

APPENDICES

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 735

DOWNSHIRE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Notice is hereby given that a Proposal under Article 92 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 has been submitted to the Education Authority by the Board of Governors of Downshire Primary School to the effect that:

Downshire Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

A copy of the Proposal and Case for Change may be inspected at the offices of the Education Authority located at Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, BT16 1HS, between the hours of 9.00 am and 4.30 pm and www.eani.org.uk/school-management/area-planning.

Any objections or support to this Proposal should be lodged with the Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 7PR or emailed to dps@education-ni.gov.uk within two months of the date of publication of this notice. Any letters of objection or support may be published on the Department of Education's website, with appropriate redactions, if they are included in full in the submission on which the outcome of the proposal is decided.

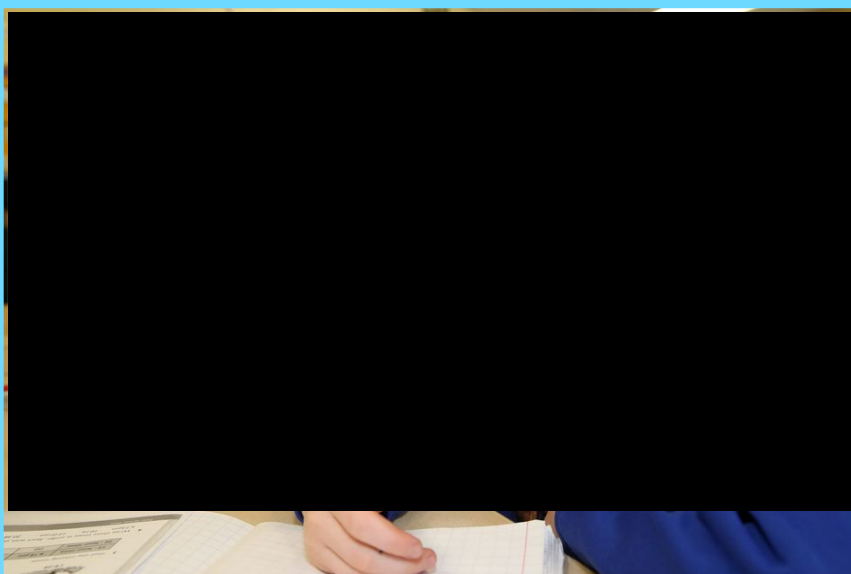
The Department of Education and the Education Authority operate a regime of openness under the Freedom of Information Act. Letters of objection and information supplied to the Department of Education and the Education Authority may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, if requested. (A fee may be charged for supplying this information).

Richard Pengelly
Chief Executive



Case for Change

Proposal to Transform to Controlled Integrated Status



Case for Change: Supporting Information - Summary/Overview	
Area Planning District	Lisburn City and Castlereagh
Development Proposal Number	735
Proposer	Board of Governors Downshire Primary School
School(s) Name	Downshire Primary School
School(s) Reference	401-6649
Sector	Primary
Management	Controlled
Development Proposal Publication Date	Week commencing 9 September 2024
Proposal	Downshire Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status, with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter

Case for Change: Statutory Consultation

Note: It may be necessary for documentary evidence to be provided to show that the statutory procedures have been followed. It is essential that relevant parties retain this information.

The following is to be completed by the Proposer and signed off by them.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Proposer

Provide detail of consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers, and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils.

Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before publication of the DP 691.

29th September 2022

A member of the Board of Governors requested that NICIE would come to discuss the possibility of Integration for Downshire PS and Nursery Unit. Governors were unanimously supportive of this request.

24th October 2022

L Johnston (NICIE) and F Donnelly (EA) met with Governors to discuss the process of a move to Integrated status

14th November 2022

At a Governors meeting it was decided to allow time to reflect on the information given by NICIE and the EA

17th November 2022

Staff met with NICIE and the EA to hear more about Integration

2nd May 2023

Governors requested that the principal organise a visit from a principal from the Integrated sector to discuss what it would mean for Downshire.

16th May 2023

J Marshall, principal of Drumlins Integrated School spoke to the Governors about her experiences leading an Integrated school. Governors discussed issues relating to a transformation of the school.

20th June 2023 After further discussion all Governors expressed their support for moving towards Integration and transformation.

26th September 2023

J Marshall and N Doherty from Drumlins Integrated PS spoke to the staff about their experiences of working in the integrated sector

28th September 2023

Governors voted unanimously to pass a resolution to hold a parental ballot concerning Integration.

29th September 2023

A letter from the Board of Governors was sent out to all parents to notify them of the decision to actively explore Integration.

4th October 2023

The document 'Integration Works' was shared with all parents.

5th October 2023

The principal and vice-principal attended an Integration Works event.

9th October 2023

A Microsoft Form which could be completed anonymously was sent to parents to encourage them to share their views concerning Integration and ask any questions.

16th October 2023

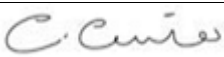
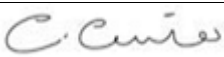
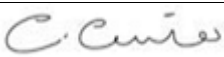
The principal prepared and sent to all parents a letter entitled 'Frequently Asked Questions About Integration'.

17th October 2023

	The first meeting of the Transformation Action group met to plan for future parent events. Eleven members met made up of Governors, school teaching staff and parents. 20th October 2023 Parents were informed about Parent Information Sessions planned for 6th November 7-8.30pm and 13th November 1.50-3.15pm (childcare provided) 9th November 2023 S Weatherall (Vice-principal of Forthill Integrated PS) spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff about his experiences of working in the Integrated sector 10th November 2023 J Brown from CSSC met with principal and offered support in the transformation process 13th November and 22nd November 2023 Teaching staff visited Forthill Integrated PS to see how an Integrated school works Opportunity for staff to meet with NICIE to ask any further questions. 14th November 2023 Online Drop-In Session for parents to ask any further questions – led by IEF. 15th November 2023 'Integration Principles' document was shared with all parents. 17th November 2023 Parents were sent a letter explaining to them the voting system and timeframe. Voting packs sent to parents from CIVICA. 20th November 2023 M Hanna (Chairman of the Board of Governors) wrote to parents about the reasons why Governors felt the school should become Integrated and encouraging them to vote in the ballot Parental ballot opened until 11th December. 24th November 2023 Reminder sent to parents to vote in the ballot. Parents also reminded regularly in the weekly Friday Note to use their vote and the percentages who had voted so far in the process. 8th December 2023 IEF attended the school Open Morning for new Nursery and P1 parents. 11th December 2023 Parental ballot closed. 12th December 2023 Results issued to BOG and parents – 76.7% yes with 65.9% turnout. Press release regarding results. 17th – 19th January 2024 Two members of the teaching staff attended the NICIE Anti-Bias training. 30th January 2024 The Transformation Action group met to discuss Community Connections in relation to the Case for Change 1st February 2024 Area Planning meeting with J Colmer 8th February 2024 NICIE meeting with staff to discuss the Case for Change in relation to High Quality Teaching and Learning
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Confirmation by the Proposer	I confirm that the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of pupils of Downshire Primary School were consulted on the dates detailed previously. Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.	
	Name:	Maurice Hanna
	Office Held:	Chair of Board of Governors
	Signed:	
	Date:	23.05.24
Associated Proposals	N/A	

Case for Change: Statutory Consultation		
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION		
<i>The following is to be completed and signed off by the EA.</i>		
The Education Authority (EA)	I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 24 May 2024 with a return date of 21 June 2024.	
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Cynthia Currie</td> </tr> </table>	Name:
Name:	Cynthia Currie	

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td><td>Interim Director of Education</td></tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td><td>3 September 2024</td></tr> </table>	Office Held:	Interim Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	3 September 2024
Office Held:	Interim Director of Education						
Signed:							
Date:	3 September 2024						
Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings. Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition). Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation. Dates of EA meetings eg Strategic Planning and Policy Committee/ Board etc. <u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u>	In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, consultation on the proposal took place between 24 May 2024 to 21 June 2024 with schools and pre-schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 121 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded a copy of the proposal. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 21 June 2024. No responses were received from affected schools. A response was received from the Controlled Schools' Support Council. A summary of the response is provided below: Summary Comments – Support the Proposal • Downshire PS already welcomes children from different socio-economic backgrounds, children with different abilities and children from all faiths and none, compatible with the meaning of integrated education as defined within the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. • Supports Downshire PS in seeking to transform to controlled integrated status and believes that the development proposal will provide an efficient means by which formally recognised integrated provision can be increased in the area. This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 3 September 2024.						
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account	The Education Authority recognises its duty to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education under the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 which came into operation on 26 October 2022. The Education Authority has and will continue to support the Board of Governors of Downshire Primary School through its proposal.						

any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?		The Education Authority supports the proposal for Downshire Primary School to transform from controlled to controlled integrated status.
Name:	Cynthia Currie	Downshire Primary School is a sustainable school and maintains a healthy enrolment whose community breakdown and background is reflective of the area from where the school draws its pupils. There are limited available places at integrated primary schools in the area but not enough to meet the demand expressed in the parental ballot for Downshire Primary School. In consideration of the above, and the Case for Change, the Education Authority is proposing to publish Development Proposal 735 during the week beginning 9 September 2024.
Office Held:	Interim Director of Education	
Signed:		
Date:	3 September 2024	

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Downshire Primary School

Downshire Primary School is a controlled co-educational school located at Ballynahinch Road in Hillsborough and is in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. Downshire Primary School was established on 1 September 2005 following the amalgamation of Hillsborough Primary School and Newport Primary School.

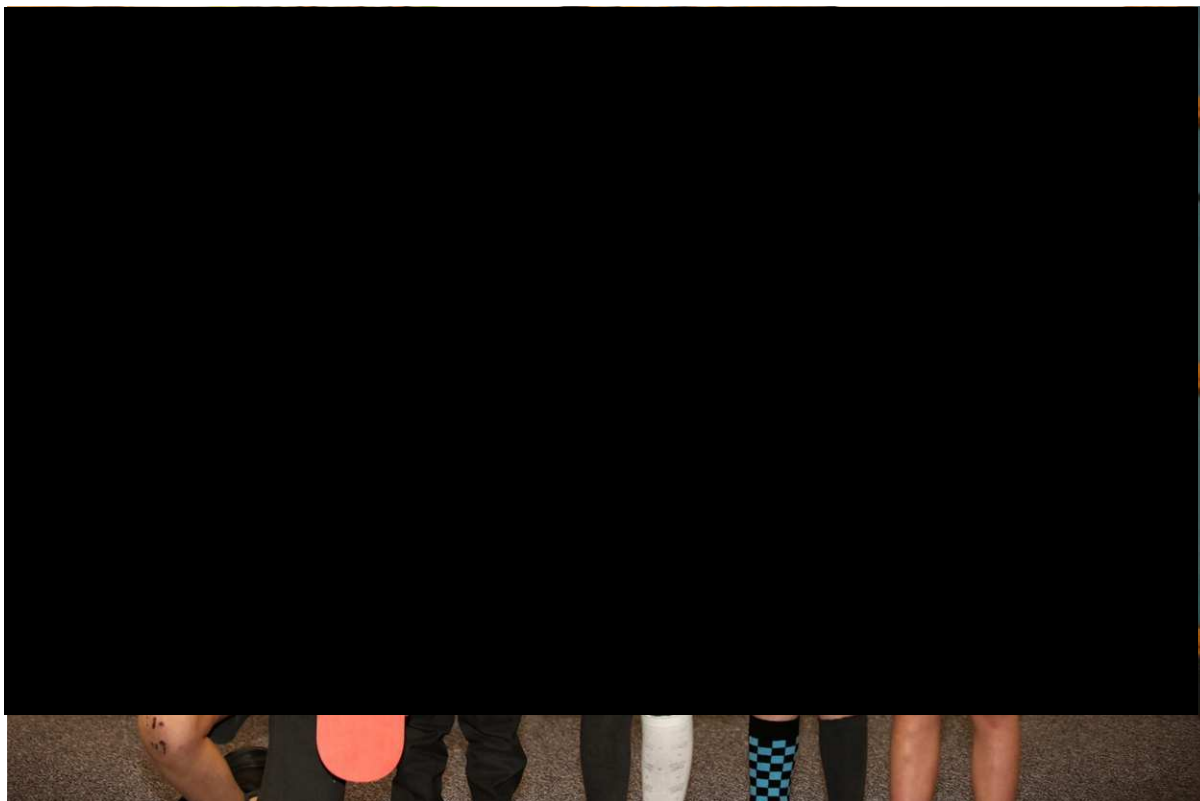
The school shares the site with Hillsborough Village Centre providing a combined facility which is the central hub for activity in the Hillsborough area.

The school has an approved admissions number of 87 pupils and an approved enrolment number of 610 pupils. The school also has a nursery unit for 52 part-time pupil places operating morning and afternoon.

Downshire Primary School currently operates as a three-form entry primary school along with a two-class nursery unit. The school has a diverse population and welcomes children from all backgrounds, religions, faiths, and nationalities.

Downshire Primary School is embedded within the local community and there are strong links to all local churches and community and youth groups.

Downshire Primary School is a sustainable school with a high quality of education.



1.2 Vision, Mission Statement and Aims

At Downshire Primary School our **Vision** is:

- **Everyone Valued**
- **Everyone Encouraged**
- **Everyone Achieving**

Our **Mission** for Downshire Primary School is that:

We believe that each child will succeed through experiencing:

- **A warm, caring and stimulating environment.**
- **An ethos of support, challenge and encouragement**
- **A rich varied and up to date range of learning resources**
- **A broad, balanced, and challenging curriculum**
- **Innovative teaching and an investigative approach to learning**
- **An enriching programme of extra-curricular activities and visits**
- **Effective learning partnerships between school, home and the community**

We demonstrate our commitment to working as a learning community by:

- **Striving for continuous improvement in all that we do**
- **Effectively monitoring and evaluation standards of educational provision**

- **Collaborating towards common goals**

Aims for our Pupils

We want our pupils to:

- **Have high self-esteem - respecting themselves, others and the environment**
- **Acquire attitudes of acceptance, tolerance, equality, honesty and trust**
- **Take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions**
- **Achieve their best in all areas of the curriculum**
- **Develop a range of communication, practical and technological skills**
- **Gain life skills e.g. personal safety, problem solving**
- **Work independently, creatively and collaboratively**
- **Become confident, well-motivated, inquisitive life-long learners**
- **Enjoy being a pupil at Downshire Primary School**

In taking forward the transformation of Downshire Primary School from Controlled status to Controlled Integrated status, the current values and philosophy will be built upon to reflect the core principles and ethos Integrated Education laid out by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE):

Equality:	The Integrated school promotes equality in sharing between and within the diverse groups that compose the school community. This occurs structurally at every level amongst pupils, staff, and the board of governors, as well as culturally within the overt and hidden curricula of the school.
Faith & Values:	The Integrated school provides a Christian-based rather than a secular approach. It aspires to create an environment where those of all faiths and none are respected, acknowledged, and accepted as valued members of the school community.
Parental Involvement:	The support and commitment of parents is a fundamental element of Integrated schools. The Integrated school therefore seeks to encourage and sustain effective parental involvement in the life and work of the school.
Social Responsibility:	The Integrated school delivers the curriculum on an all-ability and inclusive basis to all its pupils. It respects the uniqueness of every pupil and acknowledges their entitlement to personal, social, intellectual, and spiritual development in the attainment of individual potential.

The existing ethos of the school reflects the intention to provide a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment, and we believe that this connects well to the Integrated Ethos and the aim of Integrated Education to learn together for a shared society.

2 RATIONALE FOR TRANSFORMATION

2.1 Downshire Primary School – Why Transform?

The key objective of the proposal to transform to Controlled Integrated status is to enable Downshire Primary School and Nursery Unit to offer Integrated primary school education in this area.

The school's decision to transform to Integrated status arises from the desire firstly amongst Governors and then the local community to provide an Integrated school within the local area. There is currently no provision for an Integrated primary school within Hillsborough and the closest available Integrated school is in Lisburn. The transformation of Downshire PS and Nursery Unit is a no-cost option for the Department of Education (DE) whilst still providing a school with an enrolment number of 610.

The local area is becoming more and more diverse and already the school attracts a significant percentage of pupils from the minority religion group (Catholic 12%). Although our ethnic group percentage is low, this has been growing and the school now attracts children from various cultures and backgrounds. This is proof that Downshire PS and Nursery Unit has always been viewed by the local community as an inclusive school and we would like to build on this moving forward.

The school has already made efforts to ensure that our ethos and practice is one of respect for all, whatever religion or belief system each family holds. Each child is viewed as an individual and throughout the school there is a culture that celebrates diversity, as we actively encourage respect for all backgrounds. The school takes pride in providing an enriching school experience regardless of ability or socio-economic background.

The local community has voted to ensure that the school retains and advances these values and as a school we want to be committed to providing an inclusive and diverse education for all of our children in the years to come. The Board of Governors feel that this can be best achieved with the status of Integration.

The school has already started in its journey of ensuring the principles of Integrated education are embedded in the fabric of the school and in the mindsets of the principal, Board of Governors, all school staff and the pupils. Training has been given by NICIE and IEF and the Transformation Action Plan highlights the commitment to follow these principles and develop on the already good practice within the school. As a school, we acknowledge that we have not always been fully intentional to ensure diversity is fully celebrated and Governors now feel that an Integrated status would allow us to pursue this goal.

The community within Hillsborough village have clearly voted that they support the school in achieving these aims. The school is committed to the principles behind Integration and want to make a positive contribution to reconciliation within the area and beyond.

2.2 The Journey to Transformation

2.2.1 School Leadership

The Board of Governors and Principal have taken their time to fully explore Transformation prior to discussing it with parents. The table labelled 'Statutory Consultation' at the beginning of this document outlines the extensive range of meetings, consultations and engagements that have taken place with stakeholders and the wider community. A detailed breakdown of the Statutory Consultations can be found on pages 3-5 of this document

The school staff have engaged with NICIE and EA Sectoral Support Officers in relation to learning about the Integrated Ethos and the development of our school's Transformation Action Plan, which is attached as Appendix 1.

The senior leadership of the school began to explore Integration during the academic year 2022-23. All members of this group were positive about Transformation and fully believed in the ethos of Integrated education.

In turn, the Board of Governors began a long process of discovering what this would mean for the school and the community and various groups were consulted and advice sought.

The leaders within Downshire PS then informed teaching and non-teaching staff about the proposed developments. Time was taken to inform staff members of the implications of such a change of status and training was given to them by NICIE and IEF along with input from other local integrated schools.

This was a slow process to ensure that everyone was involved, had a voice and that they were informed of what Integration would mean for our school. This was a useful process, ensuring everyone could have an accurate understanding and therefore be fully committed to it.

2.2.2 Parents

On 28 September 2023, the Board of Governors passed a resolution to initiate a parental ballot. The postal ballot was administrated by Civica Election Services and took place from 20 November 2023 to 11 December 2023.

Parents were asked the following question:

Do you agree that Downshire Primary School and Nursery Unit should transform to become a Controlled Integrated School with effect from 1st September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter?

The result of the ballot is outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

RESULT	No. votes	% of valid vote
Yes	441	76.7%
No	134	23.3%

Number of eligible voters		872
Votes cast by post:	575	
Total number of votes cast:		575
Turnout:		65.9%
Number of votes found to be invalid:		0
Total number of valid votes to be counted:		575

2.2.3 Pupils

All of the pupils in Downshire have had a role to play in the process of moving towards Integration. The school has a very active Student Council and they have met and discussed plans for moving forward. This group have discussed ideas with their class peers and are keen to be part of the process of change. The ideas that they have come up with include making a 'Welcome Kit' for pupils joining the school, having posters throughout the school in various languages and learning about different languages and cultures. They also have plans to change the school logo and want to include joined hands or branches of a tree to represent everyone together.

The children have learnt about Integration through special assemblies and have discussed what it means to them. They have voiced these views:

"It will help us work better with others when we're adults."

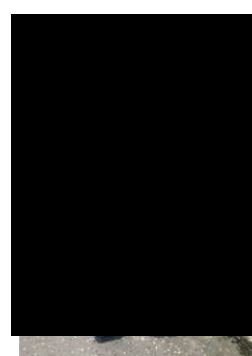
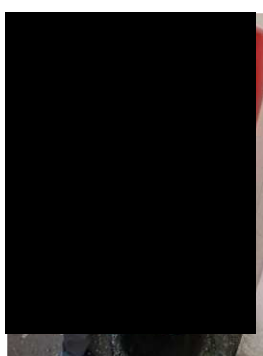
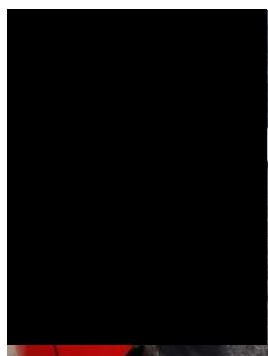
"No one feels left out."

"If you're new, you feel welcome."

"We need to know what other people believe."

"Downshire is really welcoming but now we can really show that."

Parents took photographs of their children posting the ballot votes and these could be seen by the whole community on Instagram.



2.2.4 Community Support

Alongside this positive support from parents of children at the school, possible future parents at the school and within the wider community, the Governors have been pleased to note the positive response that has been received from within the local community.

Local churches have voiced their support for Integration. The Transformation Action Group is made up of many members who are enthusiastic in their approach and many people have

contacted the school to say what a positive impact they believe the change will have on the local community.

2.3 Realising the benefits of Integrated Education

The Department of Education's 'Integration Works' document places the Transformation process firmly within the context of school improvement. Downshire Primary School recognises the school improvement opportunities presented by the Transformation process and embraces these as complementary to the on-going work for sustained improvement which are consistently carried out within the school at all levels. The Board of Governors believe that Integrated status will enhance existing provision within the school and bring tangible benefits to pupils, staff, and parents. It is already accepted that Integrated schooling has a positive social influence on those who experience it, helping young people and adults to recognise bias and building their capacity to challenge assumptions and deal with opposing viewpoints. This has been central to the school's decision to explore Integration, as we recognise the positive impact transformation, and specifically the targets set out in the Transformation Plan, will have on its practice and, as a result, pupils and wider school community.

Transformation will provide increased opportunities for staff and whole school development activity through the support programmes provided by NICIE and EA. These will help grow confidence, boost skills and build capacity to deliver an educational experience for pupils which will help equip them for living in a shared society. Downshire Primary School is already proud of its strong links with the community and its recognition as a school at the heart of the community and serving all of it, is very important to Governors. Through Transformation, the school intends to promote Downshire Primary School as an option for every and any child, and will, as outlined in the community connections section of the Transformation Plan, develop further and wider links in the community it serves. This will help promote the school as an intentionally inclusive, diverse space. Integration will provide a platform for the school to become even more inclusive and welcoming and a focal point for all members of the community.

2.4 The Transformation Plan – Developing the Integrated ethos

Over the last two years the school has worked closely with the Department of Education, NICIE and IEF. They have provided invaluable support and led numerous information sessions for Boards of Governors, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and parents.

Integrated Education brings great benefits and opportunities for Downshire Primary School:

- for pupils who can learn with young people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.
- for parents who can have a greater involvement in school life (Integrated schools have increased parent places on the Board of Governors).
- for schools who can serve their whole community.
- for society which is given a new generation who learn to understand and celebrate difference, inclusivity, and diversity.

The TAG, SLT and Principal have succeeded in creating a robust Transformation Action Plan for 2023-26 in partnership with EA Sectoral Support, NICIE and other members of staff. The school leadership believes that becoming an Integrated school will enable the school to engage more openly with all aspects of diversity, particularly within a Northern Ireland context, and the Transformation Action Plan outlines how it will do that. There is a commitment to monitor and evaluate the Transformation process over the next 3 years and report back to the Board of Governors, EA, DE and NICIE.

The school recognises the importance of working towards the targets outlined in the Transformation Plan and intends to use Transformation as the vehicle to expand and grow its inclusive practice. The governors welcome the challenge that Integrated Education presents to the school and believe that Transformation will enhance the quality curriculum and pastoral provision that already exists for all pupils.

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Enrolment Statistics/Pupil Distribution

Downshire Primary School is a sustainable school and has been established as a primary and nursery education provider within the Hillsborough area for a number of years. The school is a sustainable school and has maintained a healthy enrolment in keeping with its admission and approved enrolment with some available places.

The current staffing consists of the Principal, Vice-Principal, 26 teachers (including VP), 38 classroom assistants and 20 support staff.

Table 1 below, details the historical and current enrolment figures.

Table 1: Enrolment Statistics: Downshire Primary School									
Approved Admission Number: 87 Approved Enrolment Number: 610									
	Nursery	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total Years 1-7
2015/16	52	79	88	86	90	89	82	81	595
2016/17	51	86	80	86	85	90	90	81	598
2017/18	52	76	86	83	88	87	90	90	600
2018/19	52	81	77	89	86	88	87	90	598
2019/20	52	76	83	82	89	89	89	87	595
2020/21	52	80	75	83	83	87	88	88	584
2021/22	52	76	81	77	85	83	89	89	580
2022/23	52	88	80	80	80	88	85	93	594
2023/24	52	83	89	82	87	82	90	86	599

intentionally supports, protects and advances an ethos of diversity, respect and understanding between those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, between those of different socio-economic backgrounds and between those of different abilities.'

