



**Down and Connor
Catholic Schools' Support Service**

120 Cliftonville Road, Belfast BT14 6LA

T: 028 9049 1886

E: dctrusteeservice@downandconnor.org



Citation delivered at the Spirit of Catholic Education Awards Ceremony

At St Marys University College, Belfast

On Monday 30 January 2023

**St Mary's Primary School, Aughlisnafin
recipient of the Spirit of Catholic Education Award 2023**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the representatives of St Mary's Primary School here today to receive their Spirit of Catholic Education Award. It is a school in which I have personally witnessed the commitment to the aims and objectives of Catholic education and have experienced how every effort is being made to live out the Gospel values through the day-to-day life of the school.

In Laudato Si, Pope Francis Stated that: "The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this." St Mary's Primary School strives to ensure that its pupils do develop this universal awareness and actively seek ways to create the new start which Pope Francis urges us to do.

The work taking place in this school to develop pupils' understanding of the need to respect their environment is outstanding. Through theatre events, World Around Us workshops, assemblies, outdoor learning and partnership with outside agencies, the staff have endeavoured to ensure that pupils have a full understanding of the environmental challenges facing our world today.

The children have had opportunities to consider how they might begin to tackle these challenges such as the need to reverse our over reliance on plastics, reducing our carbon emissions, and water pollution which is depriving so many people across the globe of a supply of fresh drinking water.

The school was chosen to be part of the Sustrans Active School Travel Programme, aimed at encouraging pupils to walk or cycle to school, which not only improves pupils' physical and mental health, but also aims to reduce the number of cars on our roads especially around our schools.

The children have also explored the impact of global warming on our planet and the danger it presents to our very existence. The pupils of St Mary's are truly being shaped into global citizens who care deeply for the survival of our planet and seek to follow Pope Francis' call to action.

The Principal states that his vision is to create a school that engages hearts, inspires minds and serves its community. The work that has taken place to date would certainly suggest that this vision is very much a reality. I am therefore delighted to ask the representatives of St Mary's Primary School, Aughlisnafin to come forward to receive their Spirit of Catholic Education Award 2023.