

Contents

Appendix A – Published Development Proposal.....	2
Appendix B – Case for Change.....	3
Appendix C – DE Policy Team Inputs.....	24
Appendix D – ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper.....	38
Appendix E – CSSC Response.....	41
Appendix F – Sustainability Assessment.....	42

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 756

DRUMAHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Notice is hereby given that a Proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 has been submitted by the Education Authority to the effect that:

A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, 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, 17 Lough Road, Antrim, BT41 4DH, between the hours of 9.00 am and 4.30 pm and <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/area-planning/development-proposals>.

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

Area Planning
Case for Change

Drumahoe Primary School

Development Proposal No 756

Establishment of a Nursery Unit

Case for Change: Supporting Information - Summary/Overview	
Area Planning District	Derry City and Strabane
Development Proposal Number	756
Proposer	Education Authority
School(s) Name	Drumahoe Primary School
School(s) Reference	201-2227
Sector	Primary
Management	Controlled
Development Proposal Publication Date	Week commencing 6 April 2026
Proposal	A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, 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?

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority undertook pre-publication consultation from 6 November 2025 to 15 January 2026. Staff, governors and parents/guardians of Drumahoe Primary School were notified of the launch of the pre-publication consultation via questionnaire, with the publication of the consultation document on the Education Authority's website on 6 November 2025 (consultation document and response form). Affected schools and pre-school settings (45) were notified of the pre-publication consultation on the proposal to establish a nursery (via letter).

A pre-publication consultation document and response form were available on the Education Authority's website for the period 6 November 2025 to 15 January 2026.

The Education Authority received a total of 98 responses, three of which were duplicates. The information below provides a summary of the 95 responses and emerging themes.

Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Total
Governor – Drumahoe PS	2			2
Staff/Principal - Drumahoe PS	11			11
Parents and Guardians - Drumahoe PS	47			47
Parents and Guardians - Ashlea PS		2		2
Parents and Guardians – Other (no identified school)	7			7
Staff - Ashlea PS		9		9
Child/Young Person	1			1
Affected Schools' Boards of Governors – Ashlea PS and Lisnagelvin PS	1	1		2
Principals (Chapel Road PS, Good Shepherd PS and Lisneal College)	3			3
Other - including community, family members and past pupils	6	3		9
Trade Union	1			1
Controlled Schools' Support Council	1			
Total Responses	80	15		95

Support the proposal – summary comments

- The numbers in Drumahoe Community Pre-school Playgroup continue to increase each year – there is a need for a statutory nursery.
- This proposal will help keep families together and provide continuity from pre-school to full-time education.
- There are benefits of early educational intervention and the positive impact that strong early years foundations have on children's learning, social development and confidence.
- Introducing a nursery unit within the school will enable a smoother and more supportive transition into Primary 1, allow earlier identification of learning needs, and ensure greater continuity in pastoral care and teaching approaches. This will enhance children's readiness for school and improve long-term outcomes.

	• Staff will benefit from professional development opportunities and alignment with the school's ethos; improved access to funding and resources. • There has been an increase in the number of residents living in Drumahoe area due to new housing developments. A nursery unit would benefit the whole community. • Drumahoe PS deserves a statutory nursery as it will provide the children with a safe secure and purposeful environment that they can flourish in. Do not support the proposal – summary comments • In our community there is already a long standing and well-established nursery unit at Ashlea PS. • A local school within the area already provides an amazing nursery unit, which locals avail of. Having another nursery unit so nearby will have a negative effect. • This decision will directly impact on Ashlea PS's nursery unit which is located in close proximity to Drumahoe PS – it is unlikely there is demand for two full-time nursery units. Section 75 comments Twenty responses commented on Section 75. These comments and all responses have been taken into account when assessing the equality impact of the proposal. • <i>The local community has been expanding rapidly, with numerous new housing developments attracting residents from a wide range of cultural, religious, political, and ethnic backgrounds. Establishing a nursery within the community would provide a valuable opportunity for families to come together, fostering inclusion, understanding, and stronger community relationships.</i> • <i>It is harder for children with disabilities to get access to help, such as assistants if the preschool is not a registered nursery. This puts children with disabilities at a disadvantage.</i> • <i>I believe this proposal will have a positive impact on equality and community relations. The new nursery unit will give all children, regardless of background or belief, an equal start in education within a safe and supportive environment. It will also help parents and carers by offering local full-time nursery provision, reducing travel and childcare challenges.</i> • <i>The proposed nursery unit would have a positive impact on equality of opportunity, particularly in relation to age and dependants, by expanding access to high-quality early years education for young children within the local area.</i>								
Confirmation by the Proposer	I confirm that the Board of Governors, Staff, Parents/Guardians of Drumahoe Primary School were consulted via questionnaire from 6 November 2025 to 15 January 2026 and Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td><td>Eve Bremner</td></tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td><td>Chief Education Officer</td></tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td><td>31 March 2026</td></tr> </table>	Name:	Eve Bremner	Office Held:	Chief Education Officer	Signed:		Date:	31 March 2026
Name:	Eve Bremner								
Office Held:	Chief Education Officer								
Signed:									
Date:	31 March 2026								
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 6 November 2025 with a return date of 15 January 2026. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Eve Bremner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Chief Education Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>31 March 2026</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Eve Bremner	Office Held:	Chief Education Officer	Signed:		Date:	31 March 2026
Name:	Eve Bremner								
Office Held:	Chief Education Officer								
Signed:									
Date:	31 March 2026								
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, a copy of the proposal was sent on 6 November 2025 to schools and pre-school settings which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 45 local schools and pre-school settings were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 15 January 2026. Two responses were received from affected schools. One response was received from the Controlled Schools' Support Council. Support the proposal - CSSC notes that this proposal seeks to replace existing provision provided by the former Drumahoe Community Pre-School. The proposal will also support the sustainability of primary provision in the Drumahoe area. - The proposal is in line with the intentions of the Department of Education's Pre-School Standardisation programme. - Acknowledges that the proposal should have minimal financial impact and that Drumahoe Primary School has the physical capacity to accommodate pre-school provision. Do not support the proposal - The establishment of the nursery unit will impact Ashlea PS: - Fewer pupils enrolling at Primary 1 will lead to smaller class sizes and disrupt planned class structures. - Staffing Reductions: Lower enrolment will directly impact teacher allocation and support staff positions, risking job losses. - Funding Loss: School budgets are tied to pupil numbers; reduced intake will result in significant funding cuts, limiting our ability to maintain high standards. - Diminished Extracurricular Opportunities: With fewer resources, programmes such as sports, music, and after-school clubs will be scaled back or eliminated, reducing opportunities for holistic development. - Long-Term Sustainability Risks: Continued decline in enrolment could threaten the viability of Ashlea PS, undermining its role as a cornerstone of the local community.								

	• Education Authority policy emphasises sustainable planning and avoidance of unnecessary duplication. Creating an additional nursery unit where demand is not demonstrated would undermine these principles and negatively affect families who rely on Ashlea PS for continuity and stability. • The governors of Lisnagelvin PS have no issue with Drumahoe PS and recognise it as a well-established controlled school within the city of Londonderry, providing for their local community. The issue lies with the decision which was made to reduce the nursery intake at Lisnagelvin Nursery School to a two-class intake (from a three-class intake), whilst there was obviously a need within the city for that additional class, hence the proposal. • The decision to set up a new nursery class on the outskirts of the city, when an established nursery provision is readily available in the heart of the city, would appear to be non-sensical. Lisnagelvin Nursery School was oversubscribed for the 2025/26 academic year, indicating a preference to avail of provision within the heart of the city. Some children were denied a place in Lisnagelvin Nursery School. The development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 31 March 2026.								
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal? <table border="1" data-bbox="225 1214 627 1464"> <tr> <td>Name:</td><td>Eve Bremner</td></tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td><td>Chief Education Officer</td></tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td><td>31 March 2026</td></tr> </table>	Name:	Eve Bremner	Office Held:	Chief Education Officer	Signed:		Date:	31 March 2026	The Education Authority, as the proposer, supports Development Proposal 756 to establish a statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter. On 19 December 2024, Drumahoe Community Playgroup received Ministerial approval under the "Standardisation Programme" to deliver full-time (22.5 hours per week) funded pre-school education from September 2025. This proposal reflects the full-time approval. The Education Authority undertook pre-publication consultation (via questionnaire) with governors, staff and parents/guardians and affected schools on the proposal to establish a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School. While the majority of responses supported the proposal, one recurring theme emerged for those not in support of the proposal: Pre-School Provision in the Area Respondents made reference to extra pre-school places being created in the area. However, the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School is a result of notification of the stepping down of Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup which currently has 23 pre-school children. Thereby, the proposal is a direct replacement. In effect, there will be a slight increase of three pre-school places in the area. This small increase will not have an adverse impact on existing pre-school settings in the area. The proposal is in keeping with the Minister of Education's commitment to early years education - Pre-School Education Programme - Standardisation and the Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. The establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter was discussed by PEG on 4 December 2025. PEG considered the proposal from the Education Authority for Drumahoe Primary School with the comment:
Name:	Eve Bremner								
Office Held:	Chief Education Officer								
Signed:									
Date:	31 March 2026								