3.3 Alignment of Downshire Primary School proposal with the Integrated Education Act 2022

This section demonstrates how Downshire Primary School, aligns to the new definition of Integrated Education in Section 1 of the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022

3.3.1 Different Cultures and Religious Beliefs and of None

Downshire Primary School's religious balance is reflective of the community it currently serves. The diagram below outlines the community balance.



Diagram 1 details the community balance in the areas from which Downshire Primary School attracts most of its pupils – the information was obtained from the new NISRA application detailing 2021 results and can be accessed via the link below:

<https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/area-explorer-2021/N92000002/>

The areas shown are the District Electoral Areas and cover the main areas from which Downshire Primary School attracts its pupils from.

The diagram shows an area where the predominate religion is Protestant and other Christian religions with those indicating Catholic as second highest with no religion/none stated being the third highest.

This religious breakdown of Downshire Primary School as shown is Table 2.

Table 2: Religious profile of Downshire Primary School			
Academic year	% Protestant %	% Catholic %	% Other Christian / non-Christian / no religion / unknown
2018/19	62.31%	12.77%	24.92%
2019/20	58.27%	12.83%	28.90%
2020/21	56.29%	13.05%	30.66%
2021/22	53.96%	13.61%	32.44%
2022/23	53.25%	11.92%	34.83%
2023/24	51.2%	11.6%	37.2%

Source: NI School Census

Table 2 shows:

- The number of pupils attending the school from a Protestant background has dropped slightly over the years.
- A slight decline in the number of pupils from a Catholic background.
- An increasing number of pupils designated as Other (*Other includes Christians and non-Christians*).

The school has pupils from other religions and community backgrounds within it, including increasing numbers of those who have designated as having 'Other'. The school is also aware that official designation does not give the full picture. The school acknowledges that it caters for a significant number of children that come from mixed marriages and mixed relationships.

Downshire Primary School and Nursery Unit is an inclusive school that welcomes all applicants, but we cannot use the word Integrated in our title without this change. We want every family in the Hillsborough community to think of Downshire Primary School as an option for them and the title of the school is an important way to promote this. As our school community is diverse, by becoming Integrated we would be more 'intentional' in welcoming children from different backgrounds and celebrating all our traditions. At the moment it is a 'controlled' school, which historically has mainly appealed to only one sector of the community.

Downshire Primary School acknowledges that the percentage of children identifying as Catholic is low however it is consistent with the overall percentage of families across the District Electoral Areas as shown in Diagram 1. Over the years many of these families have articulated that they specifically chose Downshire Primary School due to its inclusive and mixed community ethos. However, they have also stated that Downshire is a controlled school and they would prefer that their children had more opportunities to have their background and traditions celebrated and encouraged.

The school has also lost potential pupils in the past because we have not offered the teaching of the Sacraments. By becoming Integrated, this issue would be addressed.

The school, in working with the Education Authority's Sectoral Support and Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education has identified within the Transformational Plan, Appendix 1, work to be undertaken to address this.

The EA/NICIE have worked with the school to ensure that a robust transformational plan is in place and this will ensure that changes are made to make the school more diverse in its outlook and even more welcoming to the whole community.

Table 3: Newcomers at Downshire Primary School	
Year	Newcomer Pupils
2018/19	4 or less
2019/20	6 pupils
2020/21	4 or less
2021/22	4 or less
2022/23	4 or less
2023/24	4 or less

Table 3 indicates that there is a low percentage of Newcomer children attending Downshire Primary School but this is again reflective of the local area (98% White, 2% Other Ethnic Groups). It is hoped that when the transformational plan is put into practice that this may encourage others to join the school.

3.3.2 Those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not

Table 4 details the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) for the main wards from which Downshire Primary School attracts its pupils. The lower numbers indicate areas of most deprivation.

Table 4 - Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (2017)

Ward Name	Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank	Domain Ranking						
		Income	Employment	Health Deprivation and Disability	Education, Skills, and Training	Access to Services	Living Environment	Crime and Disorder
Hillhall	322	326	265	251	225	209	351	285
Blaris	329	318	300	334	234	259	157	147
Dromara	352	298	390	383	419	111	50	375
Ballymacbrennan	393	404	448	445	453	84	70	455
Ravernet	395	411	453	456	461	63	116	461
Maze	424	423	416	431	413	165	272	365
Hillsborough	431	387	451	448	455	180	186	361

Most of the wards in this area rank in upper part of the NIMDM ranking.

Table 5: Free School Meals at Downshire Primary School

Year	FSME Number	FSME % of School Population
2018/19	32	5.35%
2019/20	35	5.88%
2020/21	35	5.99%
2021/22	36	6.21%
2022/23	38	5.88%
2023/24	39	6.0%

Table 5 above shows that the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals has remained relatively constant over the years. The relatively low free school meals uptake at the school is reflective and in keeping with the NIMDM ranking of the wards and the general profile of the main areas from which the school attracts most of its pupils from.

3.3.3 Those of Different Abilities

Downshire Primary School is open to all pupils. The table below provides the numbers of pupils with a Special Educational Needs statement. Downshire Primary School provides for the needs of all children and especially those with additional needs.

In recent years, two Special Educational Needs Coordinators have been appointed to support those children who need additional help. We also have two further members of staff who provide Learning Support in small groups or individual settings. The school annually assesses the progress of each child (with the aid of standardised

tests) and there are systems in place to ensure that children who are not performing at their innate level of ability are given strategies and the scaffolding to ensure that in the following year they make solid progress. The results in the school are high, which is partly reflective of the fact that children are assessed early and given the adequate help to ensure that they make often significant progress.

The school also has strong links with a range of external agencies, e.g. EA Psychology Service, The Autism Advisory Intervention Service, RISE, Literacy Support Service, EA Behaviour Support Service, and Health Visitors. By working together, we can ensure that the needs of all children are met.

Table 6: Pupils with Special Educational Needs at Downshire Primary School			
Year	SEN Stage 5/ Stage 3	SEN Stage 1 - 4 / 1-2	SEN All Stages
2015/16	14	49	63
2016/17	12	61	73
2017/18	11	46	57
2018/19	10	81	91
2019/20	13	62	75
2020/21	8	73	81
2021/22	8	74	82
2022/23	20	54	74
2023/24	25	40	65

Table 6 above shows that the school experienced a significant increase in the number of pupils with a statement of educational need in 2023/24. Downshire Primary School continues to provide support to those pupils who do not have a statement but continue to require additional support in the classroom.

The school caters for children with a wide range of current attainment levels, as evidenced by our most recent assessment data.

Table 7 below shows the range in standardised scores achieved by pupils in each GL assessment conducted in May 2023. The wide range in results is also evidenced in other assessments including Accelerated Reader and Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT4). This provides clear evidence that the school caters for children across all nine stanine bands, within the majority of year groups.

Table 7: Range of Standardised Scores Achieved by pupils in Downshire Primary School – May 2023		
Data from May 2023 Assessments	Progress Test English (standardised scores: range)	Progress Test Maths (standardised scores: range)
Primary 3	72-125	72-132
Primary 4	73-134	69-139

Primary 5	83-140	83-141
Primary 6	77-140	69-137
Primary 7	69-138	77-140

Downshire Primary School caters for pupils with all abilities with pupils transitioning from Year 7 to Year 8. These pupils transfer to schools across many different types – Selective, Non-Selective, Controlled, Integrated, and Catholic Maintained. Most pupils transfer to selective post primary schools with Friends School and Wallace High School in Lisburn along with Royal Belfast Academical Institution in Belfast being the main recipients but with pupils also transferring to Methodist College and Victoria College. A significant number of the pupils transfer to non-selective post primary schools with Dromore High School and Fort Hill Integrated College being the main schools.

Table 8: Downshire Primary School Year 7 to Year 8 Leavers Destination

Leavers Destination	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Selective (%)	83%	65%	78%	83%	74%	76%	79%	81%	73%
Non-Selective (%)	17%	35%	22%	17%	26%	24%	21%	19%	28%

Table 9 above summarises the various characteristics of Downshire Primary School in relation to Section 1 of the Integrated Education Act 2022.

Table 9: Downshire Primary School Profile

Year	Free School Meals	SEN Stage 5/ Stage 3	SEN Stage 1 - 4 / 1-2	SEN All Stages	% Protestant	% Catholic	% Other Christian / non-Christian / no religion / unknown	% Newcomer
2015/16	7.06%	14	49	63	66.92%	11.13%	21.95%	*
2016/17	5.02%	12	61	73	65.95%	11.40%	22.65%	*
2017/18	4.17%	11	46	57	65.18%	11.66%	23.16%	0.00%
2018/19	5.35%	10	81	91	62.31%	12.77%	24.92%	*
2019/20	5.88%	13	62	75	58.27%	12.83%	28.90%	0.93%
2020/21	5.99%	8	73	81	56.29%	13.05%	30.66%	*
2021/22	6.21%	8	74	82	53.96%	13.61%	32.44%	*
2022/23	5.88%	20	54	74	53.25%	11.92%	34.83%	*
2023/24	6.00%	25	25	65	51.20%	11.70%	37.2%	*

*Number suppressed as less than 4

Table 9 shows:

- that the school's community profile is keeping with other schools in the area, i.e., the mix from both main communities, as well as from those classified as 'Other'.
- the number of pupils at Downshire Primary School that receive free school meals is low. Given the MDM ranking of the wards that the school attracts most of its pupils from, the free school meals uptake is in keeping with the profile of the area, i.e., an area where the wards rank in the upper range into the MDM. The socio-economic background of the pupils attending the school is in keeping with the area the school serves.

However, the school does support those pupils from a disadvantaged background. There are pre-loved uniform sales throughout the year organised by the very active PTA. The cost of school trips, including the P7 trip to London, at times have been paid for by the school, so that all can attend.

Similarly, charitable giving in the school is high and each year on average £10 000 is collected for local and international charities. This of course encourages our pupils to be empathetic for those who are in need.

- the school meets the needs of pupils with varying abilities and needs as shown by the number of pupils that are within stage 1-3 (or 1-5 in the former category breakdown).

Tables 2 to 9, and Diagram 1, demonstrate Downshire Primary School's ability to meet the definition of Integrated Education, as outlined in Section 1 of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Downshire Primary School with support from NICIE and EA Sectoral Support through the Transformation Plan actions will build greater diversity in the school in relation to religion, culture, Protestant, Catholic, socio-economic background and ability.

3.4 Transformation Plan

The school will use its Transformation Plan (Appendix 1) to demonstrate its responsibility towards Integrated Education by undertaking the necessary actions to ensure meaningful cultural and organisational change. As already detailed the school maintains a balance of pupils in keeping with the area it attracts its pupils from, whether that be their respective religious, socio-economic, cultural or ability background, and through the implementation of the Transformation Plan the school will, over time fully meet the new definition of an Integrated school.

Transformation Plan, described more fully in Section 2 of the Case for Change below, is a deliberate and intentional document designed to show how Downshire Primary School will develop an Integrated ethos and how it will avail of the school improvement opportunities presented by the Transformation process. The plan is structured around the characteristics of a successful school, adapted from those within the 'Every School a Good School' policy and is underpinned by the NICIE Statement of Principles. The school is confident that the changes proposed for implementation from September 2025 will result in enhanced educational outcomes for all pupils and will support the development of Downshire Primary School as an Integrated setting in line with the Integrated Education Act. The Plan, in particular outlines how the school will work to engage its minority community over the next three years and how it intends to further develop local connections across all the cultures and traditions that are currently represented within the school. As the school moves through its Integration Journey, a long-term objective will be achieving the Excellence in Integrated Education Award.

4 EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Whilst the delivery of the NI curriculum will remain unchanged, the school will work to add in depth explorations of diversity as appropriate for each key stage.

There are increased opportunities for staff and whole school development activity through the support programmes of NICIE, IEF and the EA Shared Education and Sectoral Support

team. Already, the school (Governors and staff) have taken advantage of support from NICIE, IEF and the EA . For example, on 8th February 2024 NICIE met with staff to discuss the Case for Change in relation to High Quality Teaching and Learning. Good practice was highlighted within the school and areas that could be developed to become more inclusive. This helped to form the Transformation Action Plan. Members of staff have also attended Ant-Bias training at a residential course organised by NICIE (17th-19th January 2024).

The school looks forward to taking full advantage of the resources that are available to Integrated schools to develop our confidence and skills in delivering an educational experience for our young people that helps to equip them for living in our vision of a shared and peaceful society.

Downshire Primary School has always been welcoming to the whole community and its enrolment is more diverse than the traditional descriptors of 'Protestant, Catholic or Other'. The school already caters for pupils from a range of socio-economic and ability backgrounds in keeping with the area the schools attract its pupils from as evidenced by:

- **community background of the pupils (Table 2), and**
- **the free school meals uptake at the school (Table 5).**

There is a significant body of evidence which points to the value of children from different communities or cultures being educated together. Through the Transformation Plan, we have made clear the steps we intend to take to develop our good practice and ensure that every child within the school is represented and celebrated for their specific identity. Over the three years encapsulated by the Plan, it is evident that the school will carry this out in an age-appropriate manner and with a fully learner centred focus.

The school acknowledges that this is the beginning of a journey for the school. We want to work with other Integrated schools, establishing links and learning from each other through the dissemination of good practice.

5 AREA PLANNING IMPACT

The proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan for Northern Ireland aims to ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable. It sets out the key priorities and objectives in providing access to a network of sustainable schools for the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, and other sectoral bodies in the light of Department of Education policy, in particular the need to raise standards and close the attainment gap through a network of sustainable schools. The focus of the plan is on the educational best interests of children and young people.

Since 2011, statutory planning authorities and school managing authorities have been engaged in implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Schools Policy through Area Planning. The first four objectives are:

- ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural settings, in accessible, modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation;
- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning; and
- sustain strong, successful, and viable schools, well-led by their governors representing local stakeholders, principals, and their staff, to be the centre of the education system, supported by effective administrative and strategic direction.

The Department of Education's vision in the Sustainable Schools Policy¹ 2009 is for an educationally sustainable schools' estate planned on an area basis, with a focus on sharing and collaboration. The Board of Governors and principal of Downshire Primary School believe that transformation to Integrated status will help to achieve this vision.

5.1 Potential Impact on other schools

Table 10 below shows the details of primary schools closest to Downshire Primary School, as well as our closest integrated primary school.

Table 10 – Alternative Primary Schools in the area					
School Name	Management Type	Distance (miles) to Downshire PS	Approved Enrolment 2023/24	Total Enrolment (Years 1-7) 2023/24	Available Places 2023/24
Riverdale PS	Controlled	3.6	203	204	0
Lisburn Central PS	Controlled	3.7	203	186	17
Anahilt PS	Controlled	3.9	210	139	71
Old Warren PS	Controlled	3.9	196	129	67
Meadow Bridge PS	Controlled	3.9	290	296	0
Tonagh PS	Controlled	4.3	228	203	25
Knockmore PS	Controlled	4.3	212	244	0
Largymore PS	Controlled	4.5	196	193	3
St Joseph's PS	Maintained	4.5	395	388	7
St Aloysius PS	Maintained	4.6	490	417	73
Fort Hill IPS	Controlled Integrated	4.6	210	205	5
Brownlee PS	Controlled	4.7	196	200	0
Harmony Hill PS	Controlled	5.1	609	593	16

¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/sustainable-schools>

Ballymacash PS	Controlled	5.2	406	405	1
St Colman's PS, Dromore	Maintained	5.2	145	92	53
Pond Park PS	Controlled	5.3	610	625	0
Killowen PS	Controlled	5.4	420	387	33
St Colman's PS, Lisburn	Maintained	5.8	348	393	0
Dromore Central PS	Controlled	5.8	727	727	0

As the proposal for transformation does not impact the approved enrolment or approved admission number of Downshire Primary School, it will not have an impact on the number of primary school places within the area. The proposal will only increase Integrated primary provision within the area.

5.2 Potential Impact on other Integrated Schools

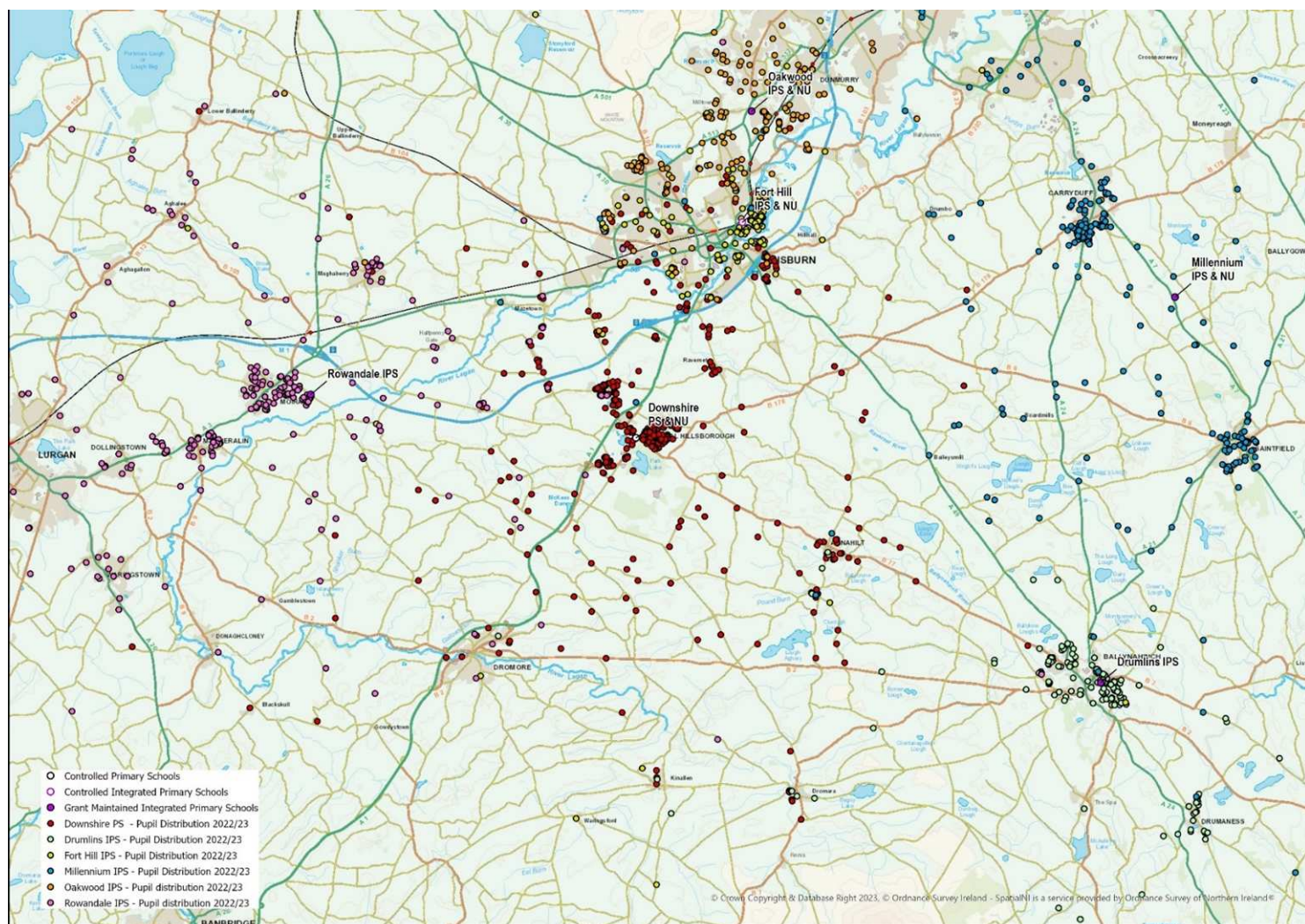
The nearest alternative Integrated providers are:

Table 11 – Alternative Integrated Primary School Provision in the Area					
School Name	Management Type	Distance (miles) to Downshire PS	Approved Enrolment 2023/24	Total Enrolment (Years 1-7) 2023/24	Available Places 2023/24
Fort Hill IPS	Controlled Integrated	4.6	210	205	5
Oakwood IPS	Grant Maintained Integrated	6.6	203	187	16
Rowandale IPS	Grant Maintained Integrated	6.8	346	345	1
Drumlins IPS	Grant Maintained Integrated	9	203	212	0
Millennium IPS	Grant Maintained Integrated	11.3	392	370	22

- **Map 2, overleaf, shows that there is limited crossover in areas between Downshire Primary School and nearby Integrated schools.**
- **There is a limited number of available places with the Integrated schools closest to Downshire Primary School.**

The transformation of Downshire Primary School to controlled Integrated status will increase integrated provision for the Hillsborough village and surrounding area. It should be noted that there is a level of available places in the local controlled and maintained schools, as indicated in Table 10.

Map 2 – Alternative Integrated Primary Schools and their Pupil Distribution



5.3 Religious Balance

The religious balance within the school's locality has been outlined previously in this document (section 2), in Diagram 1 above.

The religious balance of Downshire Primary School is also detailed in both Tables 2 and 12 below.

Table 12 highlights the Community breakdown of primary provision in the area.

Table 12: Community Breakdown of Primary Provision – 2023/24

School	Management Type	% Protestant	% Catholic	% Other Christian / non-Christian / no religion / unknown
Downshire PS	Controlled	53.25%	11.92%	34.83%
Largymore PS	Controlled	32.64%	0.00%	67.36%
Brownlee PS	Controlled	52.50%	5.50%	42.00%
Lisburn Central PS	Controlled	37.26%	11.79%	50.94%
Tonagh PS	Controlled	76.42%	10.04%	13.54%
Anahilt PS	Controlled	#	*	58.27%
Harmony Hill PS	Controlled	44.24%	6.70%	49.07%
Knockmore PS	Controlled	34.84%	15.98%	49.18%
Old Warren PS	Controlled	55.48%	9.68%	34.84%
Killowen PS	Controlled	42.76%	5.29%	51.95%
Pond Park PS	Controlled	53.28%	11.20%	35.52%
Ballymacash PS	Controlled	48.03%	4.59%	47.38%
Riverdale PS	Controlled	59.31%	4.41%	36.27%
Meadow Bridge PS	Controlled	67.91%	3.38%	28.72%
St Joseph's PS, Lisburn	Catholic Maintained	*	88.66%	#
St Aloysius PS	Catholic Maintained	4.06%	83.07%	12.87%
St Colman's PS, Lisburn	Catholic Maintained	*	94.66%	#
Fort Hill IPS School	Controlled Integrated	41.99%	23.38%	34.63%
Oakwood IPS	GMI	19.25%	43.19%	37.56%
Dromore Central PS	Controlled	65.75%	5.64%	28.61%
St Colman's PS, Dromore	Catholic Maintained	7.61%	80.43%	11.96%

Table 12 shows that most schools in the area have similar community breakdowns, i.e. the percentage of pupils from Other/None is significant in the majority of cases.

The Board of Governors has noted that several schools in proximity to Downshire Primary School have a mix of religious background and community. The Board of Governors at Downshire Primary School are responding to the parental desire to have recognition of the school as an integrated setting.

5.4 Equality Impact and Rural Needs Assessment

The area in which Downshire Primary School is situated is classified as a rural area and the school has therefore been described by DE census 2022/23 as being in a rural area. In accordance with the 'Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised)' [\[1\]](#) is not eligible for special consideration.

The school's Board of Governors have used the EA's Equality and Human Rights screening template and are of the view that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this proposal. The equality screening process carried out by the Board of Governors indicates that this proposal to achieve Integrated status is likely to have a positive impact on many of the Section 75 categories of NI Act.

[\[4\]](#)

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/17.18.249%20Guide%20to%20Rural%20Needs%20Act%20NI%20final%20v2.PDF>

6 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The focus of the Area Planning process is embedded in 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy) first published in 2009 and applies to primary and post-primary schools. The policy outlines the criteria that school managing authorities should consider when making decisions affecting the best use of resources to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out 6 sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.

Section 3 below outlines an assessment of the school's sustainability. Downshire Primary School is a strong, sustainable school. The school has maintained a healthy enrolment and is well above the SSP threshold of 105 for rural schools.

6.1 Quality of Education

The last Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection in Downshire Primary School was undertaken in January 2014.

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Nursery Unit	Very Good

The children in the school are well-motivated learners and display good levels of independence and maturity. They respond positively to the learning opportunities provided by their teachers and their behaviour is exemplary. In most of the lessons observed, the children worked well individually, in pairs and in small groups.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the area for improvement.

6.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

Downshire Primary School has an approved enrolment number of 610 pupils and an approved admission number of 87 pupils. Table 14 below outlines pupil enrolment trends from 2015 to 2023. Downshire Primary School has maintained a healthy enrolment and is well above the SSP threshold of 105 for rural primary schools.

Table 13: Downshire Primary School Enrolment History									
Admission number – 87 Approved Enrolment - 610									
	Nursery	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total (Years 1-7)
2015/16	52	79	88	86	90	89	82	81	595
2016/17	51	86	80	86	85	90	90	81	598
2017/18	52	76	86	83	88	87	90	90	600
2018/19	52	81	77	89	86	88	87	90	598
2019/20	52	76	83	82	89	89	89	87	595
2020/21	52	80	75	83	83	87	88	88	584
2021/22	52	76	81	77	85	83	89	89	580
2022/23	52	88	80	80	80	88	85	93	594
2023/24	52	83	89	82	87	82	90	86	599

Note: all figures are inclusive of Stage 3 pupils

6.3 Sound Financial Position

Downshire Primary School had a deficit of £545,203 at 31 March 2023. The Principal and Board of Governors have worked with the Education Authority each year to ensure sound financial management.

