

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	DP 749
School	Larne and Inver Primary School
Proposal	Larne and Inver Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status, with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.
Ministers Decision	Not Approved
Date of Decision	30/08/2026
Ministers Comments	I have read the evidence provided in the submission and appendices provided by officials in relation to this Development Proposal. I have also considered the judgment of the Court of Appeal in JR335 and JR336. I do not intend to repeat in full the legal and factual analysis contained within the documentation, with which I concur. However, two provisions are critical to the consideration of this Development Proposal. Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 provides: “It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage, facilitate and support the development of integrated education and to provide support for integrated education.” Article 92(6) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 provides: “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 <i>likely</i> to provide integrated education.” I will view the reasonable numbers requirement in the context of Article 64(1) of the 1989 Order. Critically the Court of Appeal considered the relationship between Article 64 and 92(6) and concluded that Article 92(6) remains a mandatory statutory test which must be satisfied.

	It also observed, “In short, if there is not a reasonable number of Catholic and Protestant pupils attending a school then it is not an integrated school as defined by the legislation.” The outcome of this Development Proposal turns on whether the ‘reasonable numbers’ test set out in 92(6) has been satisfied. The Department has set out guidance in relation to ‘reasonable numbers’ though the statutory test remains the key consideration. As observed above, Article 92(6) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 provides (my emphasis in italics): “The Department shall not approve a proposal under this Article in relation to a school unless <i>it appears to the Department</i> that, if the school were to become, or be established as, a controlled integrated school, the school would be <i>likely</i> to provide integrated education.” Integrated education is defined in section 1 of the Integrated Education Act 2022: “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. Departmental guidance provides: “Department of Education Position on ‘Reasonable Numbers’ While a rigid approach should not be taken to ‘reasonable numbers,’ what constitutes reasonable numbers should be considered having regard to, the intention of the 1989 Order, the NICIE Statement of Principles, and the underlying rationale of contact theory that there should be a reasonable balance between Protestant and Catholic children. The statement that follows in italics is the general principle that will be applied in the context of proposals to Transform to Integrated status. <i>General Principle To ensure the process of Transformation is both well-grounded at the outset and capable of</i>
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	<i>developing over time, the Department will expect, as a general principle, the proposer 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 in those schools seeking to transform to Integrated status, 15% of the combined number of Protestant and Catholic year 1 or year 8 pupils, in the first year of Transformation. There may be exceptions to this general principle however, and each case will be considered in its own unique circumstances regardless of the percentage of Protestant and Catholics evidenced by the proposer. Evidence is also required that this is likely to increase over the next 7 years to achieve reasonable numbers from the minority religion and an aspiration for the relative proportions of the two groups to be similar.</i> As will be noted, this involves a two-stage test to inform the analysis.” First, is the school “likely to be able to attract at least 10% of its total year 1 or year 8 from the minority religion, or in those schools seeking to transform to Integrated status, 15% of the combined number of Protestant and Catholic year 1 or year 8 pupils, in the first year of Transformation.” Second, and more importantly as it relates more closely to the statutory test, is there evidence that this is likely to increase over the next 7 years to achieve reasonable numbers from the minority religion and an aspiration for the relative proportions of the two groups to be similar? <u>Integrated schools and religious balance</u> It is sometimes suggested that post-transformation schools become more religiously mixed because of measures that are put in place. It is uncontentious to note that this is normally, though not invariably, the case. The more relevant question is whether they generally become sufficiently religiously mixed in order to satisfy the statutory reasonable numbers test. A recent analysis of the figures indicated that the latter is not the case. At present no integrated school meets the aspiration of the minority Catholic or Protestant community representing 40% of all children at a school. Of those schools which have transformed, 31 out of 33 [93.9%] have a minority population under 25% of the school community.
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	Of the 71 integrated primary and post-primary schools, (48, or 67.6%) saw a decrease in the percentage of pupils from the minority religious community in 2025/26 from 2024/25¹, while (23, or 32.4%) saw an increase. The Department's reasonable numbers assessment also set out an analysis of the trends and numbers in relation to those schools which have transformed. As the Court of Appeal has observed, "The statistics demonstrate that in some schools transformation has had a significant impact in addressing religious balance at the school. In other schools there has been no or little improvement in religious balance. We accept, as a matter of common sense, that transformation to integrated status has the potential to increase the number of students from an under-represented religion at a particular school. Ultimately, whether this is likely to be achieved remains a matter of judgement in each case." The most recent statistics, therefore, support the Court of Appeal's observation that there is no general rule that transformation will lead to the achievement of reasonable numbers. The question must be determined on the individual merits of each case and the evidence available in respect of the particular school. <u>Is the first limb of the test satisfied in this case?</u> School Census data in Table 6 of Appendix G (ii) indicate that in 2024/25 there were * Catholic children in Year 1 representing *% of Year 1 enrolments, while paragraph 41 in the same appendix details that in 2025/26 there was only * Catholic children representing *%. It should be recognised that a small numerical change in the actual number of children can have a significant impact on the statistics. Given my conclusion on the statutory test below, it is unnecessary to determine whether this indicator is met. However, I note that the evidence provides only limited support for it, and there is no established trend demonstrating sustained achievement of the relevant threshold. <u>Are there presently reasonable numbers in the school?</u>
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¹ In two schools, the minority religion switched between years (from Protestant to Catholic, or vice versa) due to small changes in the relative proportions of Catholic and Protestant pupils. As a result, the minority percentages compared across years for these schools do not refer to the same religious group.

	Table 1 at paragraph 10 of the submission and quoted at paragraphs 104 and 105 makes it clear that with 5% Catholic children within the total enrolment in 2025/26, the school does not presently have reasonable numbers of Catholic children. <u>What is the basis to believe that reasonable numbers of Catholic children are likely?</u> The central question is, therefore, whether reasonable numbers are likely to be achieved in some reasonable period. In doing so, without adopting a rigid approach, I have regard to the intention of the 1989 Order, the NICIE Statement of Principles, and the underlying rationale of contact theory that there should be a reasonable balance between Protestant and Catholic children. I have considered the case for change and other representations (in particular those of the section 3 bodies) to assess whether the Article 92(6) test is satisfied. The most favourable factors in considering the test are; (a) the number of Catholics who live in areas from which the school draws its children (para 50, Table 5), (b) an acceptance that post-transformation, it would be expected that the number of Catholic children would increase, (c) a modest increase in the number of Catholic children in recent years (para 10, Table 1), (d) the transformation plan. However, set against that, there is little evidence that the Catholic population will translate into enrolments of Catholic children at the school and they would have to attend the school in a proportion for which there is no historic evidence. The issue of a post-transformation boost in Catholic numbers – even if accepted as a matter of common sense – falls far short of evidence that this would achieve reasonable numbers of Catholic children. The recent small increase in Catholic children would not yet rise to a level where one could conclude that it would continue to the level where reasonable numbers would be achieved. At paragraph 28, officials note that the school’s three-year transformation plan, “does not provide an evidential basis to satisfy the requirements of section 1(1)(a) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 ...”
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	The parental ballot is evidence of unmet demand with 44% of all eligible voters being in favour which equates to 60.5% of those who voted, for integrated education. It does not, however, demonstrate evidence that the reasonable numbers test would be met. Further, I note at paragraph 40, officials conclude that the Case for Change did not provide any evidence of Expression of Interest (EOI) forms nor were they provided during the statutory two-month objection period. The suggestion that a potential exists to achieve reasonable numbers is demonstrably different from that being likely as required in legislation. The fact that a transformation plan exists is not evidence that it will deliver reasonable numbers of Catholic children. In January 2026, the school provided details of EOIs received, which revealed 24 responses: 16 were Protestant, none were Catholic, four were other culture/belief/background, three were a mix of Catholic and Protestant, and one was other. It need hardly be stated that this adds no support to the proposition that the reasonable numbers test is likely to be met. There is nothing in the section 3 bodies' responses that provides compelling evidence that the reasonable numbers test is likely to be met. Indeed, by now it should be apparent that a <i>potential</i> growth in religious diversity is not the statutory test for reasonable numbers. In its response NICIE places some importance on the extension of the idea of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism from being religions to being cultures. Setting aside the merits of such an analysis, the survey of the school in this particular case would demonstrate that this offers no meaningful support to the idea that the reasonable numbers test would be met in this case. Corran IPS, a Grant Maintained Integrated School – not a transformed school - has achieved a good religious balance, however it appears to be able to accommodate all those Catholic children who wish to attend the school. This application pattern would therefore not bolster the argument that the reasonable numbers test would be achieved In conclusion, having considered all of the evidence, I am not persuaded that the statutory test is satisfied.
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	I conclude that while a number of factors (including those cited above) can be argued in favour of the proposal, these matters demonstrate no more than the possibility of future growth. The statutory test requires more than possibility. It requires me to be satisfied that it appears likely that the school will provide integrated education. The school had * Catholic enrolment in Year 1 (25/26) which equates to *% though this is down from the 2024/25 year. There is no established trend demonstrating movement towards reasonable numbers, nor is there persuasive evidence that the Catholic population within the wider catchment area is likely to translate into enrolment at the scale required. The transformation plan sets out aspirations and proposed actions, but it does not provide a sufficient evidential basis for concluding that reasonable numbers are likely to be achieved. The parental ballot demonstrates support for transformation. It does not, however, demonstrate that the statutory requirement concerning reasonable numbers is likely to be met. Similarly, the Expressions of Interest data provide no support for the proposition that future enrolment from the minority community is likely to increase to the extent required. Taken collectively, the evidence establishes the potential for greater religious diversity within the school. It does not establish that the achievement of reasonable numbers of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils is likely. I therefore cannot be satisfied that the school would be likely to provide integrated education within the meaning of the legislation. The proposal must accordingly be refused. I should add that nothing in this conclusion prevents the school bringing a further application which is grounded in further evidence. In considering such an application considerable weight would be given to evidence that the statutory test is likely to be met.	
Additional notes		
Information redacted	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.	
	Key	Details
	■	redaction
	*	refers to less than five cases where data is considered sensitive