	<i>"It is important the Education Authority (EA) and the PEG support the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty by striving to meet demonstrated demand in an area for pre-school education for those parents/carers who want it for their children. In this context, PEG supports the DP on the basis of demonstrated demand as evidenced by the number of 1st preference applications and that it is a replacement of the existing funded non-statutory pre-school provision within the school's grounds..... PEG wishes to endorse its support for the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS, which is a direct replacement for Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup situated on the grounds of Drumahoe Primary School. Within the 2-mile radius of Drumahoe PS, for the 2025-2026 academic year there were no surplus places and for the incoming academic year there are 133 first preference applications received for 128 funded places."</i> In consideration of the above, and the Case for Change, the Education Authority is proposing to publish Development Proposal 756 the week beginning 6 April 2026.
--	---

EDUCATION AUTHORITY**PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2025-26****PRE-PUBLICATION CONSULTATION – DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL 756 TO ESTABLISH A NURSERY UNIT FOR 26 FULL-TIME PUPILS AT DRUMAHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH EFFECT FROM 1st SEPTEMBER 2027 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER****Date of PEG Meeting:- 5th February 2026****PEG Comments**

School	Drumahoe Primary School
Address	31 Drumahoe Road, Londonderry, BT47 3SD
PEG Comment – overview of rationale for comment.	PEG considered the Pre-Publication Consultation from Drumahoe Primary School for comment and is in support of this proposal at the 4th December 2025 meeting: It is important the Education Authority (EA) and the PEG support the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty by striving to meet demonstrated demand in an area for pre-school education for those parents/carers who want it for their children. In this context, PEG supports the DP based on the demonstrated demand as evidenced by the number of 1st preference applications and that it is a replacement of the existing funded non-statutory pre-school provision within the school's grounds. In addition to the PEG comment, PEG wishes to endorse its support for the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS, which is a direct replacement for Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup situated on the grounds of Drumahoe Primary School. Within the 2-mile radius of Drumahoe PS, for the 2025-2026 academic year there were no surplus places and for the incoming academic year there are 133 first preference applications received for 128 funded places.
What is the potential impact if the proposal is/ is not approved? (alternatives for meeting demand/ potential for over provision)	Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup, Londonderry received 27 1st preference applications for 23 places in the 2026-27 academic year and is situated within the grounds of Drumahoe Primary School. Drumahoe notified the EA Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) in March 2025 of their intention to stand down as and when the nursery is approved.
What is the PEG assessment of need for pre-school provision for the area? Is this need currently met?	For the 2026-27 academic year a total of 127 funded places are available in the local area (5-mile radius from the setting; and 2-mile radius in the cities of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry as defined by the Department of Education) with a total of 133 1 st preference applications being received. All four settings within the 2-mile radius of Drumahoe community Pre-School Playgroup has standardised to full time provision. The existing figures suggest there is insufficient capacity to meet current demand for pre-school provision within the area, and the change is replacement with the proposed nursery being established providing a small increase to the area.
How many 1 st preference applications were received by the setting? (usually, 2 years figures but this depends on the timing of the development proposal)	2024-25 25 applications 2025-26 29 applications

Are there current or anticipated pressures in placing target age children into pre-school education in the local area?	There are no current or anticipated pressures in placing target age children into pre-school education in the local area, as applications have listed further preferences listed in settings that have capacity.
Have children been unplaced at the end of the process in previous years?	In the BT47 area: 2025-26 - 5 (4 did not engage in Stage 2 and 1 was a late deferral, not considered until stage 2) 2024-25 - 1 (did not engage in Stage 2) 2023-24 – 6 (did not engage in Stage 2) 2022-23 – 1 (refused stage 1 offer and re-applied in Stage 2 as a late application)
Has demand been increasing over time, but the number of places has not? Is the level of need or provision changing significantly? e.g. provider leaving PSEP	Projected live births for the ward area of Drumahoe: 2025-26 = 49 children 2026-27 = 70 children 2027-28 = 78 children Projected live births for settings within 2-mile radius located in Drumahoe: 2025-26 = 274 children 2026-27 = 260 children 2027-28 = 297 children PSEP providers. Drumahoe Community Preschool (Londonderry) PG (notice of closure received for end of June 2026)
Can existing non-statutory providers expand to help meet demand? Is there potential for new providers to come on to the programme?	There is no unmet need in the area.
What is the potential impact on existing good quality provision (displacement)?	Drumahoe Community Pre-School (Londonderry) PG, Drumahoe is the only voluntary/private setting in the local area and have already expressed that they intend to stand down from the PSEP. The setting currently has 23 funded pre-school places for the 2025-26 academic year; the setting has a registration number of 24 places.
If there are other development proposals in the area, how might they impact? (e.g. if proposal A were to be approved, would B still be required?)	None that PEG is aware of.
Other comments	Drumahoe Community Pre-School (Londonderry) PG, Drumahoe is ranked 525, on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure, areas are ranked out of 890 (with 1 being most deprived and 890 least deprived).

1.0 PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION IN THE DRUMAHOE AREA

Drumahoe Community Pre-School has been one of the main providers of pre-school provision in the area for over 20 years. The playgroup is located in the grounds of Drumahoe Primary School.

Over the past number of years Drumahoe Community Pre-School has experienced fluctuations in numbers and staffing and has engaged with Drumahoe Primary School on the continued provision of pre-school education in the area. Unfortunately, the management committee of the current pre-school provider, Drumahoe Community Pre-School, has advised that it will stand down on a date to be agreed pending the outcome of this proposal. Should this proposal not be approved this will result in a shortfall of pre-school provision in the local area.

The Pre-school Education Programme, 'Standardisation Programme' to deliver new or additional full-time (22.5 hours per week) from September 2025, has impacted provision within the area:

- Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup – delivery from part-time to full-time provision; and
- Lisnagelvin Nursery School – delivery from one full-time and two part-time classes to two full-time classes.

The impact of the standardisation has been experienced within the area. While there are sufficient providers in the area, the impact of standardisation has resulted in an increase in demand.

In consideration of the above, the Education Authority is proposing the establishment of a 26 full-time place nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter. This proposal will ensure all parents in the area who wish to will be able to avail of pre-school education. In effect the proposal is a change in management of pre-school provision in the Drumahoe area.

In formally establishing a nursery unit, a Development Proposal is required. The proposal is:

A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

This proposal will contribute to the Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. The Programme for Government 2024-2027 details nine 'immediate priorities' with one of these being 'Deliver More Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Learning and Childcare'.

This priority aligns with the Minister of Education's commitment to early learning and childcare in Northern Ireland as on 23 May 2024 the Minister announced a £25 million package of measures to support children, parents and providers of early learning and childcare in 2024/25. The commitment is for the offer to all children of 22.5 hours pre-school education per week.

Approval of the nursery unit provision would be supportive of the Programme for Government and the Minister of Education's commitment to early years education.

In 2014 Development Proposal 251 for the establishment of a full-time nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School was not approved on the rationale that 'there are already sufficient pre-school places in the area and if approved the new unit would have had the potential to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence'. The information contained within this Case for Change provides background on current and projected pre-school provision for the area and a rationale for taking forward this proposal.

2.0 EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

The aim of Area Planning is 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.

Area Planning contributes to school improvement through evaluating the best use of resources within the system to ensure that available provision can meet the needs of all pupils.