Table 14: Financial History	
Year	Surplus/Deficit
2015/16	£34,120
2016/17	-£14,848
2017/18	-£138,406
2018/19	-£258,260
2019/20	-£389,421
2020/21	-£431,212
2021/22	-£457,522
2022/23	-£545,203

6.4 Strong Leadership and Management

The last Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection in Downshire Primary School was undertaken in January 2014. It noted:

The leadership and management of the school are effective and committed to the holistic development of the children and to raising further the standards for them. The school development plan sets out a range of priorities for improvement with associated action plans and these should now be adjusted to reflect the inspection findings.

Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in most aspects of governance evaluated. It will be important for the governors to continue to support and work with the school in addressing the area for improvement identified in the report.

Since the last inspection a new Principal and Vice-principal have been appointed.

6.5 Accessibility

The school is situated in the village of Hillsborough and the location of the school, close to major arterial routes maximises parental accessibility for both public and private transport networks. As shown in Map 1 most pupils live within a short travel distance to Downshire Primary School.

6.6 Strong Links with the Community

Downshire PS has excellent links with the local community which are long lasting. There are partnerships and community events that we are involved in each academic year. We also strive to regularly create new partnerships within the local area. Examples of the wide range of community activities that we have been involved in over the last few years are as follows:

- Well established links with the PTA
- Strong links with Hillsborough Castle
- Strong links with local foodbank
- Strong links with local dementia centre
- Strong links with the British Royal Legion
- Strong links with the local churches
- Pupil Voice group established – Student Council, House System and House Captains, Eco Council, Buddy System, Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, Digital Leaders
- Choir performances at community events
- Travel/School Trips
- Peace Proms
- Mental Wellbeing Focus – Children's Mental Health Week, Hello Yellow, Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day
- Strong communication/social media – Friday Note, Instagram, school app, school website, Seesaw
- Transition links with post-primary settings
- Links with pre-school settings in the local area
- Links with local businesses, the Rotary Club, and visitors to the school

- Regular use of the local environment – Hillsborough Forest
- Strong links with local and national charities
- Placements for PGCE/Bed student teachers and Classroom Assistants
- Links with other integrated primary schools near by – staff visited
- Sport community link – local tournaments, Irish dancing, Gaelic, Ulster Scots Club, Drama, rugby, football, golf, hockey
- Increasingly diverse intake
- Involvement in the Comenius Project
- Involvement in the Superbloom Project with Historic Royal Palaces
- A range of groups using the school premises, such as the PSNI and the Fire Service

As a school we are eager to continue with these links and pursue even more opportunities to engage with various community organisations. The Transformation Action Plan highlights ways in which this can be done.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no cost implications to this proposal at its implementation stage. There is no capital cost required as there is no need for additional accommodation at the existing school site. Approval of this proposal is a cost-effective method to discharge the Departmental duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, to encourage and facilitate Integrated Education, which has now been amended by the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 to encourage, facilitate and support Integrated Education.

8 IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Downshire Primary School working with the Education Authority's Sectoral Support and Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education has produced a 3-year Transformation Action Plan which is attached as Appendix 1.

The development of this plan has been led by the school Principal with support from the Transformation Action Group. It is not a static plan and is subject to review by any or all of these parties during the school's Transformation journey.

The proposal is being brought forward under Article 64 (1) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. The implementation date for the proposal is 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline	
Proposal: Downshire Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status, with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.	Proposed Timeline
Consultation with other affected schools (4 weeks)	May 2024 – June 2024
Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority	
Responses will be considered, and a summary of the responses included in the Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee prior to publication	
Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to note and publish	3 September 2024
Case for Change to be taken to 3 September 2024 Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for EA Views and Publication.	
The Education Authority has an obligation to publish.	
Statutory Objection Period (2 months)	September – November 2024
Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education	
Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision	March 2025
Implementation If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.	

9 CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND RECONCILLATION POLICY OBJECTIVES

Downshire Primary School believes that by further developing our culture of respect and mutual understanding, promoting excellence and celebrating difference in the education of Catholics, Protestants, children from other beliefs, cultures and communities together every day in one school, the school can make a contribution to reconciliation and peace building within and beyond the school community.

Approval of this Development Proposal will assist the Department to continue to make a positive contribution and fulfil a number of government legislative and policy agendas, including the following:

- **The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 - as referred to above.**
- **NI Programme for Government (2016- 2021)**
- **Together, Building a United Community (published 2013)**

- **Schools for The Future: A policy for sustainable schools (2009)**
- Every School a Good School (2008)
- The Belfast Good Friday Agreement (1998)

10 CONCLUSION

Downshire Primary School is a strong sustainable primary school. The school community is diverse, catering for pupils from all faiths, religions and none attending.

The management team at Downshire Primary School has deliberated over several years to explore Transformation and the Board of Governors then took the decision to ballot parents. Its parental body showed strong support for Transformation to Integrated status with 76.7% of parents that returned a ballot voting Yes for Integration for 1 September 2025.

The school has produced an extensive Transformation Action Plan which sets out its intentions over three years of which 2025/26 is Year 1. This document outlines the vision of the school to further develop in all aspects towards a fully inclusive and integrated school environment. Given approval, the school will continue to intentionally develop the integrated ethos and its contribution to peace and reconciliation.

The approval of this proposal will enable the Department of Education to meet the identified parental demand for Integrated Education within the school and the surrounding community.

The management of the school demonstrates a commitment to making Downshire Primary School a strong Integrated school which will serve the needs and demands of the local area for many years to come. This commitment has strong support within the school community and parental body as well as in the local community as evidenced in the Case for Change.

3 Year Overview – Targets for Transformation

	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27
Learner Centred	1) Pupils will continue to develop their understanding of Integration. 2) Ensure that the voice of minority groups is heard and celebrated 3) Intergenerational connections will be formed between the school and the local fold 4) Pupils will begin the first year of the Rights Respecting School programme	1) Recognition of all faiths with visitors to the school from more diverse backgrounds 2) Develop cultural events such as, European Language Week 3) Foyer developed to become more welcoming and inclusive of all groups e.g. signs, photos, various languages 4) Pupils will begin the second year of the Rights Respecting School programme	1) Discuss with older children the NI historical conflict and how far we have come. Exploration of identity and heritage 2) Staff preparation time given to infuse cultures into year group subject planning e.g. through PE and music 3) As more staff take part in Anti-Bias training this can be delivered throughout the curriculum 4) Pupils will begin the third year of the Rights Respecting School programme
High Quality Teaching & Learning	1) Staff consolidate their knowledge of RSS and begin to deliver this effectively to the pupils	1) Exploration of identity amongst pupils. Exploration of heritage and history of Ireland/N. Ireland within year groups.	1) Exploration of heritage and history of Ireland/N.Ireland within year groups.

	2) Review of PDMU Policy 3) Further links between the school and the NICIE/EA and IEF will be made. Staff to attend NICIE and IEF training – Integration Works, Anti-Bias, Marketing – Use of Social Media to Promote the School 4) More training for staff to feel confident in discussing Integration with pupils 5) Development of a new RE scheme 6) The staff will produce an annual calendar of events which will be reflective of our school community and our commitment to inclusion and diversity	2) Growth Mindset to be promoted throughout the school 3) Each year group to focus on a religion and culture as part of their topic and to share learning with wider community as appropriate.	2) Introduction of Ulster Scots in the school 3) Introduction of a second language
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Effective Leadership	1) Continuation of the TAG group and the work of two Integration Co-ordinators to promote the ethos within the school and the community 2) Staff to explore the vision of the school as we move towards Integration – new Diversity and Inclusion Policy written. 3) Children informed about what Integration means in special assemblies. Pupils voice listened to via the Student Council to inform future practice e.g. name of school logo, uniform	1) Further Anti-Bias training for more members of staff 2) To become part of an Integration Cluster Group 3) Senior Leadership Team to organise feedback from all stakeholders - including the pupils - concerning change of school name, uniform and logo. Further development of new school ethos 4) New Board of Governors constituted to reflect the Integration status of the school. Appropriate training will be given. 5) New constituted Governors to examine the current Admissions Criteria	1) Policy written – Diversity and Inclusion 2) Staff development day devoted to Integration on an annual basis
Community Connections	1) Utilize the IEF grant to allow staff to visit other Integrated schools 2) Utilize the new Integration Co-ordinators to promote	1) Further develop the after schools programme to include GAA sports especially for girls and Irish dancing	1) Intergenerational links expanded to involve the wider community

	our new school ethos digitally and online, ensuring the website will be updated to include an Integration section 3) Introduction within the school of the teaching of the Sacraments (P4 and P7 children)	2) Assemblies planned to include a wider world view, involving community members	2) All local clergy to be invited to the opening assembly of the new school
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Learner Centred (2024-2027)

What? Baseline position at April 2024 The children's interests have always been at the heart of the decision to make Downshire PS an Integrated school and there is a very active Student Council who advise on key areas of school life. The school has a welcoming ethos, where all children are cared for and we strive to give them the best opportunities in their primary schooling. This is reflected in the school motto: Everyone Valued, Everyone Encouraged, Everyone Achieving. The Transformation process has been very successful. Staff and parents were informed and shown that each child is at the centre of an Integrated school. Opportunity was given to learn more about Integration and to have any questions answered. The children's views have also been taken into account. Diversity has happened naturally over the course of the last few years. Children from other nationalities and cultures have begun moving into the village and the school has welcomed them. We would like to see this	So what? Conclusions and recommendations for the way forward (24-27) The Student Council plays a key role in leading the views of the whole pupil community. This will be a useful vehicle to understand how much the children have grasped the ethos of Integration and also to have a development of ideas to move the school forward from their perspective. Staff will need further training to be fully able to deliver the vision of Integration within the school. NICIE/IEF courses will be invaluable in this process. The staff's knowledge and confidence to deliver such a curriculum needs to be expanded upon. Although, the Christian ethos will always be paramount in the school we do want to further the children's knowledge by giving them experience of other religions and cultures. Key Stage and Whole School Assembly will be a good way to do this. Issues like racism and world festivals can be addressed in this context and a yearly plan needs to be formed to do this effectively. Although the school does have good links with local community establishments it would be beneficial to further develop this.
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growing even more. Our classes are increasingly becoming a mix of gender, religion, culture and ability. The school has begun to recognise this diversity and learn from those of different backgrounds. For example, St. Patrick's Day has been celebrated in a whole school assembly along with Chinese New Year.

The school has worked hard to involve the EA, NICIE and IEF to lead workshops about Integration so that we can become more knowledgeable about it and instrumental in supporting the ethos and promoting it amongst our pupils. Issues involving religion and different viewpoints have begun to be addressed in an age-sensitive way. For example, the children took part in the recent Peace Proms event in the SEE arena.

School meals have been adapted to suit the diet of those children who follow other religions than Christianity. This reflects the acceptance of difference and a desire to value cultural diversity.

In recent years within Downshire we have had between 11-14% of pupils from a Catholic background attending. This percentage is very high for a controlled school, and it reflects the understanding in the area that the school is accepting of all children. The school leaders attend the Sacrament services in St. Patrick's Church for those pupils who are taking part. However, we would like to see this figure even further increased and one way to do this will be to start teaching the Sacraments as part of the school day.

Almost 35% of pupils are from homes where their parents declare they are other Christian/non-Christian or no Christian background. The school must take these viewpoints into account as we move forward whilst at the same time having a Christian ethos.

Children learn via a topic-based approach, with the topics chosen by each year group. These can be adapted to include a more global element which will promote the ethos behind Integration.

Curriculum Development needs to take place in specific areas, namely PDMU, PE and Music, to ensure staff are skilled and confident in delivering these subjects to the pupils.

At the moment, the school does not have any intergenerational input and it would be good to expand on this either through visiting the local fold or inviting retirees into the school.

As well as the name of the school and uniform changing, we feel we would like to make the foyer more international and welcoming to those who enter the school from different backgrounds.

There has been a steady increase in the percentage of children on the Special Needs register. The school has worked hard to ensure that additional needs are met for those children and the Governors have employed two SENCos to support the pupils and their families. The Head of Foundation and The Head of the Nursery have a very good relationship with local pre-school providers. A thorough Induction system is in place to ensure our new pupils settle quickly and parents are informed about how they can support their children. This all leads to a very smooth transition as the children begin their school careers. At the other end of the school, we welcome the post-primary schools and have formed very good relationships with them. This also helps the transition into secondary level education for our pupils. Our PDMU Co-ordinator works hard to promote this area in the school and is keen to begin the Rights Respecting School's Award. It is recognised that as we move towards Integration the school should find a more suitable scheme for RE.		
Now what? Future targets (subject to Ministerial decision)		
Year 1 (2024-25) 1) Pupils will continue to develop their understanding of Integration. 2) Ensure that the voice of minority groups is heard and celebrated 3) Intergenerational connections will be formed between the school and the local fold 4) Pupils will begin the first year of the Rights Respecting School programme	Year 2 (2025-26) 1) Recognition of all faiths with visitors to the school from more diverse backgrounds 2) Develop cultural events such as European Language Week 3) Foyer developed to become more welcoming and inclusive of all groups e.g. signs, photos, various languages 4) Pupils will begin the second year of the Rights Respecting School programme	Year 3 (2026-27) 1) Discuss with older children the NI historical conflict and how far we have come. Exploration of identity and heritage 2) Staff preparation time given to infuse cultures into year group subject planning e.g. through PE and music 3) As more staff take part in Anti-Bias training this can be delivered throughout the curriculum

		4) Pupils will begin the third year of the Rights Respecting School programme
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Learner Centred (Year 1 2024-25)

Learner Centred 2024/25 Targets	Actions	Success Criteria (Quantitative & Qualitative)	Timescales	Resources	Monitoring & Evaluation
1) Pupils will continue to develop their understanding of Integration.	- The whole school will discuss what Integration means and be informed of each stage as we Transform - The Student Council will listen to the views of their peers and inform SLT	- After discussion the Student Council will inform SLT of their ideas and understanding of Integration - All pupils will have had the opportunity to discuss issues in an age-appropriate manner	September 2024 to June 2025	NICIE materials Minutes from Student Council meetings	Meet with the Student Council and ascertain their understanding to reflect the school perspective
2) Ensure that the voice of minority groups is heard and celebrated	- The principal and SLT will plan a yearly assembly programme to ensure that some festivals and important days are included e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day, Anti-Racism - Year groups will begin to include cultural days as part of their topic work and world music will be explored with the aid of Charanga - During Christian Assemblies phraseology will be adapted to include 'If you would like to pray...' 'Some people believe.....'	- A more broad and varied Assembly programme developed alongside Christian principles. - The pupils will have opportunities to learn about world cultures and beliefs and raise their understanding	September 2024 to June 2025	Relevant materials to aid children's understanding of festivals and multi-cultural days. Assembly timetable and relevant resources to lead children's understanding. Year group planning to include festivals and cultural events.	Review of the Assembly programme can be discussed by SLT and can be developed and changed further in light of progress. Review of teachers' planning can be made to ascertain learning opportunities for the pupils

3) Intergenerational connections will be formed between the school and the local fold	The choir will visit the fold and support the residents	Visits will take place between the school and the local Hillsborough Fold	Before June 2025	The local fold	Progress can be discussed with the Music Co-ordinator
4) Pupils will begin the first year of the Rights Respecting School programme	The Rights Respecting School programme will be bought and implemented amongst staff who in turn will cascade these principles to the pupils	All staff and pupils will be more aware and cognisant of the principles behind a Rights Respecting School, and these will be seen in action throughout the school	September 2024 to June 2025	Rights Respecting School programme	Review of attitudes throughout the school – staff questionnaires and pupil voice via the Student Council. Evaluate the level of engagement that the pupils have with the programme

High Quality Teaching & Learning (2024-2027)

What? Baseline position at April 2024	So what? Conclusions and recommendations for the way forward (24-27)
In Downshire, children are given opportunities to experience all learning areas to ensure a broad and balanced education and one that will help them to respond to the rapidly changing technological world. Our approach to teaching and learning promotes a child-centred education with an emphasis on encouraging children to actively engage in their own learning. We place an emphasis on core areas of learning such as communication, using mathematics and ICT as well as developing our children's personal, social, and thinking skills. We aim to ensure that the needs of individual children are catered for, and we deliver lessons for a wide range of abilities across the subjects. Active learning is promoted in the school as we have a desire to ensure that our lessons are delivered to children with various learning styles. For example, the school actively promotes outdoor learning, and every class participates in visits to the local forest where they can complete tasks and experience learning in the outdoors. We endeavour to make school an exciting experience and hopefully one which will help children to foster a love of learning. The staff are cognisant of the principles at the root of Integrated Education but for some this has been a new approach to education and more time needs to be devoted to further training in this area.	Downshire PS recognises that to fully embrace an Integrated ethos, the school wants to make necessary changes to the delivery of the curriculum and also in the general life of the school. This is something that we are committed to, and we have a desire to embed these principles on a daily basis. Further training from NICIE and IEF will be instrumental in ensuring this happens. This will make the staff even more confident in their roles. Areas such as becoming a Rights Respecting School will need to be examined along with our historical legacy. Building confidence and upskilling staff is a crucial element of ensuring that we become a fully Integrated school in attitude as well as name. Policies will be reviewed by the principal, staff and also Board of Governors. This will be to ensure that Integrated principles, such as, equality, anti-discrimination and diversity are highlighted and reinforced throughout the school. One way, in which this can be done, is to look at the RE scheme. Whilst we want one to reflect the Christian nature of the school, we recognise that children should have opportunity to learn about other faiths. The new scheme will therefore take cognisance of this.

The school also feels that more time should be spent considering what a Rights Respecting School is and how these ideas can be further implemented within Downshire.		
Now what? Future targets (subject to Ministerial decision)		
Year 1 (2024-25) 1) Staff consolidate their knowledge of RSS and begin to deliver this effectively to the pupils 2) Review of PDMU Policy 3) Further links between the school and the NICIE/EA and IEF will be made. Staff to attend NICIE and IEF training – Integration Works, Anti-Bias, Marketing – Use of Social Media to Promote the School 4) More training for staff to feel confident in discussing Integration with pupils 5) Development of a new RE scheme 6) The staff will produce an annual calendar of events which will be reflective of our school community and our commitment to inclusion and diversity	Year 2 (2025-26) 1) Exploration of identity amongst pupils. Exploration of heritage and history of Ireland/N. Ireland within year groups. 2) Growth Mindset to be promoted throughout the school 3) Each year group to focus on a religion and culture as part of their topic and to share learning with wider community as appropriate.	Year 3 (2026-27) 1) Exploration of heritage and history of Ireland/N. Ireland within year groups. 2) Introduction of Ulster Scots in the school 3) Introduction of another language to be taught in the school

High Quality Teaching & Learning (Year 1 2024-25)

High Quality Teaching & Learning 2024/25 Targets	Actions	Success Criteria (Quantitative & Qualitative)	Timescales	Resources	Monitoring & Evaluation
1) Staff consolidate their knowledge of RRS and begin to deliver this effectively to the pupils	Co-ordinator to lead staff in RRS workshops to upskill them to be able to aid learning in this area	Staff informed and confident in this area. All children have a full understanding of the RRS programme	September 2024 to June 2025	RRS resources	Ongoing review of lessons by individual class teachers and year groups. Evaluation of progress or otherwise recorded.
2) Review of PDMU Policy	Co-ordinator to lead staff review of policy and scheme. New resources can be examined by staff and trialled with the children. Staff surveys to be completed before and after implementation	Policy updated. Children have a greater understanding of PDMU themes New resources in use. Staff and pupils more confident in this area	September 2024 to June 2025	PDMU Curriculum	Policy reviewed and used effectively. Ongoing review of lessons and evaluation of children's understanding of the PDMU curriculum
3) Further links between the school and the NICIE/EA and IEF will be made. Staff to attend NICIE and IEF training – Integration Works, Anti-Bias, Marketing – Use of Social Media to Promote the School	The principal will further develop the positive relationship that the school has with these bodies The Principal will organise staff to take part in courses organised by NICIE/IEF All staff will then meet and be made aware of the training, information and areas that can be developed	As positive relationships are formed with these bodies, we will all benefit from the expertise of the professionals. Meetings and staff meetings will be organised to foster these relationships and information shared. Staff will have attended courses and shared good practice with their colleagues	September 2024 to June 2025	NICIE/IEF/EA Relevant Powerpoints and course details	Copies of information from training sessions. Good practice can then be seen in the school and classrooms

		The whole school will see the benefits of these new ideas as the ethos is formed			
4) More training for staff to feel confident in discussing Integration with pupils	Staff can access courses provided by NICIE or IEF to become more confident in delivering an Integrated ethos within the school	Staff to attend relevant courses, such as Anti-Bias training and be further skilled	September 2024 to June 2025	NICIE/IEF training programmes	Staff who participate in training can feedback to those who were unable to attend
5) Development of a new RE scheme	Staff will meet and look at various schemes that highlight Christianity but also other world views	Effective religious lessons are delivered to children throughout the school from P1-P7	September 2024 to June 2025	New RE scheme	Ongoing review of lessons by individual class teachers and year groups. Evaluation of progress or otherwise recorded.
6) The staff will produce an annual calendar of events which will be reflective of our school community and our commitment to inclusion and diversity	At a staff meeting the staff will decide on areas to be a focus throughout the year e.g. national and international special days and festivals.	The children will engage in a varied programme of global events, celebrating people from their own culture and worldwide, aiding their understanding.	September 2024 to June 2025	Internet, timetables	Timetable of events will be monitored and assessed monthly to ensure that events are celebrated. Review of lessons/assemblies by SLT will take place and any changes made.

Effective Leadership (2024-2027)

What? Baseline position at April 2024	So what? Conclusions and recommendations for the way forward (24-27)
The Board of Governors are passionate about the move towards Integration and voted for it unanimously. They instigated the parental ballot and have been a driving force in ensuring that the vote was so successful. Within the school there is also a Senior Leadership Team which comprises of the principal, vice-principal, and the two heads of Key Stages. They too are convinced that this is the best future for the school and are fully supportive. The BOGs and SLT have worked closely with the EA, IEF and NICIE over the last 18 months to ensure that the community has been informed of the process and given the relevant information about Integration to make an informed choice. A Transformation Action Group has been formed for this transition period and they have been enthusiastic in promoting the Integrated ethos. In turn, the principal is firmly committed to this exciting move for Downshire PS and believes that this is important for the school, the village and indeed the country. He has organised many sessions involving IEF and NICIE for the staff to learn more and actively participate in and he has also organised visits to a local Integrated school for staff. As 11-14% of pupils within the school come from a Catholic background, the school acknowledges that this is an excellent starting point to encourage an even higher representation A number of staff have also participated in NICE training, for example, Use of Media to Promote a School and Anti-Bias training.	A very supportive and productive relationship has been formed with the EA/NICIE and IEF and the school would be keen to further pursue this. Hopefully, this will be beneficial for all concerned. Every staff member has also gained knowledge about Integration and it would be useful to continue this process by giving them every opportunity to further their understanding and reflect on their practice. It will therefore be vital to encourage staff to attend relevant courses and this will also be important for their own personal development. This will in turn reflect the new vision and policies will have to be revised in light of this. In turn, the pupils need to be informed and Assembly will be a useful vehicle to allow this to happen. Their voice needs to be heard, so the Student Council can share the views of their peers to allow us to ascertain what the children would like to happen moving forward. Transformation can only happen successfully if people believe that this is an important development in the life of Downshire. Therefore, the Governors will appoint two co-ordinators who will have the role of further pursuing this goal and encouraging others to have a similar outlook. The Transformation Action Group will also support them and will be useful to assess the viewpoints of the wider school body. As the school moves towards Integration the values and ethos need to be revised to further reflect the new outlook. Governors also need to look at the current Admissions Criteria to ensure that that the school is open to all. The whole community needs to be considered and their views and

The teaching and non-teaching staff have also participated in learning about Integration and have had their voice heard with regards input into the Transformation Action Plan. The school believes that the pupils within the school should have their views heard. We have an active Student Council and ECO Club, with each class voting for class representatives. These groups have already participated in suggestions for the new school e.g. the new name, uniform logo, and school motto. Although we believe that the school is welcoming and to some extent celebrates diversity, we feel that it is only with Integrated status that we can fully embrace the principles of inclusivity regardless of background, faith or ethnicity.	opinions taken into account. In turn, we need to share how the Transformation journey is happening, keeping all the main stakeholders involved. Social Media will be a useful tool which can support us sharing relevant information, along with the Friday Note, that goes home to the school community each week. There will be opportunities to hear what the children, the staff, the Board of Governors, and the wider community think and then put into practice their ideas and hopes for the school.	
Now what? Future targets (subject to Ministerial decision)		
Year 1 (2024-25)	Year 2 (2025-26)	Year 3 (2026-27)
1) Continuation of the TAG group and the work of two Integration Co-ordinators to promote the ethos within the school and the community 2) Staff to explore the vision of the school as we move towards Integration – new Diversity and Inclusion Policy written. 3) Children informed about what Integration means in special assemblies. Pupils voice listened to via the Student Council to inform	1) Further Anti-Bias training ‘for more members of staff 2) To become part of an Integration Cluster Group 3) Senior Leadership Team to organise feedback from all stakeholders – including the pupils- concerning change of school name, uniform and logo. Further development of new school ethos	1) Policy written – Integration Policy 2) Staff development day devoted to Integration on an annual basis

future practice e.g. name of school logo, uniform	4) New Board of Governors constituted to reflect the Integration status of the school. Appropriate training will be given. 5) New constituted Governors to examine the current Admissions Criteria	
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Effective Leadership (Year 1 2024-25)

Effective Leadership 2024/25 Targets	Actions	Success Criteria (Quantitative & Qualitative)	Timescales	Resources	Monitoring & Evaluation
1) Continuation of the TAG group and appointment of two Integration Co-ordinators to promote the ethos within the school and the community	- The TAG group will organise Parent Information Sessions, and discuss community plans for the future - New Integration Co-ordinators will be appointed by Governors - Co-ordinators will use Sway to promote Integration through the Friday Note to parents and keep them informed of new developments - An Instagram/Facebook account will also be started to highlight areas that the school is moving towards and the new vision. - The website will be adapted to ensure that Transformation and Integration are a key part of it and it will be a source for people to find out relevant information	- TAG group formed and operational. - Parent Sessions well organised with opportunity for them to share their opinions and ideas - The two appointed Integration Co-ordinators will continue in post and use modern technology to promote the new ethos of the school	September 2024-June 2025	Facebook Instagram New Co-ordinators to promote Integration	Instagram and Facebook accounts opened and the numbers of posts viewed can be monitored SWAY will be monitored to see if the Friday Note being read by the parent body- feedback from parents The school website can be examined to see the number of hits TAG Meetings to be held with views and discussions voiced and minutes taken.

