		
Leadership Team						
HOD Senior (S)	HOD Nurture (N)	SENCO	Lee-Anne Wilson	Rachel McCourt	Gillian Cromie	
Holly Rankin	Beverley Hendry	Linzi Blair	HOD N/FS (F)	HOD KS1&2 (J)	HOD Sensory (Sen)	
TA2 Permanent (4 days but FTE post)	TA2 Permanent	TA2 Permanent Leads	TA2 Permanent	TA2 Permanent	TA2 Permanent	
Management Team						
ICT Coordinator	LSC Curriculum	LSC Behaviour	Pupil-Wellbeing	Staff-Wellbeing	Summer Scheme & Extended Schools	Shared Education Coordinator
Kelly Johnston	Sarah Hill 0.6 Cherith McCrystal 0.4	Kevin Fitzsimons	Rianna McCaughley	Rachel Marshall	Orla McMinn	Rebecca Jones
TA1 Permanent	TA1 Permanent	TA1 Permanent	TA1 Permanent	TA1 Permanent	TA1 Temporary	TA1 Temporary
Deputise for N/FS	Deputise for SENCO	Deputise for Nurture	Deputise for Sensory	Deputise for KS1&2		
Teacher Coordinators						

REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

School Development

A one-year school development plan was compiled to cover the initial year of Mrs McFeeters secondment to EA. The priority focus was on the development and preparation for the implementation of the equals curriculum across all five school departments. A consistent method of planning and recording was worked on and will be completed early in the next academic year.

The role of the core team was further developed to empower class teams to support our most complex pupils. There were many success stories with whole class and individual interventions being noted as making a significant improvement in the presentation and wellbeing of our pupils.

Development of our understanding of Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) continued with staff training for all primary staff on the Positive Looking programme including the hierarchy of visual skills and creating vision friendly learning areas and resources.

An outdoor learning team was established with Emma Patton promoting the use of the outdoor gym and staff training being completed during a power hour.
Esther Hamilton and Orla McMinn worked on the use of Forest School Area and Becky Jones developed our playground equipment and purposeful play outdoors along with a visual communication board for the junior playground in line with the recommendation of the Middletown Action Plan.

The vision and ethos of the school were developed with whole school restorative practice training being completed during the August training days. This empowered staff to have a significant and lasting impact on the physical and emotional wellbeing of our pupils. Jonny Miskelly attended trauma informed train the trainer training and due to the limited number of training days available each year, along with Eamon Doherty, incorporated this into the existing school training cycle. Surveys from pupils, families and staff and training feedback were collated from the previous three years to formulate a school vision statement, mission statement and motto (or tag line). All three were put out for consultation with staff, families and pupils and will be launched at the beginning of the next academic year.

Training and Curriculum Development

Staff training was linked directly to the School Development Plan. Staff received training from school staff, online and from NHSCT in delegated nursing tasks. Some of these courses included:

- The Hill Croft 'Why'- Trauma informed practice in Hill Croft School
- Restorative practice from Jenny Knock
- Safe Manual Handling (online)
- Communication Friendly Environment
- Feeding – eating, drinking, and swallowing
- Angel Eyes Vision Awareness and training
- Staff training for all primary staff on creating vision friendly learning areas and resources and Positive Looking programme including the hierarchy of visual skills
- Anti-bullying
- GDPR and Cybersecurity

- Health and Safety
- Cash Book Training
- Personal Care Training
- Child Protection/Safeguarding
- Fire Safety
- Team Teach
- First Aid
- Inclusion and Pupil Voice Training
- Trauma Informed Practice Level 1 – online
- Medical Procedures specific to individual pupils including:
    - Administration of medication
    - Buccal Midazolam and epilepsy training
    - ventral/peg feeding
    - NG feeding
    - Oxygen and stats
    - Catheterisation
    - Suctioning training
    - Diabetes and anaphylaxis training

Many of the school development days and much of the curriculum development time was taken up with staff meeting in departments to focus on the development of the equals curriculum.

Individual staff have attended external training, mostly online and have completed training records regarding their learning and next steps.