	#	means figure has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information under rules of disclosure
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ELAINE ARMSTRONG
Area Planning Policy Team (South-West Region)
(Cleared by Sharon Smyth –29 June 2026)

Date: 29 June 2026

To: Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

Copy distribution below

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) 749 – LARNE AND INVER PRIMARY SCHOOL
TRANSFORMATION TO CONTROLLED INTEGRATED STATUS**

Issue:	To decide on Development Proposal (DP) 749 which proposes: <i>Larne and Inver Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated status with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.</i>
Timescale:	Routine
Financial/Resource Implications:	Resource/Capital – There are no resource or capital costs. Transport - It is possible that the Transformation may lead to an increase in the number of pupils requiring transport assistance, however, it is anticipated that the cost would not be significant.
FOI Implications:	The contents of this submission are likely to be fully disclosable.
Statutory Duty Implications:	Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, to encourage, facilitate and support the development of Integrated education Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 The Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 This submission takes account of the Court of Appeal judgement on DP 727 (JR 335 - Bangor Academy) and DP 728 (JR 336 - Rathmore Primary School).

**Presentational
Issues:**

It is likely there will be local media interest in the decision. In the event of any queries arising, the Press Office will refer to this submission and liaise with officials. (AC – 29/06/26.)

Recommendation:

It is recommended that you: -

- (i) consider the evidence set out in this submission and appendices to inform your decision on DP 749; and
- (ii) If content, agree this submission (with any appropriate redactions) and the DP 749 decision can be published on the Department's website once the Board of Governors of Larne and Inver Primary School and the Education Authority have been informed of the decision.

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Appendices (attached separately)

Appendix A:	Copy of Published DP 749
Appendix B:	Case for Change (CfC)– DP 749
Appendix C:	Summary of Responses -Two Month Objection Period
Appendix D:	Consultation responses from: • Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education • Controlled Schools Support Council • Integrated Education Fund
Appendix E:	ETI Commentary Paper - DP 749
Appendix F:	Update from Principal re Reasonable Numbers Paper and updated Transformation Action Plan
Appendix G:	Key Statistical / Assessment Data (i) Alternative Primary Provision (ii) Assessment Against the Transformation Criteria
Appendix H:	Department of Education (Policy Team) Comments - DP 749
Appendix I:	Other Considerations

Introduction

1. On 11 September 2025, the Education Authority (EA) published Development Proposal (DP) 749 on behalf of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Larne and Inver Primary School (PS). A copy of the Published DP 749, attached at **Appendix A**, proposed that: -

Larne and Inver Primary School will transform to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

2. A copy of the proposer's supporting Case for Change (CfC) for DP 749 is attached at **Appendix B**.
3. The statutory two-month objection period ended on 11 November 2025. A summary of the responses received during the two-month objection is attached at **Appendix C**.
4. The assessment of this DP has been impacted by the Judicial Review in relation to DPs 727 and 728 and the subsequent appeal.

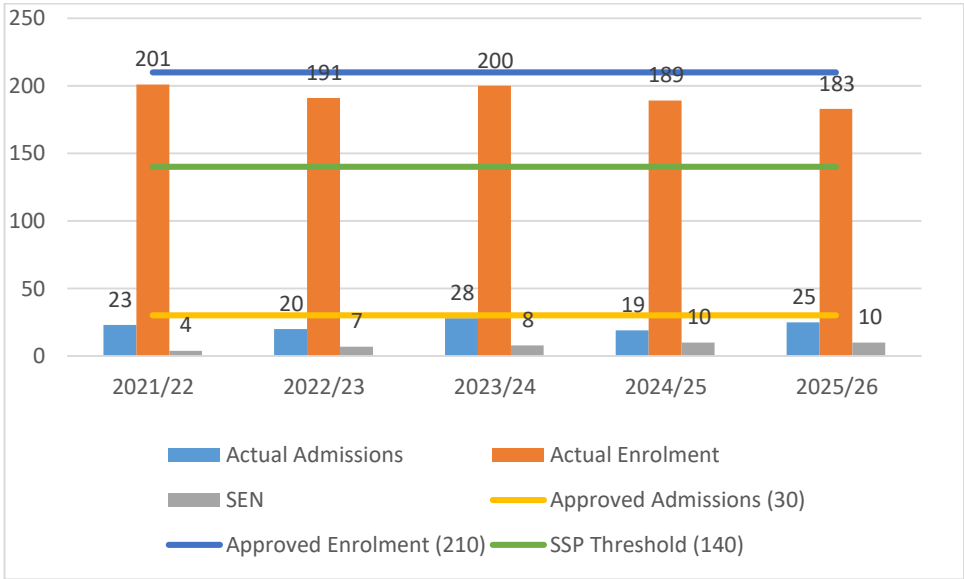
Background - Larne and Inver Primary School

5. Larne and Inver Primary School (PS) is a seven-class co-educational Controlled primary school which was established in 1842. It is situated on the edge of the commercial centre of Larne. [Map 1](#) illustrates its location.
6. In 2022/23, the school had its approved numbers decreased via the Department's Resetting Exercise² as follows:
 - approved admissions were reduced from 34 to 30; and
 - enrolment numbers were reduced from 237 to 210.
7. Whilst the school's enrolment numbers are above the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) recommended minimum threshold (i.e. 140 for a sustainable urban³ primary school), the school's actual admissions and enrolment have been below its reset approved numbers over the last 5 years.
8. In 2025/26, the school had an actual enrolment of **183** pupils in Y1-Y7, including an intake of 25 Year 1 pupils at school census date. The figures include 10 pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
9. [Chart 1](#) below illustrates Larne and Inver PS' actual admissions and enrolment trends over the last five years and shows that the school's actual enrolment has fallen from 201 pupils in 2021/22 to 183 pupils in 2025/26, with the Year 1 intake ranging between 19 and 28 pupils.

² [Resetting for Area Planning | Department of Education](#)

³ From September 2022, the urban/ rural definitions used in the Sustainable Schools Policy reflect those used by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and under the NISRA definition, Larne and Inver PS is located in an urban area. Urban: schools are defined as urban if they are located in settlements with a population greater than or equal to 5,000 people (NISRA Bands A-E); and Rural: schools are defined as rural if they are located in settlements with less than 5,000 people (NISRA Bands F-H).

Chart 1: Larne and Inver PS – Historical Admissions and Enrolments



*Verified census data - Includes Pupils with a Statement of SEN

10. [Table 1](#) below shows the statistics capturing the numbers of Protestant, Roman Catholic and other denominations over the last 5 years.

Table 1 Larne and Inver PS – Religious Balance

Year	Protestant		Catholic		Others		Total
	No.	% (rounded)	No.	%	No.	%	
2020/21	108	52%					205
2021/22	106	52%					201
2022/23	107	56%					191
2023/24	111	56%					200
2024/25	95	50%	6	3%	88	47%	189
2025/26	91	50%	10	5%	82	45%	183

Integrated Education - Legislation and Case Law

11. The legislative process for proposals to transform to integrated status is outlined in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989⁴.
12. Article 64(1) of Order states: *‘It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage, facilitate and support the development of integrated education, and to provide support for integrated education.’*
13. The Department’s assessment of Larne and Inver PS in the context of DP 749 to transform to Controlled Integrated status, takes due account of the information and evidence gathered in this report and associated appendices, together with the Department’s ‘duty’ under Article 64.

