



VISION 2030

May 2026

Integrated Education Demand

Evidence, Insights, and Limitations

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Ministerial Foreword

I welcome the publication of the Integrated Education Demand Report. This report brings together a range of evidence to support a clearer understanding of the factors that shape parental choices and the patterns of demand emerging across Northern Ireland. The analysis provides an overview of current trends and highlights the importance of ensuring that families have access to high quality information when making decisions about their children's education.

The report reflects the Department's commitment to monitoring and assessing demand in line with the Integrated Education Act and Vision 2030. By drawing on admissions data, survey findings and information from parental ballots, it offers a more comprehensive picture of how parents are engaging with the options available to them and where pressures or opportunities may arise.

As with all evidence of this nature, the findings should be considered alongside ongoing area planning work and wider engagement with schools, communities and delivery partners. I encourage all stakeholders, including Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Education Authority (EA), Integrated Education Fund (IEF) and the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC), to reflect on the report and consider how its insights can inform future planning and support for families.

This is the first departmental report on demand and I anticipate building on this with further analysis and insight over time.

I thank all those involved in the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Givan', with a horizontal line underneath.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

Chapter 1: Introduction

Defining Demand

This report adopts the Department’s definition of demand for Integrated Education, as set out in Vision 2030 and grounded in the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022. Demand is defined as:

The level of support and desire for Integrated Education expressed by parents, demonstrated through school admission preferences (behavioural demand) and wider societal attitudes (societal demand).

Demand comprises two distinct but complementary components:

Behavioural Demand

This is evidence of demand indicated by school preference as expressed via the school admission system at entry to pre-school, primary and post-primary school. It is also indicated from successful parental ballots held to consider Transformation proposals. The factors taken into account when making school admission choices were gathered from a survey of parents who had just completed the school admissions process.

Societal Demand

This is evidence of demand taken from a Northern Ireland wide survey of parents on their desire for Integrated Education (IE) and the factors they consider when expressing school preferences and desire for their child’s school to transform to an Integrated school.

Integrated Education is provided in two types of school

- **Controlled integrated:** Controlled schools which have acquired Integrated status.
- **Grant Maintained integrated:** Self-governing schools with Integrated Education status, funded directly by the Department of Education and managed by Boards of Governors. The Board of Governors is the employing authority and responsible for employing staff.

Understanding the Relationship Between Demand and Capacity measured by approved admission numbers

- This report examines demand for Integrated Education in relation to the approved admission capacity (admission numbers) available within the school system. In planning and policy terms, demand can only be meaningfully interpreted when

assessed against the number of places that are formally approved at each stage of entry.

- The relationship between parental demand and approved admission numbers is described in this report as the balance between demand and capacity. This balance varies across phases, council areas and individual schools, reflecting local demographics, accessibility, school reputation and admissions arrangements.
- To meet the requirements of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, demand relative to capacity is measured using first preference applications compared with approved admission numbers. Section 6 (3) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 states:

“In this Act, a reference to ascertaining the demand for integrated education is a reference to ascertaining the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained integrated or controlled integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained integrated schools or controlled integrated schools”.

- Where first preference demand exceeds approved admission numbers, this is referred to as oversubscription and indicates capacity pressure. Where first preference demand is below approved admission numbers, this is referred to as undersubscription.
- These terms are used throughout the report as operational indicators rather than as evaluations of individual schools. Oversubscription and undersubscription should be interpreted alongside other evidence including demographic trends, admissions criteria, parental surveys and geographic analysis, and should not be considered in isolation as definitive measures of unmet or absent demand.

Chapter 2: Evidence and Data

Data sources and their evidential strength

A range of evidence sources informs the assessment of demand.

Admissions Data (Behavioural)

- Annual Education Authority (EA) admissions data for pre-school, primary and post-primary phases.
- Oversubscription patterns by local council areas.
- School-level intake analysis, including Lagan College and Slemish College.

This data shows actual choices made by parents and provides the best available system-wide proxy of how demand translates into behaviour.

Parental Admissions Survey

- Survey of 9,720 parents who used the EA admissions portal in 2025.
- Provides insight into factors influencing choice and parental attitudes.

NILT Survey (Societal)

- Annual region-wide survey of adults.
- Indicates long-term trends in attitudes but not actual parental behaviour or geographical variation.

Parental Ballots & Geographic Analysis

- Transformation ballots show strong local engagement but reflect school-specific decisions.
- Geographic access maps show distance to nearest IE school but do not measure demand independently.

The NI Education system: Key data

This section provides statistical context for the Northern Ireland education system and summarises recent trends in pupil numbers and Integrated Education. All figures relate to the 2025/26 academic year unless stated otherwise.

In 2025/26 Integrated schools represented 6.9% of grant aided schools in the Northern Ireland school estate. The Integrated sector had 28,617 pupils enrolled which accounted for 8.3% of the school population an increase from 8.2% in 2024/25. Analysis by phase shows that 0.4% were enrolled in Integrated nursery settings, 3.4% in Integrated primary schools and 4.5% in Integrated post-primary schools.

Growth in Integrated Enrolments

Between 2009/10 and 2025/26 the number of pupils attending Integrated schools increased from 20,714 to 28,617 an overall rise of 38.2%. Growth has been recorded across all phases although the scale of change differs. Integrated nursery school and nursery class enrolments rose from 498 in 2009/10 to 1,408 in 2025/26. Integrated primary enrolments rose from 8,117 to 11,757 over the period which represents a 44.8% increase while post-primary enrolments increased from 12,099 to 15,452 equivalent to a rise of 27.7%.

Table 1. Growth in pupil enrolment by school management type

	2009/10	2025/26
Integrated Nursery classes and Schools inc. Pre school age specialist provision	498	1,408
Integrated Primary Reception-Year 7	8,117	11,757
Integrated Post-primary Non Grammar	12,099	15,452
Total	20,714	28,617
Controlled Nursery classes and Schools inc. Pre school age specialist provision	8,164	7,898
Controlled Primary Reception-Year 7	71,611	73,754
Controlled Post-primary Non Grammar	31,701	32,075
Total	111,476	113,727
Catholic Maintained Nursery classes and Schools inc. Pre school age specialist provision	5,272	5,557
Catholic Maintained Primary Reception-Year 7	71,461	74,647
Catholic Maintained Post-primary Non Grammar	40,954	41,175
Total	117,687	121,379

Source: Annual School Census

School Age Population Trends

Enrolments of pupils in years 1 to 7 declined for the eighth consecutive year which is consistent with the continuing reduction in the number of children aged four to ten in the wider population. Enrolments in years 8 to 12 also decreased since the previous year. This is mirrored by a decrease in the number of 11-15 year olds in the population. Population figures are based on [NISRA mid-year estimates](#). As 2025 figures were unavailable at the time of publication, the [NISRA population projections](#) have been used instead.

Projected Decline in Pupil Numbers

The total school age population is projected to fall by 8.2% between 2023/24 and 2030/31. This aggregate change masks significant differences between primary and post-primary phases.

Primary Phase Projections

The primary school population is projected to decline by 15.3% between 2023/24 and 2030/31. This anticipated reduction reflects sustained decreases in the birth rate over the last decade. The scale of the decline is expected to generate increases in available places and may have material effects on school sustainability in some localities particularly in areas already characterised by small schools or low levels of demand.

Post-primary Phase Projections

The post-primary population is projected to fall by 3.6% over the same period. Recent increases in post-primary enrolments suggest that this phase is currently at the peak of its demographic cycle. The projected decrease therefore represents the beginning of a gradual contraction that will become more evident in the latter years of the projection period once smaller primary cohorts feed through to secondary level.

Relative Impact Across the System

The larger proportional reduction in the primary phase means that the immediate impact of demographic change will concentrate on primary provision. Post-primary enrolments will remain relatively stable in the short term before subsequently declining in line with smaller primary intakes. For the Integrated sector continued growth in parental preference may offset some of the effects of wider population decline although overall demographic trends will remain a fundamental determinant of future system wide capacity.

Chapter 3: Admission Data

Over and undersubscription at first preference trends for Integrated Education

Oversubscription occurs when there are more first preference applications than the approved admission numbers. Undersubscription occurs when there are fewer first preference applications than the approved admission numbers.

Behavioural demand as observed in admissions data reflects actual choices within the options available but it does not measure latent preference in areas where Integrated provision is limited or where admissions criteria reduce accessibility for families entering the sector for the first time.

Admissions Data Analysis

Data for 2025/26 admissions preferences has been analysed utilising the same methodology as adopted for the [2024 Section 10 Report](#) on Integrated Education.

The analysis below is based on first preferences and approved admission numbers over the academic years 2020/21 – 2025/26. Oversubscription is calculated as the excess of first preference applications expressed as a percentage of approved admission numbers. When undersubscription occurs, this is expressed as a negative percentage.

Appendix A outlines the latest oversubscription data for these schools.

Over/under subscription at first preference for primary Integrated schools by council area

- There are 502 more approved Year 1 admission numbers in Integrated schools at Primary 1 level than there are first preference applications (see Table 2).
- Demand is uneven:
 - Mid Ulster: consistently oversubscribed (up to +14.4% but was undersubscribed -7.8% in 2025/26).
 - Belfast: previously oversubscribed, now undersubscribed by -22.3%.
 - Fermanagh & Omagh: previously undersubscribed (-15.0% in 2020/21), now improved to 0.0% in 2025/26.
 - Antrim and Newtownabbey: consistently high levels of undersubscription over past six years (varies from -29.6% to -44.4%).
 - Substantial decline in some areas

- Ards & North Down from -14.9% in 2020/21 to -40.3% in 2025/26.
- Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon from -3.6% in 2020/21 to -27.6% in 2025/26.