2) Staff to explore the vision of the school as we move towards Integration – new Diversity and Inclusion Policy written.	• NICIE to attend P1 Parent Information Sessions • NICIE to lead information development with staff informing them of the ethos and ascertaining staff views and hopes as we move forward. • Integration to become a standing item at each Board of Governors Meeting • Principal, along with SLT and staff, to write a new Diversity and Inclusion Policy	• Parents to be informed about integration so they are fully aware as their child enters P1 • Staff views will be ascertained and plans for the future written • Minutes of all Board of Governors meetings moving forward will have an item entitled Integration • Diversity and Inclusion Policy written and shared with all stakeholders	September 2024-June 2025	NICIE course materials	Agendas/Minutes of Staff meetings Agendas/Minutes of Board of Governors Minutes Diversity and Inclusion Policy written. Review of how ethos is changing and development of Integrated practice within the school. Feedback from parents about how informed they feel
3) Children informed about what Integration means in special assemblies. Pupils voice listened to via the Student Council to inform future practice e.g. name of school logo, uniform	• Co-ordinators and principal to plan whole school assemblies to inform the children about the Transformation process and the benefits of Integration for our school. • Student Council meet to discuss changes they would like to see in the school and SLT and Governors informed of these ideas.	• Assemblies delivered to the whole school highlighting relevant Integration information • Ideas gained from the Student Council reflecting the views and opinions of their peers	September 2024-June 2025	Powerpoints, videos, storybooks to share information with children. Minutes from Student Council	Review of Assemblies. Decisions informed about how to move forward. Work of the Student Council put into practice.

Community Connections (2024-2027)

What? Baseline position at April 2024	So what? Conclusions and recommendations for the way forward (24-27)
As 77% of parents voted for the Transformation of Downshire PS to Integrated status it is very clear that the school community is overwhelmingly in favour of such a move. The school's progress has been mentioned in press releases throughout the country. The new cohort of parents whose children will be in Nursery and P1 have been informed of the Transformation, reflecting the approval of the community for this new move. The principal and SLT are aware that the school website needs updated to reflect this new status and we also want to make greater use of social media to publicise what we are doing as a school. The school has a solid reputation for holding parents' meetings and information sessions and also for encouraging the children to be involved in the many opportunities given to them. In fact, there are many connections with the local community. For example, the local Protestant churches all participate in school life, we provide food for the local Food Bank, and community sports clubs provide coaching for the children. There is a vast array of afterschool clubs on offer such as hockey, drama, choir, art, rugby, badminton, cross-country, along with a full orchestra. However, we still believe that a wider selection of activities should be offered to the children which reflect varied traditions. If these were in place it would allow for a greater awareness of whole community traditions. Although the school has many links with other primary schools and post-primary schools in the area, further development of this to include other Integrated schools would be useful.	With the aid of IEF funding, the staff will be able to visit other Integrated schools to see them working and to glean information from relevant colleagues. The new Integration Co-ordinators will promote the school's new ethos and use modern technology as a tool to do this. The Rights Respecting Award will be implemented in our school. Staff will have training, led by the PDMU Co-ordinator, and then this will be spiralled down to the pupils. It is hoped that in the years to come we will be able to achieve the gold level. The school recognises that it is only the protestant churches who have previously been involved in the daily running of the school and we now need to include the local Catholic church. The principal will start promoting relationships between the school and the church. Efforts will be made to begin the teaching of the Sacraments for the children whose parents want them to take part. We have a wide and varied after school programme for the children to take part in and as we move towards Integration, we feel this does need further developed to include Gaelic sports, especially for girls and we would also like to see Irish dancing taught.

Now what? Future targets (subject to Ministerial decision)		
Year 1 (2024-25)	Year 2 (2025-26)	Year 3 (2026-27)
1) Utilize the IEF grant to allow staff to visit other Integrated schools 2) Utilize the new Integration Co-ordinators to promote our new school ethos digitally and online and the website will be updated to include an Integration section 3) Introduction within the school of teaching of the Sacraments (P4 and P7 children)	1) Further develop the after schools programme to include GAA sports especially for girls and Irish dancing 2) Assemblies planned to include a wider world view	1) Intergenerational links expanded 2) All local clergy to be invited to the opening assembly of the new school

Community Connections (Year 1 2024-25)

Community Connections 2024/25 Targets	Actions	Success Criteria (Quantitative & Qualitative)	Timescales	Resources	Monitoring & Evaluation
1) Utilize the IEF grant to allow staff to visit other Integrated schools	The principal will make contact with Forthill Integrated School and promote links. Staff will have the opportunity to go to the school, see how an Integrated school runs and learn more about the Integrated ethos.	- Staff will have visited a local Integrated school - Staff's understanding of Integration will increase	September 2024-June 2025	Local Integrated schools	Monitor the level of understanding the staff have about the ethos of Integration
2) Utilize the new Integration Co-ordinators to promote our new school ethos digitally and online. The website will be updated to include an Integration section	The new co-ordinators will create Facebook and Instagram accounts to show the wider community what the school has been involved in and to promote further the Integrated ethos. These will be updated weekly.	- New accounts will be set up and each week information and photographs will be shared with parents and the wider community. An effort will be made to ensure that the followers are continually increasing - The website will have an Integrated section that can be added to over the next number of years as we promote Integration for our school and the wider community	September 2024-June 2025	Facebook and Instagram accounts, website	Facebook, Instagram and Website can be monitored to see the level of interest and followers seeing the posts

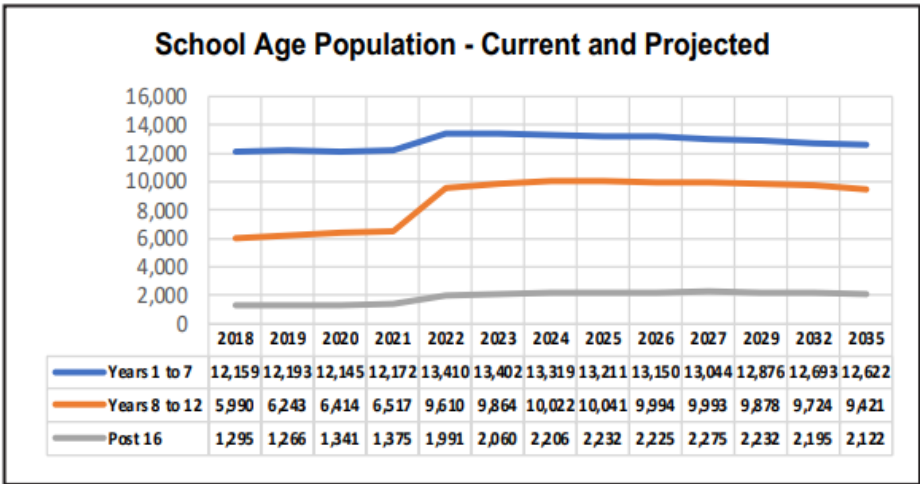
3) Introduction within the school of teaching of the Sacraments (P4 and P7 children). Links with St.Patrick's Church	The principal will meet with the local priest from St Patrick's parish and discuss how the school can teach the Sacraments for P4 and P7 children. A member of the teaching staff will have the responsibility to carry out this training on a weekly basis with those children who want to partake of it.	- A close relationship between the school and St. Patrick's will have been formed and children will be prepared for the Sacraments - Those children who have been involved in the training will go to the church and follow the teachings with a full understanding of them	September 2024-June 2025	St. Patrick's church	Review developments and how successful the relationship between the school and the church has been.
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KEY STATISTICAL DATA

BACKGROUND

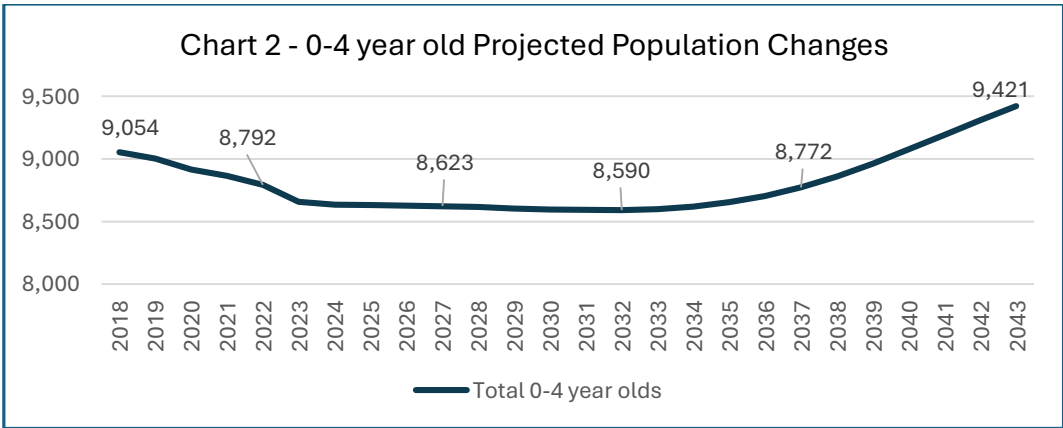
Area Context

[Chart 1](#) - Historic, Current and Projected Primary and Post Primary Schools in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area



Source: DE Census Data/NISRA

- [Chart 2](#) illustrates the projected population changes of 0–4-year-olds in the Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD from 2018 to 2043². It shows that the number of 0–4-year-olds declines until approximately 2033 and at this point the number of children is projected to gradually increase again until a peak in 2043.



Source: NISRA

² [Population datasets - NINIS: Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#) – Population Change; LGD2014; Population Projections (administrative geographies)

Strategic Area Plan

2. The Strategic Area Plan 2022-27: Planning for Sustainable Provision was published by the EA on 29 June 2022. Subsequent operational plans (OP) are published outlining area planning activities to be taken forward.
3. The Downshire PS proposal was not included in OP1. However, since publication of OP1 additional work streams were identified. The addendum provides a list of additional Short Term work streams at 1 February 2024 including the following action:

Downshire PS 7 Ballynahinch Road Hillsborough BT26 6AR	Background / Engagement	
	Downshire PS is proposing to transform to controlled integrated status.	
	Statutory Duty / Ministerial Priority	Key Theme(s)
	Statutory Duty - Integrated Education	Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Alternative Primary Provision

4. Map 1 illustrates the location of Downshire PS and alternative primary provision within a five-mile mapping radius. It must be noted that there are two Preparatory Schools within a five-mile mapping radius of Downshire PS as illustrated on Map 1, however, preparatory schools are not considered alternative schools as they sit outside the public, grant-aided funding system.
5. The snapshot at [Table 1](#) sets out the statistical data including admissions and enrolment details for schools and the latest Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) assessments. As there is only one existing integrated provision within a five-mile radius, Table 1 includes integrated provision within a six-mile radius.
6. [Table 1](#) illustrates 20 alternative primary schools within a six-mile radius of Downshire PS.
7. As DP 735 is seeking integrated status, Map 3 provides details of existing integrated provision within a six-mile mapping radius.

Controlled Primary Provision

8. There are 15 Controlled primary schools within a five-mile radius of Downshire PS (including Downshire PS). For 2025/26 these schools, when considered together, had approved admissions and enrolment numbers of 756 and 5316 respectively. The actual enrolment for the Controlled schools was 5037 (including supernumerary). Of the 15 schools, 14 were sustainable in terms of enrolment, with Old Warren PS falling short of the recommended sustainable threshold of 140 pupils for an urban school. These schools had a total of 647 available places (including 69 available places at Downshire PS).
9. At the conclusion of the 2026/27 admissions process, three schools were oversubscribed at first preference applications and 12 were undersubscribed. At the conclusion of the 2026/27 admissions process, Downshire PS received 67 first preference applications.

10. The ETI reports for the controlled sector schools indicate that there are no concerns regarding the quality of education at these schools.

Integrated Primary Provision

11. There are three alternative integrated primary schools (IPS), Fort Hill IPS, Oakwood IPS and Rowandale IPS within a six-mile radius of Downshire PS.
12. In 2025/26 the integrated schools had collective approved admissions and enrolment numbers of 116 and 812 respectively. Collectively in 2025/26 they had actual admissions and enrolment totals of 108 and 786 with 53 supernumerary pupils and 79 available places. Additionally, the religious split across all three schools shows an overall balance of 221 Protestant pupils, 284 Catholic pupils and 269 'Other' pupils.
13. All three integrated schools were sustainable with enrolments in excess of the minimum SSP thresholds for urban and rural schools.
14. At the conclusion of the admission process for September 2026/27 admissions process, Fort Hill IPS and Rowandale IPS received first preference applications in alignment with approved admissions number, and Oakwood was undersubscribed at first preference applications.
15. The ETI reports for the alternative integrated schools indicate that there are no concerns with the quality of education at these schools.

Catholic Maintained Primary Provision

16. There are three Catholic Maintained PS, St Aloysius PS, St Joseph's PS and St Colman's PS within a five-mile mapping radius of Downshire PS as illustrated on Map 1.
17. For 2025/26, these schools had collective approved admissions and enrolment numbers of 147 and 1030 respectively. Collectively in 2025/26 they had actual admissions and enrolment of 104 and 895 with 38 supernumerary pupils and 173 available places.
18. Two out of the three schools had enrolments in excess of the minimum SSP urban threshold of 140 pupils, however, St Colman's PS fell short of the recommended sustainable threshold for an urban school.
19. The ETI reports for the Catholic Maintained schools concluded that there are no concerns regarding the quality of education at these schools.

Irish-medium Provision

20. There is no Irish-medium provision within a five- mile radius of Downshire PS.
21. In summary, of the 21 schools:

- The area is well served with schools between all sectors with the exception of IM schools;
- 19 schools were above the recommended minimum sustainability enrolment threshold for an urban or rural school;
- Two schools were below the recommended minimum sustainability enrolment threshold for an urban or rural school; and
- There were 899 available places overall, however only 79 places were available in the integrated sector.

TABLE 1 : Downshire Primary School - Primary School Provision

School Ref No	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Distance in Miles by Road Google Maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
4016649	Downshire PS, Hillsborough, BT26 6AR	Rural		610	599	580	569	28	69	73	87	67	U-20	Jan 2017 - ASOS Jan 2014 - Good
				610	599	580	569	28	69	73	87	67		
Integrated Provision - 6 Miles Radius														
Controlled Integrated														
4053308	Fort Hill IPS, Lisburn, BT27 4TJ	Urban	4.6	210	205	212	216	28	22	30	30	31	0-1	March 2017 - ASOS Feb 2014 - Very Good
Sub-total				210	205	212	216	28	22	30	30	31		
GMI														
4066611	Oakwood IPS, BT17 9HN	Urban	6.7	203	187	190	181	8	30	25	29	14	U-15	Nov. 2024 - New style inspection Feb 2017 - Identifying and bringing about the necessary improvements
4066682	Rowandale IPS, BT67 0PB	Rural	6.9	399	354	372	389	17	27	53	57	56	U-1	March 2018 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Sub-total				602	541	562	570	25	57	78	86	70		

School Ref No	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Distance in Miles by Road Google Maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
Neighbouring Provision - 5 Miles Radius														
Controlled														
4016615	Riverdale PS, BT25 5LX	Rural	3.5	203	204	203	202	5	6	30	29	32	O-3	May 2017 - ASOS Feb 2010 - Very Good
4010807	Lisburn Central PS, BT28 1JJ	Urban	3.7	203	189	193	188	14	29	24	29	25	U-4	Nov 2025 - New style inspection May 2017 - ASOS Nov 2008 - Very Good
4016636	Meadow Bridge PS, BT26 6JR	Rural	3.9	290	292	289	293	13	10	37	41	33	U-8	June 2024 - New style inspection Jan 2018 - ASOS June 2011 - Good
4016144	Old Warren PS, BT28 1QP	Urban	3.9	196	111	117	123	15	88	14	28	14	U-14	June 2016 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
4011608	Anahilt PS, BT26 6BP	Rural	3.9	210	149	145	153	5	62	22	30	22	U-8	April 2018 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
4010885	Tonagh PS, Lisburn, BT28 1DQ	Urban	4.3	228	202	196	185	24	67	21	30	25	U-5	Sept 2019 - ASOS Sept 2016 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement

School Ref No	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Distance in Miles by Road Google Maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
4013334	Knockmore PS, Lisburn, BT28 1SA	Urban	4.4	212	233	230	218	105	99	24	30	20	U-10	Sept 2017 - ASOS Oct 2010 - Good
4010743	Largymore PS, BT27 5BT	Urban	4.6	196	194	195	196	10	10	28	28	16	U-12	June 2017 - ASOS Nov 2013 - Very Good
4010762	Brownlee PS, BT27 4AA	Urban	4.7	196	198	206	197	16	15	21	28	20	U-8	Nov 2018 - ASOS Oct 2011 - Very Good
4013305	Harmony Hill PS, Lisburn, BT27 4ES	Urban	5.2	609	605	612	627	24	6	88	87	88	O - 1	June 2018 - ASOS April 2015 - Good
4016441	Ballymacash PS, BT28 2EE	Urban	5.3	406	414	405	406	28	28	57	58	56	U-2	Jan 2017 - ASOS Oct 2013 - Good
4016145	Killowen PS, BT28 2UH	Urban	5.5	420	374	374	374	23	69	44	60	46	U-14	Sept 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
4016401	Pond Park PS, BT28 3BF	Urban	5.5	610	626	623	625	33	18	87	87	97	0-10	Jan 2018 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
5011575	Dromore Central PS, BT25 1AD	Urban	6.5	727	697	694	681	25	71	79	104	89	U-15	May 2018 - ASOS June 2011 - Good
Sub-total				4706	4488	4482	4468	340	578	576	669	583		

School Ref No	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Distance in Miles by Road Google Maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
Catholic Maintained														
4033306	St Aloysius PS, Lisburn, BT28 1TB	Urban	4.6	490	422	410	402	15	103	45	70	45	U-25	Jan 2019 - ASOS Jan 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
4030897	St Joseph's PS, Lisburn, BT27 4XE	Urban	4.6	395	385	392	389	17	23	45	56	53	U-3	Feb 2018 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
5036000	St Colman's PS, Dromore, BT25 1BD	Urban	5.7	145	107	102	104	6	47	14	21	13	U-8	April 2019 - ASOS March 2016 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Sub-total				1030	914	904	895	38	173	104	147	111		
Grand Totals				7158	6747	6740	6718	459	899	861	1019	862		
Preparatory														
4620050	Friends' School Prep, Lisburn BT28 3BH	Urban	4.6	N/A	144	143	151	N/A	N/A	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	Feb 2020 - ASOS Jan 2017 - ASOS March 2011 - Very Good
4620051	Wallace HS Prep, Lisburn, BT28 3AD	Urban	4.9	N/A	138	109	52	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sept 2019 - ASOS May 2013 - Very Good
Total				0	282	252	203	0	0	18	0	0	0	

The actual enrolment and admissions numbers include supernumerary pupils, however, exclude reception pupils (as per annual Census information).

The 1st preference applications do not include reception or statemented pupils - position at the conclusion of the EA Primary School Admissions Process 20.03.2026.

ASOS - Action Short of Strike

DP 671 - Rowandale IPS - New Nursery Unit - Approved 8/6/2023. This Nursery Unit has been approved a change from 26 part-time to 26 full-time places from Sept. 2025 as per the DE Standardisation exercise.

DP 255 - Rowandale IPS - Increase in approved numbers from 174/29 to 399/57 - approved 13/11/2014.

The 2 schools detailed below featured on the DE Resetting exercise, effective from the 2022/23 School Year -

Anahilt PS - Approved numbers decreased from 300/43 < 210/30

Fort Hill IPS - Approved numbers decreased from 240/30 < 210/30

Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

22. The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 came into operation on 26 October 2022. It amends the definition of Integrated education and what it means to be an Integrated school.
23. Section 3 of the act indicates that “In exercising any functions relating to integrated education the Department of Education must consult with -
 - (a) any body appearing to the Department of Education to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education, and if required
 - (b) any other body the Department of Education considers appropriate.
24. Section 4 of the Act has amended Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 in respect of the Department's statutory duty towards integrated education; the duty has been amended to “encourage, facilitate **and support** the development of integrated education”. “**Support**” is defined in Section 5 of the Act.
25. The Act also puts an onus on the Department to carry out different functions, such as:-

Article 3 of the Act states *“In exercising any functions relating to integrated education the Department of Education must consult with—*

 - a) any body appearing to the Department of Education to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education, and if required; and*
 - b) any other body the Department of Education considers appropriate.”*
26. The Department's duty to Integrated education must, however, be balanced alongside other relevant statutory and (educational) policy requirements to reach a reasoned conclusion and does not create any requirement to approve a proposal simply on the grounds that it relates to integrated education provision.

Support & Demand

27. Sections 5 and 6 of the 2022 Act reference the Department's duty to encourage, facilitate and now support integrated education.
28. In discharging its duties under these Sections of the Act, the Department has considered both the level of demand for integrated education in the area and the extent to which that demand is currently being met or could be facilitated.
29. Table 1 illustrates the enrolment trends at alternative integrated schools within a six-mile radius of Downshire PS, and Table 9 shows application history across three integrated primary schools. They both indicate that the integrated schools

tend to fill close to or above their approved admissions numbers. This demonstrates demand for integrated education in the local area.

TRANSFORMATION TO CONTROLLED INTEGRATED STATUS

30. The legal process for Transformation is defined and described in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. The Department published new transformation guidance³ in February 2026 (Transforming Together - Understanding the Pathway to Integrated Education) which supersedes the previous Integration Works, Transforming Your School⁴ guidance.
31. The Department notes that the CfC was written at a point in time when the previous Integration Works guidance was utilised. However, the new Transforming Together guidance identified key considerations for assessing transformation proposals and requires broadly similar information. The Department will take into consideration when assessing DPs for transformation. These are:
 - planning and engagement in the transformation process;
 - provision of Integrated Education;
 - sustainability;
 - demand for integrated education; and
 - area planning context.
32. The guidance advised that a DP should be published at least 18 months before the intended 1 September implementation date allowing time for the school to communicate its new Integrated identity, provide information on ethos and admissions, and attract pupils from the minority community. It also reflects experience that shorter lead-in times can hinder enrolment from the minority community and limits preparation.
33. The extended timeframe supports schools to implement necessary operational and cultural changes, including submitting revised admissions criteria for the following September.
34. The Downshire PS proposal aligns with this guidance: the transformation process began in 2022, with implementation planned for September 2025 (or as soon as possible thereafter), providing an appropriate timeframe for delivery if approved.

³ [Transforming Together - Understanding the Pathway to Integrated Education | Department of Education](#)

⁴ [Integration-Works-Transforming-your-School-December-2017](#)

Assessment against the Transformation Criteria

Planning and Engagement in the Transformation Process

35. The guidance states that in considering the proposal, the Department will want to be satisfied of the school's commitment to Integrated Education and its potential to become a sustainable Integrated school.
36. The CfC should demonstrate that the school is likely to provide Integrated Education by indicating how it intends to attract pupils of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none (including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic pupils), along with pupils from differing socio-economic backgrounds and abilities.
37. The CfC outlines the school's journey towards Transformation, detailing extensive engagement with stakeholders and the wider community. It explains that the Transformation Plan is a deliberate framework to support meaningful cultural and organisational change, ensuring the school fulfils its responsibilities under Integrated Education. Downshire PS already reflects the diversity of its local area across religious, socio-economic, cultural and ability backgrounds, and through this plan aims to fully meet the definition of an Integrated school over time. Structured around the characteristics of a successful school within the 'Every School a Good School' policy and underpinned by NICIE principles, the plan sets out actions from September 2025 to improve educational outcomes, strengthen engagement with minority communities, and build connections across all represented cultures. Ultimately, the school seeks to progress along its integration journey with a long-term goal of achieving the Excellence in Integrated Education Award.
38. A Transformation Action Group (TAG) was formally established in October 2023 made up of Governors, school teaching staff and parents. Annex B of the CfC provides details and dates of a range of events, activities and communications made by the school to staff, pupils, parents and the wider community.
39. The TAP states that the *"teaching and non-teaching staff have also participated in learning about Integration and have had their voice heard with regards input into the Transformation Action Plan"*.
40. The CfC asserts that the school has worked closely with the Department, NICIE and IEF to provide support and led information sessions for teaching staff and non-teaching staff and that that all pupils have had a role in the process of moving towards Integration.
41. The TAP states that while the school already provides a wide and varied programme, moving forward they want to further develop this by including Gaelic sports and Irish Dancing.
42. The school has included detailed plans in its TAP (Appendix A of the CfC) to reach out further with several community links including the further promotion of relationship with the local Catholic church. School leaders currently attend the

Sacrament services in St Patrick's Church for those children who are taking part in the Sacrament learning.