⁴ [The Education Reform \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989](#) (Chapter II)

14. In terms of ‘Proposals for acquisition of controlled integrated status’ Article 92(6) of the 1989 Order states that *‘[t]he 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’*. Article 92(7) states that *‘[t]he Department shall not approve a proposal ... in relation to a school unless the school was eligible for controlled integrated status on the date on which the proposal was submitted under that paragraph’*.
15. Section 1(1) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022⁵ defines integrated education as: *‘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.’*
16. In order to progress plans to bring forward a DP to transform to controlled integrated status, the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 requires a ballot to be held in which every parent with a pupil currently attending the school is eligible to vote. At least 50% of those eligible to vote must do so and there must be a simple majority in favour of applying for the transformation.
17. On 24 April 2024, the BoG passed a resolution to initiate a parental ballot which took place from 30 May 2024 to 20 June 2024 to transform Larne and Inver PS to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from September 2026. With 275 eligible voters, there was a turnout of 72.7% (200), with 60.5% (121) voting in favour of Transformation with 39.5% (79) voting against. The result of the ballot is included in the CfC at Appendix B.
18. The recent Court of Appeal judgement on the outcome of DP 727 (Bangor Academy) and DP 728 (Rathmore Primary School) recognised the tension between the Department’s duty under Article 64 of the 1989 Order to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education and the statutory requirement under Article 92(6) that a proposal may only be approved where it appears likely that the school will provide integrated education. While Article 64 provides a clear policy direction in favour of transformation, the Court confirmed that Article 92(6) remains a **mandatory statutory test which must be satisfied**. In practice, this means that although the Department is required to support the development of integrated education, proposals cannot be approved unless “reasonable numbers” of both Protestant and Catholic pupils are likely to be achieved.
19. The Court also confirmed that the assessment under Article 92(6) is inherently forward-looking, requiring the Department to make a judgement as to whether the school is likely to provide integrated education over time rather than to demonstrate certainty at the point of decision. This involves an element of

⁵ [Integrated Education \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022](#)

evaluative judgement, informed by available evidence including demand indicators, planned actions and local context.

Integrated Education – Guidance

20. In May 2026, the Department published [Integrated Education Demand Evidence Insights and Limitations](#) to ensure decisions on Integrated Education are being informed by robust, system-wide analysis.
21. The Department's [Transforming Together - Understanding the Pathway to Integrated Education](#)⁶ (updated and published on 25 February 2026) outlines the legislative and policy areas the Department will take into consideration when assessing DPs for transformation. These are:
 - planning and engagement in the transformation process;
 - sustainability;
 - demand for integrated education; and
 - area planning context.
22. The Transforming Together guidance outlines the Department's position on 'reasonable numbers' in respect of section 1(1)(a) of the Integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 as outlined in [paragraph 14](#) above.
23. The guidance states that; 'to ensure the process of transformation is both well-grounded at the outset and capable of developing over time, it is expected, as a general principle, the proposer to provide evidence that the school is likely:
 - (i) to be able to attract at least 10% of its total year 1 (for Primary) from the minority religion, or 15% of the combined number of Protestant and Catholic year 1 pupils, in the year following achieving Integrated status i.e. within the first year 1 intake of pupils who have gone through the admissions process with the school listed as an Integrated school; and
 - (ii) to increase over the next seven years to achieve reasonable numbers from the minority religion and an aspiration for the relative proportions of the two groups to be similar.
24. Using the information provided in the CfC⁷ and the updated information and Transformation Action Plan provided in **Appendix F**, the assessment of DP 749 will be carried out against the four areas listed in [paragraph 21](#). It will also take cognisance of the general principle in terms of reasonable numbers and reflect the findings in the recent Court of Appeal judgement.

Planning and Engagement in the Transformation Process

25. The Department's Transforming Together guidance requires evidence of the school's commitment to Integrated education and its potential to become a

⁶ *It is noted that DP 749 was developed and progressed in advance of the publication of the revised guidance.*

⁷ See separate Submission Appendices (Appendix B – Case for Change (CfC))

sustainable Integrated school. As part of the CfC, schools are required to provide the Department with:-

- A report on the initial exploration phase.
 - A copy of the Transformation Plan.
 - Details of cultural and operational changes, as well as any training completed, to date.
26. Details of the activity and engagement the school has taken forward is provided in the CfC.
27. The ETI has commented that *‘The school has been pro-active in preparing for Transformation, including consultation, re-branding and re-designing both crest and uniform. The three-year Transformation Plan, running from the 2024-25 school year to 2026-27, is now in its second year of implementation: this indicates the school’s planning for, and commitment to, Transformation’*. The ETI Commentary Paper is included at **Appendix E**.
28. The school’s 3-year Transformation Plan covers four themes (i.e. learner centred; high quality teaching; effective leadership; and community connections) and details actions to ensure *‘families feel comfortable sharing their cultural identity, supporting understanding of cultural and religious diversity within the school, and celebrating the rich diversity of identities, religions and beliefs as the school becomes more intentional in its work’*⁸. The plan however does not provide an evidential basis to satisfy the requirements of section 1(1)(a) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022⁹ as outlined in [paragraph 15](#).

Sustainability

29. An essential consideration for the Department is that the school will be viable and sustainable for the long term. All proposals are assessed against the criteria and indicators in the SSP.
30. Whilst the school’s actual admissions and enrolment have been below its reset approved numbers over the last five years, its enrolment numbers are above the SSP recommended minimum threshold (i.e. 140 for a sustainable urban¹⁰ primary school). The sustainability assessment of the school, as set out in **Appendix G** shows that the school would be deemed sustainable at the present time.
31. In regard to the provision of integrated education, however, the Court of Appeal’s judgement outlines the Department’s duty to evaluate whether the school is likely to provide integrated education over time rather than to demonstrate certainty at the point of decision. This will be further explored in the section on Demand for Integrated Education below.

⁸ See separate Appendices (Appendix B – CfC (Appendix 2 – Transformation Plan) page 53

⁹ [Integrated Education \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022](#)

¹⁰ From September 2022, the urban/ rural definitions used in the Sustainable Schools Policy reflect those used by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and under the NISRA definition, Larne and Inver PS is located in an urban area. Urban: schools are defined as urban if they are located in settlements with a population greater than or equal to 5,000 people (NISRA Bands A-E); and Rural: schools are defined as rural if they are located in settlements with less than 5,000 people (NISRA Bands F-H).

Demand for Integrated Education

32. The Integration Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 section 5 (1) states that a reference to ‘support for’ integrated education is a reference to **(emphasis added)**—
- ‘(a) identifying, assessing, monitoring and aiming to meet the demand for the provision of integrated education **within the context of area planning and the overall sustainability of the school estate** (including, in particular, monitoring the number and success of applications for integrated education), and*
- (b) 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)’.*
33. The Integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Act (2022) also states that; ‘a reference to ascertaining the demand for integrated education is a reference to ascertaining the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained integrated or controlled integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained integrated schools or controlled integrated schools’.
34. The [Integrated Education Demand Evidence Insights and Limitations](#) outlines that:
- enrolments of pupils in years 1 to 7 declined for the eighth consecutive year (which is consistent with the continuing reduction in the number of children aged four to ten in the wider population);
 - the primary school population is projected to decline by 15.3% between 2023/24 and 2030/31 (reflecting sustained decreases in the birth rate over the last decade); and
 - for the Integrated sector continued growth in parental preference may offset some of the effects of wider population decline although overall demographic trends will remain a fundamental determinant of future system wide capacity.
35. In assessing parental demand for Integrated Education in the school’s area, evidence can be demonstrated in a range of ways, including, but not limited to:
- published surveys and reports related to demand for Integrated Education;
 - school preference and parental survey responses as expressed via the EA school admissions portal;
 - the results of the Transformation ballot;
 - the availability of Integrated Education in the local area, including oversubscription at local Integrated schools; and
 - expression of interest forms collected from the locality.
36. The CfC¹¹ states that demand for Integrated Education is evidenced in the positive parental ballot in June 2024, and also from the enrolment figures from the only other Integrated primary school in the town (i.e. Corran IPS).

¹¹ Appendix B – CfC Page 11 Section 2 (Rationale for Change).

37. By way of background, Corran IPS is not a 'transformed' school as it was established as a grant maintained integrated (GMI). Table 2 (in **Appendix G(i)**) sets out this school's historical enrolment and shows that in 2025/26 Corran IPS had 195 pupils enrolled. Table 10 (**Appendix G(ii)**) sets out the historical breakdown of Corran IPS' enrolment and shows 26.67% from a Protestant background, 36.92% from a Catholic background and 36.41% from others.
38. The recent Court of Appeal emphasised that evidence of general parental demand or support for transformation, while relevant, is not sufficient in itself to satisfy Article 92(6). In particular, it highlighted the importance of demonstrating the likelihood of increased participation from the minority community, noting that the assessment must focus on whether reasonable numbers from that group are likely to be achieved.
39. In considering the evidential basis for likely future enrolment patterns, the Court attached significant weight to the presence or absence of concrete evidence, including Expression of Interest (EOI) forms and demonstrable engagement with the minority community. In the cases considered, the absence of such evidence was a key factor in concluding that the statutory test was not met. In contrast, the provision of EOI data and evidence of targeted engagement activity provides a more robust basis on which to assess the likelihood of achieving reasonable numbers over time.
40. The CfC for DP 749 did not provide any evidence of EOIs, nor were there any provided during the statutory two-month objection period. DE Officials sought an update from the school and were advised EOIs were collected after the submission and provided to the Department in January 2026. The school advised that the EOI form was co-designed by the school and NICIE and *'The forms have been circulated online, placed in the local library and distributed during two promotional sessions at ASDA, Larne on Wednesday 12th November 2025 and Saturday 20th December 2025'*.
41. [Table 2](#) below provides the school's summary table of the EOIs received, broken down by religious background as follows:

Table 2: Larne and Inver PS - Expressions of Interest

Protestant (background, culture and/or religion)	16
Catholic (background, culture and/or religion)	0
Other culture/belief/background	4
Mix of Catholic and Protestant (background, culture and/or religion)	3
Other	1

42. The table indicates that 24 EOIs have been received, with the majority (16) for pupils from a Protestant background and there are none on behalf of pupils from a solely Catholic background. Three are listed as being from a mix of Catholic and Protestant (background, culture and/or religion). The table does not break the EOIs down by the proposed date of commencement i.e. which school year they apply to.