Table 2. Over/under subscription at first preference for Integrated primary schools at Year 1 by council of school location since 2020/21.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	231	231	216	216	216	203
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	142 (-38.5%)	152 (-34.2%)	120 (-44.4%)	128 (-40.7%)	152 (-29.6%)	124 (-38.9%)
Ards & North Down	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	181	181	181	181	186	186
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	154 (-14.9%)	147 (-18.8%)	135 (-25.4%)	152 (-16.0%)	134 (-28.0%)	111 (-40.3%)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon***	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	166	166	166	166	166	196
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	160 (-3.6%)	159 (-4.2%)	161 (-3.0%)	173 (+4.2%)	128 (-22.9%)	142 (-27.6%)
Belfast	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	301	300	300	300	305	305
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	320 (+6.3%)	310 (+3.3%)	302 (+0.7%)	271 (-9.7%)	276 (-9.5%)	237 (-22.3%)
Causeway Coast & Glens	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	189	189	189	189	191	191
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	157 (-16.9%)	156 (-17.5%)	143 (-24.3%)	145 (-23.3%)	129 (-32.5%)	155 (-18.8%)
Derry City & Strabane*	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	60	60	60	113	113	113
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	48 (-20.0%)	44 (-26.7%)	42 (-30.0%)	76 (-32.7%)	71 (-37.2%)	81 (-28.3%)

Fermanagh & Omagh	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	120	120	120	120	120	120
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	102 (-15.0%)	97 (-19.2%)	93 (-22.5%)	105 (-12.5%)	100 (-16.7%)	120 (0.0%)
Lisburn & Castlereagh***	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	180	180	180	180	180	268
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	145 (-19.4%)	161 (-10.6%)	150 (-16.7%)	159 (-11.7%)	157 (-12.8%)	210 (-21.6%)
Mid & East Antrim**	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	152	180	180	180	180	180
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	110 (-27.6%)	140 (-22.2%)	137 (-23.9%)	132 (-26.7%)	131 (-27.2%)	133 (-26.1%)
Mid Ulster	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	90	90	90	90	90	90
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	96 (+6.7%)	103 (+14.4%)	102 (+13.3%)	90 (0.0%)	98 (+8.9%)	83 (-7.8%)
Newry, Mourne & Down	Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	150	150	150	150	150	150
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	120 (-20.0%)	109 (-27.3%)	116 (-22.7%)	101 (-32.7%)	84 (-44.0%)	104 (-30.7%)

Source: DE School Admissions Team

*Increase in approved admission numbers and first preference applications in Derry City & Strabane due to Sion Mills Primary School Transforming to Integrated status.

** Increase in approved admission numbers and first preference applications in Mid & East Antrim due to Carrickfergus Central Primary School Transforming to Central Integrated Primary School.

*** Increase in approved admission numbers and first preference applications in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon and Lisburn & Castlereagh due to Lurgan Model Primary School Transforming to Lurgan Model Integrated Primary School and Cairnshill Primary School Transforming to Cairnshill Integrated Primary School.

Over/under subscription at first preference for post-primary Integrated schools by council area

- Oversubscription has been high over the last few years in specific councils: Mid & East Antrim, Ards & North Down, and Belfast.
- Oversubscription rates have peaked at:
 - Mid & East Antrim: +73.8% (2022/23)
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh: +50.6% (2020/21)
 - Ards & North Down: +31.7% (2023/24)
 - Belfast: +31.1% (2023/24)
- However, oversubscription reduced in 2025/26 in Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh, which, while historically oversubscribed, has fallen to 0.0% in 2025/26.
- In 2025/26, there were 229 more approved admission numbers at Year 8 level than there were first preference applications, but pressure remained concentrated in a small number of schools (e.g. Lagan, Strangford, and Slemish).
- In 2025/26 Derry City and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens, and Fermanagh & Omagh councils remain heavily undersubscribed.

Deep Dive: Lagan and Slemish College Intake Patterns

- Geographical analysis of pupils enrolled at two consistently oversubscribed Integrated schools in 2024/25, Lagan College and Slemish College, shows that many pupils are bypassing other Integrated schools and schools in their own local councils to attend their chosen school (Annex B).
- An obvious explanation is that the admissions criteria used by these schools are associated with wider geographic application patterns. However, the analysis cannot isolate the specific contribution of criteria relative to reputation, academic outcomes or parental networks.
- In these schools, patterns of intake and oversubscription seem to be impacted by having both academic selection and a first preference criterion and then selecting children who have attended an Integrated primary school before all other children.

- This highlights the complexity of interpreting oversubscription as a direct measure of localised demand. Detailed admissions criteria for Lagan College and Slemish College, are provided in Annex B.

Table 3. Over/under subscription at first preference for Integrated post-primary schools at Year 8 by council of school location since 2020/21.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25***	2025/26
Antrim & Newtownabbey**	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	225	225	435*	435	435	435
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	204 (-9.3%)	170 (-24.4%)	349* (-19.8%)	361 (-17.0%)	326 (-25.1%)	352 (-19.1%)
Ards & North Down	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	230	230	230	230	230	230
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	262 (+13.9%)	237 (+3.0%)	298 (+29.6%)	303 (+31.7%)	288 (+25.2%)	270 (+17.4%)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	190	190	190	190	190	190
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	161 (-15.3%)	152 (-20.0%)	184 (-3.2%)	149 (-21.6%)	151 (-20.5%)	137 (-27.9%)
Belfast	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	290	290	290	305	305	305
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	339 (+16.9%)	263 (-9.3%)	339 (+16.9%)	400 (+31.1%)	319 (+4.6%)	343 (+12.5%)
Causeway Coast & Glens	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	80	80	80	80	80	80
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	47 (-41.3%)	37 (-53.8%)	57 (-28.8%)	52 (-35.0%)	45 (-43.8%)	29 (-63.8%)
Derry City & Strabane	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	130	130	130	130	130	130
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	76 (-41.5%)	61 (-53.1%)	59 (-54.6%)	68 (-47.7%)	57 (-56.2%)	38 (-70.8%)

Fermanagh & Omagh	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	175	175	175	175	175	175
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	134 (-23.4%)	178 (+1.7%)	122 (-30.3%)	107 (-38.9%)	84 (-52.0%)	89 (-49.1%)
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	360	360	380	380	380	380
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	542 (+50.6%)	436 (+21.1%)	495 (+30.3%)	473 (+24.5%)	358 (-5.8%)	380 (0.0%)
Mid & East Antrim	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	240	240	240	270	275	275
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	381 (+58.8%)	319 (+32.9%)	417 (+73.8%)	425 (+57.4%)	368 (+33.8%)	396 (+44.0%)
Mid Ulster	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	210	210	210	230	230	230
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	211 (0.0%)	197 (-27.0%)	169 (-16.0%)	206 (-10.4%)	218 (-5.2%)	230 (0.0%)
Newry, Mourne & Down**	Approved Year 8 Admission Numbers	180	180	180	180	180	180
	1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	152 (-15.6%)	101 (-43.9%)	121 (-32.8%)	154 (-14.4%)	135 (-25.0%)	117 (-35.0%)

Source: DE School Admissions Team

*Increase in approved admission numbers and first preference applications in Antrim and Newtownabbey due to Glengormley High School transforming to Integrated College Glengormley.

**While Antrim & Newtownabbey, and Newry Mourne & Down are not oversubscribed overall in 2023/24, they include individual schools that are, namely, Parkhall and Shimna respectively.

***While Antrim & Newtownabbey and Lisburn & Castlereagh are not oversubscribed overall in 2024/25, they include individual schools that are, namely, Parkhall and Lagan respectively.

Table 4. Percentage of primary pupils selected at first preference September 2025

Controlled	98.5%
Catholic Maintained	98.6%
Other Maintained	99.7%
Controlled Integrated	99.3%
Grant Maintained Integrated	98.0%
Total	98.6%

Source EA Admissions Portal

Table 5. Percentage of post-primary pupils selected at first preference September 2025

Controlled	92.5%
Voluntary	84.8%
Catholic Maintained	96.0%
Other Maintained	100.0%
Controlled Integrated	99.8%
Grant Maintained Integrated	82.3%
Total	90.1%

Source EA Admissions Portal

Second preference pattern among Integrated post-primary school applicants

- Thirteen percent of parents selecting an Integrated school as first preference chose another Integrated school as second preference.
- Almost 50% choose a controlled school as second preference, over 18% choosing a Catholic Maintained school, and 9% choosing a voluntary school. Almost 10% of parents did not express a second preference. Whilst likely influenced by the availability of schools, this indicates that ethos alone is not the dominant driver of choice.
- For those with a first preference of Controlled, 22.3% chose an Integrated school as second preference.
- For those with a first preference of Catholic Maintained, 11.6% chose an Integrated school as second preference.

Table 6. School management type of second preference for those pupils with a first preference of Integrated post-primary.

	Sep-23	Sep-24	Sep-25
<i>No Second Preference</i>	9.4%	9.8%	9.8%
Controlled	47.6%	47.1%	49.8%
Voluntary	9.9%	11.0%	9.1%
Catholic Maintained	20.0%	19.1%	18.3%
Other maintained	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Controlled Integrated	5.2%	5.8%	5.9%
Grant Maintained Integrated	7.8%	7.1%	7.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

All Integrated	13.1%	13.0%	12.9%
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Source EA Admissions Portal

Table 7. School management type of post-primary second preference Sept 2025.

First Preference	Second Preference						
	No selection	Controlled	Voluntary	Catholic Maintained	Other Maintained	Controlled Integrated	Grant Maintained Integrated
Integrated	9.8%	49.8%	9.1%	18.3%	0.0%	5.9%	7.0%
Controlled	16.5%	40.8%	14.8%	5.6%	0.0%	5.6%	16.7%
Catholic Maintained	27.8%	7.9%	20.1%	32.1%	0.5%	1.6%	10.0%

Source EA Admissions Portal

Understanding parental preference

Oversubscription and undersubscription may not always indicate unmet demand or lack of demand. Parental preferences and admission decisions are influenced by a range of factors, and demand for individual schools may extend well beyond their immediate locality. One key factor impacting preference decisions is school admissions policies which vary across Integrated schools. Oversubscription may suppress applications but does not signal reduced appetite for Integrated Education. In areas where particular schools have been oversubscribed for sustained periods some families may choose not to apply because they believe a place is unlikely to be available which means that oversubscription may underrepresent the full level of interest in that provision.