43. The TAP states that the school will develop cultural events such as, European Language Week and develop the after schools' programme to include GAA sports especially for girls and Irish dancing. The TAP further states that they will create Facebook and Instagram accounts to show the wider community what the school has been involved in and to promote further the Integrated ethos.
44. The TAP indicates that *"Diversity has happened naturally over the course of the last few years. Children from other nationalities and cultures have begun moving into the village and the school has welcomed them. We would like to see this growing even more. Our classes are increasingly becoming a mix of gender, religion, culture and ability. The school has begun to recognise this diversity and learn from those of different backgrounds"*. The CfC asserts that the school has lost potential pupils in the past because they have not offered the teaching of the Sacraments and that by becoming Integrated this issue would be addressed.
45. The CfC provides a TAP over a three-year period based on targets:- Learner Centred; High Quality Teaching & Learning; Effective Leadership; and Community Connections. These targets provide a baseline position as of September 2024, and what the school plans to do going forward.

Provision of Integrated Education

46. The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets out the meaning of Integrated education and religious balance in Article 1 (1) as *"Integrated education" means the education together, in an Integrated school, of:*
 - (a) those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including **reasonable numbers** of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons;*
 - (b) those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and*
 - (c) those of different abilities.*
47. As detailed in the submission, on 4 September 2025, in a Written Statement to the Assembly, you set out the Department's position on 'reasonable numbers' that as a general principle, the proposer is to provide evidence that the school is likely to be able to attract at least 10% of its total Year 1 or Year 8 from the minority religion, or 15% of the combined number of Protestant and Catholic Year 1 or Year 8 pupils, **in the first year of Transformation**.
48. It should be noted that DP 735 was developed and progressed in advance of the publication of the new Transformation guidance and the position paper on 'reasonable numbers'.

49. The 'reasonable numbers' paper advises that *'There may be exceptions to this general principle however, and each case will be considered on its own unique circumstances'*.
50. As part of the context in relation to the provisions of Section 1 and 2 of the 2022 Act, the CfC provided the information set out below. Where available, updated DE census data has been added to specific areas.

(a): those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons

Religion

51. Downshire PS attracts pupils from a Roman Catholic background in an area which is predominately Protestant population. From 2020/21 until 2025/26 the number of Roman Catholic pupils has remained fairly consistent between 12.30% and 13.45% and the Protestant pupils ranged between 49.56% and 56.50%. The pupil designating as 'Other' has risen slowly year on year from 30.14% (2020/21) to 38.14% (2025/26).
52. [Table 2](#) below reflects Downshire PS' religious breakdown mirroring the pattern above, demonstrating that the school attracts pupils from a Catholic background in an area which has a predominately Protestant population reflective of the area it serves.
53. The CfC indicates that *"The school has pupils from other religions and community backgrounds within it, including increasing numbers of those who have designated as having [sic] 'Other'. The school is also aware that official designation does not give the full picture. The school acknowledges that it caters for a significant number of children that come from mixed marriages and mixed relationships."*

TABLE 2: Downshire PS – Religious Balance Trends

Table 2 Academic Year	Protestant	Catholic	Other
2020/21	330 (56.50%)	78 (13.36%)	176 (30.14%)
2021/22	313 (53.96%)	78 (13.45%)	189 (32.59%)
2022/23	318 (53.54%)	72 (12.12%)	204 (34.34%)
2023/24	307 (51.25%)	72 (12.02%)	220 (36.73%)
2024/25	288 (49.66%)	75 (12.93%)	217 (37.41%)
2025/26	282 (49.56%)	70 (12.30%)	217 (38.14%)

Source: DE Census Data

54. The CfC asserts that *"The school's religious profile is currently reflective of the community make up, 58% Protestant or other Christian Religion, 27% from Catholic backgrounds and 15% other or no religion."* (this is assessed further in the Religious Balance section of the report).
55. [Table 3](#) indicates that in the 2025/26 school year, there were six Catholic pupils in Year 1, representing 8.22% of the cohort. The combined proportion of Protestant and Catholic pupils in Year 1 for the same year reached 14.29%, just

below the minimum thresholds of 10% and 15% outlined in your WMS of 4 September 2025⁵ setting out what a school is expected to meet in the first year of Transformation.

56. However, in the past six years from 2020/21, the school has exceeded 10% of Catholic pupils in Year 1 on three occasions and has exceeded the 15% of combined Protestant and Catholic pupils in four of those years.

Table 3: Downshire PS – 2025/26 Religious breakdown

Year	No religion / unknown	%	Other	%	Protestant	%	Catholic	%	Total	Total %
1	24	32.88%	7	9.59%	36	49.31%	6	8.22%	73	100.00%
2	27	35.53%	4	5.26%	34	44.74%	11	14.47%	76	100.00%
3	21	26.58%	10	12.66%	39	49.37%	9	11.39%	79	100.00%
4	24	26.96%	10	11.24%	48	53.93%	7	7.87%	89	100.00%
5	18	21.95%	7	8.53%	49	59.76%	8	9.76%	82	100.00%
6	22	25.29%	12	13.79%	43	49.43%	10	11.49%	87	100.00%
7	24	28.92%	7	8.43%	33	39.76%	19	22.89%	83	100.00%
Total	160	28.12%	57	10.02%	282	49.56%	70	12.30%	569	100.00%

57. [Table 4](#) shows the Year 1 religious composition of pupils at Downshire PS over a six-year period. The analysis shows the school met the minimum 10% threshold for Catholic Year 1 pupils in three of the six years (2020/21, 2021/22, and 2024/25) and exceeded the combined 15% threshold for Protestant and Catholic Year 1 pupils in four of the six years (2020/21, 2021/22, 2023/24 and 2024/25).

⁵ [Written Ministerial Statement – Reasonable Numbers | Department of Education](#)

Table 4: Downshire PS - Year 1 Religious breakdown

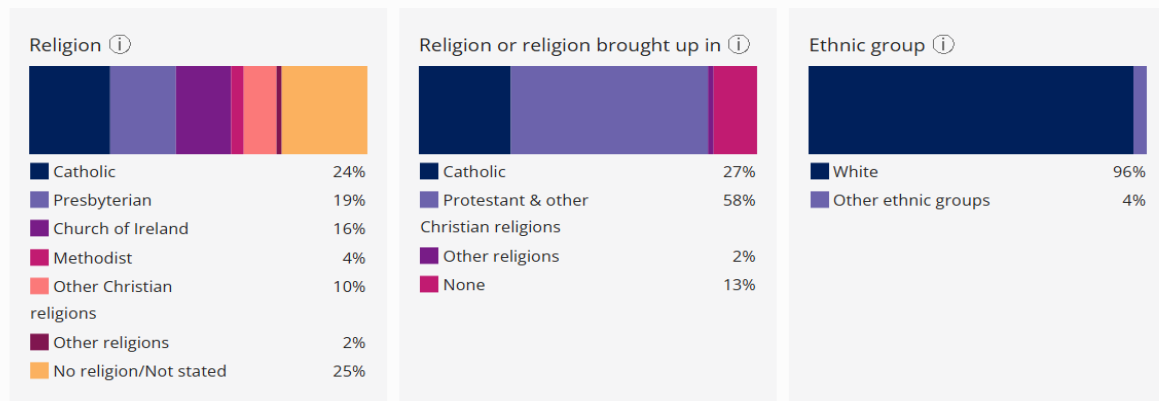
School Year	Religion	Year 1	% Religion	General Principle %
	Protestant	39	48.75	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	8	10	10.00%
2020/21	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			17.02%
	Other Christian	#	#	
	Other Non-Christian	*	#	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	#	#	
	Total Religion	80		
	Protestant	43	56.58	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	8	10.53	10.53%
2021/22	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			15.69%
	Other Christian	5	6.58	
	Other Non-Christian	0	0.00	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	20	26.32	
	Total Religion	76		
	Protestant	48	54.55	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	7	7.95	7.95%
2022/23	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			12.73%
	Other Christian	#	#	
	Other Non-Christian	*	#	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	#	#	
	Total Religion	88		
	Protestant	39	46.99	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	8	9.64	9.64%
2023/24	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			17.02%
	Other Christian	#	#	
	Other Non-Christian	*	#	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	#	#	
	Total Religion	83		
	Protestant	33	45.83	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	11	15.28	15.28%
2024/25	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			25.00%
	Other Christian	6	8.33	
	Other Non-Christian	0	0.00	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	22	30.56	
	Total Religion	72		
	Protestant	36	49.32	
	Roman Catholic (min 10%)	6	8.22	8.22%

2025/26	Combined Protestant and Catholic (min 15%)			14.29%
	Other Christian		0.00	
	Other Non-Christian	7	9.59	
	No Religion/Religion Unknown	24	32.88	
	Total Religion	73		

Source: DE Census Data

58. In the 2025/26 school year, there were six Catholic pupils in Year 1, representing 8.22% of the total cohort. When considered within the Protestant and Catholic cohort only (42 pupils), Catholic pupils account for 14.29% of that group. The overall proportion of Catholic pupils in the Year 1 intake therefore falls below the 10% threshold referenced in the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) for the first year of Transformation.
59. The revised transformation guidance reflects the 10% and 15% thresholds referenced in the WMS, while also introducing an alternative formulation. This states: “or, a minimum of [X] pupils (10% / 15% of the total number of Year 1 pupils or Protestant and Catholic Year 8 pupils).”
60. The table shows that the proportion of Catholic pupils within the Year 1 intake has fluctuated over the period. While earlier years indicate that the school was broadly meeting, or close to, the Department’s indicative thresholds, there was a decline in 2022/23 followed by an increase in 2024/25. The most recent data for 2025/26 indicates a further reduction. Overall, the trend does not demonstrate consistent upward growth.
61. Article 92 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 stated that “*the Department shall not approve a proposal unless reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic pupils are likely to attend the school.*” The 2022 Act updates this Article to state “*the Department shall not approve a proposal under this Article in relation to a school unless it appears to the Department that, if the school were to become, or be established as, a controlled integrated school, the school would be likely to provide integrated education*”. The 2022 Act also states the meaning of integrated education and religious balance in Article 1 (1) (a) as “*those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons*”.
62. The CfC, including the TAP, provides information on what the school has accomplished to date, and outlines its plans to enhance integration if the DP is approved.
63. The illustration below presents the religious composition of the Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD: 39% Protestant, 24% Catholic, and 37% classified as Other.

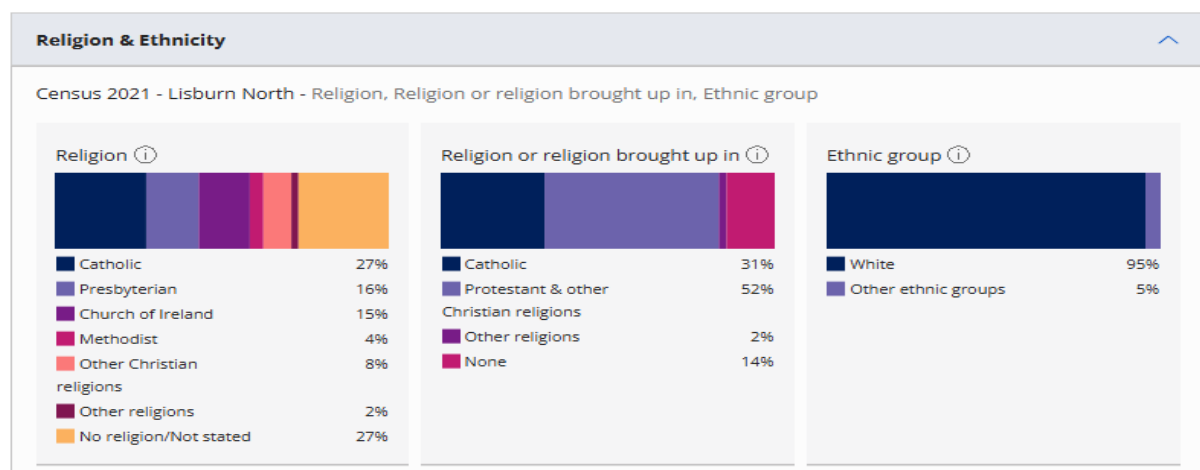
Census 2021 - Lisburn and Castlereagh - Religion, Religion or religion brought up in, Ethnic group



Source: NISRA Census 2021 - [Lisburn and Castlereagh Census Data](#)

64. Fort Hill IPS and Oakwood IPS are located within the Lisburn North DEA, while Rowandale IPS is located within the Downshire West DEA.

65. The illustration below depicts the religious composition of the Lisburn North DEA, with 35% Protestant, 27% Catholic, and 37% classified as Other.



Source: NISRA Census 2021 - [Lisburn North Census Data](#)

66. [Table 5](#) below compares the religious composition of pupils in the three alternative integrated schools with the demographics of the LGD and their respective DEAs. While Catholic representation remains a minority across both the LGD and DEAs, two of the schools have a higher proportion of Catholic pupils than would be expected based on local demographics. In contrast, Fort Hill IPS has a Catholic enrolment of 15.28% in 2025/26, which is below the area average. However, this represents a decrease from 20.28% in 2024/25, which was broadly in line with the local Catholic population. Overall, while currently lower, Fort Hill's Catholic enrolment remains relatively close to local demographic levels.

Table 5 - Total Enrolment Religious Breakdown 2025/26

School	Protestant (School)	DEA	Roman Catholic (School)	DEA	Other / No religion (School)	DEA	Total (School)
405-3308 Fort Hill PS Controlled Integrated	90 (41.67)	35%	33 (15.28%)	27%	93 (43.05%)	37%	216
406-6611 Oakwood IPS GMI	33 (18.23%)	35%	76 (41.99%)	27%	72 (39.78%)	37%	181
406-6682 Rowandale IPS GMI	92 (23.65%)	49%	152 (39.07%)	15%	145 (37.28%)	35%	389
Total	215 (27.35%)		261 (33.21%)		310 (39.44)		786 (100%)

67. The combined enrolment across the three schools comprises 215 Protestant pupils, 261 Catholic pupils, and 310 pupils from other or no religious backgrounds. Notably, pupils from a Protestant background represent the smallest cohort across the three schools, despite the area being predominantly Protestant.
68. [Table 6](#) illustrates the historic religious balance at Downshire PS and shows that the proportion of pupils from the minority background (Roman Catholic) has remained steady year on year across the past five years. It also demonstrates that while the number of pupils selecting “Other/No Religion” has increased year on year across the same period, the number of pupils from the Protestant background has dropped.

Table 6 Downshire PS – Religious Balance Trends

Religion of Pupil	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Protestant	330 (56.5%)	313 (54%)	318 (53.6%)	307 (51.3%)	288 (49.6%)
Roman Catholic	78 (13.4%)	78 (13.4%)	72 (12.1%)	72 (12%)	75 (13%)
Other	176 (30.1%)	189 (32.6%)	204 (34.3%)	220 (36.7%)	217 (37.4%)
Total	584	580	594	599	580

Source: School Census Return
Census data 2024/25

69. [Table 6](#) shows that in 2025/26 the religious breakdown at Downshire PS shows a similar pattern to the figures in [Table 5](#). The religious balance trends outlined above suggest that the current composition within the school reflects the broader religious demographic of the DEA.
70. The legislation and guidance for Transformation provides a mechanism for the Department to exercise its duty when a school meets the criteria set out in the guidance. The Department’s assessment of Downshire PS in the context of DP 735 indicates that enrolment from the minority background at the school has been stable to this point.
71. The CfC acknowledges that the percentage of children identifying as Catholic is low, however it is consistent with the overall percentage of families across the DEA (15% Downshire West).

Expressions of Interest

72. The Department received **EOI** forms outside the Department's statutory two-month objection period, or without a formal request during the assessment process. However, as a decision had not been taken on the proposal the Department accepted these and have included these as evidential material. The letter can be found below.
73. The process included an online form designed to capture both parental demand and cultural/religious identity, as required by legislation. Respondents were asked to indicate their family's cultural/religious background from the following categories:
 - Mix of Catholic and Protestant
 - Protestant (background, culture and/or religion)
 - Catholic (background, culture and/or religion)
 - A different background, culture and/or religion



8th December 2025

Expressions of Interest in Integrated Education at the school

In considering the recent Ministerial statement and the developments relating to schools seeking to become Integrated recently, we decided to gather Expressions of Interest in Integrated Education. This summary covers the Expressions of Interest received between 14th November and the 8th December. Respondents were members of the public and parents currently attending Downshire PS as a Controlled school. The online Expression of Interest Form used can be viewed [here](#).

As well as additional evidence of parental demand, the Form was created to enable parents to more fully express their cultural and religious identity, as required by the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022. This question was framed within the Form as follows:

"Culture and Religion

One important aspect of Integrated Education, outlined in the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022, is "the education together, in an Integrated school, of those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none: including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons".

In Northern Ireland, the terms Protestant and Catholic are often used as shorthand for identifying our cultural/traditional background, as well as our faith background, even if we don't practise religion.

Integrated schools pay attention to this because we want to bring communities together.

Please answer the following questions with this emphasis on your family's cultural/religious background in mind. Thank you.

Parent/Carer 1: What is their cultural/religious background?

- *Mix of Catholic and Protestant (background, culture and/or religion)*
- *Protestant (background, culture and/or religion)*
- *Catholic (background, culture and/or religion)*
- *A different background, culture and/or religion"*

The Form then goes on to ask about Parent/Carer 2 and the same cultural/religious background options are given in relation to the designation of the children in the family, up to a maximum of three children per respondent.

Principal: Mr M Poots

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Summary of responses

There were 198 respondents and collections are ongoing. Eleven respondents did not have a child of primary school age and of these, eight responded to say they supported the school's proposal and three responded that they did not.

187 respondents had a child of primary school age. Of these respondents, 157 said that if the school was to become Integrated, they would be interested in sending their child to the school and thirty respondents answered no to this question. Of the 157 respondents who have children of primary school age and expressed an interest in sending their child to the school if it were to become Integrated, 37% persons responding as 'parent 1' designated their background as Catholic, and 49% as Protestant. Respondents designated the background of 'parent 2' as 34% Catholic and 57% Protestant.

Table 1: Respondents' designations of the cultural and/or religious background of Parents '1' and '2'

Culture/religious background of parent 1	Number	%	Culture/religious background of parent 2	Number	%
Catholic background, culture and/or religion	58	37%	Catholic background, culture and/or religion	52	34.2%
Protestant background, culture and/or religion	77	49%	Protestant background, culture and/or religion	87	57.2%
Mix of Catholic and Protestant background, culture and/or religion	13	8.3%	Mix of Catholic and Protestant background, culture and/or religion	9	5.9%
A different background, culture and/or religion	9	5.7%	A different background, culture and/or religion	4	2.7%**
Totals	157	100%	Totals	152*	100%

*5 respondents did not provide this information

**rounded up by 0.07% to give 100% total

The 157 respondents who have children of primary school age and expressed an interest in sending their child to the school if it were to become Integrated represent 281 children. Table 2 below outlines how those respondents designated their children within the options given.

Table 2: Religious Identity designation of children whose parent/guardian expressed an Interest in sending a child to Downshire primary School if it were to become Integrated

Culture/religious background of child	Number: 1 st child in family	Number: 2 nd child in family	Number: 3 rd child in family	Total number	percentage
Catholic background, culture and/or religion	36	20	5	61	21.7%
Protestant background, culture and/or religion	59	45	10	114	40.6%
Mix of Catholic and Protestant background, culture and/or religion	40	27	5	72	25.6%
A different background, culture and/or religion	22	9	3	34	12.1%
Totals	157	101	23	281	100 %

A quarter of respondents designated their children as having a mixed Catholic and Protestant background. It is possible that these parents may designate as 'other' within the DE school census data as neither of the former descriptors are an accurate reflection of their cultural and/or religious identity. In 24/25, the school had 38.2% of pupils designated as 'other', 49.4% as Protestant and 12.4% designated as Catholic.

The data provided above relates to parents who have expressed an interest in sending their child to our school if it were to become Integrated, and their children. It provides additional and significant evidence of parental demand for Integrated Education at Downshire Primary School and also shows that there is cultural and religious diversity within the families who have expressed interest in sending their child to our school if it were to become Integrated.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Hanna
Chair of the Board of Governors

Downshire Primary School
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74. Table 2 in the EOI letter shows the religious breakdown of the 281 children represented in the survey. Analysis of the responses indicates that the religious identity designation of children whose parents or guardians expressed an interest in enrolling at Downshire PS, should it attain Controlled Integrated status, demonstrates a broad and inclusive community profile. Of the 281 children represented in the survey:

- 114 were identified as having a Protestant background;
- 61 were identified as having a Catholic background;
- 72 were identified as coming from a mixed Catholic and Protestant background; and
- 34 were identified as belonging to a different cultural or religious background.

75. This distribution reflects representation from both main traditions, alongside a notable proportion of mixed and other backgrounds.

Expressions of Interest of Minority Religion

76. The additional [EOI](#) information provided indicates a positive level of interest from families across a range of backgrounds, including those identifying as Catholic, Protestant, and other traditions. This suggests that there is a potential pipeline of pupils from the minority community who may choose the school in the event of transformation. However, it is recognised that EOIs do not provide certainty regarding actual enrolment and must be considered alongside recent intake trends, which show some variability in the proportion of pupils from the minority religion. Notwithstanding this, when viewed in the round with the school's TAP, and its engagement with the local community, the EOI data provides supportive - though not conclusive - evidence that the school may improve its ability over time to attract more Catholic pupils.

77. Year 1 intake data shows that the school has met or exceeded the Department's 'general principle' thresholds in multiple years. These figures suggest that

Downshire PS enrolment is generally reflective of its local demographic context. The school has already achieved above the 10% 'general principle' level in numerous years and has commenced the taking of sacraments.

Socio-Economic Deprivation

(b): those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not;

78. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2017 the Hillsborough 1 area (in which the school is located) is ranked as 862 out of 890 (1 being the most deprived and 890 the least deprived).

Free School Meals

79. NISRA statistics indicate that around 26% (90,858) of pupils in Northern Ireland are entitled to free school meals (25.9% in 2025/26⁶). Of that 26%, 27% (43,675) are from primary and preparatory provision.
80. The CfC asserts that while the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is relatively low at Downshire PS, it is reflective and in keeping with the NIMDM ranking of the wards and the general profile of the main areas from which the school attracts most of its pupils from.

Table 7 Downshire PS- Pupils entitled to Free School Meals

Academic Year	Pupils entitled to Free School Meals	Pupils taking Free School Meals (FSME) %
2020/21	35	5.50%
2021/22	36	5.7%
2022/23	38	5.9%
2023/24	39	6.0%
2024/25	28	4.8%
2025/26	28	4.9%

Source: DE Census Data & CfC

81. [Table 7](#) above shows that the number of pupils entitled to FSM has remained relatively constant in the past six years.
82. While the number of pupils entitled to FSM is low, at 4.9% in 2025/26, it is in keeping with the NIMDM (Hillsborough 1 is 862 out of 890) and the general profile of the main areas from which the school attracts pupils.

School Support

83. The CfC states that the school supports those pupils from a disadvantaged background. There is pre-loved uniform sales throughout the year organised by the very active PTA. The cost of school trips, including the P7 trip to London, at times have been paid for by the school, so that all can attend.

⁶ [Free School Meal Entitlement 202526.pdf](#)

Newcomers⁷

84. The CfC asserts that there is a low percentage of Newcomer children attending Downshire PS and that it is reflective of the local area. The CfC further asserts that it is hoped that when the transformation plan is put into practice that this may encourage others to join the school.
85. Northern Ireland Census data shows that 98% of those living within Downshire West and Downshire East (the areas from which the school attracts most of its pupils) state their first language as English with the remaining 2% 'Other' as their main language. <https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/area-explorer-2021/N10000703>
86. [Table 8](#) below shows the number of newcomer pupils attending Downshire PS in the last six years. It shows that there are low numbers of newcomer pupils attending.

Table 8 Downshire PS – Newcomer pupils

Section	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Newcomer pupils	*	*	*	*	*	*

Source: DE Census Data

(c) those of different abilities.

87. The CfC asserts that Downshire PS caters for pupils of all abilities and it provided details of the range of standardised scores based on Cognitive Ability Tests. It also asserts that this provides clear evidence that the school caters for children across all nine stanine bands, within each year group.

Table 9– Range of Standardised Scores Achieved by pupils in Downshire PS May 2023

Data from May 2023 Assessments	Progress Test English (standardised scores: range)	Progress Test Maths (standardised scores: range)
Primary 3	72-125	72-132
Primary 4	73-134	69-139
Primary 5	83-140	83-141
Primary 6	77-140	69-137
Primary 7	69-138	77-140

Unverified – School source.