Power Hours and workshops offered on a voluntary basis throughout the year –

- CVI and Vision Friendly Classrooms
- Transition process and Transition plans.
- Setting up and using Evidence for Learning (EfL) system for pupil targets
- Making the most of your Interactive Whiteboard IMEX
- Outdoor learning including the outdoor gym
- Completion of PPExt and behaviour support referrals
- CAP Pensions and Finance Information
- Forest Schools and Therapeutic approach
- Completing pupil information and handovers for end of year
- Prep pupil info and classroom end of year.

In addition, the following training was provided to parents/carers:

- Incredible Years – Sylvia Cardwell and Tina Donaldson
- Getting Ready to Learn for parents of pupils in Nursery and Foundation Stage.

The Curriculum

Our practical and skills-based curriculum focuses on communication, independence, and skills for life. Individual targets are set for key learning areas, agreed with parents/carers, and included within the annual report as per DE requirements. The use of multi-sensory methods and "hands on" learning allows pupils to practise their skills in a variety of settings.

Over the last number of years, the curriculum team have been looking to devise and implement a purposeful and inspiring specialist curriculum which meets the needs of all our learners; promotes individual interests, independence, and enrichment. This will continue as part of the school development plan in the year ahead. This has been supported by the senior leadership team. Links have been established with schools who have had or are in the process of developing curricula. In 2026-27 three pathways of the Equals Curriculum will be introduced across each department in the school. This will continue to be reported on through the school development plan.

Pupil assessment profiles were developed in 23-24 and are now embedded within the school's system along with the use of EfL to give clear learning evidence. A regular monitoring and evaluation system is in place for discussion at department level.

Well-Being

As a trauma-informed school, we take the well-being of pupils, families, and staff very seriously. The appointment of pupil and staff wellbeing leads, and the further expansion of the Well Team show testament to the commitment we have to this way of working. The trauma-informed and nurturing ethos run deeply throughout all that we do and are clear in training, events and provisions for all our stakeholders.

The Well Team have all been trained as Mental Health First Aiders and can support and signpost when needed. This team was expanded to include our executive officer who in many cases is the first point of call for staff and parents who are experiencing difficulties along with Ryan Stewart to represent our increasing male staff population.

This year we have had monthly High5Fridays! These work within the themes of the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing and are fun and engaging days for the pupils and staff, they included:

Be a Team – Carrying out a team building activities

Be Cheerful – Fire Station Party and Singing Christmas Songs

And many more.

We recognise that winter can be a difficult time for many and so we took time to celebrate Wellbeing Day and Blue Monday (which was designated pink Monday in memory of our departed teacher Chloe) with coffee mornings for staff to allow for greater connection.

This work builds on the family work model which continues with Tina Donaldson and other staff members. (See more information later in the report.)

The ongoing wellbeing work in school was celebrated in June by Hill Croft being the first special school to be reaccredited with the Take 5 Steps Platinum Award.

School Security, Disability Access and Child Protection

The Governors place great importance on the safety and protection of all pupils in Hill Croft. The school provides all accommodation on ground level and is fully accessible for pupils and visitors with disabilities. Specialist equipment is fitted as required to meet pupil needs and facilitate learning.

Consistent procedures and policies are established in school and are followed by all relevant members of staff. These include:

- A modern, well-kept building with perimeter fencing and internal fencing with electronic locking system.
- Testing and maintenance of fire and security systems.
- Electronic entrances/exits are always kept locked.
- Regular maintenance and quick repair of equipment.
- Vetting of all members of staff, substitute staff, students and volunteers following DE requirements.
- The appointment of Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- Regular training for staff in Child Protection procedures and policies.
- Close links with External Agencies such as Social Services;
- Excellent communication with parents and families.

Due to the high volume of staff, and the number of entrances/exits being used a swipe in/swipe out system was introduced for all staff in 2025/26.

Links with the Community

For many years Hill Croft has shared positive links with the local community. We continue to find ways for the young people to access the community and for the community to have a part to play in school life.