All other Integrated post-primary schools, with the exception of Strangford College, show a similar pattern of oversubscription impacted by the application of their admissions criterion:

- **Hazelwood Integrated College** explicitly prioritises applicants who attended a Grant Maintained or Controlled Integrated primary school for the majority of their primary years.

- **Parkhall Integrated College** – aims for a balanced intake of pupils from different religious backgrounds and prioritises pupils from Integrated primary schools as part of its ranked admissions criteria.
- **Ulidia Integrated College** - prioritises pupils from Integrated primary schools as part of its ranked admissions criteria.
- **Shimna Integrated College** - prioritises pupils from Integrated primary schools in its admissions criteria.
- **Strangford Integrated College's** 2024 admissions criteria do not explicitly prioritise pupils from Integrated primary schools in the way some other Integrated colleges do.

Key findings – Admissions preference data

Primary School Phase

Oversubscription is not a significant issue in the primary school phase. There are 502 more approved Year 1 admission numbers than there are first preference applications across Integrated primary schools in Northern Ireland with most councils remaining undersubscribed.

High-Demand Areas:

- Belfast showed oversubscription in earlier years but has been undersubscribed in the last number of years falling to -22.3% in 2025/26.
- Mid Ulster has been consistently oversubscribed, reaching +14.4% in 2021/22, however, is undersubscribed (-7.8%) in 2025/26.
- Fermanagh and Omagh has been historically undersubscribed but has improved to 0.0% in 2025/26.

Declining Demand:

The following council areas experienced declines:

- Ards & North Down from -14.9% in 2020/21 to -40.3% in 2025/26.
- Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon from -3.6% in 2020/21 to -27.6% in 2025/26.
- Antrim and Newtownabbey has been consistently undersubscribed over the last six years (ranging from -44.4% to -29.6%)

Impact of School Transformations:

- Derry City & Strabane increased approved admission numbers after Sion Mills Transformed. Demand has improved from -30.0% prior to Transformation (2022/23) to -28.3% in 2025/26 yet remains undersubscribed.
- Mid & East Antrim increased approved admission numbers following Carrickfergus Central's Transformation yet continues to be undersubscribed (-27.6% prior to Transformation (2020/21) to -26.1% in 2025/26).
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon increased approved admission numbers following Lurgan Model's Transformation yet continues to be undersubscribed (-22.9% prior to Transformation (2024/25) to -27.6% in 2025/26).
- Lisburn and Castlereagh increased approved admission numbers following Cairnshill's Transformation yet continues to be undersubscribed (-12.8% prior to Transformation (2024/25) to -21.6% in 2025/26).

Post-primary phase

There are 229 more approved Year 8 admission numbers than there are first preference applications across Integrated post-primary schools in Northern Ireland, with oversubscription concentrated in specific council areas and schools rather than system wide.

Persistent Oversubscription: there is consistent oversubscription in certain council areas:

- Oversubscription rates have peaked at:
 - Mid & East Antrim: +73.8% (2022/23)
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh: +50.6% (2020/21)
 - Ards & North Down: +31.7% (2023/24)
 - Belfast: +31.1% (2023/24)
- Oversubscription remains high in Mid & East Antrim (+44.0% in 2025/26) while oversubscription reduced in Lisburn and Castlereagh to 0.0% in 2025/26.
- Ards & North Down and Belfast also show strong demand, with oversubscription exceeding +30% in recent years although this has reduced to +17.4% in Ards & North Down and +12.5% in Belfast in 2025/26.

Undersubscription:

- There is undersubscription in Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry City & Strabane, and Fermanagh & Omagh councils remaining undersubscribed, exceeding -50% in recent years. Derry City & Strabane has fallen to -70.8% in 2025/26, however, Fermanagh & Omagh has improved to 0.0%.
- Newry, Mourne & Down fluctuates but remains largely undersubscribed (-35.0% in 2025/26).

Impact of Transformation:

- Glengormley High School's Transformation increased approved Year 8 admission numbers in Antrim & Newtownabbey from 225 to 435, but while showing an increase in demand continues to be undersubscribed (-24.4% prior to Transformation (2021/22) to -19.1% in 2025/26).

Summary analysis: School level oversubscription:

Admissions Criteria:

- Admissions criteria determine allocation when places are limited, but they do not create demand. Most Integrated colleges (Hazelwood, Parkhall, Ulidia, Shimna) prioritise pupils from Integrated primaries, reinforcing oversubscription patterns.
- Strangford College is an exception, as its 2024 criteria do not explicitly prioritise Integrated primary pupils.

Localised Pressure:

Oversubscription at individual schools reflects strong parental preference for certain schools, influenced by factors such as perceived quality, reputation, and accessibility.

Second preference data shows limited fallback to Integrated options, with only 13% of parents choosing another Integrated school if their first preference was unavailable, most opting for controlled or maintained schools.

Chapter 4: Parental School Admission Survey

Survey Design and Methodology

As part of the Department's commitment under Vision 2030 – A Strategy for Integrated Education, a survey was developed to explore parental demand for Integrated Education. The target group comprised parents who had recently made school preference decisions via the Education Authority (EA) admissions portal. Departmental officials, in collaboration with NISRA statisticians and education stakeholders, designed the survey to investigate several key areas, including:

- Factors influencing first preference decisions.
- Parental attitudes toward Integrated Education.
- Awareness and understanding of the transformation process.

The survey was distributed by the Education Authority to 63,349 parents whose children were participating in the school admissions process. A total of 9,720 responses were received.

The Parental School Admission Survey Report 2025 was published on 24 July 2025 and a copy can be found [here](#). For planning purposes, behavioural evidence (actual application patterns and oversubscription trends) provides greater opportunity for in-depth analysis, with survey findings used primarily to understand parental attitudes and factors influencing parental choice.

Appendix C sets out more detail on the methodology of the survey.

Summary of Survey Findings

Factors affecting first preference school choice

The main findings from the survey are summarised below:

- Quality of education was the most common factor considered by parents when making their school choice regardless of first preference (Integrated school 70.1%, Non-Integrated school 74.7%).
- Proximity to home, families or friends at the school and School facilities were also indicated by parents as being among the factors considered regardless of school choice.

- Wanting Integrated Education and school ethos and pastoral care is a consideration for many families (35.3% and 44.1% respectively).

The factors are not unique to any sector but are considered across the education spectrum.

Integrated School as first preference			Non-Integrated school as first preference		
Reason	Number	%	Reason	Number	%
Quality of education	2,243	70.1%	Quality of education	4,872	74.7%
Proximity to home	1,745	54.5%	Proximity to home	4,032	61.8%
Family or friends at school	1,489	46.5%	Family or friends at school	3,420	52.5%
School facilities	1,421	44.4%	School facilities	2,927	44.9%
I wanted Integrated Education	1,129	35.3%	School ethos and pastoral care reputation	2,878	44.1%

Similar responses were given by parents when asked about the single MOST important factor with Quality of education again the most important choice regardless of first preference (Integrated school 32.5%, Non-Integrated school 39.6%). Almost 13% of parents whose first preference was Integrated Education said the most important factor was that they ‘wanted Integrated education’.

Integrated School as first preference			Non-Integrated school as first preference		
Reason	Number	%	Reason	Number	%
Quality of education	1,041	32.5%	Quality of education	2,554	39.6%
Proximity to home	466	14.6%	Proximity to home	1,018	15.8%
I wanted Integrated Education	414	12.9%	Family or friends at school	909	14.1%
Family or friends at school	351	11.0%	School ethos and pastoral care reputation	670	10.4%

School ethos and pastoral care reputation	192	6.0%	Childcare arrangements	245	3.8%
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Parental preference for Integrated Education

Section 6 of the Act states that a reference to ascertaining the demand for Integrated education is a reference to ascertaining the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained Integrated or controlled Integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained Integrated schools or controlled Integrated schools.

To meet this requirement, question 8 of the survey asked parents regardless of the selection you have already made at first preference, would you prefer your child/children to be educated at an Integrated school rather than any other type of school?