88. The CfC also asserts that the pupils transitioning from Year 7 to Year 8 transfer to selective and non-selective schools and to Controlled, Integrated and Catholic Maintained Post Primary schools. While most pupils transfer to selective post primary schools, the CfC states that a significant number of pupils transfer to non-selective post primary schools with Dromore High School and Fort Hill Integrated College being the main schools.

⁷A 'Newcomer' is defined as a 'child or young person who has enrolled in a school but does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher'.

89. It further asserts that the school has strong links with a range of external agencies, e.g. EA Psychology Service, The Autism Advisory Intervention Service, RISE, Literacy Support Service, EA Behaviour Support Service and Health Visitors and by working together they can ensure that the needs of all children are met.
90. In terms of pupil with SEN in 2025/26 there were 28 pupils (4.9%) enrolled that had a statement of SEN (Stage 3) and 52 pupils (9.1%) at stages 1-2 of the statementing process. The school has strong links with a range of external agencies.
91. Around 20% (70,687) of pupils in Northern Ireland have identified Special Educational Needs (20.1% in 2025/26⁸). Nine percent (31,949) have a statement of SEN, and a further 11% (38,738) have SEN without a statement.
92. The CfC states that the school continues to provide support to those pupils who do not have a statement but continue to require additional support in the classroom.
93. [Table 10](#) below shows that the number of pupils with a statement of SEN (Stage 3) has increased over the past six years.

Table 10 Downshire PS Pupils with a Special Educational Need (SEN)		
Academic Year	Pupils with SEN - Stages 1 & 2	Pupils with SEN - Stage 3
2020/21	73	8
2021/22	74	8
2022/23	54	20
2023/24	39	24
2024/25	46	24
2025/26	52	28

Source: DE Census Data & CfC

* In 2021 changes were made to the SEN stages, reducing from 5 stages to 3

94. In line with the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on “reasonable numbers”, the Department has considered whether the school is likely to provide integrated education through the presence of a sufficient representation of both Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils at the point of transformation and over time. The available evidence indicates that the proportion of Catholic pupils within the Year 1 intake has been variable across the reporting period, with the school meeting or approaching the indicative 10% minority threshold in a number of years, but not consistently, and with the most recent 2025/26 intake falling below this level. Similarly, the combined proportion of Protestant and Catholic pupils has exceeded the indicative 15% threshold in most years, although the latest data indicates a reduction below this level.
95. Notwithstanding the variance, the Department has considered the evidence in the round. This includes the broader whole-school religious profile, which demonstrates an established presence of pupils from both main traditions; the school’s previous ability to exceed the indicative thresholds for the year after

⁸ [Special Educational Needs 202526.pdf](#)

transformation; and, importantly, additional evidence of future demand, including EOs which show a move towards a potential increase of pupils from a Catholic background. The TAP outlines a range of practical steps to help the school better engage with underrepresented groups and become more welcoming to pupils from the minority religion. These include introducing sacramental provision, giving greater recognition to different faiths in the curriculum, providing anti-bias training for staff, and building stronger links with the wider community. Overall, the plan shows a clear commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion.

96. The current Year 1 intake does not provide clear assurance that the thresholds will be met at the point of transformation. However, based on historic Year 1 enrolment indicates that it could be assumed that the threshold is likely to be met.
97. The Department's Irish-Medium and Integrated Education Team (IMIE) provided an input to the proposal which can be found in full at [Appendix E](#). It has indicated that the proposal to transform Downshire PS to controlled integrated status is broadly consistent with the principles of the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022 and aligns with the Department's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education. It is supported by a clear demonstration of parental demand, does not require additional capital investment, and would increase the availability of integrated places in an area where provision is currently limited. The proposal is also aligned with the objectives of Vision 2030, including expanding access and creating an integrated pathway in Hillsborough, with emerging evidence indicating local demand for integrated education.
98. However, it has also indicated that while the TAP is comprehensive and well aligned with NICIE and "Every School a Good School" principles, the CfC does not fully reflect the requirements of the WMS on "reasonable numbers." In particular, it lacks quantified projections, clear targets, and a defined trajectory for achieving and sustaining a balanced intake. This limits the Department's ability to assess compliance with the statutory definition of integrated education and to determine, with confidence, whether a reasonable mix can be achieved in practice. On balance, although the proposal is strategically aligned and supported by stakeholders, further clarity and quantification would strengthen assurance in relation to delivery against legislative and policy expectations.
99. In summary, the school is meeting the requirements of the Integrated Education Act in terms of those of different cultures, those experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not and those of different abilities. Although the school has a religious mix in its enrolment, the highest number of pupils from the minority religion were enrolled in 2020/21 and 2021/22. The school's Year 1 enrolment for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2024/25 indicated that the school met both requirements as set out in the reasonable numbers position paper for a first year intake, however its religious balance has not improved significantly since the school began its Transformation journey in 2022 (12.12% in 2022/23 to 12.30% in 2025/26).

Sustainability

100. Downshire PS is a popular and sustainable primary school. The school has demonstrated a commitment to the Transformation process and the parental ballot further demonstrates the desire to transform to integrated education on the part of parents of pupils at the school. Save for the financial position (of the school) there are no significant concerns regarding sustainability as measured against the SSP criteria.
101. This proposal does not seek to increase admissions or enrolment. It is also unlikely to negatively impact on neighbouring Integrated Primary Schools.
102. However, if there is a change to Downshire PS' admissions criteria because of an approval decision, there is potential for a shift in the application trends going forward. There is potential for the Catholic-Maintained primary schools to admit fewer Catholic pupils if this DP is approved.
103. The transformation guidance indicates that schools should familiarise themselves with the SSP and demonstrate how they meet the six key indicators. Additionally, they should also explicitly demonstrate that they have the capacity to ensure a high-quality educational experience and that they can identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all pupils.
104. In approving Transformation to integrated status, an essential consideration for the Department is that the new integrated school will be viable and sustainable for the long term.

Sustainability Criteria Assessment

Criterion 1: Quality Education Experience

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Assessment

105. The last completed full inspection of Downshire PS was carried out in January 2014, and as such the report is based on information which is more than 10 years old and cannot be relied upon at this time.
106. In 2025/26 Downshire PS operated as a 21-class base with a three-form entry for all classes and a two-class nursery unit. The school has 24.10 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers which exceeds the minimum of four teachers required under SSP.

Special Educational Needs

107. In 2025/26 Downshire PS had 28 pupils with Statements of SEN stage 3 enrolled and 52 with stage 1-2. The overall number of SEN pupils (all stages) enrolled at the school was 80.
108. The CfC states that *"in recent years, two Special Educational Needs Coordinators have been appointed to support those children who need additional*

help. We also have two further members of staff who provide Learning Support in small groups or individual settings.”

109. The CfC also states that the school has strong links with EA Psychology Service, Autism Advisory Intervention Service, RISE, Literacy Support Service, EA Behaviour Support Service and Health Visitors.

Extra-Curricular Activities

110. The school's website shows that Downshire PS offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities ranging from Hockey, Badminton, Football, Rugby, Netball, Cricket, Art and Craft, Cycling Proficiency, Cross Country Running, Drama, Swimming, Choir, Cookery, Irish Dancing, Golftastic, Scripture Union, Dodge Ball, Tag Rugby, Orchestra and Green Fingers Club.
111. The school is a member of the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA).

Physical Environment

112. The CfC states that the school shares the site with Hillsborough Village Centre. Downshire PS operates as a 21-class base. The school also operates a two-class nursery unit.
113. Externally the school has four main playground areas made up of hard play and grass play areas. The CFC states that the school actively promotes outdoor learning, and every class participates in visit to Hillsborough Forest where they can complete tasks and experience learning in the outdoors.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

114. The SSP recommends a minimum enrolment threshold of 105 pupils for a sustainable and viable rural primary school. The current approved admissions and enrolment numbers at Downshire PS are 87 and 610 respectively.
115. [Table 11](#) sets out the school's actual admissions and enrolment over the last five years. While Year 1 admissions have been slightly below the approved admissions number, they have remained relatively stable. Overall enrolment has remained stable. The number of children enrolled has consistently exceeded the SSP minimum enrolment threshold.

Table 11: Downshire PS Admissions and Enrolment Figures

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Approved Admissions - 87						
Approved Enrolment - 610						
Year 1	80	76	88	83	72	73
Year 2	75	81	80	89	80	76
Year 3	83	77	80	82	89	79
Year 4	83	85	80	87	80	89
Year 5	87	83	88	82	87	82
Year 6	88	89	85	90	82	87
Year 7	88	89	93	86	90	83
Total Y1-Y7 including SEN	584	580	594	599	580	569
Total Pupils with a Statement of SEN	8	8	20	24	24	28
Nursery Pupils	52	52	52	52	49	52
Total Pupils	636	632	646	651	629	629

Source: Schools +

116. [Table 12](#) shows the pattern of applications to the school. The table shows that the school has been undersubscribed with first preference applications in each of the past five years. While first preferences applications are strong, they remain below the approved admissions of 87.

Table 12: Downshire PS - Applications

Year	Approved Admissions	First Preferences	Total Applications (all preferences)	Total Admissions
2020/21	87	79	79	79
2021/22	87	71	75	75
2022/23	87	86	93	87
2023/24	87	79	85	85
2024/25	87	72	73	73
2025/26	87	71	78	78
2026/27	87	67	69	*

Source: School Census Return *Not yet verified

117. At the conclusion of the admissions process for 2026/27 there were 67 first preference applications and 69 in total.

Downshire PS Nursery Unit

118. The nursery unit has only been oversubscribed with first preference applications in two of the past five academic years. A small number of underage children have been admitted to a funded pre-school education place in the nursery unit in three of the last four years, but none have been admitted in the current academic

year. In 2024/25 and 2025/26 the total number of pupils admitted was less than the 52 part time places offered. See [Table 13](#) below:

Table 13 Pre-School Provision Downshire PS

Academic Year	Statutory Places Available (PT)	1st Preference Applications	Total Applications	Target Age Admitted	Under Age Pupils Admitted	Total Number Admitted
2020/21	52	50	56	52	0	52
2021/22	52	74	82	52	0	52
2022/23	52	50	51	49	3	52
2023/24	52	51	55	50	2	52
2024/25	52	55	56	47	2	49
2025/26	52	60	83	51	0	51

Source EA, ASU branch

* based on 1st preference statistics at the conclusion of the admissions process.

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

119. The school's provisional Deficit position as of 31 March 2026 is -£864,109. The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2025 was -£678,375.
120. Based on the Interim Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations, the school received a total CFF budget of **£2,287,985** in the 2026-27 financial year for **595¹** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of **£3,845**. The average for all primary schools is **£4,426**.
121. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **28⁹** pupils, which represents **4.92%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes.
122. The CfC states the projected 3-year plan would indicate that by 2026/27 the school will be in a deficit position of - £858,850. The deficit is a significant concern and it will be important for the EA to work closely with the school to address it.
123. Given the current enrolment Downshire PS does not receive any funding in relation to Small Schools Support funding or Principals' Release Time.

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

124. The CfC states that since the last ETI inspection a new Principal and Vice Principal have been appointed. Commenting on DP 735 the ETI noted that: -
"The principal was appointed in November 2020 and previously held the post of vice-principal in the school. A new internal vice-principal appointment was made in

⁹ The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2025 census data was used to determine the 2026-27 CFF allocation). The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year. In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

2021' and 'A number of teaching posts were made permanent at that time which brought stability to the staff team'.

Criterion 5: Accessibility

125. Downshire PS is situated in the village of Hillsborough, and is easily accessible by foot, public and private transport. Most pupils live within a short travel distance to Downshire PS as demonstrated on Map 2.
126. The CfC asserts that the school's location on a major arterial route maximises parental accessibility for public and private transport networks.

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

127. The CfC asserts that the school has an active Parent Teacher Association and enjoys excellent links with the local community which are long lasting. They have also created new partnerships within the local area. These include links with the following: -

- Hillsborough Castle
- Strong links with local and national charities such as local foodbank, dementia centre and British Royal Legion
- Local churches
- Pupil Voice groups
- Peace Proms
- Mental Wellbeing Focus – Children's Mental Health Week, Hello Yellow, Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day
- Links with local businesses, the Rotary Club, and visitors to the school
- Regular use of the local environment – Hillsborough Forest
- Placements for PGCE/BEd student teachers and Classroom Assistants
- Links with pre-school, post primary and other integrated primary school settings
- Sport community link – local tournaments, Irish dancing, Gaelic, Ulster Scots Club, Drama, rugby, football, golf, hockey
- Involvement in the Comenius Project

128. Downshire PS is not currently involved in any Shared Education programme.

Demand for Integrated Education

129. The CfC states that the BoG began initial exploration of transformation potential in September 2022 when a member of the BoG requested that NICIE come to the school to discuss the possibility of Integration for Downshire PS and NU. The Governors were unanimously supportive of this request.
130. The CfC states that following a resolution being passed by the BoG on the 28 September 2023, a ballot was conducted by Civica Election Services from 20 November 2023 to 11 December 2023 in respect of a proposal to transform to

Controlled Integrated Status from 1 September 2025. From a total of 872 entitled to vote, 575 votes were cast (65.9% turnout) with 441 votes in favour of the Transformation (76.7%) and 134 votes not in favour of the Transformation (23.3%). The Department notes that the outcome of the parental ballot meets the legislative requirement that over 50% of the parents have voted (65.9%) and that a simple majority (76.7%) have voted in favour making the parental ballot valid and the proposal for transformation can be pursued.

131. The Department notes the level of engagement that has been undertaken by the school in respect of the transformation process. The school has embraced the opportunity to seek Transformation. It also notes the consistent religious enrolment trend, and the commencement of the sacramental preparation and established links with the local Catholic church. Additionally, the TAP outlines how the school will work to engage its minority community over the next three years and how it intends to further develop local connections across all the cultures and traditions that are currently represented within the school. The school states that as it moves through the Integration Journey, its long-term objective will be achieving the Excellence in Integrated Education Award.
132. The TAP states that new BoG will be constituted to reflect integrated status in 2025/26 (which was the year after the proposed transformation was to take effect).
133. There is no information on what the school has been doing in the interim period since the CfC was submitted for publication other than providing an update on the EOIs. The BoG did not write in during the statutory two-month objection period to give an update on what the school has completed since the CfC was submitted; nor did NICIE provide any meaningful evidential input of same. The CfC provides information about the school, and the transformation plan provides information about what the school will do if the DP is approved. Additionally, a review of the school's website shows that it has an Integration link which includes the Principal's initial letter to parents regarding transformation, frequently asked questions and a letter from the Chair of the BoG encouraging parents to vote, however, this does not seem to have been updated to take account of what the school has achieved to date, which in the context of a school that is seeking to transform would be considered an important source of information for the existing school community and any future cohort of pupils.
134. The CfC states that *'The approval of this proposal will enable the Department of Education to meet the identified parental demand for Integrated Education within the school and the surrounding community.'*
135. The CfC states that *"The school's decision to transform to Integrated status arises from the desire firstly amongst Governors and then the local community to provide an Integrated school within the local area. There is currently no provision for an Integrated primary school within Hillsborough and the closest available Integrated school is in Lisburn. The local area is becoming more and more diverse and already the school attracts a significant percentage of pupils from the minority religion group (Catholic 12%). Although our ethnic group percentage is low, this has been growing and the school now attracts children*

from various cultures and backgrounds. Local churches have voiced their support for Integration. The Transformation Action Group is made up of many members who are enthusiastic in their approach and many people have contacted the school to say what a positive impact they believe the change will have on the local community.”

136. It must be noted that [Table 1](#) above (snapshot) illustrates the enrolment trends at alternative integrated schools within a six-mile radius of Downshire PS, and [Table 14](#) shows application history across three integrated primary schools. They both indicate that the integrated schools tend to fill close to or above their approved admissions numbers. This demonstrates demand for integrated education in the local area.
137. DP 735 is not proposing to create any additional places for pupils at the school rather, approval of the proposal would transform the school from Controlled to Controlled Integrated status, meaning the school’s complement would be educated in an Integrated setting.
138. The Department published its first report on demand for Integrated Education in May 2026¹⁰, which indicates that there is potential demand for integrated provision within this locality. It also published [Vision 2030 - A Strategy for Integrated Education](#) on the 11 June 2025¹¹. Vision 2030 is the second strategic plan for Integrated Education, covering the period 2025–2030.
139. The Vision 2030 document is building on the initial findings within the [Department’s Section 10 report](#)¹². The Department’s Section 10 Report identified Lisburn and Castlereagh as an area where there is unmet demand for post-primary Integrated Education. The more recent May 2026 demand report builds on this by highlighting that demand tends to be quite localised, and is most clearly seen in admissions patterns, with pressure often focused in particular schools rather than spread evenly across all areas.
140. Across the three alternative integrated primary schools, there are 116 approved admissions and 812 approved enrolments. In 2025/26, actual uptake was slightly lower, with 108 admissions and 785 pupils enrolled. The evidence also indicates that there were 79 available integrated primary places across the nearest integrated primary schools in that year.

Area Planning Context

141. This proposal aligns with the current Strategic Area Plan and Operational Plan as referenced in paragraph 2 above.
142. The CfC asserts that there were ongoing discussions with NICIE, IEF and EA Sectoral Support Officers from September 2022.

¹⁰ [Integrated Education Demand report published | Department of Education](#)

¹¹ [Vision 2030 A Strategy for Integrated Education 2025 to 2030.PDF](#)

¹² [Integrated Education Section 10 Report | Department of Education](#)

Impact on alternative Integrated Primary Provision

143. The Transformation guidance states that any DP for Transformation must consider the wider context of the network of schools. Downshire PS is one of 14 Controlled primary schools within the area and each of them with the exception of Old Warren PS has an enrolment which is above the SSP threshold. They also have available places, should parents wish to continue with Controlled provision.
144. It is also the case that the duty on the Department to encourage and facilitate and (as amended) support the development of Integrated education means that it is alternative Integrated provision which should be the main focus rather than consideration of the availability of places in other sectors. This has been clarified through case law.
145. The closest Integrated school to Downshire PS is Fort Hill IPS. [Table 1](#) provides the enrolment and admission figures for Fort Hill IPS over the past three years which show that, enrolments and admissions have remained steady.
146. Within a six-mile radius there are two further IPS', Oakwood IPS and Rowandale IPS, both of which are popular schools.
147. The CfC asserts that there is limited crossover in areas between Downshire PS and nearby integrated primary schools (IPS) and that there are limited available places. Map 3 illustrates pupil locations of those pupils attending Downshire PS and the IPS'. The map shows that while there is some crossover in the centre of Lisburn, pupils attending the four schools tend to reside in specific locations, for example, Oakwood IPS pupils reside mainly to the north of Lisburn, Fort Hill IPS pupils tend to reside around Lisburn city centre, Rowandale IPS pupils tend to reside to the west of Lisburn, and Downshire PS pupils tend to reside south of Lisburn.
148. [Table 14](#) below indicates that there are 79 available places in those three schools.

Table 14 - Alternative Integrated Primary Provision Available Places 2025/26			
School	Distance to Downshire PS	Approved Enrolment	Available Places (25/26)
Fort Hill CIPS	4.6 miles	210	22
Rowandale IPS	6.9 miles	399	27
Oakwood IPS	6.7 miles	203	30
Total		812	79

149. The CfC points out that there are available places in both the Controlled and Maintained Sector and notes that as the Transformation does not impact on the approved enrolment or admission number of Downshire PS, it will not have an impact on the number of primary school places within the area. The proposal will only increase integrated provision within the area.

Impact on alternative Non-Integrated Primary Schools

150. There are 18 alternative non-integrated primary schools within a five-mile radius of Downshire PS.
151. [Table 1](#) shows that in 2025/26 there were **899 available places** across all primary schools in the area. All but two of the schools have an enrolment figure above the minimum threshold recommended by SSP for an urban or rural primary school.
152. If Downshire PS transforms to a controlled integrated school, there would be no controlled primary school provision within the town of Hillsborough. The next closest controlled primary school is Riverdale PS (six available places) which is 3.5 miles away.
153. There is no maintained primary school within the town of Hillborough, with the nearest maintained school being St Aloysius PS (103 available places) 4.6 miles away.
154. Should this proposal be approved, there are available places within the area for those parents who expressed a preference which is not integrated education.
155. However, if parental preference remains for admission to a Controlled primary school, there are alternative schools in the wider area that historically do not fill up with first preference applications, and which are relatively accessible.
156. There is also potential for the maintained primary schools to admit fewer Catholic pupils if this DP is approved. Should this proposal be approved Downshire PS, under its new integrated status, may seek to encourage applications from those identifying as Catholic.
157. The TAP states that the school leaders currently attend the Sacrament services in St Patrick's Church for those pupils who are taking part. The school would like to see this figure increase and to start teaching the Sacraments as part of the school day. It further indicates that it will develop a new Religious Education scheme which will reflect the Christian nature of the school and recognise that children should have the opportunity to learn about other faiths. It also recognises that it is only the protestant churches who have previously been involved in the daily running of the school, and it needs to include the local Catholic church. As a result, it is asserted that the principal will start promoting relationships between the school and the church, and efforts will be made to begin the teaching of the Sacraments for the children whose parents want them to take part.

Statutory Considerations

Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986

Effective and Efficient use of Public Funds

158. The Department has a responsibility of its duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and under Managing Public Money to ensure effective and efficient use of public funds. In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of available resources.
159. The CfC states that *“there are no cost implications to this proposal at its implementation stage. There is no capital cost required as there is no need for additional accommodation at the existing school site”*. There is also expected to be minimal impact on the transport budget.
160. Based on the information above, it is therefore deemed that there will be no unreasonable public expenditure associated with DP 735 as published.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

161. The school's BoG carried out an Equality Impact Screening exercise and determined that *“the proposal to achieve Integrated status is likely to have a positive impact on many of the Section 75 categories of Northern Ireland Act”*.
162. During the two-month objection period, concerns arose regarding potential discrimination against Protestant pupils seeking admission should the proposal be approved. It has been asserted by the party objecting to the proposal that setting requirements/goals as to how many children from each side of the community should make up the school that it could lead to a Protestant child not getting a place because the school need more Catholic children to meet the goals set. However, the Department does not have any roles and responsibilities in relation to the development, application and review of admissions criteria, as that function lies solely with the BoG of the school. The TAP confirms that the BoG *“need to look at the current Admissions Criteria to ensure that that the school is open to all”*, as per the requirement at Section1(1) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Rural Needs (Northern Ireland) 2016

163. Downshire PS is located in Hillsborough and under the NISRA definitions, as now used in the SSP, the school is situated in the Hillsborough 1 Super Output Area and is classified as rural, therefore the Rural Needs Act is applicable to this proposal.
164. In considering the EA functions, the CfC confirms that Equality screening and statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered. The CfC states, *“The school's Board of Governors have used the Education Authority's Equality and Human Rights*

screening template and are of the view that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this proposal. The equality screening process carried out by the Board of Governors indicates that this proposal to achieve Integrated status is likely to have a positive impact on many of the Section 75 categories of NI Act”.

Correspondence received during Statutory Objection Period for DP 735

OBJECTIONS

Objection 1

Hi.

I'm just writing to convey my opposition to Downshire being given integrated status. The school is already integrated in all but name and it widely represents the community with a lot of children attending from mixed marriages, other religions and no religions. Therefore I do not feel it is necessary to change the status quo and I would much prefer the money being spent in staffing and resources to directly address the children's needs rather than in all the training and changes that goes with integration.

Objection 2

I am also concerned that if there is an integrated school in Hillsborough there is no choice for parents who do not wish their children to attend this school. Any other local schools are at least 4/5 miles away and many are over subscribed.

Many thanks for taking the time to read my views.

Objection 3

Hello

I am the parent of children at Downshire Primary School. The school principal encouraged us to share our views on Integration before 11th November.

I didn't support the move to integration but do support the school's ethos of inclusivity and providing a safe environment for all the school children.

From attending meetings at the time of the vote with the school senior leaders I understand the move to integration was to allow specific religious teaching to be introduced to the school for children whose parents consented to it. This is because some parents with children at the school and other parents who would have been interested in sending their children to the school expect this teaching to be provided in a school setting and had communicated this to the principal. It was explained by the individuals from the integrated schools body that the integrated movement was founded by parents of a particular faith on the principle of introducing this specific teaching into Controlled Schools. (I understand from what was said at the meetings that the school senior leaders also wanted to balance the cultural focus in the school, for example the cultural focus at the time of the King's coronation, away from one community to recognise more diverse cultural celebrations.)

The concern I have is that from my involvement with the school for the past 10 years there has been a Christian ethos, celebrating Christmas and Easter with children learning about general Bible principles and stories through activities organised directly by the school and from the involvement of third parties invited into the school. This has covered topics reflected by all Christian teaching. No specific school organised learning has taken place to my knowledge that has presented faith specific teaching on baptism, the Lord's supper, confession, forgiveness and relationship with Jesus nor has this happened at the expense of making the same provision for all other Christian faiths.

Unfortunately it is inherent in the 'Integrated' commitments that are a part of Integrated Schools to support these specific teachings of one faith without safeguarding equal opportunity on the same religious subjects for other faiths, including minority faiths in the school such as mine.