The addition of a full-time nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School will have a positive impact on those parents seeking pre-school education.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Before arriving at the final recommendation on pre-school provision at Drumahoe Primary School, the Education Authority sought the views of those most directly involved at a local level. The Education Authority sought to engage in consultation with the Board of Governors, parents/guardians and staff of Drumahoe Primary School, Trustees and Board of Governors of local schools, local pre-school providers and other interested parties in the local community.

3.1 Vision

The aim of the Education Authority is to facilitate the development of a network of viable and sustainable schools that can deliver the Northern Ireland curriculum effectively and provide access to a range of education provision that is appropriate to the needs of children and young people, so that every pupil can realise their potential and contribute to a caring, inclusive and progressive society.

In striving to realise this aspiration, the Education Authority aims to ensure that every pupil has:

- access to a broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities to realise his or her potential;
- an education in which the learning outcomes are appropriate to their needs;
- access to quality teaching delivered in a caring and supportive environment; and
- education delivered in modern, well-resourced facilities, suitable for the demands of education in the twenty-first century.

3.2 Education Authority Position

On 29 June 2022, the Education Authority published the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27: Planning for Sustainable Provision with Operational Plan 2: 2024-26 for Primary, Special and Post Primary Schools (including Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools) published in January 2025. The proposal for Drumahoe Primary School is in addition to the workstreams published in January 2025 and is included as an addendum published on 16 September 2025.

Drumahoe PS 31 Drumahoe Road Drumahoe Londonderry BT47 3SD	Background / Engagement	
	The Education Authority is proposing the establishment of a new full-time nursery unit at Drumahoe PS. The school currently has an approved admission number of 41 and approved enrolment number of 291. At September 2024, the school had an enrolment of 272 pupils. The school does not currently have nursery provision.	
	Statutory Duty / Ministerial Priority	Key Theme(s)
	Statutory Duty – Access to Places	Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

At the meeting of the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee on 31 March 2026, it was agreed to publish Development Proposal 756 that:

A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

3.3 Pre-School Provision in the Drumahoe Area

The current pre-school provider in the Drumahoe area is Drumahoe Community Pre-School. Drumahoe Community Pre-School is located on the site of Drumahoe Primary School and currently operates separately from the school site with its own management committee and staff.

On 19 March 2025, the Management Committee of Drumahoe Community Pre-School notified the Education Authority of its intention to step down as a pre-school provider in the area. The decision to step down as the provider of pre-school provision for the area was not taken lightly by the Management Committee, however, the pre-school will continue to operate until a decision has been taken on the proposal to establish a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School.

To provide for the pre-school needs of the area, the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School would ensure no loss of provision for the area. The change would be in pre-school provider thereby ensuring the continuum of pre-school provision in the area.

The information below shows that there is a community need for pre-school provision in the area with Drumahoe Community Pre-School receiving 29 first preference applications for September 2025. Within the two-mile radius of Drumahoe Primary School, for the 2025/26 academic year there were no surplus places and for the incoming academic year there are 133 first preference applications received for 128 funded places.

The Education Authority is proposing to continue pre-school provision in the area through the following Development Proposal:

A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

3.4 Nature of the Education Authority's Recommendation

The Education Authority has met with the Board of Governors and Principal of Drumahoe Primary School to discuss all options and based on available information the Education Authority is taking forward the development proposal for the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School.

The Education Authority is taking forward this provision through Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 which describes the process regarding making 'a *significant change in the character or size of a controlled school*'. This process requires the publication of a development proposal.

Therefore, as part of the pre-publication consultation on the development proposal, the Education Authority sought any objections and/or other comments on the proposed establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School from the Board of Governors, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and parents/guardians of children attending Drumahoe Primary School, as well as from other schools/pre-school providers that may be affected by the proposal.

The pre-publication consultation process and a summary of comments is included in pages 3-10 of this Case for Change.

4.0 BACKGROUND

Drumahoe Primary School is situated in the village of Drumahoe, County Londonderry. Most of the children attend from the local area. Drumahoe Primary School is a sustainable school and has an approved admission number of 41 and approved enrolment number of 290 pupils.

Table 1 below shows the enrolment numbers of Drumahoe Primary School.

Table 1: Enrolment Statistics - Drumahoe Primary School									
	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total (Years 1-7)
2019/20	0	35	41	47	47	52	38	48	308
2020/21	0	39	34	38	47	48	49	39	294
2021/22	0	34	42	35	40	48	49	48	296
2022/23	4	32	35	44	36	39	50	49	285
2023/24	5	34	33	35	43	38	40	49	272
2024/25	5	44	34	37	33	44	41	39	272
2025/26	0	46	42	32	36	31	47	39	273

As indicated above, Drumahoe Community Pre-School currently provides pre-school provision for the immediate area with Table 2 below showing the pre-school numbers attending the playgroup and their Year 1 destinations.

Table 2: Drumahoe Community Pre-School - Transferring Year 1 Destination					
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Cumber Claudy Primary School	0	0	0	0	1
Drumahoe Primary School	14	15	13	9	19
Ebrington Primary School	2	0	0	1	0
Eglinton Primary School	0	0	1	0	0
Good Shepherd Primary School	0	0	0	0	1
Lisnagelvin Primary School	0	0	0	2	0
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	0	1	1	0	0
St Columba's Primary School	0	0	1	0	0
	16	16	16	12	21

Table 2 above indicates that the majority of the pupils attending Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup transfer to Drumahoe Primary School. This clearly supports the retention of pre-school provision for the area as a feeder for Drumahoe Primary School and a number of other local schools.

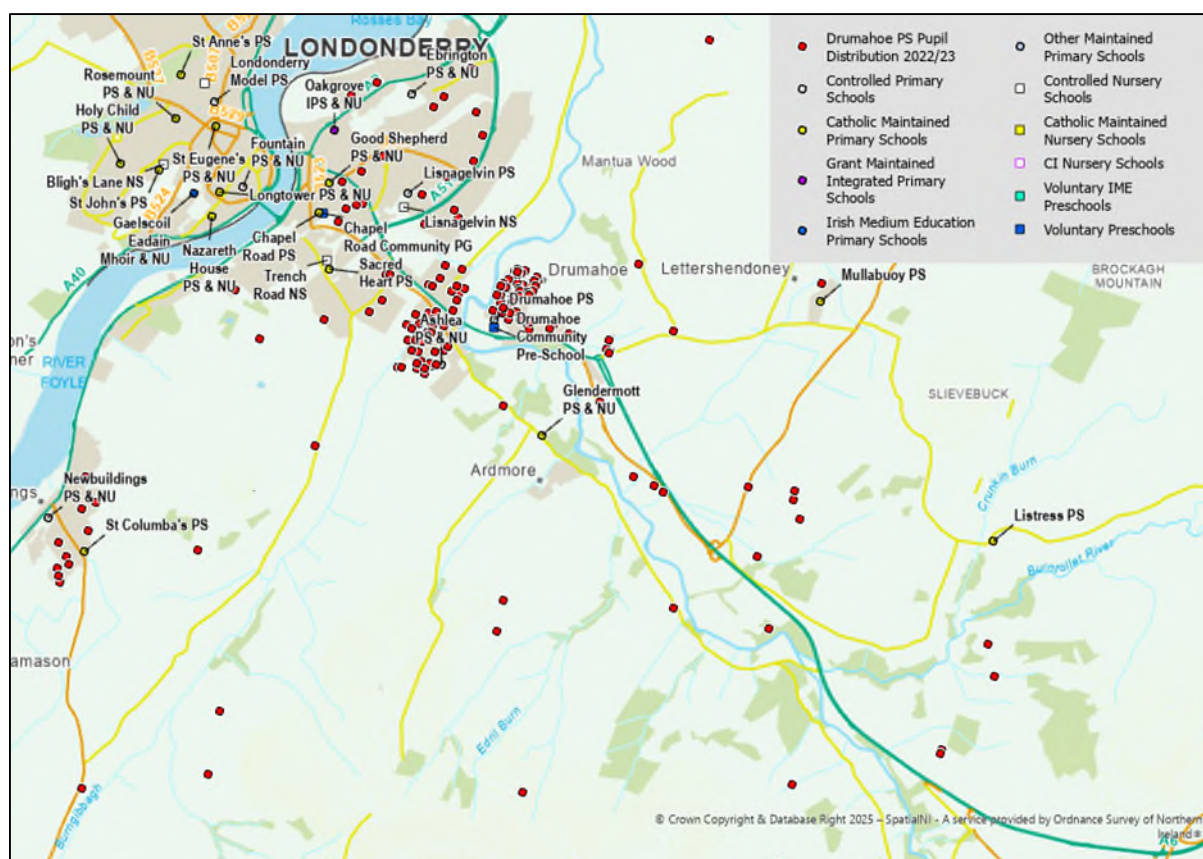
Table 3 below shows that Drumahoe Primary School attracts pupils in Year 1 from a number of pre-school settings. The main contributory pre-school settings to Year 1 at Drumahoe Primary school are, Drumahoe Community Pre-School and Ashlea Primary School and Nursery Unit. In consideration of the preference applications for this year for controlled nursery provision supports the provision of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School in addition to the nursery unit at Ashlea Primary School.