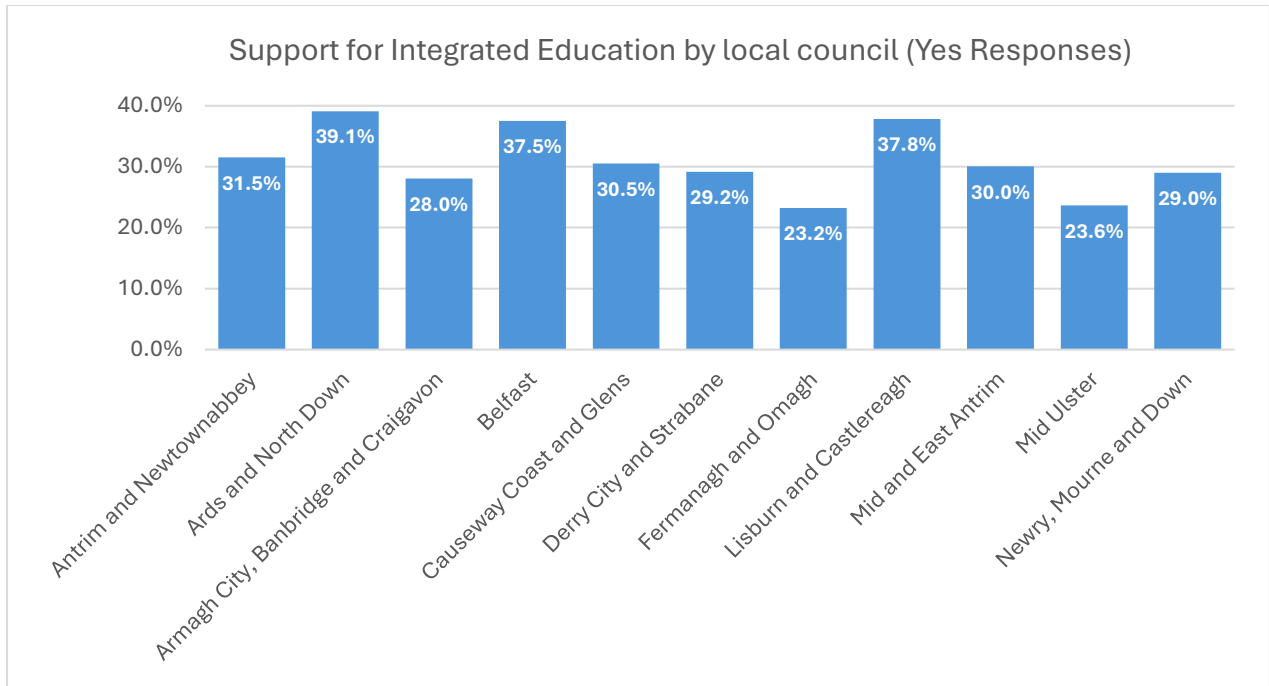
Table 10. Number and percentage of parents who would prefer Integrated Education.

	Pre-school		Primary school		Post-primary school		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Yes	811	31.2%	818	31.7%	1,388	31.0%	3,017	31.2%
No	608	23.4%	652	25.3%	1,063	23.8%	2,323	24.1%
Don't mind	982	37.7%	899	34.8%	1,722	38.5%	3,603	37.3%
Don't know	131	5.0%	133	5.2%	201	4.5%	465	4.8%
Prefer not to say	71	2.7%	78	3.0%	101	2.3%	250	2.6%
Total	2,603	100.0%	2,580	100.0%	4,475	100.0%	9,658	100.0%

Note. 62 parents did not indicate a school type and therefore have been excluded from the table.

- Noting that the proportion of respondents choosing an Integrated school as their first preference is over-represented in the survey, regardless of the selection they already made, 31.2% of parents said they would prefer their child to be educated at an Integrated school. There is no material difference in support for Integrated Education by school phase.

Figure 1: Percentage of parents who would prefer Integrated Education by council of residence



- Support for Integrated Education varies across local councils.
- Highest support is observed in Ards and North Down (39.1%), followed closely by Lisburn and Castlereagh (37.8%) and Belfast (37.5%), indicating strong urban and suburban demand. This broadly mirrors the localities identified with oversubscribed schools.
- Lowest support is in Fermanagh and Omagh (23.2%) and Mid Ulster (23.6%), suggesting more limited appetite in western councils.
- The gap between the highest and lowest councils is 15.9 percentage points, highlighting regional disparities that should inform area planning and targeted outreach.
- These figures reflect expressed preference and do not account for parents who indicated “Don’t Mind”.

Parental preference for Transformation

Question 10 in the Parental Admission Survey asked parents who had expressed a first preference for a non-Integrated school if they would have wanted the non-Integrated school they selected to Transform to be an Integrated school.

Table 11. Number and percentage of parents wanting their non-Integrated first preference school to Transform to Integrated.

	Pre-school		Primary school		Post-primary school		Total	
Yes	249	16.0%	310	17.7%	516	16.8%	1,075	16.9%
No	543	35.0%	683	39.1%	1,133	37.0%	2,359	37.1%
Don't mind	593	38.2%	625	35.8%	1,169	38.2%	2,387	37.5%
Don't know	136	8.8%	100	5.7%	194	6.3%	430	6.8%
Prefer not to say	31	2.0%	30	1.7%	52	1.7%	113	1.8%
Total	1,552	100.0%	1,748	100.0%	3,064	100.0%	6,364	100.0%

Note. 25 parents did not indicate a school type and therefore have been excluded from the table.

Overall, 16.9% of parents would have wanted their selected first preference non-Integrated school to Transform to Integrated status. This was broadly similar across all school phases. A further 37.5% of parents said they don't mind if the school Transformed. Again, this was similar across all school phases.

Table 12. Number and percentage of parents wanting their non-Integrated first preference school to Transform to Integrated by council of residence.

	Number	Percentage	Total parents
Antrim and Newtownabbey	67	15.7%	428
Ards and North Down	118	25.9%	456
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	125	15.1%	828
Belfast	211	20.5%	1,027
Causeway Coast and Glens	69	18.8%	367
Derry City and Strabane	77	16.6%	465
Fermanagh and Omagh	59	12.2%	483
Lisburn and Castlereagh	107	20.6%	519
Mid and East Antrim	66	14.2%	466
Mid Ulster	75	11.6%	649
Newry, Mourne and Down	98	14.6%	670
Missing/invalid postcode	6	19.4%	31
Total	1,078	16.9%	6,389

Source: School Admissions Survey

Over a quarter (25.9%) of parents resident in Ards and North Down wanted the non-Integrated school selected as first preference to Transform to Integrated status. Mid Ulster had the lowest percentage with 11.6% of respondents wanting Transformation.

Analysis of potential unmet preference for an Integrated school by phase

Of those parents that selected a non-Integrated school as first preference, 542 (8.3% of respondents) stated that one of the factors for doing so was because there was no Integrated school nearby with 37 (0.6%) indicating that this was the MOST important factor.

Table 13. Distance by road to the nearest Integrated school for those responding there was no Integrated school nearby

	Pre-School*	Primary School*	Post-Primary School
0-2 miles	22	34	11
2.01-5 miles	45	41	62
5.01-10 miles	54	63	62
10.01-15 miles	17	29	47
15.01+ miles	13	5	33

*one respondents' location could not be verified in pre-school and primary school

Source: School Admissions Survey

Two parents did not indicate a school type and therefore have been excluded from the table.

A small proportion of parents (8.3%, 542) who chose a non-Integrated school as their first preference stated that there was no Integrated school nearby. However, many of these parents lived within reasonable proximity to an Integrated school:

- 44% of pre-school respondents (67 out of 151) lived within 5 miles of an Integrated nursery or Integrated primary school with a nursery unit.
- 44% of primary school respondents (75 out of 172) lived within 5 miles of an Integrated primary school.
- 85% of post-primary respondents (182 out of 215) lived within 15 miles of an Integrated post-primary school.

This suggests a disconnect between perceived and actual availability, possibly due to lack of awareness, visibility, or perceived suitability of nearby Integrated schools. This could be influenced by:

- School admissions criteria.

- Limited capacity or oversubscription at nearby Integrated schools.
- Lack of information or familiarity with the Integrated ethos.
- Other factors such as school reputation, academic performance, or peer networks.

Key Findings: Parental Survey Data

- Quality of education was the most common factor contributing to parental decision making by parents, regardless of first preference (Integrated school 70.1%, non-Integrated school 74.7%).
- Proximity to home, families or friends at the school and school facilities were also indicated by parents as important factors that were considered.
- Wanting Integrated Education, school ethos and pastoral care is a consideration for many families.
- Regardless of the selection parents already made at first preference, most parents would prefer or did not mind if their child was educated at an Integrated school.
- Almost a quarter of parents did not want their child to be educated at an Integrated school:
 - 31.2% of parents indicated that they would prefer their child to be educated at an Integrated school.
 - 37.3% indicated they did not mind if their child was educated at an Integrated school.
 - 24.0% of parents indicated they would rather their child was not educated in an Integrated school.
- Support for Transformation of non-Integrated schools (16.9%) is more limited than general preference for Integrated Education (31.2%) of those surveyed that selected a non-Integrated school as first preference. A larger proportion do not mind or do not support Transformation.
 - 16.9% supported Transformation of their preferred school,
 - 37.5% did not mind if it transformed to become an Integrated school; and,
 - 37.0% would not want the selected first preference school to Transform to Integrated status.

Ards and North Down had the greatest proportion of parents wanting to Transform from non-Integrated to Integrated.

Interpreting survey evidence alongside admissions data

Stakeholders have historically raised concerns that first preference admissions data may not capture the full extent of parental interest in Integrated Education. Admissions data remains the most robust indicator of behavioural demand, as it reflects actual choices made by parents within the admissions system. Survey findings show that a larger proportion of parents express a preference for Integrated Education in principle than is reflected in application patterns, and that parents who chose Integrated schools often cited wanting Integrated Education as a significant factor alongside quality of education and proximity.

Taken together, this suggests that first preference data may understate underlying preference in some areas, particularly where choices are shaped by factors such as admissions criteria, perceived likelihood of securing a place, distance or awareness of local provision. Survey evidence therefore helps to contextualise admissions data, but it does not replace behavioural measures as the primary basis for assessing demand.

Chapter 5: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

What is the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey?

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey is an annual, independent study that captures public attitudes of adults on a wide range of social and political issues, including education. It provides a reliable evidence base for understanding societal views on Integrated Education. The 2024 results were published at the end of May 2024 and are available [here](#).

NILT is designed to capture broad public attitudes across the region, making it a valuable tool for tracking societal views on Integrated Education over time. However, its methodology, based on representative sampling at the regional level, means it is not suited to measuring demand at the level of individual schools or communities. It cannot provide granular data on parental interest or enrolment pressures in specific areas.

Despite this limitation, NILT remains useful for understanding general trends in public opinion. It offers insight into how attitudes toward integrated provision are evolving, the extent of support across different demographic groups, and how these views align with policy objectives. When used alongside school-level data such as ballots and admissions data, NILT helps build a fuller picture of demand for Integrated Education.

