**Biography**

Malou Valdez recently joined Holy Trinity College as our School Matron. After living and working in Belfast for 10 years, she and her family decided to move to Cookstown during the summer months of the lockdown. Originally from the Philippines, Malou has worked with Belfast Trust for a number of years in different areas such as School Immunisation team, Learning Disability, and most recently at the Belfast City Hospital Outpatient Department.

**Tell us what is your day like?**

No two days are the same. My typical day would start at 8:30 checking my emails and then it’s show time by about 9am. The school has about 1000 pupils and my main role is to attend to first aid medical needs. I’m mostly in the treatment room, but I could be called anywhere within the school site and the pitch for any sporting activities, so I am out and about. Breaks and lunchtime are also the busiest as some pupils come to me for any emergencies it could be anything from minor cuts, graze, slips, nosebleed etc. Then there’s phone calls to different teachers and parents relating to a pupil if there is an incident report.

**What are the other roles of the Matron?**

I am very fortunate to be working closely with our most experienced Senior Leadership Team on Child Protection and Safeguarding issues, as well as advising the school on health and safety matters especially during the beginning of the school term in Sept for COVID safety measures. On certain occasions, pupils and teachers would seek my advice on topics relating to mental health/self-harming, smoking and alcohol issues and peer pressure to name a few. I am also involved in the huge task of organising the school vaccination programme for all year groups, health appraisals and liaise closely with the local Public Health Nursing Team. As I am new to the role and the area, it is very important to build internal and external work relationships and communicate effectively.

**What are the challenges you have faced so far?**

The lockdown and school closure**.** We know our pupils are happiest when they are at school and with their friends. Also, the changes in our school set-up make sure we follow and adhere to health and safety measures.

**What do enjoy in this job and what made you change from hospital to school setting?**

The perks of this job are: I work closely to home which is 10 minutes away, I am home early and weekends off, not to mention term time. I don’t miss the long days of shift and weekends working in the hospital but I miss my hardworking nursing colleagues who became my friends. It is rewarding to see the development of a Year 8 pupil until they leave school at age 18 for most of them and to witness how much they have grown and changed over the years. Our School Principal Mrs. Russell, teachers and staff have been welcoming and supportive when I joined in September. I am also looking forward to the new school build in the next year which is very exciting for our school community.