Alternative Primary Provision

43. To satisfy the duty under the Integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Act Section 5 (1)(a) and (b) (as outlined in [paragraph 32](#) above), it is important to look at alternative provision in the local area. Key statistical data including alternative primary provision is provided in **Appendix G (i)**.
44. [Map 2](#) outlines the neighbouring primary school provision and pupil location within a 5-mile radius showing that the Larne area offers significant primary education provision with seven primary schools in the Controlled sector and two in the Catholic Maintained sector within the five-mile radius of Larne and Inver PS, plus one GMI primary school. [Map 3](#) illustrates the drive times of pupils attending Larne and Inver PS and shows that all pupils live within 30 minutes of the school, with the majority of pupils living within 10 minutes.
45. [Table 3](#) below is an extract from the CfC and shows that in 2023-2024, there were 435 available places in alternative primary provision in the local area (including 9 in the local integrated school). In 2025/26, this number has increased to 595 available places in the area with 13 available places at the nearest Integrated school.

School	Sector	Distance from Larne and Inver PS (miles)	Enrolment 2023-24	Available Places 2023-24
St MacNissis's PS	Maintained	0.6	169	92
Moyle PS	Controlled	0.7	369	0
St Anthony's PS	Maintained	1.5	71	139
Olderfleet PS	Controlled	1.2	114	84
Linn PS	Controlled	1.6	356	24
Corran Integrated PS	GMI	1.6	194	9
Glynn PS	Controlled	1.9	87	16
Toreagh PS	Controlled	3.9	114	0
Cairncastle PS	Controlled	4.6	66	71

46. In 2025/26, across the 10 primary schools in the area (including Larne and Inver PS), there were 1,656 pupils (including supernumerary) enrolled in a total of 2,129 approved places (showing a capacity of 22%). In Year 1, there were 221 pupils enrolled in the 298 approved Year 1 places (showing a capacity of 25%).
47. The [Integrated Education Demand Evidence Insights and Limitations](#) published in May 2026, shows the over and under subscription at first preference for Integrated primary schools at Year 1 by council of school location since 2020/21.
48. [Table 4](#) below shows the subscription details for Integrated Primary School in the Mid and East Antrim Area.

Table 4: Mid and East Antrim Area						
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Approved Year 1 Admission Numbers	152	180	180	180	180	180
1st Preference Applications (% over/under subscription)	110 (-27.6%)	140 (-22.2%)	137 (-23.9%)	132 (-26.7%)	131 (-27.2%)	133 (-26.1%)

49. Mid & East Antrim increased approved admission numbers following Carrickfergus Central's Transformation however, continues to be undersubscribed (-27.6% prior to Transformation (2020/21) to -26.1% in 2025/26).
50. [Table 5](#) below was provided in the CfC and details the community balance (Religion or Religion Brought up in) in the NISRA Census 2021 Data Zones in which the majority of pupils who attend Larne and Inver PS reside. All zones are majority Protestant but with a significant percentage of persons in all zones who identify as Catholic, or as Other Religions or None.

Table 5: Religious Breakdown in the areas in which the majority of pupils reside				
Data Zone	% Catholic	% Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)	% Other religions and philosophies	% None
Larne Lough A	26%	64%	<1%	9%
Larne Lough B	22%	65%	1%	11%
Coast Road D	35%	55%	<1%	9%
Coast Road E	25%	62%	<1%	12%
Coast Road F	24%	62%	<1%	14%
Coast Road G	17%	68%	<1%	15%
Coast Road H	18%	64%	<1%	17%
Coast Road J	29%	60%	1%	10%

51. Whilst there is evidence of areas within the data zones where children from a Catholic background can be drawn from, the data cannot however conclude that the school can attract reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children as required in Article 92(6) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

Area Planning Context

52. As outlined in the Integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 (section 5 (1)), the area planning context must be taken into consideration when identifying the Department's duty to support integrated education.

53. The assessment includes how the proposal aligns with the current Strategic Area Plan and Operational Plan and how it will contribute to the delivery of sustainable education provision within the geographical area and school estate.
54. Larne and Inver PS is located within the Mid and East Antrim Local Government District (LGD).
55. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017, the Central Larne Super Output Area (SOA) (within which Larne and Inver PS is situated) is ranked 192 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 least deprived). In 2025/26, 43 pupils (23.5%) were entitled to Free School Meals (FSM).
56. The CfC asserts the main Wards in which the majority of Larne and Inver PS pupils reside are Craigyhill, Curran and Inver, Gardenmore and The Maidens, as indicated on and supported by [Map 4](#).
57. [Map 5](#) shows that the pupils who attend Larne and Inver PS intersect with 16 Super Data Zones and the majority of these pupils reside in the Larne Lough or Coast Road Super Data Zones. Both of these zones have a majority of the Protestant tradition, whilst there are a number of persons in all zones who identify as Catholic, or as None.
58. [Table 6](#) below has been reproduced from the CfC and details the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure for the four main wards in which the majority of Larne and Inver PS pupils reside, as listed above and as verified by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The lower numbers indicate areas of most deprivation, with 462 being the least deprived area.

Table 6: 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
Craigyhill	144	227	111	91	78	252	326	150
Curran & Inver	125	179	96	160	163	321	18	50
Gardenmore	172	243	243	157	126	414	113	81
The Maidens	165	208	208	134	87	389	85	274

59. The Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 – Planning for Sustainable Provision (the Area Plan) states that *'The managing authorities and sectoral bodies in their statutory duty will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate both Irish Medium and Integrated education to provide sustainable education for an area. Both Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will provide guidance on innovative sustainable provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions, including the option for individual schools to transform to Integrated status.'*

60. Larne and Inver PS features in the EA's Operational Plan 2 – 2024-2026 as a Short-Term Work Stream with a key issue '*Larne and Inver PS is proposing to transform to Controlled Integrated status*'. It cites the statutory duty to Integrated education with the associated key theme to '*Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways*'.
61. OP2 shows that based on projected births, over the next number of years, the primary school enrolment numbers will experience a decline. Departmental school phase projections show that enrolment in primary and preparatory schools (Year 1 – Year 7) is projected to decline by 20.4% from 2023/24 to 2033/34. This is a projected fall from around 167,000 to 133,000 pupils or circa 34,000 pupils. DP 749 does not propose to alter Larne and Inver PS' approved numbers.
62. NISRA projections for the former Larne LGD, the smallest geographical area breakdown for which projections are available in which Larne and Inver PS is located, provide a more localised estimate of population numbers, as set out in [Table 7](#) below. The table shows the predicted decreases for the listed age groups for the periods 2018-2028 and 2018-2043.

Table 7: 2018-Based Population Projections for the Former Larne LGD

Age Group	2018	2019	2020		2028	2043
0-4	1,758	1,718	1,687		1,581	1,551
5 to 11	4,494	4,450	4,413		4,065	3,817

Source: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2018-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland>

63. [Table 8](#) below shows a projected decrease of 10.1% in the 0-4 age group to 2028 and 11.8% to 2043; 9.5% in the 5 to 11 age group to 2028 and 15.1% to 2043.

Table 8: 2018 – Based Population Projections - Percentage Change

Age Group	2018 to 2028		2018 to 2043	
	Individuals	Percentage	Individuals	Percentage
0-4	-177	-10.1%	-207	-11.8
5 to 11	-429	-9.5	-677	-15.1

Source: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2018-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland>

64. In relation to **Area Context**, the CfC states '*As the proposal for Transformation does not impact the approved enrolment or approved admission number of Larne and Inver 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.*' Details of alternative primary provision in the area are included above beginning at [paragraph 45](#) showing that the Larne area offers significant primary education provision with seven primary schools in the Controlled sector and two in the Catholic Maintained sector within the five-mile radius of Larne and Inver PS, plus one GMI primary school. In 2025/26, the

number of available places increased to 595 in the area with 13 available places at the nearest Integrated school.

65. In relation to the areas to be considered by the Department for a successful Transformation, the evidence set out would indicate that Larne and Inver PS has carried out planning and engagement activity towards the Transformation process and, in relation to the SSP, the school meets the sustainability criteria. Whilst the school met the reasonable number requirements in 2024/25, its Year 1 enrolment in 2025/26 does not meet the reasonable numbers requirements.
66. Given the projected decline in numbers of primary school children up to 2028 and beyond, and in the wider school estate context for the area, it is not possible to determine if the school can satisfy the requirements of Section 1(1) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as outlined in [paragraph 14](#) above.
67. More details on the assessment against the transformation areas can be found at **Appendix G(ii)**. Comments from other policy areas in the Department of Education can be found at **Appendix H**.