- Involving the local PSNI and Fire Service; For over 20 years the blue watch at Whitla Station have provided Christmas parties for the pupils both at the station and within school. We have regular visits from the services as part of curriculum topics.
- Pupils making great use of many of the local community resources including parks, cafes, and businesses which they were able to walk to or use public transport from school.
- Some of our transition pupils were able to avail of work experience in the third term including Nando's and Corrs Corner Hotel.
- Our Knit and Natter group continues to go from strength to strength. It operates fortnightly on Monday evening and has a strong group of approximately 10 to 14 ladies who attend each session. Group members can work on their own knitting and crocheting projects, and they have also been involved in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Council "Winter Woollies'" appeal this year and trauma bears for the emergency services.
- Hill Croft School has links with the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Locality Planning Group. The meetings allow our Family Worker to hear about available support and services that would be of benefit to our families.
- Signposting of services to families is carried out using our school Facebook page, school website and Seesaw. Links with organisations such as CYPSP, Parenting NI, Action for Happiness, Family Support Hub, Community Advice, Autism Northern Ireland, the NOW project, Home Start East Antrim allow information to be shared with families. Information on how to order nappies/continence aids is always sought after.

In 2023 Special Schools Partnership was established as part of a pilot through DE/PHA/EA to raise awareness of the work of the special school in the local community, but also to bring on board agencies who can support the work and provision for our pupils within and outside of school. Hill Croft was selected to be the pilot school for the Northern Trust area.

There have been 3 meetings held this year with attendees from health, social services, education, voluntary and charitable organisations. Priorities for the coming three years have been identified:

- Engaging the voices of children, young people, and their carers

- Increasing inclusive opportunities in the community for our pupils and their families
- Social, emotional, and behavioural support
- Training and upskilling across professions.

PHA provided additional funding for ongoing alternative therapies to evoke the voices of children and young people and art, music and play therapies were provided during the school year.

Hill Croft is the only special school to be a member of NEST (Newtownabbey Empowering Schools Together) which is a group of 22 cross phase and cross sector schools within the Newtownabbey area. Our staff have actively engaged in the early years and SENCO groups.

Mr Doherty has continued to work closely with DENI in formulating the Statutory Restraint and Seclusion guidance which is currently out for public consultation. Much time and effort was spent ensuring the guidance meet the operational reality of the day to day life of a special school.

Events

This has been another busy year in school, and it is impossible to list all the events which have taken place across all five departments. The following list captures some of the highlights:

- At Christmas Junior and Senior departments provided us with "The Nativity" and "The Nativity Detectives." Uplift Performing Arts then created an Immersive Christmas experience for our pupils from Foundation, Nurture and Sensory departments and their families called "Santa's Sensory Village.".
- Santa drive-in took place for families in December; Santa also visited pupils in school during the last week in December.
- Choir sang at Kilcreggan Farm and Glenarm on run up to Christmas.
- The Uplift team then returned in Spring to work weekly with Senior department pupils who then impressed a packed hall with their show "Hill Croft Hi5 2026"
- PTA Valentines and Summer discos took place for pupils.
- Pony riding and swimming lessons for selected classes.
- World Book Day in March bedtime stories
- Fairtrade fortnight took place in March.
- First Communion service took place at St Bernard's in Glengormley
- Green Day celebrations for St. Patricks' Day
- Wee Critters and Farm animals visits to school
- Transition pupils attended their residential to Lorne House
- Inter School formal in Galgorm Hotel and Spa
- Department Fun days took place in May and included play days, sports events, and activities. Parents were able to attend these celebrations this year.

Additional Therapy Provision

Senior pupils have benefited from counselling sessions with Carlene from Action Mental Health and junior pupils have received play therapy sessions with Zoe through ZL Counselling. Lisa our art teacher has provided 1:1 Drawing and Talking Therapy sessions again this year through Extended Schools funding. PHA also funded a new pilot programme of art, music and play therapies to elicit pupil voice from our most complex pupils. We have extended our Rebound Therapy team to include a member of staff from each department to optimise the provision across the school. Lexi the dog brought much excitement and therapy to pupils in the Nurture and Sensory Departments. Equine Assisted Learning began for Nurture Department pupils and was a tremendous success.

The Peace of Mind Programme was introduced in selected Junior and Senior Department classes and a Music Therapy student worked with selected Nurture and Foundation pupils.