Simply put, specific faith based teaching of one religion over another in a school setting does not help address years of segregated education in Northern Ireland and all the related problems that have arisen from this. State funded education is not the place for espousing specific religious doctrine but should be a welcoming arena for understanding and respecting different religious views. Children should go to school with their specific faith, but not be taught it at school. There are already many schools in the country which have a particular religious focus, and Downshire moving to Integrated Status from a broad inclusive Christian outlook and arranging classes to teach specific Christian views adds to this national problem.

I am not sure how the school will apply all the Integrated principles. After all, the board of governors representative indicated at the meeting I attended that they would not promote percentage intakes from different religious backgrounds, which is another integrated principle. But already prior to integration, after the integrated vote succeeded, the school are organising faith specific sessions for children of consenting parents under the current legal status in the areas of religious teaching listed above. I will be asking the school to provide equal opportunity for other Christian faiths in the school. In the interest of equality this should also be considered for non Christian faiths including atheistic world views. The school have not provided any detail about how they will approach treating faiths within the school equally or fairly in respect of specific religious teachings. I will also be asking the school to formally share their approach to making decisions about this as this will be important to protect current freedoms in the future.

Fundamentally though this kind of specific religious teaching should remain outside the school setting and for that reason I am writing to share my objection to moving to an integrated status for Downshire Primary School because it is inherent in the Integrated Principles the school will be required to provide and promote faith specific teaching, at the risk of favouring one faith over another.

Please let me know if you would like me to share more information about the points above and thank you for providing a way for me to share my concerns.

Regards

Dear Mr Givan,

I am writing to you about the proposed integration status for Downshire Primary. As a member of the public in the Hillsborough area I am against Downshire becoming integrated.

This is due to my Christian faith, I would be concerned that integration status would further hinder the Christian gospel being brought into the school. We are living at a time when many children don't attend church and hearing the good news of Jesus may only be heard in the school environment and have my concerns that integration status would further reduce this gospel opportunity.

Thank you for your time,

Objection 4

Dear Paul Givan,

I am grateful for the opportunity to give my views on proposed integration of Downshire Primary School.

I have worked in the school for 20 years and had no voice in this process to date. I feel it is unfair that a new P1 parent had the opportunity to vote whilst an established teacher in the school had none. Yet if this proposition goes ahead I will be the one carrying out all the work that goes with the transition to integrated.

I strongly disagree with the school changing status.

There has been so much change in the school in recent years and it feels unsteady from all the chopping and changing new management are doing. The school needs continuity so we can just develop for the constant rise in classroom needs. Integration work will be at the expense of core teaching and learning and as a staff member who has to carry all this out I don't see how it will fit into an already full time budget.

I believe that Downshire going integrated limits the choice of Protestant families in the area who want a strong Christian ethos in a school. Meadowbridge and Anahilt are the closest schools for local Protestant families and one of these schools is hard to get into.

There are a number of integrated schools in the area already to serve the families who wish to have an integrated education.

I did not choose to work in the integrated sector. It's being pushed on me.

Thank you for considering my views.

Objection 5

To whom it may concern.

I just wanted to send an email to voice my concerns about the integration vote and information has been delivered at Downshire.

I felt the vote was very rushed and there was a lot of pressure to vote yes, the comments and notes provide to parents where in a way that made you feel you had no other choice than to vote yes.

I don't think the information was presented in a complete way, it was piecemeal and then hard to find if you want to go back and look over it or show someone something.

I have spoken to a number of parents who weren't aware that the uniform colour would have to change, and actually said they would have changed their vote if they had known. I think it is Unethical to make over 700 children change uniforms (even if it's over a 2-year period u don't want kids to feel different if children are wearing different colour of uniform for a while). The costs associated with the change is also not welcome and all the redundant uniform would be wasted. With the cost of living and Global warming I think this seems Unnecessary.

I would also like to know if Downshire meets the criteria other than the percentage of religion, for example do we have the split of teaching staff needed and if it does not, does that mean you would then have to either lose teachers or only employ those of another requirement to meet this Criteria in the future, which seems unfair.

Do we have the facilities needed? For example there is a lack of sport in the school until P6/P7 and afterschool programs compare to other school, so how can the school be able facility anything else under an integrated framework. Also there doesn't seem to be a demand for the sacraments, in a school of over 700, from what I have seen less 10 pupils per year.

I trust this will all be considered in the formal process.

Objection 6

Dear Mr Givan,

I have been a teacher in Downshire Primary School, Hillsborough since it opened in 2005 and I am writing in response to the public consultation process regarding the proposed integration of our school.

On a personal level, I welcome this opportunity to officially voice my opinion as the current framework for transitioning to integration status does not include teachers in schools having a vote, despite the fact that they are significant stakeholders in the process and will ultimately be the ones responsible for rolling out the integration curriculum if the status is approved. It seems counter-productive to me to sideline the educators in this way while two votes per household are given to new P1 parents who have just arrived in the school family, parents of children who may have just moved in to the school and may just as easily move on again and parents of the P7 children who left our school in June 2024. It is difficult for me to accept such a massive change to the fabric of our school when it appears that, as a teacher, my opinion has not been considered valuable enough to allow me to vote which at least would give me some ownership in the democratic decision that follows.

So here I am - almost one year since the parents of the school where I have worked since its beginning have had their say and moving towards two years since the idea was first discussed at management / Board of Governors' level - finally being given a platform to share my views.

There are a number of reasons why I am opposed to integration status being approved for Downshire Primary School.

First of all, there are already *three* integrated primary schools which Google Maps states to be within an approximate seven mile radius of Hillsborough - Fort Hill (4.6 miles), Oakwood (6.6 miles) and Rowandale (7.3 miles), so parents who wish to avail of this sector already have several options reasonably nearby. On the other hand, if Downshire Primary School should become integrated this means that parental choice for those who wish to continue sending their child / children to a controlled primary school in the area will be greatly reduced. My understanding is that Meadowbridge Primary School is already oversubscribed and nearby schools like Anahilt, Dromara and Kinallen are smaller rural schools with limited capacity to receive additional pupils. On a personal level, I applied to and have been teaching in a controlled primary school by choice and my chosen sector will be removed from me if Downshire Primary School, the school I have worked in for most of my career, transitions to the integrated sector.

In addition, I feel that integration status is not fully reflective of the demographic and proud history of the village of Royal Hillsborough. There is also a strong likelihood that as enrolment numbers change in the coming years to accommodate the religious balance requirements of integration, local children from our village and surrounding areas may lose out in gaining a school place to others with preferred religious profiles from further afield.

I would also like to add that our school has undergone considerable changes in the last few years with the appointment of a new principal, a new vice-principal and with several teachers moving year groups. Alongside this we are all well aware of the upheaval in education caused by Covid-19 coupled with an extended period of union action. It is my opinion that, at the present time, our school would be best served by taking time to embed recent initiatives and focus on improvements to our curriculum while continuing to provide rich, quality learning experiences for the children in our care. I am concerned that the demands of implementing integration status are likely to overshadow the other needs of our school and impose a considerable workload on staff members at the potential expense of other priorities.

Finally, and most significantly, the nurturing of the hearts and minds of every child in our care is of utmost personal importance to me and I have serious concerns that the strong Christian ethos which Downshire Primary School has always fostered through school assemblies, RE lessons and Bible teaching could be diluted.

To conclude, in my experience Downshire Primary School has always been an integrated (with a small i) school where all children are made very welcome and accommodation has always been made to ensure every child gets the best experience from their years in attendance. I believe that Integration with a big I is a completely unnecessary step in a school where enrolment numbers are high year on year, an excellent reputation is enjoyed in the area and beyond, everyone in the school family has always been valued, encouraged and achieving (present school

motto) and the number of P7 children transferring to grammar schools is consistently high. Why try to fix something that isn't broken?

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and to consider my opinion on this crucial matter.

Objection 7

Dear Mr Givan,

Thank you for taking the time to consider my response to the public consultation on the proposed integration of Downshire Primary School, Hillsborough.

As a former teacher myself, I have witnessed my three grandchildren flourish and progress as they received an excellent all-round education at Downshire Primary School as well as relevant support and guidance which prepared and enabled each of them to now confidently continue their education at grammar school. It is my firm understanding and personal experience that, in demonstration of its motto, 'Everyone valued, everyone encouraged, everyone achieving' Downshire Primary School is already committed to inclusivity within its pupil profile.

Clearly therefore, with this established principle and proven record already evident and in place, Downshire Primary School still will continue to welcome and embrace within its Christian ethos those of all faiths and none while still remaining in the controlled sector. I sincerely hope therefore that this highly regarded and popular primary school which is nestled within the confines of the historic village of Royal Hillsborough leaves well enough alone, does not meddle with success and does not interrupt the status quo by changing to that of integrated to which I am strongly opposed in this particular situation.

Yours Faithfully,

Objection 8

Hi Mr Givan,

I am writing as a resident of the Hillsborough area to oppose Downshire Primary School going integrated.

As a Christian I have great issues with the requirement of false religions being taught in the primary school, exposing our young generations to false practices which goes against what the Bible teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.

I also do not see any reason why integration is needed in Downshire as there has been no reports of sectarianism and many Catholic family's send their children to the school anyway.

By setting requirements/goals as to how many children from each side of the Community should make up the school could lead to a protestant child not getting a

place in their local school because the school may need more catholic children to meet the goals set (or catholic child not getting a place because protestant number needs increased).

Also already the school in an attempt to pave the way for integration, all of a sudden has been teaching the children about sectarianism, by making a big point over this, it is likely to cause issues when otherwise the children would not care about it.

God Bless,



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T: 028 9531 3030
E info@csscni.org.uk

24 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Development Proposal 735 Downshire Primary School

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) notes that the Education Authority has published a Development Proposal for Downshire Primary School to transform to controlled integrated status, with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter. CSSC welcomes the opportunity to respond and has consulted with controlled schools in the area.

CSSC notes the requirement for the Department of Education to consider the implications of the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022 (IE Act) in its assessment of Development Proposals and to consult with relevant bodies in accordance with Section 3. CSSC acknowledges its responsibility as an advisory body as defined in Section 3 of the IE Act and welcomes the opportunity to provide commentary in this context.

The following submission represents Council's response to the statutory consultation process and comments in respect of consultation in accordance with provisions in Section 3 of the IE Act. CSSC notes the assurance that points made in responding during the objection period will form part of the assessment of relevant evidence that is brought to the decision maker.

CSSC supports controlled schools, which are open to all faiths and none, in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together, within the ethos of non-denominational Christian values and principles. As a controlled school, CSSC recognises that Downshire Primary School, already welcomes children from different socio-economic backgrounds, children with different abilities and children of all faiths and none, consistent with the definition of the IE Act.

CSSC notes the positive outcome of the parental ballot at Downshire Primary School and acknowledges the school's desire to have its inclusive ethos formally recognised through the process of Transformation as articulated in the case for change.

Controlled Schools' Support Council www.csscni.org.uk
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As a sustainable school, CSSC supports Downshire Primary School in seeking to transform to controlled integrated status and believes that the development proposal will provide an efficient means by which formally recognised integrated provision can be increased in the area.

CSSC, as the sectoral support body for controlled schools, will continue to support Downshire Primary School and is committed to working with the Education Authority and other educational partners as the school progresses its Transformation.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Mark Baker
Chief Executive



**NICIE response to Public Consultation re:
Development Proposal 735:**

*Downshire Primary School will transform to
Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1
September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter*

This submission from NICIE is in response to the statutory objection period in relation to DP 735 and also to the Department's invitation to NICIE to comment as an 'advisory body' under Section 3 of the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022.

Summary

The Council for Integrated Education supports the proposal for Downshire Primary School (PS) to transform to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

This document is structured around how the proposal meets the five criteria outlined in section 3.26 of 'Integration Works' (DE, 2017), 'What will the Department of Education consider when assessing a Development Proposal?' (p24-25) and refers to the existing legislative framework.

The parental ballot, held in 2023, is evidence of unmet parental demand for Integrated Education, with 76.7% of voting persons with parental responsibility for children at the school indicating that they want the school to transform to become an Integrated school from September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

The school has robust intentions and plans to ensure that it is well positioned to meet the legal definition and purpose of Integrated Education if approval of DP 735 is granted. Moreover, the school's Transformation Plan demonstrates its commitment to the continued development of this following transformation. Significantly, the school is working to adopt the NICIE Statement of Principles, which brings the legal definition and purpose of Integrated Education to life in the active and intentional development of the school's ethos.

Downshire PS is a sustainable school, with 581 pupils (Year 1 to 7). Since the school began exploring the possibility of transformation to Integrated status in

2022, the school community has engaged with stakeholders, as outlined in the Case for Change, and has consulted with parents, school staff, pupils and the local community about the proposal.

Approval of the proposal will enable the Department to contribute to fulfilling their legal duties in relation to Integrated Education provision in Northern Ireland. The school has followed the Departmental guidance, 'Integration Works'.

Contents

1. Unmet Demand for Integrated Education
2. Sustainability
3. Area Planning including impact on existing Integrated provision
4. Religious Balance
5. Planning and Engagement in the Transformation Process
6. New Legislative Framework

1. Unmet Demand for Integrated Education

In November 2023, persons with parental responsibility of pupils at Downshire Primary School were asked:

Do you agree that Downshire Primary School and Nursery Unit should transform to become a Controlled Integrated School with effect from 1st September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter?

Of the 872 persons eligible to vote, 575 ballot papers were returned by post, representing a 65.9% turnout. Out of those who responded, 76.7% (441 people) voted yes, whilst 23.3% (134 people) voted no.

The ballot result provides evidence of unmet parental demand for Integrated Education within the existing school community. The current educational provision in Hillsborough is not able to meet this parental demand, as highlighted in the Case for Change. The Case for Change also evidences the growingly diverse community residing within the local area, which is being steadily reflected within the school population. Downshire IPS has a significant proportion of children designated as Catholic (12% as of September 2024), as well as 38% designated as 'Other' or 'None'¹. Transformation to Controlled Integrated status would both enable the school to actively reach out to

¹ School's own data

diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, and also provide a setting in which all identities are celebrated intentionally, in accordance with the Integrated ethos.

2. Sustainability

The school has an approved enrolment number of 610, and an approved admission number of 87. Table 1 below shows enrolment numbers broken down by year group from 2015/16 to 2023/24.

Table 1: Downshire Primary School Enrolment History

Approved Admission Number: 610 Approved Enrolment Number: 87									
	Nursery	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total Years 1-7
2015/16	52	79	88	86	90	89	82	81	595
2016/17	51	87	80	86	85	90	90	81	598
2017/18	52	76	86	83	88	87	90	90	600
2018/19	52	81	77	89	86	88	87	90	598
2019/20	52	76	83	82	89	89	89	87	595
2020/21	52	80	75	83	83	87	88	88	584
2021/22	52	76	81	77	85	83	89	89	580
2022/23	52	88	80	80	80	88	85	93	594
2023/24	52	83	89	82	87	82	90	86	599

Source: NI School Census

As evidenced, Downshire PS has a healthy enrolment which is consistently above the School Sustainability Policy of 105 for rural primary schools.

3. Area Planning

The proposal for the transformation of Downshire PS is on the current Operational Plan, and EA Area Planning have worked with and in support of the school to prepare a draft version of the Case for Change.

Figure 1: Extract from Area Planning: Operational Plan 1 (2022-24)

Downshire PS 7 Ballynahinch Road Hillsborough BT26 6AR	Background / Engagement	
	Downshire PS is proposing to transform to controlled integrated status.	
	Statutory Duty / Ministerial Priority	Key Theme(s)
	Statutory Duty - Integrated Education	Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

The proposal is supported by the Controlled Schools' Support Council and by the Education Authority and no objections were raised during the pre-publication consultation period.

The nearest Integrated primary schools are Fort Hill IPS (4.6 miles away), Oakwood IPS (6.6 miles away), and Rowandale IPS (6.8 miles away). Map 2 in the Case for Change demonstrates that there is limited crossover, in terms of pupil locations, between Downshire IPS and these schools. Moreover, there are insufficient available places within these schools to cater for the demand identified by Downshire PS within their school community.

4. Religious Balance

The Case for Change outlines the religious designations made by persons with parental responsibility in relation to the pupils attending the school. These can be found in Table 2 of the Case for Change, which is replicated and updated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Religious Profile – Downshire Primary School

Academic Year	% Protestant	% Catholic	% Other Christian / non-Christian / no religion / unknown
2015/16	66.92%	11.13%	21.95%
2016/17	65.95%	11.40%	22.65%
2017/18	65.18%	11.66%	23.16%
2018/19	62.31%	12.77%	24.92%
2019/20	58.27%	12.83%	28.90%
2020/21	56.29%	13.05%	30.66%
2021/22	53.96%	13.61%	32.44%
2022/23	53.25%	11.92%	34.83%
2023/24	51.20%	11.70%	27.2%
2024/25*	50%	12%	38%

Source: NI School Census *school supplied data

The percentage of pupils designated as Catholic in the school is reflective of and consistent with the religious balance in the locality, depicted in Diagram 1 of the Case for Change. The school is aware that many parents from Catholic and Other backgrounds select Downshire PS for a variety of reasons; however, it also acknowledges that transformation would enable children from diverse backgrounds to be more obviously acknowledged.

Additionally, the school has noted that it has lost potential pupils in the past due to the lack of Sacramental preparation within the school. Transformation is already going some of the way to address this issue and to encourage a greater religious balance within the school. Sacramental preparation began in the school in September 2024 with twenty children within the school

currently participating in this provision. The school has developed strong links with the local Catholic church and the Parish Priest from St. Joseph's in Lisburn.

In common with the trend across wider Northern Irish society, there is growing ratio of pupils attending the school who have designated as 'Other'. This is reflective of the locality, and also may be the result of some families within the school choosing not to disclose their religious background, or having a mixture of religious identities. At present, there is no method in the DE data collection process for parents to designate this reality of multiple and/or mixed identity.

Whilst the religious diversity of the school could be described as reasonable for a controlled school in the area, the school has acknowledged in the Case for Change that this is an area which requires their attention during the transformation journey to become a controlled Integrated school. There are specific references to and associated actions in the Transformation Plan that are designed to increase the levels of religious diversity in the school, with an intentional focus on encouraging more families from a Catholic background to apply for a place in the school.

If the proposal is approved, officers from NICIE and the EA Shared Education and Sectoral Support team (SESS) and other stakeholders will work alongside the school to reflect the requirement of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 that the Board of Governors uses its *'...best endeavours, in exercising its functions under the Education Orders, to ensure that the management, control and ethos of the school are such as are likely to ensure the provision of integrated education.'* (Article 88).

These 'best endeavours' vary from school to school, depending on context. They may include the way the school reflects and promotes the Integrated ethos; the use of admissions criteria; the addition of in-school opportunities, such as the open celebration of our two main cultural and national identities (Irish and British) and other cultures and identities. The school's Transformation Plan, which is developed with and monitored collaboratively by NICIE and EA (SESS) for at least five years post-transformation, outlines the school's intentions in this regard. NICIE is confident of the school's 'best endeavours' in this regard.

5. Planning and Engagement in the Transformation Process

The school has followed the 2017 Departmental guidance, 'Integration Works'.

The transformation journey represents significant challenges and change for all schools who make the move. School leaders and staff in Downshire Primary School have demonstrated enthusiastic and sustained engagement with officers from NICIE and EA (SESS).

This engagement included a staff development session in February 2024, when staff had the opportunity to reflect on the inclusive practices currently taking place within the school and on the opportunities and challenges ahead, enabling them to actively contribute to the development of the school's Transformation Plan.

Two members of the Senior Leadership Team attended a three-day 'Anti-Bias in Education' course in January 2024, gaining a deeper understanding of how anti-bias practices can be applied within the classroom and wider school. Two more staff will be attendance at the 2024/25 course, which begins in November 2024. Anti-Bias in Education is a core strand of the Integrated Ethos, and Downshire PS's commitment to developing staff in this regard demonstrates their dedication to growing this ethos.

The school appointed two Integration Coordinators, roles that were funded partly by the school itself and partly by an Integrated Education Fund (IEF) grant. The role of the Integration Coordinator is to oversee the development of the Integrated ethos within a school.

In its journey towards Integration, the school has revamped the way in which it delivers assemblies, delivering these more inclusively and in a way that intentionally celebrates the diversity within society. For example, in June 2024 the school invited diverse groups from locality to the school to showcase arts, culture and music. Additionally, a Black History Month assembly is planned for November 2024, and there are further plans for an International assembly, a St. Patrick's Day assembly and a Refugee Day assembly in January, March and June 2025 respectively.

The school also has undertaken the Rights Respecting Schools Award, achieving Bronze status this year. The aim of the award, that being to create safe & inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they thrive, is in keeping with the Integrated ethos, and the school's journey towards achieving this informs part of its Transformation Plan. Given that one of the legal 'purposes' (as defined in the Integrated

Education Act (NI) 2022) of Integrated Education is 'to promote awareness and appreciation of human rights', this activity within the school is further evidence of the school's intentional planning for transformation to Integrated status.

Further information on the planning and engagement in the transformation process up to the point of the submission of the Development Proposal is outlined in detail on Pages 2-4 of the Case for Change.

6. New Legislative Framework

Downshire PS's profile in relation to the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022 definition of Integrated Education is clearly outlined within the Case for Change and is updated with the school's own data for this year in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Downshire Primary School Profile

Year	Free School Meals	SEN Stage 5/ Stage 3	SEN Stage 1 - 4 / 1-2	SEN All Stages	% Protestant	% Catholic	% Other Christian / non-Christian / no religion / unknown	% Newcomer
2015/16	7.06%	14	49	63	66.92%	11.13%	21.95%	*
2016/17	5.02%	12	61	73	65.95%	11.40%	22.65%	*
2017/18	4.17%	11	46	57	65.18%	11.66%	23.16%	0.00%
2018/19	5.35%	10	81	91	62.31%	12.77%	24.92%	*
2019/20	5.88%	13	62	75	58.27%	12.83%	28.90%	0.93%
2020/21	5.99%	8	73	81	56.29%	13.05%	30.66%	*
2021/22	6.21%	8	74	82	53.96%	13.61%	32.44%	*
2022/23	5.88%	20	54	74	53.25%	11.92%	34.83%	*
2023/24*	6.00%	25	25	65	51.20%	11.70%	27.2%	*
2024/25**	4.65%	24	46	70	58%	13%	29%	0.69%

*Number suppressed as less than 4 Source: EA and ** school's own data

The Transformation Plan describes the range of intentional activities and practice planned in order to celebrate and represent the cultures, traditions and identities existing within and beyond the school. These are considered from a cross-curricular perspective, with planning for continued staff professional development delivered by NICIE to best facilitate this, as well as the fostering of positive networks with other Integrated schools. Furthermore, the Transformation Plan considers approaches to continue to build on the school's good practice in relation to students from a range of socio-

This places the school in a strong position in relation to their ability to deliver on the purpose of Integrated Education, as defined in section 2 of the 2022 Act:

*'(a) to deliver educational benefits to children and young persons;
(b) to promote awareness and appreciation of human rights;
(c) to promote equality of opportunity;
(d) to promote good relations; and
(e) to promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.'*

Approval of this proposal would contribute to the Department's duty to 'support' Integrated Education, which is defined in Section 5 of the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022:

'identifying, assessing, monitoring and aiming to meet the demand for the provision of integrated education within the context of area planning...and...'

'providing sufficient places in integrated schools to aim to meet the demand for integrated education within the context of area planning and the overall sustainability of the school estate (including examining evidence of expected future demand).'

Conclusion

NICIE supports the proposal for Downshire Primary School to transform to Controlled Integrated status from September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter. The Transformation Plan and this year's Action Plan outline a range of activities and intentions that will enable the school to continue to build on their inclusive practices to contribute to building a shared society.

The Case for Change presents strong evidence that the school will continue to build and grow the existing diversity in the school, attracting a balance of pupils from a range of backgrounds, thereby meeting the definition and purpose of Integrated Education as outlined in the Integrated Education Act (NI 2022) and the ethos of the Integrated school, as outlined in the NICIE Statement of Principles.

With the combined support of DE, EA, NICIE and CSSC, NICIE is confident that the transformation of Downshire Primary School will be a sustainable solution to meet parental demand for Integrated Education in the area.

Approval of this proposal would assist the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty to *'encourage, facilitate and support the development of integrated education'* (Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022), in Northern Ireland.

The Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)

27th November 2024



Paul Givan MLA
Education Minister
c/o Area Planning Policy Team
Department of Education
4th Floor, Rathgael House
Bangor
Co. Down BT19 7PR

26 November 2024

Dear Minister

RE: Development Proposal No 735 Downshire Primary School

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Development Proposal relating to Downshire Primary School. We propose to make one submission covering the objection period and Section 3 comments of the Integrated Education Act (2022).

As you know the IEF is an independent charity supporting the growth and development of Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. It draws its mandate from the growing demand from parents, pupils and schools for inclusive, high quality Integrated Education. We see evidence of continuing growth in support from parents for schools to transform to Integrated status as well as a growing number of enquiries from schools interested in exploring Transformation.

The IEF therefore welcomes the Development Proposal for Transformation of Downshire Primary School. This Proposal was submitted in response to parents at Downshire Primary School voting overwhelmingly by some 94% in favour to take the school on the path of Transformation to Integrated status.

The Development Proposal, and the detailed Case for Change document, highlights the high levels of engagement with key stakeholders and support for the process of Transformation. The school leadership team have shown commitment to the process throughout, ensuring that the decision to explore Transformation was made with consensus. The school has availed of support and guidance from the IEF and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, throughout their exploration phase of Transformation.