Consultation Process

68. Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 states that. *'...the Department must in particular take account of any representations made under section 3 of the Integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 (consultation) which relate to that duty.'*
69. *Section 3 of the Integrated Education Act states 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'.*
70. The Department has identified Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) and the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC) as relevant bodies for the purposes of such consultation.
71. On 11 September 2025, the Department wrote to each of these bodies, seeking their views on DP 749 and those submitted in relation to the Integrated Education Act are set out below.
72. NICIE responded as follows terms:
 - *The proposal to Transform Larne and Inver PS to Controlled Integrated status will assist the Department to deliver on 'Vision 2023 [2030] – A Strategy for Integrated Education' and fulfil their legal duties in relation to the 2022 Act and The Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 which place duties on the Department for Education to 'encourage, facilitate and support' the development of Integrated Education.*

- *We recognise that the 2022 Act requires the Integrated school to show that they are educating together those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children. This reference to culture and religion in the 2022 Act recognises the fact many people in NI use the terms Protestant and Catholic to describe their cultural background and/or their religious belief. The Ministerial statement recognises these issues too, by referring to Protestant and Catholic as 'backgrounds' in the first sections of the document. However, the inclusion of culture, which 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' are also descriptors of, and is also required by the 2022 Act, is not reflected in the guiding principle.*
- *It is NICIE's view that Larne and Inver PS will be able to provide Integrated Education, as defined by the Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022.*
- *Approval of the proposal will enable the Department to encourage, facilitate and support the development of Integrated Education and respond effectively to identified parental demand for Integrated Education, as required by the Education Reform Order (NI) 1989 and the 2022 Act.*
- *NICIE supports the proposal for Larne and Inver PS to Transform to Integrated status. Our recommendation for approval is in light of the demonstrated parental demand; the sustainability of the school; the existing and potential growth in religious and cultural diversity within the school population and locality and; the consistent demand for Integrated Education in the area. It is our view that the school is engaging effectively in the Transformation process and as a result, is positioning itself well to provide Integrated Education as defined by the 2022 Act.*

73. The IEF responded as follows:

- *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 more Integrated Education places in the Larne area, in response to the democratic wishes of parents, but will help the Department of Education and the Education Authority fulfil their statutory duty.*

74. CSSC responded in the following terms:

- *CSSC notes the requirement for the Department of Education to consider the implications of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 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 Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (IE Act) and welcomes the opportunity to provide commentary in this context.*

- *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 Larne and Inver Primary School, already welcomes children from different socio-economic backgrounds, children with different abilities and children from all faiths and none.*

75. All bodies note the support for Integrated Education evidenced by the parental ballot, the school's community engagement and the sustainable enrolments at the school.

Pre-publication Consultation

76. The CfC details the various consultations undertaken between governors, staff and parents. It also details that class teachers have discussed Integration at age-appropriate levels with the children. The CfC states that *'The 'voice of the child' plays an active role in the daily life of our school. Since September 2023, each class, as is age appropriate, has been discussing 'working together' and topics linked to our school's Transformation. Each class has watched the "Bees and the Wind" (NICIE), which depicts the history of Integrated Education, and discussed this relevant to their age through reflective circle time and open discussions, expressing views on what an Integrated School means to them and the potential positives and negatives of Larne and Inver PS becoming Integrated.'*
77. The CfC asserts that *'Children's thoughts and ideas (pupil voice) have always been and always will be central to any changes in our school. This applies to our Transformation Plan and any consequent changes. Children will always be consulted regarding any changes.'*
78. The CfC confirms that equality screening of the proposal has been carried out as have the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (where appropriate).
79. In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the EA, before submitting a proposal to the Department, is required to consult with the BoG, teachers and parents/guardians of any school or schools which could, in its opinion, be affected by the proposal.
80. A copy of the proposal was sent to 19 local schools on 12 March 2025. Comments were invited from the BoG and Trustees to be returned to the EA by 9 April 2025. The EA received two responses from affected schools and a response was received from Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC).
81. The full pre-publication consultation is summarised in the CfC as follows:

Summary Comments – Support the Proposal

- Believe that the best way for children to be educated is in an Integrated environment.

- More children will have the opportunity to be educated together and to learn with, from, and about each other on a daily basis.
- Further expansion of Integrated education within the Larne area can only lead to better outcomes for all involved.
- Notes that the school has developed a Transformation Action Plan which has identified areas for development which will include a review of the school's data collection to better reflect the school community's cultural balance.

Summary Comments – Note the Proposal

- Believe that the proposal should be looked at in the context of the wider Larne area and the need for places across all sectors.

EA's Comments

82. DP 749 was discussed by the EA's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee (SPPC) at its meetings on 3 June 2025 and 2 September 2025. The EA supports the BoG in taking forward DP 749, stating in the CfC that it *'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.'*
83. EA, whilst recognising the actions outlined in the Transformation Plan, did express its concern that the *'religious balance of Larne and Inver Primary School currently demonstrates a small number of pupils identifying as Catholic.'*
84. The EA further states that it *'recognises the level of support for integration as reflected in the parental ballot and notes that there are no available places in the integrated primary school sector in the area. Therefore, the Education Authority supports the Development Proposal for Larne and Inver Primary School to transform to Controlled Integrated status.'*

Two Month Statutory Objection Period

85. The two-month statutory objection period of DP 749 for Larne and Inver PS commenced on 11 September 2025 and ended on 11 November 2025. During the two-month statutory objection period, the Department received a total of 43 responses in support of DP 749 from parents of Larne and Inver PS, other interested individuals and groups, John Stewart, MLA, Danny Donnelly, MLA, Stewart Dickson, MLA and Noel Williams (former Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council), as well as three letters of support from the NICIE, CSSC and Integrated Education Fund (IEF).
86. Four objections were received from three parents of pupils in the school and one other member of the public. One other response was received submitting comments on the ongoing work of the school.
87. The four letters of objection received focused on the lack of need for additional Integrated places as there is another Integrated primary school in the area; that Larne and Inver PS is already naturally Integrated; the impact of demographics including a falling birth rate and decrease in population projections; and the

financial and administrative costs involved in Transformation. Two of the objections were from the same person.

88. **Appendix C** includes a summary table providing further details of the responses received during the objection period, with responses from MLAs and the responses from the sectoral support bodies reproduced in full at **Appendix D**.

Support

89. The responses received in support of the proposal stressed the demand for Integrated education in the area, the result of the parental ballot, sustainability of the nearest Integrated school and commitment to inclusion and connections within the community. A parent's right to access Integrated education was a common theme. The perceived benefits of an Integrated education to both pupils and the wider community was also consistently highlighted, including having a wide knowledge of other backgrounds from an early stage in life and the opportunity for children from all religious and economic backgrounds to share their education and learn from each other, in order to develop a brighter, inclusive future.
90. Stewart Dickson, MLA and Noel Williams (former Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council) offered full support for the proposal within the same correspondence. A full copy of the response is also reproduced at **Appendix C**.
91. John Stewart, MLA and Danny Donnelly, MLA both responded with the letter they had previously provided within the pre-publication consultation which have both been reproduced within Appendix 1 of the CfC.
92. NICIE, CSSC and IEF are recognised by the Department as advisory bodies under the provisions of Section 3 of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. As such, they are bodies that the Department contacts to take views on published proposals (in addition to any representation they may seek to make during the statutory objection period). Letters were issued to all three bodies on 11 September 2025 with a response date of 11 November 2025. All bodies supplied one response in relation to this DP covering both the Statutory Objection Period and Section 3 consultation. Section 3 comments are referenced at [paragraphs 72 to 74](#).

NICIE Comments

93. NICIE submitted a commentary on the proposal and their comments are listed throughout the submission in the relevant sections. NICIE supports the proposal for Larne and Inver PS to Transform to Controlled Integrated Status in light of the demonstrated parental demand; the sustainability of the school; the existing and potential growth in religious and cultural diversity within the school population and locality and; the consistent demand for Integrated Education in the area. NICIE's comments on DP 749 are provided in full at **Appendix D**.

CSSC Comments

94. The CSSC notes the publication of DP 749 to transform Larne and Inver PS to Controlled Integrated status, and acknowledges the publication of the CfC predates the publication of the Department's position paper on 'Reasonable Numbers,' however, CSSC is conscious that the school has been afforded a further opportunity to evidence how it will achieve reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children. It also notes Justice McAlinden's decision to dismiss applications to challenge your decisions to not approve proposals for the transformation to integrated status of Bangor Academy and Rathmore PS and your statement that "this ruling sets a significant precedent for future integrated education proposals and reaffirms the importance of legal and evidential rigour in shaping Northern Ireland's educational landscape.'
95. The full CSSC response to DP 749 is provided at **Appendix D**.