To support policy development, ARK (a joint initiative between Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University who undertake NILT), has prepared a detailed report on NILT findings for the Department of Education. This analysis offers valuable insights into long-term trends and public sentiment, helping to contextualise school-level decisions and inform strategic planning around integrated provision.

ARK Report for DE

The definition of Integrated Education was expanded in the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (‘The Act’). The Act defines Integrated Education as educating together *“those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and those of different abilities”*.

The purpose of Integrated Education, according to the Act is to: deliver educational benefits to children and young persons; promote awareness and appreciation of human

rights; promote equality of opportunity; promote good relations, and promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

Section 5 and Section 6 of the Act outline the duties of the Department of Education and Education Authority in monitoring and ascertaining the demand for Integrated Education in Northern Ireland, which is defined as “the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained integrated or controlled integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained integrated schools or controlled integrated schools” (Section 6). However, there is currently no agreed methodology on how to monitor or ascertain demand (Department of Education, 2023), though such data are required to ensure an accurate assessment of demand for Integrated Education over time.

A study, funded by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), was conducted by Early et al. (2023) to review the methods used to assess demand for Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. The study identified a range of methods used, including (but not limited to) first preference applications of pupils to schools, over/undersubscription of Integrated school places, parental ballots and expression of interest forms. Although these methods provide part of the necessary evidence jigsaw to measure demand for Integrated Education, these alone are not sufficient to ensure an accurate investigation (Early et al., 2024). As outlined by Early et al. (2024, p.19) “*attitude surveys provide a potentially representative insight into support for Integrated Education and the extent to which demand for school provisions is evident across social groups in Northern Ireland*”. The complexity of the landscape in which Integrated education is situated, and specifically parental choice of an Integrated school for their child, must be acknowledged, which the questions funded by the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey begin to address.

Key findings:

The findings are as follows:

- The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey annually monitors the attitudes and behaviour of adults in Northern Ireland, thus providing an important record of public opinion to social policy issues. 1,199 adults (aged 18 or over) took part in 2024.
- When asked “*If you were deciding where to send your child/children to school, would you prefer an Integrated school?*”, 55% of respondents said they would prefer an Integrated school (regardless of having a school aged child or not), with 17% saying that they would not prefer this. However, 23% said that they had no preference and 5% said that they did not know.

- For respondents whose eldest child had ever attended an Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland, 47% reported the Integrated status of the school as an important factor in influencing school choice, and 22% stated this was the most important factor in their choice of primary school.
- At post-primary level, 17 out of the 36 respondents whose eldest child currently attended an Integrated post-primary school in Northern Ireland stated that the Integrated status of the school was an important factor in determining choice of post-primary school. Four respondents stated it was the most important factor.
- Of those parents whose eldest child did not/does not attend an Integrated primary school, four in ten said that they would have liked them to attend an Integrated primary school. Conversely, 32% said that they would not have liked that. More than one quarter of respondents (28%) said that they did not know.
- The 78 parents who would have liked their child to attend an Integrated primary school were asked why this did not happen. The most commonly identified reason was that there was no Integrated primary school nearby (66%).
- Those respondents whose child did not attend an Integrated school in Northern Ireland were asked if they would have wanted their child's primary school to Transform to be an Integrated school with 41% saying that they would, 33% saying that they would not and 26% saying that they did not know.
- One third (34%) of respondents said that they would have liked their child to attend an Integrated post-primary school, 40% said they would not have liked this, and 26% said that they did not know.
- Those respondents whose child did not attend an Integrated post-primary school in Northern Ireland were asked if they would have wanted their child's post-primary school to transform to be an Integrated school. While 38% said that they would, a similar proportion (35%) said that they did not, and a further 26% said that they did not know.
- The NILT data indicate that school choice for primary and post-primary schools is driven by a range of factors, with the most important being the quality of education, school facilities, how easy it is to travel there and proximity to home, regardless of the Integrated status of a school.

- Quality of education was the most important factor for 52% of parents whose eldest child attended an Integrated primary school, with around a fifth (22%) citing the school's Integrated status as most important.
- For those respondents whose eldest child did not attend an Integrated primary school, 72% stated quality of education was the most important factor when deciding on a school.
- These findings mirror the Parental Admission Survey (July 2025), which also showed that quality of education was the most important factor when choosing a school.
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) provisions of the school were also reported as important factors determining primary and post-primary school choice, regardless of the Integrated status of the school. This is important within the context of the recently launched Programme for Government (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025).
- Geographical variation in Integrated school attendance is evident. Attendance at an Integrated primary or post-primary school was highest among those living in an urban area. 'No Integrated school being nearby' was cited as a reason for not attending an Integrated primary and/or post-primary school, even if respondents' preference would have been for their child to attend such a school type.
- The questions asked in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey are focused upon *parental choice* of primary and post-primary school for their child, aligning with the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The ARK report states the 'Integrated schools have a lower proportion of pupil places unfilled compared to non-Integrated schools.

Chapter 6: Parental Ballots

What are parental ballots

Transformation is the legal mechanism that enables a school to formally adopt Integrated status, committing to educating children from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds together.

The Transformation Process can be formally initiated in one of two ways:

- One being the Board of Governors decides by resolution passed at a meeting of the Board to hold a ballot of parents; or,
- the Board of Governors receives a signed request to initiate a ballot of parents from at least 20 percent of parents of pupils registered at the school.

The ballot of parents must be held no earlier than 28 days and no later than three months from the date of the resolution. In exceptional circumstances, the Department may approve a longer intervening period.

All parents of pupils registered at the school have the right to vote once in the ballot of parents.

If a simple majority of those who vote in the ballot is in favour of applying for the proposed new status and at least 50 percent of those eligible to vote have done so, the Board of Governors must submit a Development Proposal for Transformation to Integrated status to the EA.

Ballots serve as a means for schools to demonstrate the level of community interest in Integrated Education, supporting the case for Transformation under the Departmental guidelines.

Parental ballots provide insight into local engagement during Transformation processes. However, they are not considered a reliable measure of wider demand.

The ARK Report helpfully considers the strengths and limitations of parental ballots:

Strengths

- Parental choice is central to the ballot outcome.
- Parents are provided with all necessary information about what a transformation to an integrated school would mean before voting (as required by The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989). For example, the procedure for, and

consequences of, acquisition of an integrated status, and the constitution and powers of the Board of Governors are outlined to parents.

- At least 50% of parents must vote in the ballot for the result to be valid.
- Voting is anonymous, which reduces the likelihood of social desirability.
- If the ballot is successful, demand for integrated education in the local area is considered through the evidence submitted as part of the Development Proposal for Transformation.
- If the ballot is successful, the transformation to integrated status is considered on a case-to-case basis, accounting for the variation between localities such as demographics.

Limitations.

- Parental ballots are required by law (The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989) to be conducted via postal vote. This may be a barrier for parents who are unfamiliar with postal surveys. It could also be a barrier for large schools, due to parent apathy to a postal vote.
- Demand from parents in the locality with children not yet in the education system or those who are not parents are not considered.

Parental Ballots since 2014

There have been 35 schools that have held a ballot for Transformation with one school holding a second ballot as the required turnout of eligible voters had not been reached in the first ballot.

Table 14. Parental Ballot results from 2014-2024

Year	Ballot Result	
	Yes	No
2014	4	0
2019	8*	0
2020	1	0
2021	2	0
2022	7	1
2023	7	0
2024	4	2

*Includes 2nd ballot held after school did not reach the specified 50% turnout

These ballot results are school-specific and reflect localised decisions driven by parental interest and community engagement. The outcomes demonstrate a consistent pattern of support: of the 35 ballots held, 33 resulted in a majority 'Yes' vote in favour of Transformation. Only three ballots returned a 'No' outcome, two of which occurred in 2024.

Of the 35 schools that have held ballots, 10 have also had a Development Proposal for the closure of the school.

Updated DE Guidance on Parental Ballots

Updated guidance for schools considering Transformation is available [here](#). It provides clearer requirements for parental ballots, including expectations on process, participation and evidencing compliance with the statutory definition of Integrated Education.

Parental Ballots: key findings

Parental ballots provide valuable insight into levels of support and engagement within individual school communities where a specific Transformation proposal is being considered. They demonstrate that, in those contexts, a majority of participating parents have been willing to endorse a move to Integrated status. However, ballots are inherently localised and school specific in nature. They reflect the views of parents already connected to a particular school at a particular point in time and do not capture the perspectives of parents whose children attend other schools, families who may enter the system in future, or the wider local population.

As a result, while ballot outcomes are an important part of the overall evidence base, they are not designed to measure wider system demand and cannot be relied upon to draw conclusions about levels of demand for Integrated Education beyond the individual school community concerned.

Chapter 7 – Geographic Analysis

Geographic analysis of location of Integrated schools and where pupils live help identify areas where integrated provision may be outside expected travel distances, but it does not indicate demand independently of admissions data. Parents may choose not to apply to Integrated schools for reasons that include admissions criteria, perceived oversubscription, school reputation, travel arrangements or limited awareness of local provision. Proximity alone is therefore not a sufficient indicator of access.

This is the first year in which this analysis has been undertaken. The outputs should be regarded as exploratory and illustrative rather than determinative. The findings should be interpreted alongside admissions data, parental surveys and wider behavioural evidence.