Table 3: Drumahoe PS – Feeder Pre-School Provisions to Year 1						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Artigarvan Community Nursery	1	0	1	0	0	1
Ashlea PS Nursery Unit	13	7	9	11	16	8
Ballyore Nursery School	0	0	0	0	1	0
Brambly Hedge Community Playgroup	1	0	0	0	0	0
Drumahoe Community Pre-School	14	15	13	9	15	21
Ebrington PS Nursery Unit	1	0	0	0	1	1
Fountain PS Nursery Unit	3	3	1	0	1	3
Home	0	0	0	2	0	0
Lisnagelvin Nursery School (full-time)	0	1	1	1	0	2
Lisnagelvin Nursery School (part-time)	2	1	3	2	3	0
None Listed/Allocated	0	0	4	5	1	6
Oakgrove IPS Nursery Unit	0	1	0	0	0	0
Rascals Day Care	0	0	0	0	0	1
Straidarran Community Playgroup	2	3	1	0	0	0
Strathfoyle Nursery School	1	1	0	0	1	0
St Eugene's Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0	2
Trench Road Nursery School	0	1	0	0	0	1
Woodlands Pre-School Centre	1	0	0	2	0	0
Total	39	33	33	32	39	46

In addition to the above, Drumahoe Primary School operated a reception class from 2022-2024. The school is not operating a reception class for the 2025/26 academic year and, should the proposal for a nursery unit be approved, Drumahoe Primary School will not operate reception class provision.

Table 3a: Drumahoe PS – Reception Pupils					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Drumahoe PS – Reception Year	0	0	4	5	5

Map 1 - Drumahoe Primary School pupil distribution and proximity to other primary schools and pre-school providers.



Drumahoe Primary School attracts pupils from the Drumahoe Village and surrounding area.

Table 4 shows the current pre-school provision within three miles of Drumahoe Primary School.

Table 4: Pre-School Providers in the Local Area - Two Mile Radius (PEG distance for Derry/Londonderry)							
School/Pre-School Name	Full Time (FT) or Part Time (PT)	Pre-School Funded Places 2025	Nursery Unit Places	Target Age First Preference Applications (2025/26)	Total Target Age Applications (2025/26)	Total Target Age Places Accepted (2025/26)	
						Target Age	Under Age
Drumahoe Community Pre-School	FT	23		29	31	23	0
Ashlea PS Nursery Unit	FT		26	22	31	26	0
Glendermott PS Nursery Unit	FT		26	27	30	26	0
Lisnagelvin Nursery School	FT		52	70	82	52	0
Total		23	104	148	174	127	0
		127				127	

Table 4 above shows 51 first preference applications for Ashlea Primary School Nursery Unit and Drumahoe Community Playgroup showing a demand for controlled pre-school places in the area.

The establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School will be a direct replacement for Drumahoe Community Playgroup which currently has 23 pre-school children.

Table 5 below shows that the births within the catchment area show some fluctuation over the years, thereby showing no significant change in the area.

Table 5: Births in the Area								
Ward	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Drumahoe	79	70	50	49	50	45	49	70
Clondermot	42	35	25	42	59	47	45	43
Kilfennan	57	54	70	66	67	70	60	52
Total	178	159	145	157	176	162	154	165
Pre-school Admission	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Year 1 Admission	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28

Drumahoe Primary School is located in the Drumahoe ward which ranks 178 in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) where 1 indicates the most deprived and the ranking runs from 1 to 462.

Table 6: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) (2017)								
Ward	Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank	Income Domain	Employment Domain	Health Deprivation and Disability	Education, Skills and Training	Access to Services	Living Environment	Crime and Disorder
Drumahoe	178	172	146	161	105	238	369	186

The following should be noted from Tables 4, 5 and 6:

- There is parental demand for full-time pre-school places.
- The number of births in the area is generally reflected in the number of admission numbers for pre-school provision.
- Drumahoe is located in the top 40% most deprived wards according to NIMDM statistics as assessed by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The main 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 in order to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out six 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.

5.1 Quality of Education

A Report of Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection in February 2014 found the Overall Performance Level of Achievement and Standards, Provision and Leadership Management as outstanding.

"In the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding."

"From the earliest stage, the children are relaxed, confident and independent in their stimulating learning environment. They demonstrate excellent self-management skills and take responsibility for important aspects of their learning, working effectively in pairs and groups."

"The well-planned play-based learning sessions and routines provide the younger children with valuable and fun opportunities to use their language and apply their growing skills in both literacy and mathematics."

"The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. This is evident through the caring, supportive and child-centred ethos which permeates all aspects of the school's provision and the very positive working relationships at all levels. For example, the older children respond maturely to caring for the younger children through their 'playground pal' responsibilities."

"The entire staff team is highly committed to meeting the individual needs of the children and to sustaining the high standards which they achieve."

A Report of Sustaining Improvement Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection in May 2017 found that:

"The staff have developed successfully open-ended and problem-solving activities which have been embedded in the planning and they have led to highly effective learning and teaching of numeracy across the key stages."

"Drumahoe Primary School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners."

5.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

Drumahoe Primary School has an approved admission number of 41 pupils and a current enrolment of 273 pupils in 2024/25. Table 1 above details the enrolment statistics for the school which is a sustainable urban primary school.

5.3 Financial Position

At 31 March 2025, Drumahoe Primary School had a deficit of £490,969. The school does not operate within its in-year budget. The school's three-year financial plan shows that the school is projected to have a closing deficit of £998,160 by March 2027. The school is working with LMS to manage its in-year spend and reduce its projected deficit.

Table 7: Financial Position – Drumahoe Primary School	
Year	Surplus/Deficit
2022/23	-£189,670
2023/24	-£310,103
2024/25	-£522,932
2025/26	-£748,628
2026/27	-£998,160

5.4 Strong Leadership and Management

The ETI carried out a Monitoring Inspection in February 2017. In relation to leadership in the school, the report noted:

“There is a well-embedded culture of self-evaluation as evident in the review of the school development plan. The school's performance data is used rigorously by the leadership team and staff to identify trends, track the progress of the children in literacy and numeracy and to provide appropriate interventions.”

5.5 Accessibility

Drumahoe Primary School in the village of Drumahoe on the outskirts of Londonderry. The school can be accessed by car and bus.

5.6 Strong Links with the Community

The primary school has well established links within the community. Drumahoe Primary School and Drumahoe Community Pre-School work closely with learning communities including:

- The Chairperson of Drumahoe Community Association is also the Chairperson of Drumahoe Community Pre-School.
- Drumahoe Association fund raised after arson attack in 2010 to support refurbishment of the pre-school building.
- Combined Christmas, Santa and Halloween events held with Drumahoe Community Association.
- Coffee Mornings hosted in the primary school by Drumahoe Community Association to raise funds for the Pre-school.
- Principal of the primary school is on the management committee of the pre-school.
- Safety events held and supported by PSNI / Fire Brigade and ambulance.
- Pre-school has stalls at Annual community Fun Day and at the Primary School's Fun Night BBQ.
- Joint Fundraising 'Welly Walk' with Drumahoe Community Association.
- Pumpkin patch.
- School sports day.