The Case for Change also presents evidence that the school will continue to build and grow the existing diversity in the school, attracting a balance of pupils from a range of backgrounds, thereby meeting the definition and purpose of Integrated Education as outlined in the Integrated Education Act (NI 2022) and the ethos of the Integrated school, as outlined in the NICIE Statement of Principles.

The IEF would ask that the Department of Education (DE) takes this decision with regard to its statutory duty to “*encourage, facilitate and support integrated education*” and its Section 6 (Integrated Education Act 2022) duties relating to the development of Integrated Education.

A positive decision will not only create new Integrated Education provision in the Hillsborough area, in response to the democratic wishes of parents, but will help the Department of Education and the Education Authority fulfil their statutory duty.

We look forward to further supporting Downshire Primary School as they further their exploration of Transformation to Integrated status. We recognise the process of developing an Integrated ethos takes time and is a considerable change management process for the school. In the event of an approval of this Development Proposal, we will continue to invite the school to apply for grants to support the Transformation process in as far as our own limited charitable funding allows. We would strongly request that the Department of Education makes the financial resources available that a Transforming school requires.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Caskey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul Caskey OBE
Chief Executive
Integrated Education Fund

DE Policy Team Comments

Finance Return to APPT

401-6649 Downshire Primary School

The school's provisional Deficit position as of 31 March 2026 is **-£864,109**.

The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2025 was **-£678,374**.

Based on the Interim Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations, the school received a total CFF budget of £2,287,985 in the 2026-27 financial year for 595¹ FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £3,845. The average for all primary schools is £4,426.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 28¹³ pupils, which represents 4.92% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.

The school received £0 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 0.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

The school also received £0 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.

All schools receive a delegated budget for the financial year based on verified enrolments as at the October Census prior to the financial year.

¹³ The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2025 census data was used to determine the 2026-27 CFF allocation). The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year. In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

Details of the school's budget allocation from the Common Funding Formula, for the last 3 years, is as follows:

Factor	2026-27 £	2025-26 £	2024-25 £
Premises Area	30,484	30,484	30,484
Premises FTE	52,950	53,022	54,236
TSN – Social Deprivation	17,853	17,853	22,821
TSN – Additional Social Deprivation	920	893	1,077
Foundation Stage	60,713	61,764	68,773
Teachers Salary Protection	4,566	3,142	4,814
Pupil AWPU	2,117,296	2,073,842	1,954,940
Children Looked After	1,601	1,547	4,229
Newcomer Pupils	1,601	6,188	2,819

Total School Funding	2,287,985	2,248,736	2,144,193
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Pupil FTE (no.)	595.00	604.50	625.00
Per Capita	£3,845	£3,720	£3,431

SECRIT ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

DP 735 – Downshire Primary School 401-6649 – Transform to Controlled Integrated Status
STAGE 1

List of neighbouring <phase> schools provided by Area Planning

School		Programme	Membership
Ref No	Name		
4016649	Downshire Primary School, Hillsborough	-	-
4016636	Meadow Bridge Primary School	-	-
4016615	Riverdale Primary School	Steps into Sharing	-
4016144	Old Warren Primary School, Lisburn	-	-
4013334	Knockmore Primary School, Lisburn	-	-
4010807	Lisburn Central Primary School	-	-
4033306	St Aloysius Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Ballymacash PS
4010885	Tonagh Primary School, Lisburn	-	-
4010762	Brownlee Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Fort Hill IPS
4010743	Largymore Primary School, Lisburn	Steps into Sharing	-

4030897	St Joseph's Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Harmony Hill PS
4011608	Anahilt Primary School	-	-
4620051	Wallace High Preparatory, Lisburn	-	-
4620050	Friends' School Preparatory, Lisburn	Steps into Sharing	-
4016145	Killowen Primary School, Lisburn	-	-
4053308	Fort Hill Integrated Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Brownlee PS & Fort Hill IPS
4016441	Ballymacash Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Ballymacash PS & St Aloysius PS
4016401	Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	Oakwood IPS & Christ the Redeemer PS
5036000	St Colman's Primary School, Dromore	-	-
4013305	Harmony Hill Primary School, Lisburn	Mainstreaming	St. Joseph's PS
5011575	Dromore Central Primary School	Steps into Sharing	

4066611	Oakwood Integrated Primary School	Mainstreaming	Christ the Redeemer PS & Pond Park PS
4066682	Rowandale Integrated Primary School	-	-

Eight of these schools are engaged in Mainstreaming Shared Education and four of these schools have shown an interest in Shared Education through the Steps into Sharing Programme.

SECRT CONSIDERATION

The Case for Change

The proposer, Board of Governors, Downshire Primary School, have commented that there are increased opportunities for staff and whole school development activity through the support programmes of NICIE, IEF and the EA Shared Education and Sectoral Support team.

EA support this proposal but have made no reference to Shared Education. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest that Shared Education has been considered or that EA has complied with its duty under Article 6 of the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

SECRT ASSESSMENT

There is insufficient evidence in the Development Proposal to suggest a positive or negative impact to Shared Education partnerships in the area.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEAM

The only input SAT would have on this would be preference data for 2024/25.

Downshire PS received 72 1st preferences and 1 second preference. They accepted all 73 applications to P1.

Irish-medium and Integrated Education DP 735 – Downshire PS – Transform to Controlled Integrated Status

The IMIE team's remit is to consider whether the proposer has provided enough information and evidence within the case for change that if transformation is approved

the school is likely to meet the section one definition within 2022 Act and reflect the judgment under neutral citation [2025] NIKB 56 and which covers:

- **JR335** – relating to **Rathmore Primary School**
- **JR336** – relating to **Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College**

These were heard together as linked cases in the High Court (McAlinden J), with a single judgment issued and available [here](#).

1. Relevant Policies/Legislation

a. Is the proposal consistent with the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022?

The proposal is broadly aligned in principle with the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022.

- It demonstrates a clear intention to transform to integrated status and to adopt the associated ethos.
- It provides evidence of current diversity within the school and sets out actions aimed at further increasing diversity across religious, socio-economic and ability dimensions.

However:

- The absence of quantified projections or targets for achieving a reasonable mix means that the proposal does not yet provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate how it will meet the full definition of integrated education under Section 1 of the Act.
- In particular, there is limited assurance on how “reasonable numbers” of Catholic and Protestant pupils will be achieved and sustained.

b. Is the proposal in line with the statutory duty to encourage, facilitate and support Integrated Education?

Yes, The proposal is consistent with the Department’s Article 64 duty and wider IE Act 2022 obligations:

- It arises from a clear parental ballot and demand
- It represents a cost-effective expansion of integrated provision (no capital requirement)
- It would increase availability of integrated places in an area with limited provision

c. Does it align with the ‘Reasonable Numbers’ ministerial statement?

No, the CfC was prepared prior to the publication of the WMS, and therefore does not reflect its requirements.

- Notwithstanding this, the WMS clearly applies to current decision-making.

When considered against the WMS, there is no defined reasonable mix benchmark, no quantified trajectory or forecast and no milestones or monitoring framework. The proposal therefore does not currently demonstrate compliance with the WMS expectations, and this limits the ability to assess whether a reasonable mix can be achieved in practice.

2. Transformation

- **Is the transformation action plan sufficient and in line with requirements?**

The transformation action plan is comprehensive and firmly rooted in NICIE principles as well as the “Every School a Good School” framework. It sets out measurable actions across four key domains: learner-centred approaches, high-quality teaching and learning, effective leadership, and strong community connections. To achieve these objectives, the plan incorporates initiatives such as anti-bias training for staff, a revision of the Religious Education scheme, the organisation of cultural events, and proactive engagement with the wider community. In addition, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been built into the plan to ensure progress is tracked and outcomes are delivered effectively.

3. Action Plan ‘Vision 2030’

a. Is the proposal in line with the Action Plan for Vision 2030?
Yes. *Vision 2030* states:

“DE will commission NICIE to engage with Integrated schools and EA in the six localities currently identified where Integrated Education is oversubscribed... to review their enrolment numbers and school capacity and, as required, prepare and bring forward Development Proposals.”

Downshire PS is in Lisburn & Castlereagh, one of the six priority areas identified for NICIE engagement. The DP references NICIE and EA involvement in enrolment/capacity review.

b. Has there been progress in gathering more comprehensive evidence of demand?

The Department published the first report on IE demand in May 2026. This indicates that there may be demand for IE within this locality.

c. How does the Department plan to “increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways”? Would this proposal help to create a pathway?

Yes. Transformation creates an integrated pathway in Hillsborough where none currently exists, supporting Vision 2030’s aim to increase access and choice.

4. IE Views / Additional Comments

Are there any updates in legislation/policies/guidance that should be considered?

N/A

Any other information useful for assessing the DP?

- The proposal aligns with the strategic intent of the Integrated Education Act, the Department's statutory duty, and the overarching objectives of Vision 2030 in seeking to expand integrated provision in response to parental demand. However, the Case for Change, having been developed prior to the Written Ministerial Statement, does not provide the level of quantified analysis now expected in relation to the achievement of a reasonable mix. While the Transformation Plan is comprehensive in terms of process and activity, it does not set out measurable targets or a clear trajectory for achieving the community balance required under Section 1 of the Act. In the absence of such evidence, it is difficult to assess with confidence the school's capacity to meet the statutory definition of integrated education or to demonstrate compliance with the WMS requirements.
- Strong stakeholder support: parental ballot (76.7% Yes), EA and CSSC endorsements.
- Sustainable enrolment (c. 599 pupils) and sound educational provision confirmed by ETI.

Inclusion Directorate Input to Development Proposal (DP) Submission

DP 735 - Downshire Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Inclusion Directorate Input: 24 October 2024

SEN Early Years & Pupil Support Team Input

It is noted in the Case for Change (CfC) that Downshire Primary School (PS) is considered a sustainable school. ¹⁴, The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice focuses on a continuum of need and a continuum of provision, which may be made in a variety of forms and it is important that schools reflect their local communities. Children with SEN require equitable access to a broad and balanced education, including access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The CfC states that 'Downshire Primary School provides for the needs of all children and especially those with additional needs' and that 'in recent years, two Special Educational Needs Coordinators have been appointed to support those children who need additional help.....with two further members of staff who provide Learning Support in small groups or individual settings'. The school census figures, however, depict that the school has less than 10% of it's population on the SEN register with only 3.8% of children who have a statement of SEN. Both these proportions are significantly lower than the regional averages of 20% and 7.6% respectively.

The CfC also notes that the 'school also has strong links with a range of external agencies, e.g. EA Psychology Service, The Autism Advisory Intervention Service,

¹⁴ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/special-educational-needs-code-practice>

RISE, Literacy Support Service, EA Behaviour Support Service, and Health Visitors. By working together, we can ensure that the needs of all children are met'.

The school experienced a significant increase in the number of pupils with a statement of SEN in 2023/24 and again the school census depicts this at five children which, taking the proportion of children with a statement in the school, was a 0.8 ppts rise since 2022/23. Downshire PS continues to provide support to those pupils who do not have a statement, but continue to require additional support in the classroom which is welcome and in line with providing support at the point of need.

Therefore, Inclusion Directorate would support this DP and would welcome the increased focus on providing support for all children who need it and at the point at which need presents.

Input From Early Years Team on Development Proposal No 735

Downshire PS (401-6649) is a controlled primary school situated in Hillsborough, with a statutory nursery unit that provides 52 part-time places.

The nursery unit at Downshire PS has been oversubscribed with 1st preference applications in two of the last four academic years. A small number of underage children have been admitted to a funded pre-school education place in the nursery unit in two of the last four years, but none have been admitted in the current academic year.

Table 1

Pre-School Provision Downshire PS 401-6649

Academic Year	Statutory Places Available (p/t)	1 st Preference Applications	Target Age Admitted	Under Age Pupils admitted	Total Number Admitted
2021/2022	52	75	52	0	52
2022/2023	52	51	49	3	52
2023/2024	52	51	50	2	52
2024/2025 *	52	55	51	0	51

Source: EA, ASU branch

*Provisional EA data

DE records show that no Temporary Flexibility (TF) requests were submitted for the nursery unit in any of the last three academic years.

As the proposal is to transform from “controlled” to “controlled integrated” management type with no change to the number or pattern of pre-school education places, there would be no change to the level of pre-school provision in the local area. There is one alternative integrated pre-school setting within the five mile radius of Downshire PS NU, namely Fort Hill Integrated PS Nursery Unit who provide 26 full-time funded pre-school education places and was oversubscribed with pre-school applications in two of the last three years.

While it is not considered that there would be any negative impact on the statutory nursery unit at Downshire PS if the proposal to transform to Controlled integrated status was approved, it may result in an increase in the numbers of children applying to the school’s nursery unit each year by offering an additional choice for parents in the area who may seek a funded pre-school education place for their child in a setting of an integrated management type, which in turn could have an impact on the numbers applying to the pre-school provision at Fort Hill Integrated PS NU.

The proposal would also appear to be in line with the Department’s duty to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education under the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 and the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Conclusion

Taking into account all of the above information, EYT considers that the proposal for Downshire PS to transform to controlled integrated management type is likely to be reasonable at this time and would have no objection, in principle, to the proposal. However, it should be noted, if approved, it could potentially impact on the numbers of children applying for funded pre-school provision at Fort Hill Integrated PS NU.

Education Workforce Directorate INPUT:

NIL RETURN - No issues/concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff as highlighted in the Resource Implications section 7 of the Case for Change (CfC).

Should the situation change assurance should be sought from the Employing Authority that any potential impact on terms and conditions of teaching staff are managed in accordance with the following policy:

TNC 2024/2 – Workload Agreement: Should the Case for Change result in an increase to enrolment in a school, or surrounding schools, assurance should be provided regarding how potential impact on teacher workload, as a result of increased class sizes, will be managed.

Transport and Food in Schools Input:

As this proposal is in keeping with the duty to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education under the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

and it would be anticipated the financial implications for the transport budget would not be significant, please record a Nil Return from Food in Schools Team.

ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

DP No. 735

Date of last ETI report: Last full inspection – 2014; Sustaining Improvement Inspection (involving action short of strike) – 2017.

Web link: [Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection \(Involving Action Short of Strike\) in January 2017](#)

[Report of an Inspection in January 2014](#)

Date¹⁵:

1. Update on relevant/contextual information since the last published inspection report.

District visit in June 2021

- The principal was appointed in November 2020 and previously held the post of vice-principal in the school. A new internal vice-principal appointment was made in 2021.
- A number of teaching posts were made permanent at that time which brought stability to the staff team.

2. Knowledge of **any contextual information on the quality of education** in the wider local area.

There are five integrated primary schools within an 11-mile radius of Downshire Primary School. Dromore Central Integrated Primary School is 6.5 miles from Downshire Primary School with an approved enrolment of 727 and a current enrolment of 697. The other schools are almost at or currently above their approved enrolment.

3. Potential benefits/concerns associated with the claims of **educational** benefits for pupils made in the Case for Change.

The option of integrated education for parents who wish this for their children in this area would be of benefit.

4. Any concerns about the **implementation date or phasing of implementation** should this be applicable (i.e. curricular, EF, accommodation, LSCs, etc).

No

5. The **SSP Criteria** indicators requiring ETI input (if known and/or for which information is available).

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils, Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.			√

¹⁵ This commentary paper is based on the information and evidence available to ETI on this date. Please check the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk for any new inspection reports that may have published after this date.

	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.	y		
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.	y		
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.	y		
	1.5 The ability at post-primary level to be able to provide suitable access to the entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.	N/A		
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.			√
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.	y		
	1.8 The quality of the <u>physical</u> environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.	y		
	1.9 The quality of, and arrangements for, pastoral care including the active promotion of the principles of social justice in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum.	y		
Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.			√
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.	y		
	4.9 Pupil behaviour, expulsions, suspensions and non-attendance as well as positive behaviours such as involvement in school management (e.g. buddying and mentoring schemes).			√
Strong links with the Community	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).	y		
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			√

	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.	y		
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6. Summary of impact of the proposal

This proposal could provide parents with an option of integrated education in this area and support DE in fulfilling their statutory obligation to encourage, support and facilitate integrated education.



Eamonn Broderick
Email: eamonn.broerick@education-ni.gov.uk

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43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Mr M Hanna
Chair of Board of Governors
Downshire Primary School
7 Ballynahinch Road
Hillsborough
BT26 6AR

17 April 2025

Email: info@dps.hillsborough.ni.sch.uk

Dear Mr Hanna

Re: Development Proposal (DP) 735

I refer to the above Development Proposal submitted by the Education Authority and published on 11 September 2024 in respect of "Downshire Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status, with effect from 1 September 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter."

As you are aware, the statutory two-month objection period has now concluded. During this period, the Department received a number of representations objecting to the proposal.

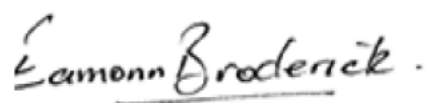
The Department is writing to invite you to provide any comments you may wish to make in response to the objections received. While the objections will be carefully considered on their own merits, this is an opportunity for you to address any issues raised and to clarify any matters which you consider relevant before a decision is made.

For your reference, a summary of the key themes raised in the objections is enclosed with this letter. Should you wish to respond, we would be grateful to receive your written comments by 2 May 2025. This will ensure that your response will be included in the advice that goes to the Minister.

Please note that while individual objections will not be shared in full for reasons of confidentiality, the Department has sought to present a fair summary of the concerns raised.

Should you have any queries or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact Joyce Nickell at joyce.nickell@education-ni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eamonn Broderick." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Eamonn Broderick
Acting Director
Sustainable Schools Policy & Planning Directorate

Annex A

- I felt the vote was very rushed and there was a lot of pressure to vote yes. The comments and notes provided to parents where in a way that made you feel you had no other choice than to vote yes.
- I don't think the information was presented in a complete way, it was piecemeal and then hard to find if you want to go back and look over it or show someone something.
- I have spoken to a number of parents who weren't aware that the uniform colour would have to change, and actually said they would have changed their vote if they had known.
- Does Downshire meet the criteria other than the percentage of religion, for example do they have the split of teaching staff needed and if it does not, does that mean the school would then have to either lose teachers or only employ those of another requirement to meet this Criteria in the future, which seems unfair.
- Does Downshire have the facilities? For example, there is a lack of sport in the school until P6/P7 and afterschool programs compared to other schools, so how can the school facilitate anything else under an integrated framework.
- I am not sure how the school will apply all the Integrated principles. After all, the board of governors representative indicated at the meeting I attended that they would not promote percentage intakes from different religious backgrounds, which is another integrated principle.
- The school have not provided any detail about how they will approach treating faiths within the school equally or fairly in respect of specific religious teachings.

Re: Development Proposal (DP) 735 – Proposal for Downshire Primary to Transform to Controlled Integrated Status

Responses to objections raised:

Objection 1:

I felt the vote was very rushed and there was a lot of pressure to vote yes. The comments and notes provided to parents were in a way that made you feel you had no other choice than to vote yes.

Objection 2:

I don't think the information was presented in a complete way, it was piecemeal and then hard to find if you want to go back and look over it or show someone something.

Response to objection 1 and 2:

The timeframe of the voting period was predetermined in the guidance by NICIE and the IEF. We followed this guidance. It was the standard timeframe for an integration vote.

Transforming to Controlled Integrated status is supported by the Board of Governors and the school; therefore, this was shared in comments and notes provided to parents the timeframe of which is outlined below and in the Case for Change:

- 28th September 2023 - Governors voted unanimously to pass a resolution to hold a parental ballot concerning Integration.
- 29th September 2023 - A letter from the Board of Governors was sent out to all parents to notify them of the decision to actively explore Integration.
- 4th October 2023 - The document 'Integration Works' was shared with all parents.
- 9th October 2023 - A Microsoft Form which could be completed anonymously was sent to parents to encourage them to share their views concerning Integration and ask any questions.
- 16th October 2023 - The principal prepared and sent to all parents a letter entitled 'Frequently Asked Questions About Integration'.
- 17th October 2023 - The first meeting of the Transformation Action group met to plan for future parent events. Eleven members met made up of Governors, school teaching staff and parents.
- 20th October 2023 - Parents were informed about Parent Information Sessions planned for 6th November 7-8.30pm and 13th November 1.50-3.15pm (childcare provided).
- 14th November 2023 - Online Drop-In Session for parents to ask any further questions – led by IEF.
- 15th November 2023 - 'Integration Principles' document was shared with all parents.

- 17th November 2023 - Parents were sent a letter explaining to them the voting system and timeframe. Voting packs sent to parents from CIVICA.
- 20th November 2023 - M Hanna (Chairman of the Board of Governors) wrote to parents about the reasons why Governors felt the school should become Integrated and encouraging them to vote in the ballot.
- Parental ballot opened until 11th December.
- 24th November 2023 - Reminder sent to parents to vote in the ballot.
- Parents also reminded regularly in the weekly 'Friday Note' publication to use their vote and the percentages who had voted so far in the process.
- 8th December 2023 - IEF attended the school Open Morning for new Nursery and P1 parents.
- 11th December 2023 - Parental ballot closed.
- 12th December 2023 - Results issued to BOG and parents – 76.7% yes with 65.9% turnout. Press release regarding results.

As outlined above, meetings were held and information sent out to parents outlining what it means to be integrated, to explain the voting process and what integrated status would mean going forward. As a school we strived to keep parents informed and communicated key information regularly.

There had been an emphasis given to parents to contact school with any questions and opportunities given to meet with and speak to NICIE who were on site regularly.

The information was sent out on a range of school platforms (letters, school website, weekly school publication, social media) to ensure there was no breakdown in communication.

Parents were encouraged to vote. This was the emphasis during this period –the school did not encourage parents to vote 'yes' or 'no' but to exercise their right to vote and have their say.

We as a school are aware that some people voted no - and that is OK! Integrated Education supports people to express opposing viewpoints in constructive ways. The school plans to work hard to engage all families and try to reassure them that, whilst change can be challenging, there is nothing to fear from the Integrated ethos.

Objection3:

I have spoken to a number of parents who weren't aware that the uniform colour would have to change, and actually said they would have changed their vote if they had known.

Response to objection 3:

- This is informationally incorrect and was addressed during the consultation process.
- The uniform colour will not change. If we are granted integrated status the word 'integrated' will be incorporated into the logo badge on the school uniform.
- There would be a period when the current uniform and the new badge uniform would both be acceptable as uniform. This means parents aren't expected to purchase new jumpers/polo shirts until the time their child has outgrown his or her current jumper/polo shirt.

Objection 4:

Does Downshire meet the criteria other than the percentage of religion, for example do they have the split of teaching staff needed and if it does not, does that mean the school would then have to either lose teachers or only employ those of another requirement to meet this Criteria in the future, which seems unfair.

Response to point 4:

- This is informationally incorrect and was addressed during the consultation process.
- If integrated status is granted, teachers will not lose their jobs. Downshire will remain an equal opportunities employer.
- School staff will continue to be appointed on merit. A religious balance amongst staff is an aspiration of the Integrated school, rather than a legal requirement. Due to the extension of the fair employment legislation to education, appointment on the basis of religious belief is unlawful.

Objection 5:

Does Downshire have the facilities? For example, there is a lack of sport in the school until P6/P7 and afterschool programs compared to other schools, so how can the school facilitate anything else under an integrated framework.

Response to point 5:

- This is informationally incorrect and was addressed during the consultation process.
- We offer a range of after school clubs, including sports clubs, from P1 to P7. These clubs will continue if the school transforms to integrated status as well as an aim to include GAA sports and Irish Dancing as outlined in the Transformation Plan.
- Like all schools in NI, we deliver the NI curriculum. This involves juggling of staff, use of premises, resources and external providers. Our Transformation plan outlines in detail how we plan to develop Integrated Education in our context.

Objection 6:

I am not sure how the school will apply all the Integrated principles. After all, the board of governors representative indicated at the meeting I attended that they would not promote percentage intakes from different religious backgrounds, which is another integrated principle.

Response to objection 6:

- In relation to 'percentage intakes' within our admissions criteria, the BoG will, as required by the '89 Order, use their best endeavours to provide 'Integrated Education' (as defined in the '22 Act), and this, as noted in the DE guidance 'Integration Works', will require monitoring of religious balance and review of the efforts made by the school to achieve this. This is an action in the Transformation Plan (Effective Leadership, page 34). Downshire already has a level of religious balance that is unusual in non-Integrated controlled schools (12.4% Catholic in 24/25). EA Sectoral support, NICIE and the IEF work with Integrated schools in this regard.
- This is an evolving area, one of which all Integrated schools continue to develop as discussed by NICIE.
- The Four Principles of Integrated Education are Equality, Faith and Values, Parental Involvement and Social Responsibility. Percentage intakes from different religious backgrounds is not an integrated principle.

Objection 7:

The school have not provided any detail about how they will approach treating faiths within the school equally or fairly in respect of specific religious teachings.

Response to point 7:

- Our Transformation Plan refers to this aspect in several places, including references to culture, assemblies, religion, diversity and inclusion policy, anti-bias training. NICIE, IEF and APTIS published 'Faith and Belief in Schools' in February 2025. This will be used in the development of this aspect of our Integrated practice. It advocates a democratic approach to tackling this challenging issue, meaning the school will continue to endeavour to engage with