

DE/2026-094 – Freedom of Information Request

Request:

I am requesting all information held by your organisation relating to fire safety, NIFRS notifications, risk assessments, and statutory compliance concerning:

- St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford
- The installation of modular classrooms at St Joseph's in January 2026
- The proposed transfer of 35 pupils to St Joseph's increasing the intake to approx 105.

This request covers the period January 2022– present.

1. Fire Risk Assessments & Reviews

(Required under the Fire and Rescue Services (NI) Order 2006)

Please provide:

- The current fire risk assessment for St Joseph's.
- Any updated fire risk assessments carried out before or after the installation of modular classrooms in January 2026.
- Any fire-safety assessments, capacity calculations, evacuation modelling, or internal reviews relating to:
 - The modular classrooms
 - The proposed transfer of 35 pupils
 - The proposed increase in pupil numbers
- Any documentation assessing whether St Joseph's can safely accommodate 105 pupils
- Any internal discussions about whether a review of the fire risk assessment was required.

2. Communications With NIFRS

Please provide:

- Any notifications sent to NIFRS regarding:
 - Installation of modular classrooms
 - Proposed increase in pupil numbers
 - Proposed transfer of 35 pupils
- Any requests for advice sent to NIFRS.
- Any responses received from NIFRS.

- Any meeting notes, emails, or correspondence between your organisation and NIFRS relating to either school.

This will confirm whether statutory duties to co-operate and co-ordinate were fulfilled.

3. Internal Communications About NIFRS Notification Requirements

Please provide:

- Any internal emails, memos, or notes discussing whether NIFRS should have been notified about:
 - The modular installation
 - The proposed transfer of pupils from St. Malachy's P.S in Kilclief.
- Any internal discussions about compliance with the Fire and Rescue Services (NI) Order 2006.
- Any internal concerns raised about fire safety, evacuation capacity, or building suitability.

4. Planning & "No Intensification" Statements

Please provide:

- All planning documents submitted for the modular classrooms.
- Any statements made to planners regarding "no intensification of use".
- Any internal discussions about whether the proposed transfer of 35 pupils would constitute material intensification requiring new planning approval.
- Any correspondence with Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Planning Service.

5. Equality Screening & Rural Needs Assessments

Please provide:

- The Equality Screening for:
 - The closure of St Malachy's
 - The transfer of 35 pupils
 - The installation of modular classrooms
- The Rural Needs Impact Assessment for the same decisions.
- Any drafts, internal discussions, or emails relating to the timing or content of these assessments.
- Any correspondence with the Equality Commission or DAERA.

6. Capacity, Suitability & Accommodation Assessments

Please provide:

- Any accommodation capacity assessments for St Joseph's from 2022–2026.
- Any suitability surveys, condition reports, or space analyses.
- Any documentation assessing whether St Joseph's can safely accommodate additional pupils.

- Any correspondence between CCMS, EA, DE, or school leadership regarding capacity or safety concerns.

7. Complaints, Concerns, or Safety Alerts

Please provide:

- Any complaints, concerns, or safety issues raised by parents, staff, governors, or other bodies regarding fire safety at St. Joseph's P.S in Strangford.
- Any internal responses or follow-up actions.

Department Response:

Thank you for your request for information regarding all information held relating to fire safety, NIFRS notifications, risk assessments, and statutory compliance concerning St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford. Your request was received on 17 May 2026.

You have asked the following questions which I will answer in turn:

1. Fire risk assessments and reviews for St Joseph's Primary School:

The current fire risk assessment for St Joseph's.

Any updated fire risk assessments carried out before or after the installation of modular classrooms in January 2026.

Any fire-safety assessments, capacity calculations, evacuation modelling, or internal reviews relating to:

The modular classrooms

The proposed transfer of 35 pupils

The proposed increase in pupil numbers

Any documentation assessing whether St Joseph's can safely accommodate 105 pupils

Any internal discussions about whether a review of the fire risk assessment was required.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department does not hold this information. The Education Authority's (EA) Environmental and Fire Risk Compliance Service provides advice and support to school on fire risk assessments. The information requested may therefore be held by the EA. Freedom of Information requests may be submitted, either in writing or by email, to infogov@eani.org.uk or to the relevant EA regional office, listed on their [Contact Us](#) page.