- Mini yoga.
- Jo Jingles.
- Transition mornings of preschool children held in Drumahoe Primary School in term 3.
- Pre-school children visit Drumahoe Primary School to watch shows etc.
- Pre-school children complete a PE lesson in Drumahoe Primary School one morning per week throughout the school term.
- Annual Visits to Sperrin Fun Farm.
- Parent involvement on pre-school management committee.
- Parents bring young animals into preschool in springtime – links to local farming community.
- Involvement of pre-school in consultations for Drumahoe District Park.

6.0 AREA PLANNING IMPACT

The proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan for Northern Ireland aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education. 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 best educational 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.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is for the establishment of pre-school provision at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

<i>Finance</i>	The recurrent costs associated with the nursery unit will be covered through LMS funding.
<i>Staffing</i>	Additional teaching and non-teaching staff, approximately £80,000, would be required with a recruitment process undertaken by the Board of Governors. The cost of staff would be covered through LMS funding.
<i>Transport</i>	Transport is not applicable to pre-school provision.

Accommodation No additional accommodation will be required for the nursery unit as Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup currently operates within an adjacent building. Should the development proposal be approved, the nursery unit will operate within Drumahoe Primary School's building.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

The proposal is being brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The implementation date for the proposal is for 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable, pending approval from the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee, for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline	
Proposal: A statutory nursery unit will be established at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter	Proposed Timeline
Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents/Guardians – Questionnaire 8 weeks (plus two additional weeks for the Christmas period) Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee. A deputation may request to attend the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee or the Board meeting in accordance with the Education Authority's Standing Orders.	6 November 2025 – 15 January 2026
Consultation with other affected schools - 8 weeks (plus two additional weeks for the Christmas period) Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee	6 November 2025 – 15 January 2026
Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to seek Approval to Publish Case for Change to be taken to the 31 March 2026 Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for consideration If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period	31 March 2026
Statutory Objection Period (2 months) Objections/comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education	April 2026 – June 2026
Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision	September 2026
Implementation If approved, the Development Proposal will take effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter	

Clarification received from the EA– 20 April 2026

- The nursery unit will be accommodated within a current vacant classroom in Drumahoe Primary School. The classroom can be accessed via its own entrance and has a kitchen area already included within the classroom. The current accommodation from which the pre-school operates is a mobile unit of a significant age and which was subject to fire damage some years ago. While refurbishment work was undertaken the building continues to require major upgrade works. Should the proposal to establish a nursery unit be approved the former pre-school mobile will no longer be in use.
- The management committee has been in communication with the school and EA for some years regarding its intention to stand down but do not wish to do so without arrangements to ensure pre-school provision remains within the area. The difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, the responsibility of the operational and management of the pre-school falling to a small number of staff as well as the current condition of the building have been ongoing for a number of years. Community, political and school representatives have stepped up to support the management committee, however, to ensure the future provision of pre-school education in the area, a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS would provide confidence and stability for pre-school provision.

INPUT FROM EARLY YEARS TEAM

1. Introduction

At the request of the Board of Governors of Drumahoe Primary School, the Education Authority (EA) published Development Proposal Number 756, proposing that a statutory nursery unit will be established at the school to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

There is currently a non-statutory pre-school provider, Drumahoe Community Pre-school Playgroup (PG), located within the grounds of Drumahoe PS which in the 2025/26 academic year provides 23 full-time funded pre-school education places. The EA have also advised that for the 2026/27 academic year the playgroup was allocated an initial PAN of 23 and received 27 first preference applications during the admissions process (CfC pg 8).

2. Background

Drumahoe Primary School (PS) is a controlled school situated in the village of Drumahoe, Co Londonderry which opened in 1934. It has a current approved enrolment and admissions number of 290 and 41 respectively (CfC pg 13). Drumahoe PS does not currently offer pre-school provision, however, it has operated a reception class from 2022-2024. The school is not operating a reception class for the 2025/26 academic year, however, reception provision remains in the school's admissions criteria. The CfC states that should the proposal for a nursery unit at the school be approved, it will cease to operate reception class provision (CfC pg 14).

Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG is located on the site of Drumahoe Primary School and currently operates separately from the school with its own management committee and staff. The setting has been a participant in the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) since 2001/02 and is currently located in an adjacent building to Drumahoe PS. On 19 March 2025 the Management Committee of Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG notified the EA of its intention to step down as a pre-school provider in the area, however, the playgroup will continue to operate until a decision has been taken on the proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe PS. The CfC notes that the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS would ensure no loss of provision for the area (CfC pg 12).

The CfC states that should this proposal not be approved, the proposed closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG will result in a shortfall of pre-school provision in the area (CfC pg 10). It further notes that in effect the proposal is a change of management of the pre-school provision in the Drumahoe area (CfC pg 10). The CfC also claims that this proposal will contribute to the Programme for Government 2024-2027 "Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most" and the Minister's commitment to early learning and childcare in Northern Ireland (CfC pg 10).

The CfC advises that in 2014, DP251 for the establishment of a full-time nursery unit at Drumahoe PS was not approved on the rationale that there were already sufficient pre-school places in the area and if approved, the new unit would have had the potential to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence. It further adds that information contained within this Case for Change provides background on current and projected pre-school provision for the area and a rationale for taking forward this proposal. (CfC pg 11).

The CfC further advises that no additional accommodation will be required for the proposed statutory nursery unit should the development proposal be approved as the unit will operate within Drumahoe PS's building (CfC pg 19).

The CfC states that Drumahoe PS has well established links within the community and works closely with Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG. The CfC further states that most of the children that attend the school come from the local area, adding that Drumahoe PS is a sustainable school (CfC pg 13). Table 2 in the CfC (pg 13) appears to demonstrate that the majority of pupils attending Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG transfer to Drumahoe PS which the CfC adds supports the retention of pre-school provision for the area as a feeder for Drumahoe PS (CfC pg 14).

The CfC notes that on 19th December 2024, Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG received Ministerial approval under the Pre-School Standardisation Programme (PSP) to deliver full-time (22.5 hours per week) funded pre-school education from September 2025 (CfC pg. 6).

The published proposal appears to request what amounts to a change in management/governance arrangements, and if approved, would result in the level of pre-school provision in the area remaining largely the same, with only a marginal increase in the number of funded pre-school education places.

Relevant policy areas

The main policies relevant to this proposal are:

The aim of the Pre-school Education Programme is to provide a funded pre-school education place for every target age child whose family want it.	The CfC focuses on the closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup and the need to continue to provide sufficient pre-school provision in the area. The EA has advised that existing figures suggest there is insufficient capacity to meet current demand for pre-school provision within the area, adding that within the two-mile radius there were no surplus places for the 2025/26 academic year or the incoming year. The EA further adds that the proposal is a direct replacement of the existing non-statutory pre-school provision within the school's grounds. This is considered in more detail below.
Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years	Published on 7 October 2013, among its key actions is a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time

Education and Learning	provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it. The proposals as set out in DP 756, if approved, would result in a change in management/governance arrangements only with a very small increase to the current level of provision. However, the proposal is seeking the establishment of full-time provision which could be considered to be contrary to the existing moratorium. The draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy includes a proposed action to “Amend the current moratorium on Development Proposals (DPs) to facilitate requests for new or additional statutory pre-school provision to be established on a full-time basis”, as a category two action. Although the moratorium is currently still in place it is important to note that Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG (which the CfC seeks to replace with statutory provision) was approved in Cohort One of the Pre-School Standardisation Programme and transitioned to full-time provision in September 2025. This is considered in more detail below.
Displacement of good quality pre-school education provision already in existence	It is the Department’s practice, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school education provision already in existence with pre-school education provision in an alternative setting. As this DP is for pre-school provision at a controlled primary school, it is considered in the context of DE’s relevant statutory duties. This DP is for the replacement of the existing funded non-statutory pre-school provision. The potential impact of this proposal on other existing provision is considered in more detail below.
Ensuring the best use of public resources	In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of the resources available to it. In light of this, it aims to fill available pre-school education provision as far as possible with target age children, avoiding over provision and the resulting enrolment of children under pre-school target age (penultimate age children) in statutory settings. This is considered in more detail below.
Reception provision	A key action under the Learning to Learning framework is the removal of reception provision. Drumahoe PS has offered reception provision in previous years although does not have reception pupils in the current academic year. The school have also advised that reception provision will cease

	if this proposal were to be approved. This is considered in more detail below.
Standardisation	In September 2022, the then Minister for Education announced her intention to standardise the funded pre-school education session length to 4.5 hours per day (22.5 hours per week for 38 weeks of the academic year) to all target aged pupils as part of the proposed Executive's Early Learning and Childcare Strategy. Implementation of a standardised session length will be on a phased basis and subject to Executive agreement and funding. Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup was approved in Cohort One of the Pre-School Standardisation Programme and transitioned to full-time provision from September 2025. The impact of this on the proposal is considered in more detail below.