Playdates

Play Dates took place on Tuesdays during Term Time from 2-3.30pm. Children from 0-6 years in the local community who have a potential learning disability could attend with parents/carers. We had approximately 10 children on average attending each session. As the children settle into the routines of Play Dates and getting familiar with staff, we provided information sessions for the parents on areas of concern. Stephanie Kirkpatrick, our Occupational Therapist held a Sleep Information session for us in February which was also very well received. We have provided a Speech Therapy Information Session. The Statementing Information session held at the end of November was very successful and helped to alleviate concerns from parents about the daunting process. The parents bonded with each other and created friendships which gave them a strong support system as they navigated the statementing process and receive placements in specialist provision or mainstream settings.

Shared Education

Learner Centred

- Developing relationships and friendships
- Enhancing physical, sensory, social and emotional development
- Encouraging communication and social interaction
- Fostering independence in natural environments
- Celebrating uniqueness
- Showing respect, honesty and fairness
- Recognising and appreciating some similarities and differences
- Developing self-belief and confidence
- Promoting physical health

High Quality Learning and Teaching – (Links to 5 Steps to Wellbeing)

- Joint breaks – making connections
- Outdoor play – making connections, being active
- Litter picking in local environment – give, be active, take notice
- Walks in local environment – be active, take notice
- Public play parks – be active, take notice
- Rhythmic gym antics – be active, take notice
- Sensory Circuits – be active, take notice
- Disability games – be active, make connections
- Forest schools – outdoor learning environment, be active, take notice, learn
- Blackberry farm animals – take notice, learn
- Planting and caring for plants – take notice, learn
- ICT - Online introduction videos shared between classes – make connections, take notice, give

- Art - Christmas cards given and received by partner classes - make connections, take notice, give

Effective Leadership

- Joint planning and evaluation
- Booking of buses
- Collecting evidence on Teams – each partnership saving planning and evidence (Photos and videos) in individual folders
- Moderation – meeting with Eilish Gormley

Community Connections

- Hill Croft and Rosstulla joint Equals Curriculum training with Peter Emery at Hilton Temple Patrick in August
- Blackberry Farm visit to Rosstulla
- Walks in local environment – Lough Shore
- Loughshore play park
- Litter picking in local environment
- Shared posts on Facebook of partnership activities

Extended Schools Programme

- Fruit has been delivered to school from a local Greengrocer. The pupils in the Senior department, as part of work experience have counted, cleaned, and delivered this fruit to every class in school. All pupils have had access to daily fruit throughout the year. This has supported our parents through the cost-of-living crisis. 246 pupils have been given access to free fruit from September- June.
- Play mornings were extremely successful with many families attending throughout several different sessions. Both school and community sessions were completed, supporting parents and their pupils in developing mental health and well-being, support networks, play skills and ability to access the local community.
- Junior sports club took place after Easter with 15 pupils taking part.
- Forest Schools is an area we have been establishing for several years. Building resources and developing our outside area. This year we made use of our forest schools' trainers to create basic lesson plans that would be adaptable and relevant for different departments. They then worked with classes, supported by the teachers and staff to model good practice, and develop staff understanding of Forest schools. This then linked closely to the shared education projects with Rosstulla.
- Uplift Easter performance for the senior department. The show was called Hill Croft High5 2026 and was a tremendous success with many pupils achieving way beyond their expected potential. They also provided our foundation, sensory and nurture pupils with a Christmas experience called Santa's Sensory Village.
- The transition pupils challenged their parents to a series of bowling nights with the pupils, not surprisingly, coming out on top. An excellent opportunity for our pupils to enhance their social skills and for the parents to form social groups that will help them navigate the transition to adult services.

ICT

ICT continues to develop within Hill Croft with a strong team guided by Kelly Johnston. The benefits of support from Capita's Technician support and Imex Servicing and maintenance has allowed the team to focus on curriculum development with ICT.

The 3 blocks of ICT Club were a highlight of the year and allowed Tina Donaldson and Heidi Chambers the opportunity to showcase some of the ICT equipment that school has and to develop skills that the pupils can hopefully carry forward.

The use of technology within school has been challenging- with Evidence for Learning, Seesaw and PAConnect being quite a lot for staff to embrace. Last year's trial of PAConnect proved problematic and therefore we reverted back to Teachers2Parents for staff and parents.