Methodology and Interpretation

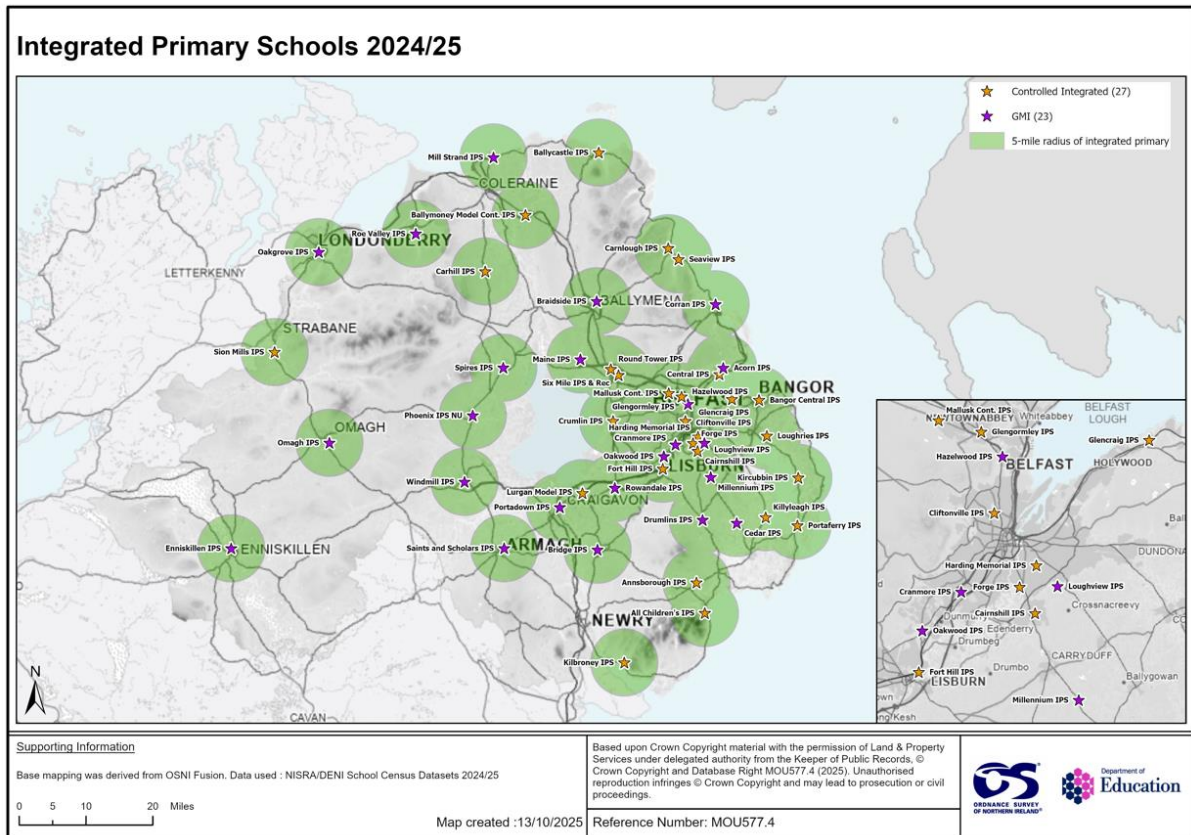
In line with Area Planning decision making practices, a distance of five miles has been used for the primary phase and fifteen miles for the post-primary phase. The results should not be interpreted as confirming unmet demand in the areas outside the buffer zones.

The maps display buffer zones around each Integrated school.

Primary Phase Analysis

Figure 2 shows all Integrated primary schools with five mile buffer zones.

Figure 2.

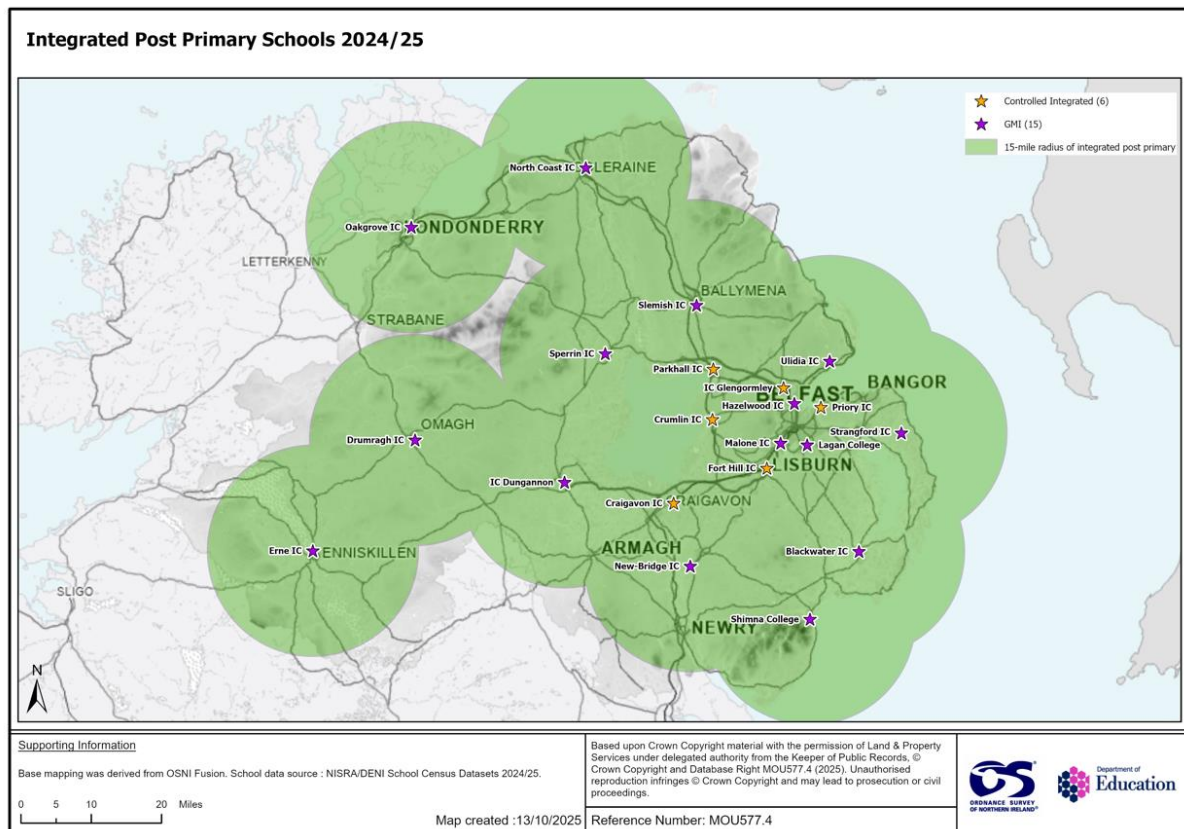


These areas may warrant further exploratory investigation by NICIE and the Education Authority to understand awareness of Integrated provision and any potential barriers to access.

Post-primary Phase Analysis

Figure 3 shows all Integrated post-primary schools with fifteen mile buffer zones.

Figure 3.



These areas may warrant further exploratory investigation by NICIE and the Education Authority to understand awareness of Integrated provision and any potential barriers to access.

Geographic Analysis: Findings

The analysis shows areas where proximity to an Integrated school can be outside the area considered by Area Planning when considering Development Proposals. It is recommended that further work should be commissioned using spatial modelling to determine potential access issues to Integrated schools, taking into account travel distances and times based on road infrastructure rather than as the crow flies.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Policy Implications

Conclusions

This report brings together a range of evidence sources to inform an initial assessment of demand for Integrated Education. As this is the first report produced under the new annual monitoring process, all findings should be considered indicative and subject to refinement as further evidence and years of data become available. There is no single measure of demand for Integrated Education. Admissions data, survey evidence, ballots and geographic analysis each provide insight into different aspects of parental behaviour and preference and must be interpreted together.

Behavioural demand

Admissions data provides the clearest indication of actual parental behaviour and therefore carries the strongest evidential weight. The analysis shows that demand for Integrated Education is unevenly distributed across Northern Ireland. Oversubscription is concentrated in a relatively small number of schools and council areas, while many other areas continue to have more approved admission numbers than first preference applications. This pattern suggests that pressures reflect school specific popularity and localised patterns of choice rather than system wide demand for Integrated places. Behavioural demand therefore appears to be shaped primarily by established factors such as school reputation, admissions criteria and accessibility rather than by uniform levels of preference across the region.

Societal attitudes and parental preferences

Survey findings including the parental school admission survey and the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey indicate broad support for Integrated Education at a societal level. However, these attitudinal measures do not consistently predict where or to what extent parents apply to Integrated schools. Parents who express general support for the principle do not always select an Integrated school as their first preference. Quality of education, proximity, school facilities and family links remain the strongest influences on choice across all school types. The integrated ethos is important for many families but is only one of several factors shaping behaviour.

Localised support through parental ballots

Parental ballots demonstrate high levels of support within the specific school communities that have initiated a Transformation process. While these results confirm strong engagement in those settings, they are not designed to measure wider system demand and should be interpreted accordingly.

Geographic access

Geographic analysis highlights areas where Integrated provision is more distant. In line with established area planning practice, indicative distance thresholds of five miles for the primary phase and fifteen miles for the post-primary phase have been used to support an exploratory assessment of geographic accessibility, rather than as a measure of unmet demand or parental willingness to travel. Survey results suggest that perceived lack of nearby provision does not always align with actual distance. This may reflect limited awareness, oversubscription at popular schools or perceptions regarding suitability rather than geography alone.

The combined evidence suggests that demand for Integrated Education is concentrated, context dependent and shaped by a range of interacting factors. At this stage, the findings are best understood as informing lines of inquiry rather than guiding decisions on provision.

Emergent Policy Implications

Given that this is the first iteration of the report, the implications outlined below should be regarded as emerging areas for further reflection. They are not intended to represent firm conclusions and will need to be revisited as additional evidence becomes available in subsequent years.

Emerging areas for detailed exploration

The admissions analysis shows sustained oversubscription in a small number of Integrated post-primary schools, notably Lagan College, Slemish College, Strangford College, Parkhall Integrated College, Hazelwood integrated College and Ulidia Integrated College. These schools may warrant further exploration to understand whether the pressures observed reflect wider local demand, the influence of admissions criteria or the established reputation of individual schools.