3. Level of need for pre-school provision

In determining the need for pre-school education provision, the Department generally assumes a level of provision at 95% of target age children, predicated on the application rate for pre-school education places, which is c.93%, however the level of provision within local areas may be higher or lower, based on historic patterns of demand and assessment of ongoing need.

Level of Provision – two-mile radius of Drumahoe PS

Table 1

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2022/23	338	36	4	374	391	95.7%	10
2023/24	338	36	5	374	392	95.4%	29
2024/25	338	46	5	384	363	105.8%	12
2025/26	312*	44	0	356	414	86.0%	15
Proposed 2026/27	338**	21***	0	359	414	86.7%	-

Source: School Census and EA

*The statutory figure in 2025/26 reflects a reduction of 26 places in Lisnagelvin NS due to their amalgamation from 78 places to 52 places under Amalgamation for Standardisation.

**The proposed 2026/27 statutory figure includes the additional 26 places that Drumahoe PS are proposing.

***The proposed 2026/27 non-statutory figure reflects the reduction of 23 places associated with the closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-school PG.

The level of provision within the two-mile radius of Drumahoe PS has been around the planning figure of 95% or above for three of the last four years. However, the provision level dropped to 86% in the current 2025/26 academic year, which is significantly

below the planning figure. It appears that this drop is primarily due to a reduction in the overall number pre-school education places available following the decision taken by Lisnagelvin NS to reduce its enrolment from 78 to 52, together with a significant increase in the P1 cohort in the area.

It is noted that over the past four years there have been substantial numbers of penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school provision within the two-mile radius of Drumahoe PS. This would normally indicate that there is a level of over-provision of funded pre-school places in the area, however, the majority of these places have been accessed in Lisnagelvin NS and Oakgrove IPS NU. With the recent reduction in enrolment numbers at Lisnagelvin NS, early data already shows that no penultimate children have accessed a funded place at this setting in 2025/26 and the overall level of provision in the area is now below, rather than above, the planning figure.

The proposal in regard to Drumahoe PS, if approved, combined with the proposed closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-school PG, would result in an overall increase of three funded places (23 non-statutory places replaced with 26 statutory places) within the two-mile radius. The proposed overall level of provision would increase by a marginal 0.7percentage points to 86.7% which would still be much lower than the planning figure and would still equate to an under-provision of 34 funded pre-school places below what would be necessary to achieve the planning figure based on the 2025/26 Primary One figures.

If the proposal was not to be approved and the existing non-statutory provider proceeds with closure as indicated in the CfC (Pg. 12), the level of provision would reduce further to 80.4%, which would equate to an under-provision of 60 places on the planning figure.

Level of Provision – five-mile radius of Drumahoe PS

Table 2

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2022/23	1222	108	5	1330	1280	103.9%	90
2023/24	1170*	102	7	1272	1243	102.3%	83
2024/25	1196**	93	7	1289	1148	112.3%	48
2025/26	1170***	88	1	1258	1218	103.3%	60
Proposed 2026/27	1196****	65*****	-	1261	1218	103.5%	-

Source: School Census and EA

*The statutory figure for 2023/24 reflects a reduction of 26 places in both The Academy Nursery School and Belmont Nursery School due to Amalgamation through Standardisation.

**The statutory figure in 2024/25 reflects an increase of 26 places due to DP685 Gaelscoil na Daroige

***The statutory figure in 2025/26 reflects a reduction of 26 places in Lisnagelvin NS due to Amalgamation through Standardisation.

****The proposed statutory figure includes the additional 26 places that Drumahoe PS are proposing.

*****The proposed non-statutory figure reflects the reduction of 23 places associated with the closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-school PG.

It is noted that the level of provision within the five-mile radius has fluctuated over the last four years, primarily due to the three statutory settings reducing their enrolment numbers through Amalgamation for Standardisation, namely The Academy NS; Belmont NS; and Lisnagelvin NS. In addition, new statutory pre-school provision was also established at Gaelscoil na Daroige in 2024/25 via DP685. Despite these fluctuations the level of provision within the five-mile radius has been higher than the planning figure of 95% in each of the years, ranging from 102.3% to 112.3%.

It is noted that significant numbers of penultimate age children have accessed funded pre-school education places within the five-mile radius in each of the last four years. However, following the reduction in the enrolment numbers of three of the statutory nursery school settings over the past three years, the number of penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school provision has declined. However, it is noted that the number of penultimate age enrolments remains significant, which is an indicator that more than sufficient provision remains available in the wider area. It is also possible that, should the proposal be approved, that this may lead to an increase in the number of penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school provision in the wider area.

If approved, combined with the proposed closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-school PG, the proposal would result in an overall increase of three funded places (23 non-statutory places replaced with 26 statutory places) within the five-mile radius. The proposed overall level of provision would increase by a marginal 0.2 percentage points to 103.5%. The level of pre-school provision in the five-mile radius, were the proposal to be approved, would equate to an over-provision of 104 funded pre-school places compared to the planning figure, based on the 2025/26 Primary One figures.

It would therefore appear from the data that sufficient funded pre-school provision is available in the wider area to meet current demand. However, if the proposal was not to be approved and the existing non-statutory provider proceeds with closure as indicated in the CfC (Pg. 12), the level of provision would drop to 101.4% within the five-mile radius. While this would remain above the planning figure for the wider area, it is important to note that the provision level within the two-mile radius would drop to 80.4%, which would be 60 places below the planning figure.

4. Recent Changes in Provision

- The Academy Nursery School and Belmont Nursery School both reduced their enrolment number by 26 places in 2023/24 via the Pre-School Standardisation Programme and Amalgamation for Standardisation and transitioned to full-time provision from September 2023;
- DP685 was approved which established a statutory 26 place nursery unit at Gaelscoil na Daroige with effect September 2024;
- Lisnagelvin NS reduced their enrolment by 26 places in 2025/26 via the Pre-School Standardisation Programme and Amalgamation for Standardisation and transitioned to full-time provision from September 2025;
- St Joseph's Community Playgroup ceased to be a participant in the PSEP at the end of the 2022/23 academic year; and
- Naiscoil Cholmcille Playgroup ceased to be a participant in the PSEP at the end of the 2024/25 academic year.

In addition, three other settings, namely Tamnaherin PG, Newbuildings PS NU and Eglinton PS NU where approved in Cohort One of the Pre-School Standardisation Programme (PSP) and transitioned to full-time provision from September 2025. Gaelscoil na Daroige was also approved in Cohort Two of the PSP and will transition to full-time from September 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter.

5. Temporary Flexibility

In 2022/23 Bunscoil Cholmcille had one Temporary Flexibility request approved. In 2023/24 Belmont NS, Longtower PS NU and St Eugene's PS NU each had one Temporary Flexibility request approved. Steelstown PS NU also had four Temporary Requests approved.

In 2024/25 Ebrington PS NU, Oakgrove IPS NU and Holy Child PS NU had Temporary Flexibility requests of 8,1 and 3 approved respectively.

In 2025/26 Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir NU had 4 Temporary Flexibility requests approved. St Eugene's PS NU also had one Temporary Flexibility request approved.

6. Reception Provision

Drumahoe PS operates reception places and accepted four children in the 2022/23 academic year, five in 2023/24 and another five in 2024/25. The school did not offer reception places to any children in the 2025/26 academic year, although reception provision remains in the school's admissions criteria for the 2026/27 academic year. EA admissions data for September 2026 indicates that the school received seven first preference applications for reception but accepted no pupils. This was because the school received 44 first preference applications for Year 1, all of which were accepted.

Only one other primary school within the five-mile radius also offers reception places, namely St Columba's Primary School, Newbuildings, which provided reception places to one child in 2022/23, two in 2023/24, two in 2024/25 and one in 2025/26.

The CfC states that, should the proposal for a statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe PS be approved, the school will cease to operate its reception class provision (CfC pg14). In addition, it is not expected that the proposal would impact the reception provision currently offered at St Columba's PS, Newbuildings.