The PTA purchased new iPads to add to our existing iPads which allowed us to expand the use of ICT in school- with a class set which can be borrowed on a timetabled basis.

Music and Drama

Our choirs performed for parents and families during the Christmas shows, prize givings and leavers' assembly. They also enjoyed performing at Kilcreggan Farm and for many guests to school throughout the year.

We are very proud of the achievements of the choir and would like to thank the parents who attended the events to lend their support. Our thanks to Mrs Rankin and Mrs Hill and all the staff teams for their support this year.

Sports

- Our PE swimming programme restarted for another year at Sixmile Ballyclare, we have successfully had two groups of senior pupils using the swimming pool which has greatly benefited not only their cardiovascular health but aided in sensory and emotional regulation. Two new classes began swimming in the first term with 4 more classes after the Easter holidays.
- On Tuesday the 11th November a group of senior pupils travelled to Newforge Belfast for the annual Kurling competition. We were able to bring a young group of year 8, 9 and 10 pupils from the senior department, some of whom had never represented school before. All pupils had a brilliant time and were successful in winning matches and advancing to the quarter finals where they narrowly lost.
- SKH had the wonderful opportunity to take part in a special school bowling competition in the SSE arena. Hill Croft were delighted to come away with a 3rd place medal.
- On Tuesday 3rd February SKH attended the Disability Sport NI Boccia annual tournament in Antrim – The whole class was involved and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, representing Hill Croft in the new sports kits donated by Ineqe last year. The pupils were successful in winning many games and made it to the quarter finals where they narrowly missed out on a place in the semi-finals.
- SEP have enjoyed shared education PE sessions with Rosstulla this term, and have hosted sessions in sitting volleyball, sensory circuits, boccia and kurling. The sessions have been very successful, with lots of learning taking part between adults and pupils alike.

- A selection of senior pupils attended the Northern Ireland Disability Indoor Athletics championships on Thursday 26th March.
- 20th March – Taylor Nixon's class went to Belfast to participate in a "Try it Sports" event, where hundreds of primary school aged children from across Northern Ireland to try a variety of different sports including wheelchair basketball, athletics, climbing, hockey, cycling, kayaking and many more. The class really enjoyed the experience.
- 'Project HIIT' intervention team from Queens University (a phd project) has visited SHR and measured height/weight/waist and daily steps were recorded for one week through an accelerometer that all pupils wore. The intervention programme is being carried out by the class team and then Project Hiit will be returning to carry out measurements after 6 weeks.
- A senior Sports Team travelled to South Lakes Leisure Centre at the end of March for the Disability Sport Indoor Athletics Championships. The team participated in events such as sprinting, javelin throw, speed bounce, relay race and target throw. All the pupils participated well, demonstrating skill, resilience and perseverance. Out of the twelve schools we were delighted to come away with the gold!!
- Junior sports club ran after schools on Mondays during the final term.
- In May each department held a sports or fun day event with all pupils being included at a level appropriate to them. Awards for sporting successes were presented at prize giving events.

These events reflect Hill Croft's ongoing commitment to promoting physical activity, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle for all pupils. Our thanks to Mrs Patton and all the staff team who support this work.

Buildings

Pupil enrolment has been required to remain steady between 245-250 for the last two years due to lack of further capacity on site. EA carried out an Optimal Pupil Number Exercise which showed that the current school building should be accommodating between 169-199 pupils. The overcrowding in the building and lack of specialist rooms and break out spaces provides a daily challenge on staff to support pupils to be regulated and maintain safety. Further funding from DE has provided much needed repairs and refurbishment of some of the outdoor spaces, including the fitting of an outdoor gym.

Through the school meals department, EA have completed the building and establishment of a larger kitchen and dining area.

School Enhancement Programme – From October 2025 the project was put on hold due to financial implications. In June 2026 Mr Doherty, having heard no further information, contacted the team lead for an update. The Senior Responsible Officer for the scheme has confirmed the Direct Award Contract has been prepared and being issued for approval, but it is being combined with a few others. There has been no feedback at all to say if positive or negative. So, they are unable to get us an approximate timescale to when design will recommence. The DAC is required because the scheme has increased so much that the consultants' fees have exceeded the procurement 50% rule, so they need approval to give them a direct award. These do not happen very often so it's complicated and may not be approved. If not, they then must tender for a new design team.