Undersubscription in areas such as Derry City and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens and Fermanagh and Omagh may also benefit from closer examination to understand the interplay between local demographics, school choice patterns and perceptions of Integrated provision.

Finally, the geographic analysis identifies areas that fall outside indicative distance thresholds of five miles and fifteen miles for provision. While distance alone does not indicate unmet demand, there may be merit in NICIE and EA engaging with local communities to understand awareness, perceptions and accessibility. This work would

be exploratory at this stage and would contribute to developing a more detailed evidence base over time.

Strengthening area planning based on behavioural evidence

There is value in further considering provision in those areas where admissions data shows sustained oversubscription at specific post-primary schools. At the same time it will be important to review areas with persistent undersubscription to ensure that planning decisions remain proportionate and aligned with demographic change. Multi year trends will be required before firmer conclusions can be drawn.

Admissions criteria and accessibility

The analysis suggests that admissions criteria in some Integrated post-primary schools may influence catchment patterns and contribute to concentrated demand. In a small number of schools the use of academic selection alongside a prioritisation for pupils from Integrated primary schools appears to widen the geographic draw of applications. This means that oversubscription at these schools may reflect a combination of their admissions policies and their established reputation rather than indicating unmet demand within the immediate local council area. Engagement with these schools may support consideration of how criteria operate in practice and whether any adjustments could improve accessibility for families within local areas. Any such work would need to recognise statutory requirements on balance and the limited ability of the Department to direct changes.

Supporting parental understanding of school options

Survey responses suggest that some parents may have limited awareness of the availability or accessibility of Integrated provision. Enhancing information for parents including clearer communication on admissions criteria, transport arrangements and the location of nearby schools may assist families in making fully informed choices.

Supporting communities exploring Transformation

Where school communities have indicated interest in Transformation through ballots or early engagement there may be value in continuing to provide clear guidance and support to ensure that local decisions are informed and transparent. This would help communities understand both the opportunities and practical considerations associated with Transformation.

Further development of the evidence base

Future reports would benefit from additional research to strengthen analysis. Potential areas include more detailed geographical modelling of access that reflects road networks and travel time, longitudinal assessment of parental choice, and further work with schools that have recently Transformed. Over time this will help refine the methodology and support more robust conclusions.

Notes for Readers

This report uses several terms that may be unfamiliar. The explanations below are intended to support readers who are not specialists in education policy or data analysis.

Integrated Education

Integrated schools bring together children and staff from Catholic, Protestant and other backgrounds. They operate according to the statutory definition set out in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and the Integrated Education Act 2022. Integrated Education is provided in two types of school

- **Controlled integrated:** Controlled schools which have acquired Integrated status and;
- **Grant Maintained integrated:** Self-governing schools with Integrated Education status, funded directly by the Department of Education and managed by Boards of Governors. The Board of Governors is the employing authority and responsible for employing staff.

Controlled, Maintained and Other School Types

Controlled: Schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority through Boards of Governors (BoG). Primary and post-primary school BoGs consist of representatives of transferors - mainly the Protestant churches - along with representatives of parents, teachers and the EA.

Voluntary: Self-governing schools, generally of long standing, originally established to provide an academic education at post-primary level on a fee paying basis. Now funded by the Department and managed by Boards of Governors. The BoGs are constituted in accordance with each school's scheme of management - usually representatives of foundation governors, parents, teachers and in most cases, DE or EA representatives. The BoGs is the employing authority and is responsible for the employment of all staff in its school.

Maintained schools are managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees, along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. These schools are funded through the EA for their running costs and directly by the Department in relation to capital building works. For **Catholic Maintained** schools, the Employing Authority is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

Other maintained schools are any schools that are not Catholic maintained. They are typically, but not exclusively, **Irish medium schools**.

Admissions data

Admissions data records the number of applications made to each school at each stage of the process, including first preferences. Because it captures the practical choices parents make, it is the most reliable indicator of “behavioural” demand.

Oversubscription

A school is oversubscribed when it receives more valid first-preference applications than it has approved admission numbers. Sustained oversubscription over several years is a strong sign of unmet demand.

First preference

When applying for a school place, parents list their choices in order. The first preference is the school they would most like their child to attend.

NILT (Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey)

An annual survey that captures the views of the general public across a wide range of social issues, including education. It reflects attitudes but does not quantify demand for school places.

Parental survey

The parental survey used in this report captures the views of parents about what influences their school choices. This provides insight into motivations and perceptions, which complement (but do not replace) admissions data.

Ballot outcomes

A parental ballot takes place when a school community votes on whether the school should transform to Integrated status. Ballot results show levels of support within that specific community at that point in time.

Transformation

The formal process through which an existing school becomes Integrated following a successful parental ballot and subsequent statutory consideration by the Education Authority and the Department of Education.

Distance analysis

Distance analysis examines how far pupils live from the schools they apply to. This helps determine whether access barriers are due to geography, perception or other factors such as reputation or admissions criteria.

Behavioural demand

This refers to actual application behaviour during the admissions process. Behavioural

demand is central to school place planning because it reflects the decisions families make in real conditions.

Localised demand

Evidence consistently shows that demand for Integrated Education is not spread evenly across Northern Ireland. Instead, it is concentrated in specific schools or small geographical areas.

Data protection and mapping

To protect the privacy of pupils and families, detailed point-level address data cannot be published or displayed on maps. This includes precise home locations or any information that could be used to identify individual pupils. For this reason, maps in this report use aggregated or generalised data, showing patterns across wider areas rather than exact points. This approach ensures that the analysis remains robust while maintaining compliance with data protection legislation and best practice for safeguarding personal information.

Purpose of combining data sources

Using admissions data together with the parental survey, NILT findings and ballot outcomes provides a fuller picture of both what parents say they want and what they actually choose. This helps distinguish broad public support for Integrated Education from the specific, school-level demand that should guide planning decisions.

Data Privacy

The Department has the capacity to utilise admissions data provided by the Education Authority under the terms of an established data sharing agreement and in full compliance with the Department of Education (DE) Privacy Notice. This arrangement ensures that all data processing activities are lawful, transparent, and aligned with the principles of data protection legislation. The admissions dataset enables the Department to analyse enrolment patterns, monitor demand trends, and support evidence-based planning for school places. Access to this data is strictly controlled, with appropriate technical and organisational measures in place to safeguard confidentiality and integrity.

Use of statistical terminology

Given the high level of public, political and sectoral interest in Integrated Education, this report adopts measured statistical language throughout. This reflects the Department's responsibility to ensure that interpretations of the evidence are accurate, proportionate and aligned with the limitations of the underlying datasets. The findings will be scrutinised closely by stakeholders with differing perspectives, and the terminology used

aims to avoid overstating the certainty of conclusions where evidence varies in strength or design. Over time, as survey methodologies mature and become more consistent across years, it may be possible to place greater reliance on these sources to inform longer-term trends. This approach ensures the report remains balanced, transparent and analytically robust, with no inference drawn beyond what the data can reliably support.

Appendix A

Over/Under subscription for Integrated Education school at primary level 2025/26

Source: DE School Admissions Team

Antrim & Newtownabbey					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1 st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Crumlin Integrated Primary School	210	138	30	10	-20
Glengormley Integrated Primary School	300	260	47	37	-10
Maine Integrated Primary School	205	133	30	11	-19
Mallusk Integrated Primary School	132	131	23	17	-6
Round Tower Integrated Primary School	276	206	43	23	-20
Six Mile Integrated Primary School	223	243	30	26	-4
	1,346	1,111	203	124	-79

Ards & North Down					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1 st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	610	423	90	39	-51
Glenraig Integrated Primary School	210	205	30	34	4
Kircubbin Integrated Primary School	189	194	30	24	-6
Loughries Integrated Primary School	102	58	18	5	-13
Portaferry Integrated Primary School	106	76	18	9	-9
	1,217	956	186	111	-75

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Bridge Integrated Primary School	406	392	60	35	-25
Lurgan Model Integrated Primary School	196	186	30	20	-10
Portadown Integrated Primary School	406	414	60	45	-15
Saints & Scholars Int Primary School	294	278	46	42	-4
	1,302	1,270	196	142	-54

Belfast					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Cliftonville Integrated Primary School	406	365	60	47	-13
Cranmore Integrated Primary School	210	198	30	21	-9
Forge Integrated Primary School	420	389	60	36	-24
Harding Memorial Primary School	210	198	30	21	-9
Hazelwood Primary School	406	381	60	49	-11
Lough View Integrated Primary & Nursery School	412	423	65	63	-2
	2,064	1,954	305	237	-68

Causeway Coast & Glens					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Ballycastle Integrated Primary School	158	163	25	16	-9
Ballymoney Model Integrated Primary School	414	337	60	42	-18
Carhill Integrated Primary School	94	87	16	12	-4
Millstrand Integrated Primary School	385	360	60	58	-2
Roe Valley Integrated Primary School	190	184	30	27	-3
	1,241	1,131	191	155	-36

Derry City & Strabane					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	400	381	60	57	-3
Sion Mills Integrated Primary School	333	181	53	24	-29
	733	562	113	81	-32

Fermanagh & Omagh					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	392	418	60	57	-3
Omagh Integrated Primary School	385	295	60	63	3
	777	713	120	120	0

Lisburn & Castlereagh					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Cairnshill Integrated Primary School	583	516	88	65	-23
Fort Hill Integrated Primary School	210	216	30	29	-1
Millennium Integrated Primary School	392	369	60	39	-21
Oakwood Integrated Primary School	203	181	30	24	-6
Rowandale Integrated Primary School	399	389	60	53	-7
	1,787	1,671	268	210	-58