If the proposal is approved, it is recommended that the removal of reception provision from the school's admissions criteria is included as a condition of approval.

7. Impact on Voluntary and Private Sector Providers

The PSEP is a partnership between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school education providers and both sectors are equally valued for their contribution to the education of pre-school children. Both sectors adhere to the same curricular guidelines and are inspected to the same educational standards. In considering DPs for statutory provision, careful consideration is given to the impact of any new provision on existing good quality voluntary/private providers in PSEP. In addition to considering the potential for over provision and duplication, this also considers the potential for a

proposal to destabilise provision in an area and considers the preferences of parents who have chosen pre-school provision of other management types in the area.

With the proposed closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG, there would be only one other non-statutory setting within a 2-mile radius of Drumahoe PS, namely Chapel Road Community Playgroup, who are situated within the grounds of Chapel Road PS and provided 21 funded pre-school places in the 2025/26 academic year. The Principal of Chapel Road PS submitted a response to the pre-publication consultation in favour of the proposal.

As the proposal is essentially a change in management type from non-statutory to statutory provision with only a marginal increase in the number of funded pre-school places (23 to 26), EYT have no concerns in regard to the potential for the proposal to displace existing funded pre-school provision in the area. It is also noted that the increase appears to align with parental demand, given the high number of applications to the non-statutory pre-school setting.

The EA in its comments within the CfC (pg 7) states *“It is important the Education Authority (EA) and the PEG support the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty by striving to meet demonstrated demand in an area for pre-school education for those parents/carers who want it for their children. In this context, PEG supports the DP on the basis of demonstrated demand as evidenced by the number of 1st preference applications and that it is a replacement of the existing funded non-statutory pre-school provision within the school’s grounds.”*

8. Ensuring the best use of Public Resources

In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of the resources available to it, in line with Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. In light of this, it aims to maximise the available pre-school places for target age children, avoiding over provision and the resulting enrolment of children younger than 3 years and 2 months (penultimate age children) in statutory settings.

It is clear from Tables 1 and 2 above that significant numbers of penultimate age children have been accessing funded pre-school education places in each of the last four years, particularly within the five-mile radius. While this would normally be an indicator that sufficient pre-school provision already exists to meet demand and any subsequent increase in provision could lead to a further increase in the numbers of underage children accessing funded pre-school provision in the area, the data also indicates that there may be under-provision within the two-mile radius, with the level of provision well below the planning figure. Following the recent reduction in pre-school provision at The Academy NS, Belmont NS and Lisnagelvin NS through the PSP, there is evidence of a significant reduction in the number of underage children accessing funded pre-school places in the area, indicating that the previous over provision is being, or has been, addressed.

The proposal is in effect a change in management type from non-statutory to statutory provision with only a very small increase in the enrolment number and it is possible that, if the proposal is approved, it could lead to a small increase in the number of

penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school places in the area. However, this risk is balanced by the low level of provision within the two-mile radius compared to the planning figure which would fall further were the proposal not to be approved and the existing non-statutory provision at Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG was to close.

The proposal, if approved, would also retain access to recently approved full-time pre-school places in the area.

9. Consultation Responses

The CfC advises that in accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the EA undertook a pre-publication consultation from 6 November 2025 to 15 January 2026, inviting responses from staff, governors and parents/guardians of Drumahoe PS. Affected schools and pre-school settings (45) were notified of the pre-publication consultation on the proposal via letter on 6 November 2025.

The EA received a total of 97 responses, three of which were duplicates. A total of 79 responses were in favour of the proposal, with 15 in disagreement. A summary of these can be found in pages 3 - 6 of the CfC.

Some of the comments from those in support of the proposal included (i) the numbers in Drumahoe Community Pre-School continue to increase each year; (ii) the proposal will help keep families together and provide continuity from pre-school to full-time education; and (iii) introducing a nursery unit within the school will enable a smoother and more supportive transition into Primary 1, allow earlier identification of learning needs, and ensure greater continuity in pastoral care and teaching approaches.

Comments in disagreement with the proposal include (i) in our community there is already a long standing and well-established nursery unit at Ashlea PS; (ii) a local school within the area already provides an amazing nursery unit, which locals avail of. Having another nursery unit so nearby will have a negative effect; and (iii) this decision will directly impact on Ashlea PS's nursery unit which is located in close proximity to Drumahoe PS – it is unlikely there is demand for two full-time nursery units.

There were also 20 responses received which commented on Section 75 issues, including one comment which suggested that it is harder for children with disabilities to get access to help, such as assistants, if the preschool is not a registered nursery. (CfC pg 4).

Two schools responded to the consultation, namely Ashlea PS and Lisnagelvin PS neither of which supported the proposal. A summary of the comments received from the two schools can be found on pages 5-6 of the CfC.

In the CfC the EA comments that respondents made reference to extra pre-school places being created, however, it adds that the establishment of a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS is as a result of notification of the stepping down of Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG, thereby the proposal is a direct replacement with minimal change in the number of places available. The EA adds that the small increase in

provision resulting from the proposal will not have an adverse impact on existing pre-school settings in the area (CfC pg 7).

The CfC also states that the EA PEG support the proposal on the basis of demonstrated demand as evidenced by the number of first preference applications in the area (133 for 128 places).

10. Standardisation

The Minister for Education announced in May 2024 his intention to standardise all pre-school sessions over time to deliver 4.5 hours per day. To date a total of 207 settings have been approved to transition to full-time provision in Cohort one and two of the Pre-School Standardisation Programme (PSP), with settings approved in Cohort one transitioning with effect from September 2025 and Cohort two settings due to transition with effect from September 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Of the settings approved to transition to date, six are within the five-mile radius of Drumahoe PS. These are listed below.

2BB0448	Drumahoe Community Playgroup
2BB0341	Tamnaherin Playgroup
2012261	Newbuildings PS NU
2012245	Eglinton PS NU
2116233	Lisnagelvin NS
2046687	Gaelscoil Na Daroige

Lisnagelvin NS transitioned to full-time provision through Amalgamation for Standardisation reducing their enrolment from 78 places to 52 places with effect from September 2025.

In addition to the settings above, two settings within the five-mile radius of Drumahoe PS, namely The Academy NS (2116023) and Belmont NS (2115345), transitioned to the standardised full-time session length in September 2023 under the Amalgamation for Standardisation Pilot Scheme, both reducing their enrolments from 78 places (52 part-time and 26 full-time) to 52 full-time places with effect from September 2023.

It is important to note that Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup was one of the settings approved by the Minister in December 2024 and transitioned to the standardised full-time session length from September 2025. However, the Case for Change states that in March 2025 the Management Committee of Drumahoe Community Pre-school PG notified the EA of its intention to step down as a pre-school provider in the area. They further advised that the playgroup will continue to operate until a decision has been taken on the proposal to establish a nursery unit at Drumahoe PS (CfC pg 12).

The proposal as published is seeking to establish replacement full-time provision similar to that approved for Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG under the PSP. EYT have considered this in respect of the policy direction for the PSEP and are content that the proposal for full-time statutory pre-school places at Drumahoe PS is consistent with the objectives of the pre-school standardisation programme and with the

proposed closure of Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup is in effect a change in management type from non-statutory to statutory provision.

11. EYIPT Input

Drumahoe Community Preschool Playgroup, which operates from Drumahoe Primary School's address, is a current recipient of the Department's Pathway Fund in 2026-27. Should the proposal be approved and the statutory nursery unit be established, Drumahoe Community Preschool Playgroup will no longer be eligible to receive Pathway funding and their 2026-27 award will be adjusted to reflect this. EYIPT, however, have no objections to this proposal in principle.

12. Conclusion

While it is clear there is sufficient pre-school provision within the five-mile radius of Drumahoe PS with current provision at 103.3%, the evidence demonstrates that provision within the two-mile radius is below the planning figure of 95% and currently sits at 86% in the 2025/26 academic year. The EA also state that there were no surplus places available within the two-mile radius of Drumahoe PS in the 2025/26 academic year and EA data for the 2026/27 academic year indicates that there are 133 first preference applications for 128 places. It is clear therefore that there is insufficient provision to meet current demand for funded pre-school provision in the immediate area of Drumahoe PS.