The Governors delegate the day-to-day running of the buildings to the principal but completed an annual health and safety tour of the school. Health and safety and the buildings are discussed as a

standing agenda item at each meeting of the governors, and they liaise with EA when the need arises.

Supporting Others

We teach the importance of giving to others. Throughout the school year 2025-26 we have raised money for our school and for our nominated charity of the year: Action Cancer.
We held two coffee mornings, collected donations through the school money app from our Halloween Hooley and Christmas Jumper day.

At Harvest parents and staff generously donated food stuffs and other items required for the Food bank. The team from Carnmoney church collected these donations which were presented at the Harvest Assembly.

Before Christmas we were approached by Antrim Lions Club. With the PTA's backing we partnered with them to run a Christmas card competition. We picked 12 amazing designs from all areas of the school and then sold the cards to the school community. A total of £1010 was raised for the N.I Children's Hospice.
The Lions are donating £490 to increase this figure up to £1500.

In supporting others, we are also very glad to be supported. We acknowledge and thank Mencap for their on-going financial support to the school in contributing to Christmas gifts and class outings each year. We are always very grateful to families and friends who make donations to school in memory of loved ones and appreciate them thinking of the school at such a difficult time. Our thanks go to staff, friends, families, and the local community who give generously throughout the year.

Parent Teacher Association

Hill Croft Parent Teacher Association has been very active this year providing financial and practical support to school.
Once again, the PTA organised the Santa Drive In for pupils and their families. The children were able to see Santa in a relaxed informal setting which meant a lot to our families who have maybe not been able to get a family photo together.
The PTA have raised funds through different ways this year and have had support from many individuals and organisations taking on fundraising challenges in aid of the PTA- including Craig McClean's Running Challenge, Ulster Motivational' s Big Dander and Mossley FC/All Star Team Football Fundraiser.
To round off the year the PTA are purchasing new iPads for school and some equipment to refresh the Multisensory Room. There are plans in place for another great year for Hill Croft PTA.

Family Worker

Tina Donaldson has continued to provide support and advice to families as our Family Support Worker. The Parent Support Group works alongside the PTA and arranges training and events. Parents have reported how useful they have found the service in school and look forward to future events. Tina attends various courses and gathers resources, information, and contacts, and meets with external agencies to highlight the support services within our community. We thank Tina for all she contributes.

An overview of support provided to parents and families this year:

- Parent Group-held fortnightly. Continues to be well attended with a core group of parents. We have welcomed speakers to the group, including Cruse Bereavement and Kyle Craig from Capernaum Youth Group. Parents speak openly and honestly about their concerns and are a great support for each other.
- Incredible Years 14-week parenting programme run with Sylvia Cardwell. 10 parents attended, and due to family issues 3 parents unfortunately were unable to complete the course. The remaining 7 parents were proud to graduate this year.
- Parent Information sessions were held in conjunction with our School Therapy Team- with Speech and Occupational Therapy running a joint Sensory Processing and Communication Workshop and Occupational Therapy holding a Toilet Training Workshop for school families.
- The Saturday Play Mornings for Junior aged pupils have been a great success throughout the year. These sessions are packed with fun activities for children and a chance for parents to connect over coffee. With crafts, games, and storytelling, Saturday Play Mornings are a hit with kids and a great way for parents to build friendships and support networks.

Conclusion

It has been another emotional year in Hill Croft School. We lost one of our teachers, Chloe McDermott and one of our pupils Katelyn McDowell with a number of staff also experiencing bereavements. Staff and families have been supported within school and signposted to agencies who can provide support.

We work hard to provide the best possible opportunities for our pupils and to extend our welcome to parents and the local community to come and learn with us. We believe that the best education is a shared education, with everyone working together to best meet the needs of our pupils.

Finally, the Governors wish to thank the parents and family members for your continued commitment to the school and for the significant contribution you make to school life. We would also wish to extend our thanks to Mr Doherty and all the staff in Hill Croft and congratulate them for their care, flexibility, commitment, and loyalty to the pupils in our school.

If you have a question or comment regarding any aspect of this report then please feel free to put this in writing to the Acting Principal, Mr Doherty