I should advise that the Department of Education does not become engaged with any Development Proposal (DP) activity until a DP has been formally published by the Education Authority (EA). No DP has yet been published by the EA in relation to St Joseph's Primary School, so the Department has not made any assessment of the school's capacity to accommodate any additional pupils.

2. Communication with NIFRS.

Any notifications sent to NIFRS regarding:

Installation of modular classrooms

Proposed increase in pupil numbers

Proposed transfer of 35 pupils

Any requests for advice sent to NIFRS.

Any responses received from NIFRS.

Any meeting notes, emails, or correspondence between your organisation and NIFRS relating to either school.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department does not hold this information. There has been no communication between the Department and NIFRS regarding St Joseph's Primary School.

3. Internal communications about NIFRS notification requirements

Any internal emails, memos, or notes discussing whether NIFRS should have been notified about:

The modular installation

The proposed transfer of pupils from St. Malachy's P.S in Kilclief.

Any internal discussions about compliance with the Fire and Rescue Services (NI) Order 2006.

Any internal concerns raised about fire safety, evacuation capacity, or building suitability.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department does not hold this information. As noted above, a Development Proposal has not yet been published by the EA which would involve the transfer of pupils from St Malachy's Primary School, Kilclief to St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford, so the Department has not made any assessment of the school's capacity to accommodate any additional pupils.

4. Planning and 'no intensification' statements

All planning documents submitted for the modular classrooms.

Any statements made to planners regarding "no intensification of use".

Any internal discussions about whether the proposed transfer of 35 pupils would constitute material intensification requiring new planning approval.

Any correspondence with Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Planning Service.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department does not hold this information. The Education Authority is managing the minor works project to provide the modular classrooms. The EA may therefore have the relevant planning documents. Freedom of Information requests may be submitted, either in writing or by email, to infogov@eani.org.uk or to the relevant EA regional office, listed on their [Contact Us](#) page.

As noted in the response to questions 1 and 3 above, the EA has not yet published a Development Proposal which would involve increased pupil numbers at St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford, so the Department has not made any assessment of the school's capacity to accommodate any additional pupils.

5. Equality screening and rural needs assessment in respect of the closure of St Malachys PS and the installation of modular classrooms at St Josephs PS.

The Equality Screening for:

The closure of St Malachy's

The transfer of 35 pupils

The installation of modular classrooms

The Rural Needs Impact Assessment for the same decisions.

Any drafts, internal discussions, or emails relating to the timing or content of these assessments.

Any correspondence with the Equality Commission or DAERA.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department does not hold this information.

The Department's statutory role only begins when a DP has been formally published by the EA. No DP has yet been published by the EA in relation to St Malachy's Primary School or St Joseph's Primary School. Until a DP is published, any consultation, analysis, documentation or engagement activity is a matter for the proposing authority, which in this case is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). Freedom of Information Requests may be submitted to CCMS, either in writing or by email, to foi@ccmsschool.com or sent by post to CCMS, Third Floor, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28 1FJ.

The Department is currently progressing a project at St Joseph's Primary School to replace an existing mobile classroom with a double modular classroom and reconfigure internal space to create a principal's office and multipurpose space. This is being delivered as an unavoidable minor works project due to the statutory health and safety

issues and concerns regarding UK GDPR, confidentiality and child protection. The Department does not undertake equality screening or rural needs assessment for unavoidable minor works projects.

6. Capacity, suitability and accommodation assessments

Any accommodation capacity assessments for St Joseph's from 2022–2026.

Any suitability surveys, condition reports, or space analyses.

Any documentation assessing whether St Joseph's can safely accommodate additional pupils.

Any correspondence between CCMS, EA, DE, or school leadership regarding capacity or safety concerns.

I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested and I have attached it to this letter as pdf documents. Please note some information has been redacted under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as this information constitutes the personal information of third parties and disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This is an absolute exemption and is not subject to a public interest test.

The EA is currently in year 4 of a five-year cycle to refresh condition reports. The EA may therefore hold a condition report of the whole school. You may submit a Freedom of Information request either in writing or by email, to infogov@eani.org.uk or to the relevant EA regional office, listed on their [Contact Us](#) page.

7. Complaints, concerns or safety alerts

Any complaints, concerns, or safety issues raised by parents, staff, governors, or other bodies regarding fire safety at St. Joseph's P.S in Strangford.

Any internal responses or follow-up actions.

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the Department has not received any complaints, concerns or safety alerts from parents, staff, governors, or other bodies regarding fire safety at St Joseph's Primary School.