IEF Comments

96. The IEF welcomed *the DP for Transformation of Larne and Inver PS acknowledging that the Proposal was submitted in response to parents who voted in a parental ballot at Larne and Inver Primary School, voting by 60.5% in favour to take the school on the path of Transformation to Integrated status. It added there are limited Integrated school options for children in the Larne area despite there being strong parental demand, illustrated by the closest Integrated School, Corran IPS, that is operating at close to capacity with no room to accommodate the level of parental demand demonstrated in this proposal.*
97. The full IEF response to DP 749 is reproduced at **Appendix D**.

Other Considerations

98. Other considerations relating to an assessment of a DP include:
- Effective and efficient use of resources (including financial considerations);
 - Shared education (i.e The Shared Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2016);
 - Educational impact;
 - Peace and reconciliation policy objectives;
 - Programme for Government;
 - Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy;
 - The Good Friday Agreement.
99. The detail of the 'other considerations are included in **Appendix I**.

CONCLUSION

100. Article 64(1) of The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 states: 'It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage, facilitate and support the development of integrated education, and to provide support for integrated education.'

101. Article 92 (6) of The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 places a statutory duty on the Department to 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.'
102. Section 1(1) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 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.*
103. There is evidence to show the school is sustainable under the SSP. There is also evidence pertaining to Section 1(1) (b) and (c) of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 integrated.
104. In respect of Section 1(1) (a) there is evidence that over the last two years the school has attracted pupils from 'different religious cultures and religious beliefs and none'. However, from the evidence provided in [Table 1](#) above, it has not shown reasonable numbers of both 'Protestant and Roman Catholic children' in 2025/26.
105. The Department's information would show that the number of pupils in the school from a Catholic background was *% in 2020/21; 3% in 2024/25 and 5% in 2025/26.
106. The [Transforming Together - Understanding the Pathway to Integrated Education](#) outlines the Department's position on 'reasonable numbers' as follows (emphasis added):
- i. *'To ensure the process of Transformation is both well-grounded at the outset and capable of developing over time, the Department will expect, as a general principle, the proposer 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 in those schools seeking to Transform to Integrated status, 15% of the combined number of Protestant and Catholic year 1 or year 8 pupils, in the first year of Transformation.'*
 - ii. *There may be exceptions to this general principle however, and each case will be considered in its own unique circumstances regardless of the percentage of Protestant and Catholics evidenced by the proposer.*
 - iii. *Evidence is also required that this is likely to increase over the next 7 years to achieve reasonable numbers from the minority religion and an aspiration for the relative proportions of the two groups to be similar'.*
107. There is no evidence from the '[Demand](#)' or '[Area Planning Context](#)' to demonstrate how the school can achieve part (iii) of the 'reasonable numbers' principle. [Table 4](#) from the [Integrated Education Demand Evidence Insights and](#)

[Limitations](#) shows that whilst Mid & East Antrim increased approved admission numbers following Carrickfergus Central's Transformation, Integrated schools continue to be undersubscribed (-27.6% prior to Transformation (2020/21) to -26.1% in 2025/26).

108. [Table 5](#) details the community balance (Religion or Religion Brought up in) in the NISRA Census 2021 Data Zones in which the majority of pupils who attend Larne and Inver PS reside. The table shows that the highest percentages of Catholic (or brought up in the Catholic religion) is 35% and the lowest is 17%. The average across all areas is 24%.
109. The three-year transformation plan presented in the CfC outlines the actions the school will take to make *'families feel comfortable sharing their cultural identity, supporting understanding of cultural and religious diversity within the school, and celebrating the rich diversity of identities, religions and beliefs as the school becomes more intentional in its work'*. However, the plan does not provide evidence on how the school intends to achieve reasonable numbers of Protestant and Catholic children within the context of the census data.

RECOMMENDATION

110. Based on the evidence detailed above, it is recommended that:

- You consider the evidence set out in this submission and the appendices to inform your decision on DP 749;
- If content, agree this submission (with any appropriate redactions) and the DP 749 decision can be published on the Department's website once the Board of Governors of Larne and Inver Primary School and the Education Authority have been informed of the decision.



ELAINE ARMSTRONG

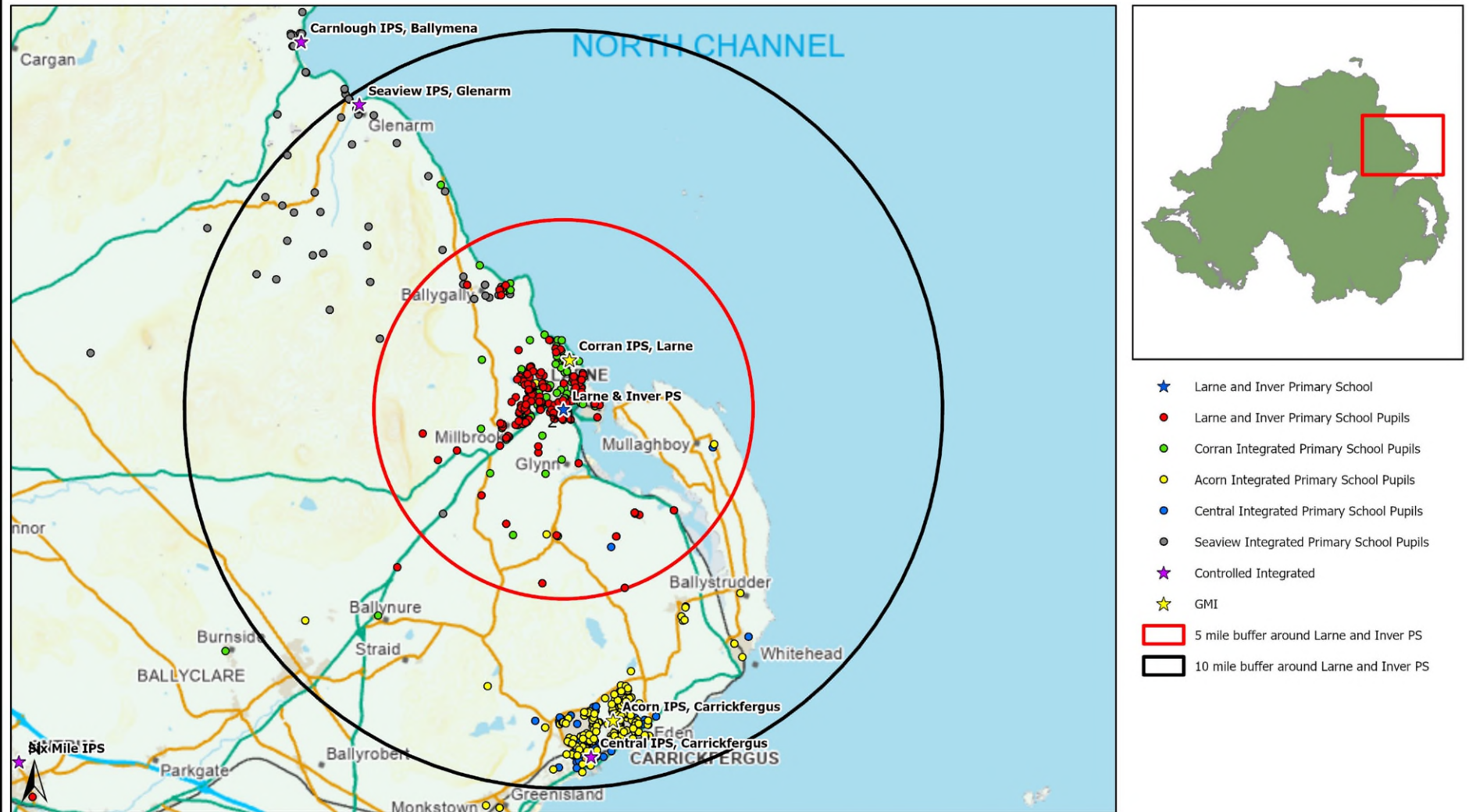
☎ 59711

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cc David Malcolm
Sharon Smyth
Heather Cousins
Faustina Graham
Suzanne Kingon
Clare Foley
Press Office
APPT
Correspondence

Map 1

Larne and Inver PS - Integrated Provision and Pupil locations - 10 Mile Radius



Supporting Information

Base mapping derived from OSNI Fusion. School/pupil data source : NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 2024/25. Note: Some pupils located outside the map extent. Some pupils at Central IPS are not visible due to the close proximity with Acorn IPS / its pupils

