

# Oakwood IPS

Belfast



Oakwood Integrated Primary School opened as the result of the hard work and commitment of a small group of dedicated parents, who felt that the kind of schooling they wished for their children did not exist in the Derrriagh area.

Oakwood IPS opened its doors in 1996 with just 34 children. The school occupied a site that had housed Malone College. It was not a purpose built school – the building was an old factory and offices in poor condition. The school started in these conditions, with the addition on an old mobile classroom.

Recognising the state of the buildings as being a barrier to learning and expansion, the same group of parents, the governors and pioneering principal Mrs. Olwyn Frost pursued a plan to ensure that the children of this new integrated school had the right to proper facilities.

We now have a beautiful purpose-built school and Children's Centre with 203 children in our primary and 30 children in our pre-school. We have wrap-a-round care from 8am-6pm, 50 weeks of the year.

Before her retirement in 2010, Mrs. Frost directed further additions to the school, with the opening of The Mo Mowlam Centre – a dedicated centre for learning support. This included a Sensory Room for the support of children with special needs.

<http://www.oakwoodips.ik.org/>

In recent years, further development has occurred under the direction of current principal Mrs. Claire Howe. We now have a dedicated outdoor garden, and a large outdoor play area for both learning and having fun!

The school has also achieved a series of prestigious awards in recent years – the NAACE ICT Mark, recognising excellent learning in technology, our fifth Eco Schools Green Flag Award, recognising our awareness of good ecological practice; and of course our award of Flagship Status in the Inclusion award – a first for a primary school in Northern Ireland.

The school continues to go from strength to strength. We have a current enrolment of 204 children.

Quotes from Hugh Wilkinson, a founder of Oakwood:

*“It was hard to hold a day job then work for the school at night. We had to keep fighting; we couldn’t believe the struggle to get official funding. We tried three or four times.”*

*“We did get ‘invisible’ funding; there was a benefit concert by an Austrian choir in London and unofficially I heard it was arranged by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.”*