Mid & East Antrim					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Acorn Integrated Primary School	203	195	30	27	-3
Braidside Integrated Primary School	348	321	60	41	-19
Carnlough Controlled Integrated Primary School	62	32	12	2	-10
Carrickfergus Central Integrated Primary School	175	131	28	16	-12
Corran Integrated Primary School	203	195	30	31	1
Seaview Integrated Primary School	121	103	20	16	-4
	1,112	977	180	133	-47

Mid Ulster					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Phoenix Integrated Primary School	203	194	30	29	-1
Spires Integrated Primary School	203	197	30	21	-9
Windmill Integrated Primary School	210	210	30	33	3
	616	601	90	83	-7

Newry Mourne & Down					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 1 Admissions	Year 1 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
All Children's Integrated Primary School	203	206	30	14	-16
Annsborough Integrated Primary School	85	31	14	2	-12
Cedar Integrated Primary School	196	190	30	27	-3
Drumlins Integrated Primary School	203	194	30	40	10
Kilbroney Integrated Primary School	140	95	24	8	-16
Killyleagh Integrated Primary School	126	95	22	13	-9
	953	811	150	104	-46

Over/Under subscription for Integrated Education school at post-primary level 2025/26

Source: DE School Admissions Team

Antrim & Newtownabbey					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Parkhall Integrated College	865	1,044	150	164	14
Crumlin Integrated College	400	252	75	26	-49
Integrated College Glengormley	1,250	1,213	210	162	-48
	2,515	2,509	435	352	-83

Ards & North Down					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Strangford Integrated College	760	833	130	197	67
Priory Integrated College	600	712	100	73	-27
	1,360	1,545	230	270	40

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Craigavon Integrated College	450	386	90	41	-49
New-Bridge Integrated College	620	698	100	96	-4
	1,070	1,084	190	137	-53

Belfast					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Hazelwood College	1,010	1,081	175	229	54
Malone Integrated College	800	818	130	114	-16
	1,810	1,899	305	343	38

Causeway Coast & Glens					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
North Coast Integrated College	500	346	80	29	-51
	500	346	80	29	-51

Derry City & Strabane					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Oakgrove Integrated College	800	560	130	38	-92
	800	560	130	38	-92

Fermanagh & Omagh					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including stated pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Drumragh Integrated College	645	588	105	64	-41
Erne Integrated College	400	293	70	25	-45
	1,045	881	175	89	-86

Lisburn & Castlereagh					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Lagan College	1,300	1,472	220	300	80
Fort Hill Integrated College	850	833	160	80	-80
	2,150	2,305	380	380	0

Mid & East Antrim					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Slemish Integrated College	880	1,076	165	223	58
Ulidia Integrated College	620	757	110	173	63
	1,500	1,833	275	396	121

Mid Ulster					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Integrated College Dungannon	685	767	110	94	-16
Sperrin Integrated College	600	759	120	136	16
	1,285	1,526	230	230	0

Newry, Mourne & Down					
	Approved Enrolment	Total Enrolment including statemented pupils	Approved Year 8 Admissions	Year 8 1st Preference Applications	Over/Under Subscription at 1 st preference
Shimna Integrated College	620	678	100	93	-7
Blackwater Integrated College	400	286	80	24	-56
	1,020	964	180	117	-63

Appendix B - Analysis of Lagan College pupil intake

Lagan College operates an admission criterion which supports applications from within the Integrated primary sector for both their academic and non-academic intake.

Mapping analysis carried out by the Department illustrates the impact of these criteria, with pupils accepted for admission from a wide geographical area. Of those not admitted to Lagan College, 68.4% came from the Controlled primary school sector and almost 22% from the Maintained primary sector.

Lisburn and Castlereagh Council have 380 approved year 8 spaces with 353 first preference applications.

Pupils expressing a first preference for Lagan College are from Antrim & Newtownabbey, Ards & North Down, Belfast and Newry, Mourne and Down are bypassing many other Integrated schools and closer schools in their own local councils such as Integrated College Glengormley, Parkhall, Priory, Malone College and Blackwater.

Most Year 8 pupils that did not get their first preference live in the greater Belfast area with some from Carryduff and beyond towards Ballynahinch and Killyleagh.

Analysis of Slemish College pupil intake

Slemish College operates an admission criterion which supports applications from within the Integrated primary sector for both their academic and non-academic intake (35%/65%).

Mapping analysis carried out by the Department illustrates the impact of these criteria, with pupils accepted for admission from a wide geographical area. Of those not admitted to Slemish College, 69.6% came from the Controlled primary school sector and 20% from the Maintained primary sector.

This year Mid & East Antrim Council has 275 approved year 8 spaces with 365 first preference applications.

Slemish College is central to the spread of its overall pupil population and does not have the same number of nearby schools as Lagan College. However, the school still has pupils travelling from other councils, namely Causeway Coast and Glens, Antrim & Newtownabbey and Mid Ulster. Many pupils live closer to other Integrated schools such as Parkhall, Ulidia and Crumlin.

There is a high concentration of Year 8 pupils that did not get their first preference live in the area around the school.

Admissions Criteria for Lagan College and Slemish College

Lagan College Admissions Criteria (2025–2026)

Lagan College operates both a grammar stream (35% of intake) and an all-ability stream (65% of intake). Admissions are managed by the Board of Governors through a dedicated Admissions Sub-Committee.

Grammar Stream Admissions Criteria: Applicants are considered based on:

- SEAG Test Score.
- Placement of Lagan College as first preference on the transfer application.
- Enrolment at a grant maintained or controlled integrated primary school.
- Proximity of the applicant's integrated primary school to Lagan College, measured using Ordnance Survey tools.
- Employment or governance links to the College.
- Proximity of the applicant's primary school to Lagan College.

All-Ability Stream Admissions Criteria: Applicants are prioritised within perceived religious affiliation groups (Catholic, Protestant, Other/None) and considered in the following order:

- Sibling currently or previously enrolled.
- Only or eldest child transferring to post-primary education.
- Enrolment at an integrated primary school.
- All other applicants.

Full details of Lagan College's admissions criteria are available

<https://lagancollege.com/app/uploads/2024/12/Lagan-College-Admissions-Criteria-2025-2026.pdf>.

Slemish College Admissions Criteria (2025–2026)

Slemish College is a grant maintained integrated school. Admissions are structured to maintain a religious balance and are grouped by religious affiliation: Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Other.

Year 8 Admissions Criteria: Applicants are considered in the following order:

- SEAG test score
- Attendance at a grant maintained integrated primary school.
- Relocation to the Mid Antrim area from outside the traditional catchment.

- Sibling currently enrolled at the College.
- Applicants from other schools.

In cases of oversubscription within a criterion, selection is based on the chronological order of application receipt. The College reserves the right to verify all information provided.

Full details of Slemish College's admissions criteria are available [here](#)

Appendix C Survey Methodology and Representativeness of Parental Survey

During the survey period, policy officials observed that a disproportionately high number of responses had been received from parents who had indicated a first preference for Integrated Education in the school admissions process. To improve the representativeness of the sample, officials contacted various sectoral bodies to encourage broader participation across the education landscape. Organisations representing Integrated Education were not included in this outreach, as parents with a first preference for Integrated schools were already well represented in the survey returns. For context:

- 32.9% of survey respondents indicated a first preference for Integrated Education in the recent admissions process (Question 3).
- In contrast, among all pupils applying through the most recent admissions cycle, only 7% of primary school and 10% of post-primary school first preferences were for Integrated schools.

Concerns have subsequently been raised that this outreach may have introduced responses from individuals outside the original target group. To assess the potential impact, NISRA statisticians conducted a series of analyses:

- **Response Rate Analysis:** Patterns in response volumes were examined, particularly around the dates of the outreach. The analysis found no spike in responses following the email to stakeholders. Instead, response rates were more strongly influenced by reminders issued by the Education Authority.
- **Geographical Distribution Analysis:** A two-part assessment confirmed that (a) the geographical spread of responses closely mirrored the distribution of the school-age population, and (b) responses regarding post-primary applications predominantly originated from postcodes where P7 pupils had been recorded in the school census seven months earlier.
- **Response Pattern Analysis:** Comparisons of responses before and after the outreach showed minimal variation. The proportion of respondents selecting an Integrated school as their first choice (Question 3) was 33.6% before and 33.9% after the intervention. Similarly, responses to Question 8, which explored parental preferences for Integrated Education, showed no statistically significant differences pre- and post-intervention.

While the decision to circulate the survey link beyond the original target group was well intentioned, it is acknowledged that this should not have occurred due to the potential risk of skewing the results. However, the analyses conducted by NISRA provides strong evidence that the impact of this action was very limited.

On this basis, the results of the School Admissions Survey are considered valid in relation to the questions asked.

Sampling Bias and Interpretation

The 2025 Parental Admissions Survey reported that 32.9% of respondents selected an Integrated school as their first preference. This is higher than the actual admissions data where only around 10% of first preference applications were for Integrated schools. This indicates that the proportion of respondents choosing an integrated school as their first preference is over-represented in the survey.

The survey was not designed to establish the percentage of parents whose first preference was Integrated or non-Integrated as this is already available from the admissions portal.

The main purpose of the survey was to establish the factors parents considered when choosing their first preference school (Integrated or non-Integrated). The factors have been analysed separately for Integrated/non-Integrated school choice so there is no knock-on effect of the high proportion of parents responding to the survey who had selected Integrated school as first preference. Questions relating to the importance of factors were designed to provide policy insight by identifying any potential barriers to applying to Integrated/non-Integrated schools.

Data Confidentiality and GDPR Considerations

Approximately 70% of survey respondents chose to keep their responses confidential. In accordance with this preference and the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), more detailed analysis of the data has not been included in this report. This is due to the potential risk of identifying individuals through more granular breakdowns or cross-referencing with other datasets. However, the full dataset and associated analysis remain available to Department of Education officials for internal use, and their handling of the data is governed by the Department's published Privacy Notice, which sets out how personal data is managed and protected.