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Map created :11/12/2025

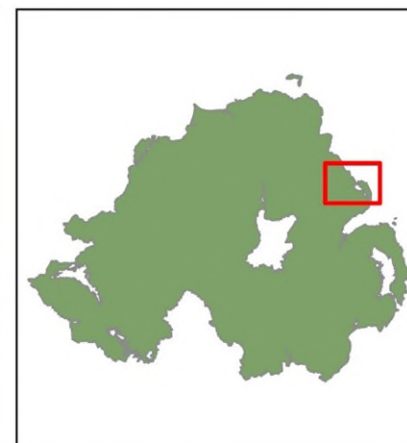
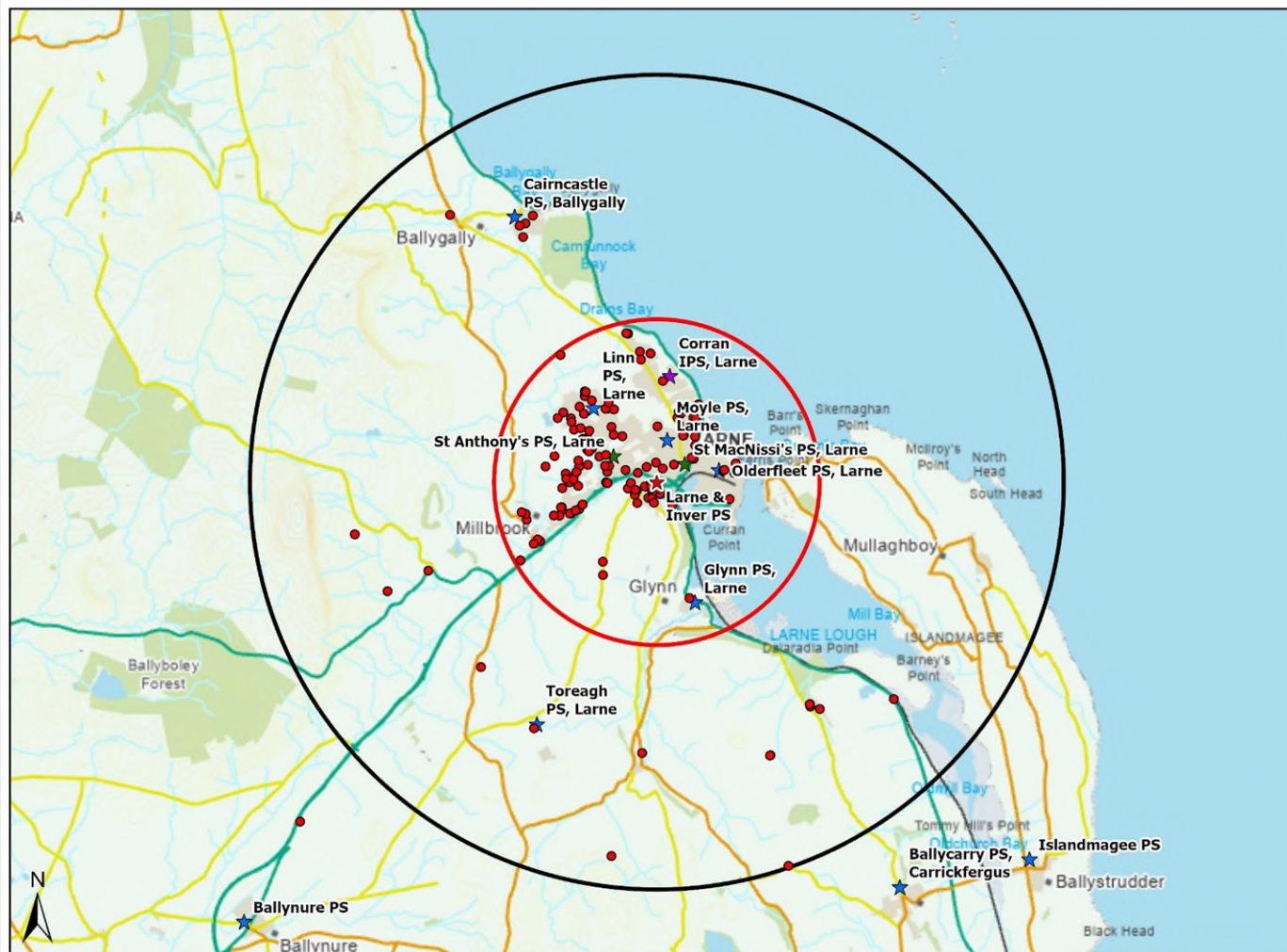
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Map 2

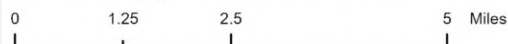
Larne and Inver PS - Neighbouring Primary Provision and Pupil locations - 5 Mile Radius



- ★ Larne and Inver Primary School
- Larne and Inver Primary School pupils
- ★ Catholic Maintained
- ★ Controlled
- ★ Controlled Integrated
- ★ GMI
- ★ Other Maintained
- ★ Voluntary
- 2 mile buffer around Larne and Inver PS
- 5 mile buffer around Larne and Inver PS

Supporting Information

Base mapping was derived from OSNI Fusion. School/pupil data source : NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 2024/25.
Note: There are 3 pupils located outside the map extent.



Map created :13/08/2025

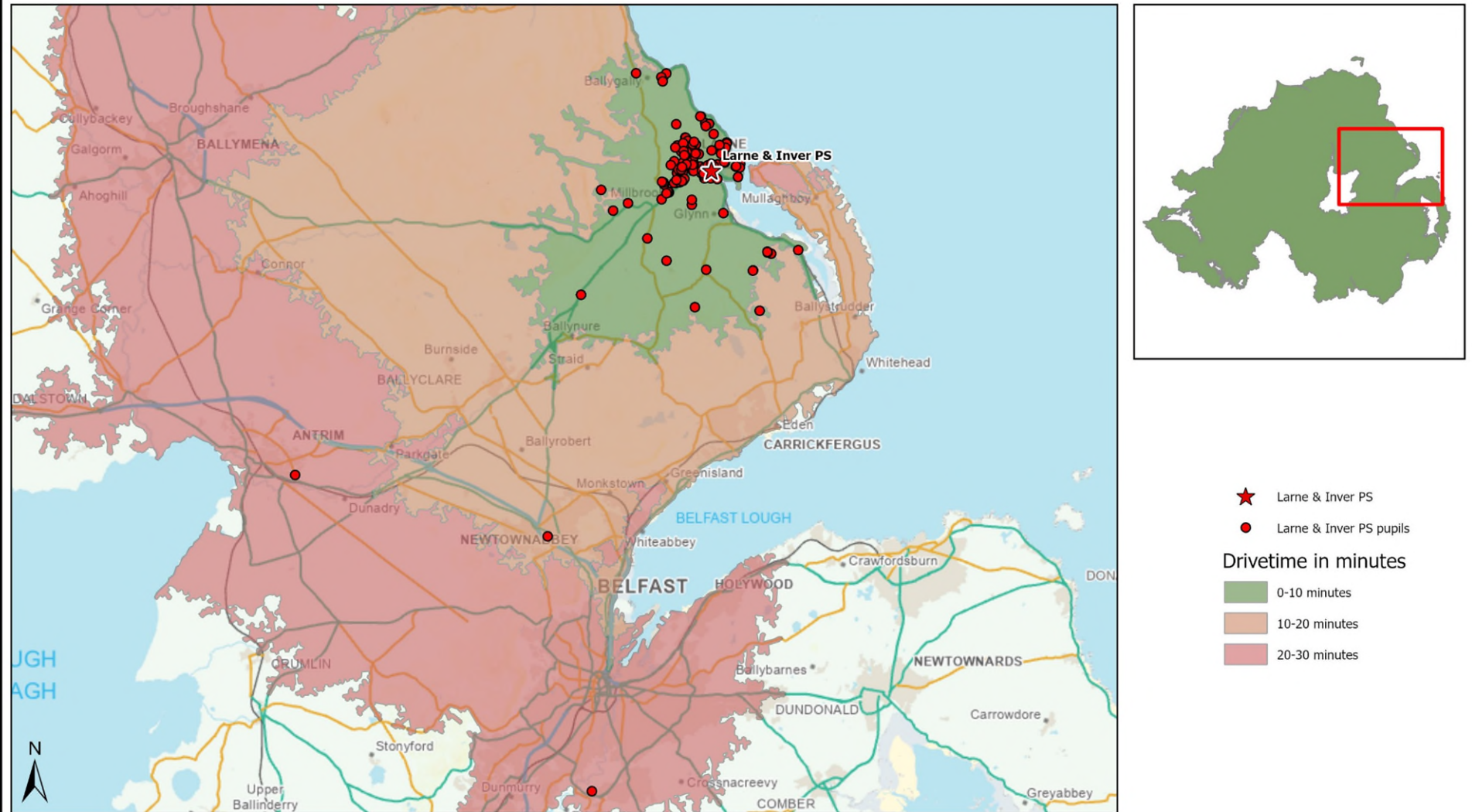
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Map 3

Larne & Inver PS : Pupil locations - up to a 30-minute drive time



Supporting Information



0 1 2 4 Miles

The dataset used in this analysis has been derived from OSNI Fusion. Drive times are approximations estimated using Road Classification and settlement limits and do not use actual speed limits. Local variations regarding Speed Limits can exist within the terms of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 2015

Base mapping also derived from OSNI Fusion.
School & pupil data : NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 2024/25

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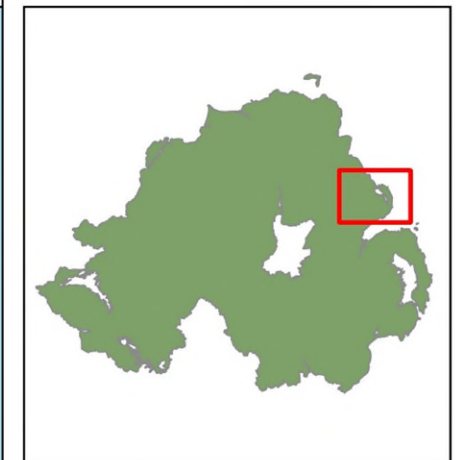
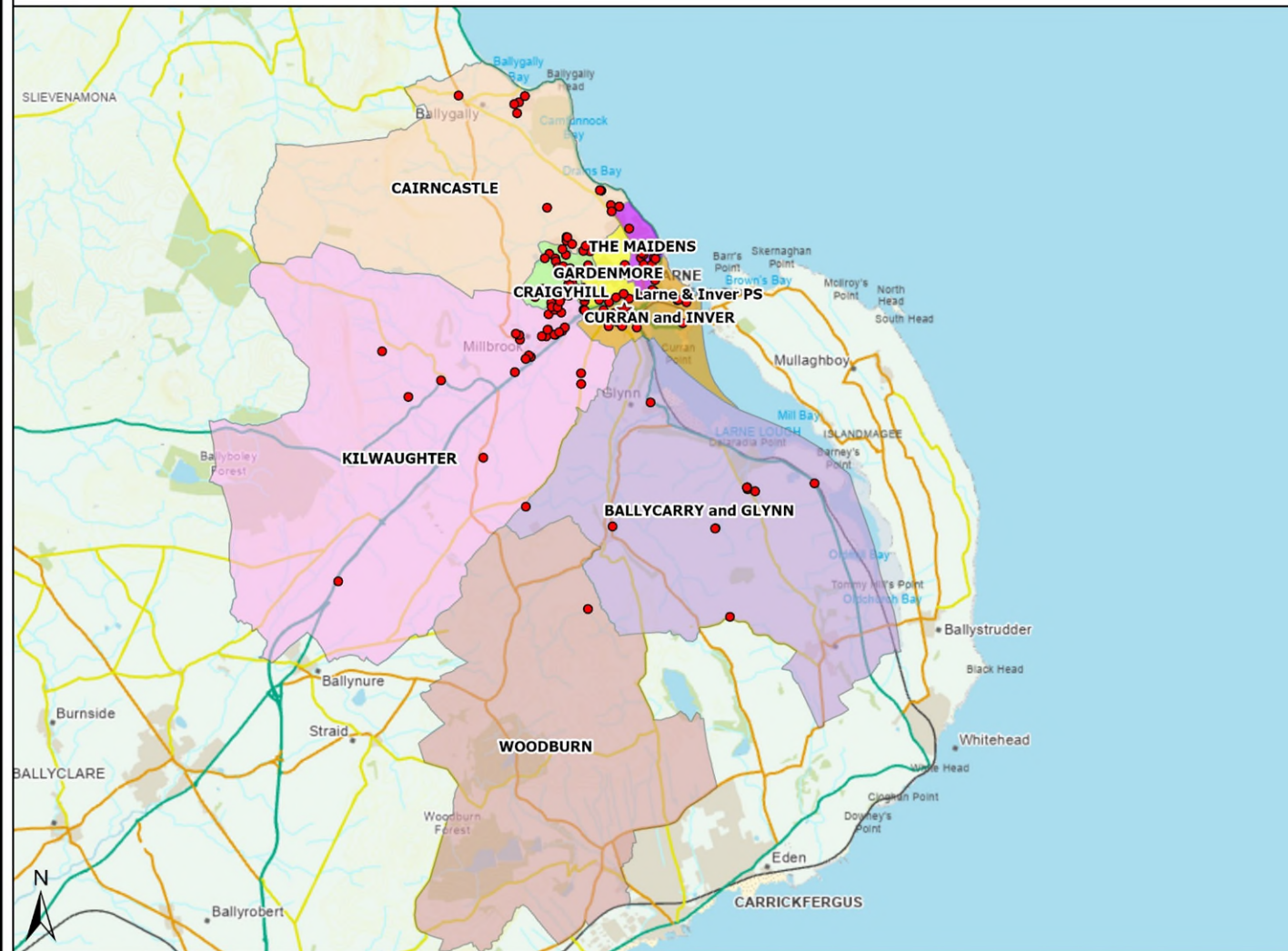
Reference Number: MOU577.4

Map created :13/08/2025



Map 4

Larne and Inver PS - Wards that intersect pupils



- ★ Larne and Inver Primary School
- Larne and Inver Primary School pupils
- BALLYCARRY and GLYNN
- BELVOIR
- CAIRNCASTLE
- CRAIGHILL
- CURRAN and INVER
- GARDENMORE
- GREYSTONE
- HIGHTOWN
- KILWAUGHTER
- THE MAIDENS
- WOODBURN

Supporting Information

Base mapping was derived from OSNI Fusion. Data used : NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 2024/25. Note: Some pupils are located outside the map extent, in the following wards - Greystone, Hightown and Belvoir.

0 1 2 4 Miles

Map created :18/08/2025

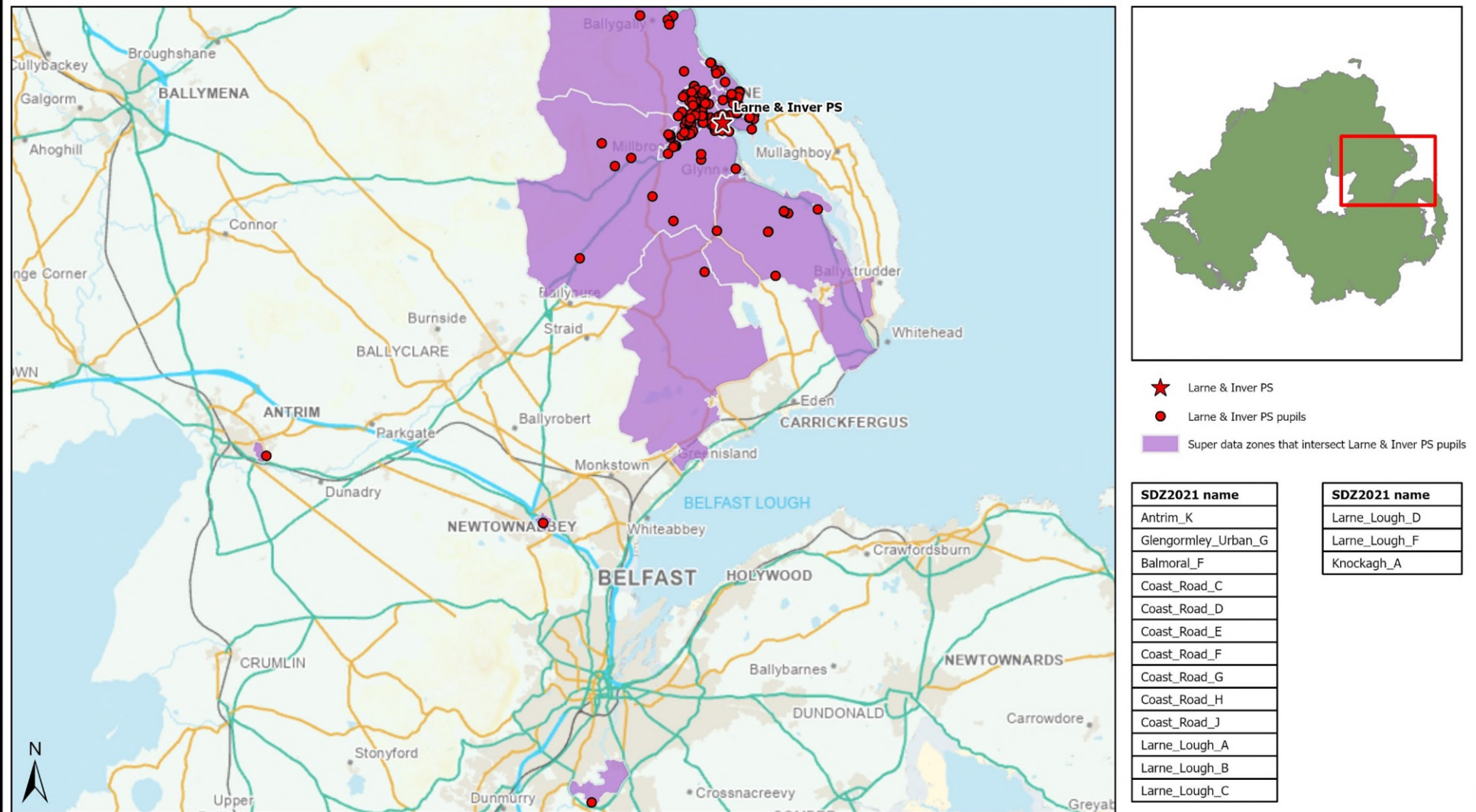
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Map 5

Larne and Inver PS : Pupil locations and super data zones



Supporting Information

Base mapping was derived from OSNI Fusion. Data used : NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 2024/25

0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Map created :17/09/2025

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