Should the proposal to provide a statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe PS not be approved, and the existing non-statutory pre-school setting was to close with no alternative provision provided, the level of provision in the area would decrease further below the planning figure to 80.4%, which equates to a shortfall in provision of circa. 60 pre-school places. The level of provision in the five-mile radius would also drop to 101.4%.

The proposal is seeking to provide statutory pre-school provision, with minimal increase to provision, to replace the existing non-statutory provision at Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup, which the CfC makes clear will close. In effect, EYT considers this proposal to be a change of management type to maintain the current level of pre-school education provision within the area and will not result in any displacement at other existing providers in the area.

The EA input has been considered and they have indicated their support for the proposal based on the demonstrated demand as evidenced by the number of 1st preference applications and that it is a direct replacement of the existing funded non-statutory pre-school provision within the school's grounds. Drumahoe Community Pre-School Playgroup has also been oversubscribed with target age first preference applications in each of the past three years, receiving 25, 29 and 27 applications respectively, which is further evidence that a 26 place statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe PS would be sustainable.

It is possible that, if approved, the proposal could result in an increase in the level of penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school provision in the area. However, it is EYT view that with the provision levels within the two-mile radius already

significantly below the planning figure, with the potential for levels to drop further if not approved, the risk of additional penultimate age children accessing funded pre-school education places presented by the proposed increase of three pre-school places is far outweighed by the benefits of approving the proposal which would keep pre-school provision at a similar level as it is currently and would ensure continuity of provision in the area.

As set out above, Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG received approval from the Minister in December 2024 to transition to full-time hours effective from September 2025 under the PSP. The proposal as published is to establish new statutory provision at Drumahoe PS providing 26 full-time nursery places.

A moratorium on any new or additional full-time pre-school provision as set out in the Learning to Learn Framework (LtL) remains in place. The draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy includes a proposed action to “Amend the current moratorium on Development Proposals (DPs) to facilitate requests for new or additional statutory pre-school provision to be established on a full-time basis”, as a category two action.

Although the moratorium is currently still in place, EYT is content that the proposal for full-time provision at Drumahoe PS does not constitute a request for new or additional full-time provision, but rather a change of management type for existing full time provision; it is therefore considered to be consistent with both the moratorium and the objectives of the pre-school standardisation programme for the provision, if approved, to be approved on a full-time basis.

Having carefully considered all the information, evidence, views for and against this proposal, EYT consider that on balance, the proposal to provide pre-school provision at Drumahoe PS is reasonable and would be unlikely to have a detrimental impact on other pre-school education provision in the area or have an adverse impact on the stability of the PSEP as a whole. If approved, EYT recommend that the removal of reception provision from the school's admissions criteria, and the cessation of EA PSEP funding to Drumahoe Community Pre-school Playgroup are included within the conditions for approval.

The team notes that, at the time of writing, the pre-school admissions process for the academic year 2026/27 has concluded.

SEN DIRECTORATE INPUT

Provision for SEN pupils is not mentioned in the business case.

It is noted that in 2024/25 Drumahoe P.S. had on its enrolment 32 pupils on stages 1-2 of the Code of Practice and 17 pupils with statements of SEN.

The SEN Directorate would not oppose this Development Proposal, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively.

EWD 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). The establishment of a new Nursery Unit has no impact on the policies which fall within EWD area of responsibility.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEAM INPUT

Approved admissions and enrolment: 41-45/290

Applications: Over the past five years the school has received the following applications for admission to Year 1:

Year	First Preference	Total Applications (all preferences)	Total Admissions*
2022/23	29	30	30
2023/24	26	27	27
2024/25	35	35	35
2025/26	39	39	39
2026/27	44	44	44

*Admission numbers exclude statemented pupils

Finance input

The school's **provisional** Deficit position as of 31 March 2026 is **£696,632**.
The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2025 was **£522,933**.

Based on the Interim Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations, the school received a total CFF budget of **£1,127,545** in the 2026-27 financial year for **285¹** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of **£3,956**. The average for all primary schools is **£4,426**.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **53¹** pupils, which represents **18.60%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes.

The school received **£9,317** for Small Schools Support funding, which represents **14.00%** of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

The school also received **£2,299** 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.

Any new provision (including new Nursery units) opening during the year are a pressure for the Department's "New Schools & Units" fund.

A new 26 F/T Nursery Unit is likely to create a funding need of **around £70k** – based on past costs for such units opening during the financial year – for the period from Opening to the end of that financial year. Full year costs to the *Aggregated Schools Budget* * are likely to be c. £121k (for new provision, not previously funded).

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	16,855	16,855	16,855
Premises FTE	25,363	24,296	24,037
TSN – Social Deprivation	32,521	42,952	35,589
TSN – Additional Social Deprivation	1,682	2,155	1,692
Small Schools Support	9,317	9,976	7,256
Primary Principals Release Time	2,299	2,709	2,299
Foundation Stage	39,335	34,779	31,625
Teachers Salary Protection	0	23,648	10,199
Specialist Provision Classes	6,000	6,000	6,000
Pupil AWPU	973,355	916,352	839,136
Children Looked After	0	3,094	1,410
Newcomer Pupils	20,819	12,6376	8,457
Total School Funding	1,127,545	1,095,192	984,554
Pupil FTE (no.)	285	277	277
Per Capita	£3,956	£3,954	£3,554

¹ 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).

Appendix D – ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

Date of last ETI inspection: May 2017

DP: 756

Web link: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/files/etini/publications/sustaining-improvement-inspection-drumahoe-primary-school-drumahoe-county-londonderry-201-2227.pdf>

Date²: 7 May 2026

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

The school has two specialist provision classes, one for children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage (KS) 1, and one for children in KS 2.

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

No recent information available.

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

The financial position of the school has changed significantly from the time of the last inspection which may have an impact on the school's ability to resource high quality nursery provision.

² 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.

The children in the local area who will move to the specialist provisions after nursery education may benefit from attending nursery provision within the primary school to support a smooth transition.

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

Planning for the nursery provision would need to be at an advanced stage if the nursery school is to be established in September 2026.

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.			√
	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.	√		
	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.	√		
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.	√		
	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.	√		

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
	1.8 The quality of the physical environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.	√		
	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.			√
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.	√		
	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).	√		
	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.	√		

6. Summary of impact of the proposal

The establishment of nursery provision within the school may enhance continuity in children's learning, wellbeing and transitions, while enabling earlier identification and support for children with additional needs. It may also strengthen engagement with families at an earlier stage and contribute to long-term improvements in educational outcomes. The school has two specialist provisions and the opportunity exists for children to potentially transfer seamlessly from nursery to Year 1. The current financial position of the school may impact adversely on the school's ability to resource high quality nursery education.

Appendix E – CSSC Response



Controlled Schools' Support Council
2nd floor, Main Building
Stranmillis University College
Belfast, BT9 5DY
T: 028 9531 3030
E: info@csscni.org.uk

21 May 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Development Proposal 756 Drumahoe Primary School

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) notes the Education Authority's proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit at Drumahoe Primary School to provide 26 full-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

CSSC notes that, if approved, the proposal would retain existing pre-school provision and address local demand, while strengthening the sustainability of Drumahoe Primary School.

CSSC recognises that this proposal provides for the establishment of full-time pre-school provision and aligns with the intentions of the Department of Education's Pre-School Standardisation programme. It is recognised that as all pre-school provision in the area has adopted the standardised model the number of places available has reduced reinforcing the need to retain provision at Drumahoe. This proposal to establish a nursery unit provides for a small increase in pre-school provision in the area.

CSSC acknowledges that the proposal should have minimal financial impact as Drumahoe Primary School has the physical capacity to accommodate pre-school provision.

CSSC supports the Education Authority's proposal and is happy to discuss this response.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Mark Baker
Chief Executive

Controlled Schools' Support Council www.csscni.org.uk
Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC107873
A company limited by Guarantee Registered in Northern Ireland NI619273

Appendix F – Sustainability Assessment

1. The SSP does not apply to pre-school provision. However, it is important when considering the establishment of statutory pre-school provision that the host school is assessed.
2. The Department's SSP sets out six criteria supported by quantitative and qualitative indicators, which provide the framework for considering a school's long-term sustainability. The primary objective of this policy is to ensure that all children and young people receive a high-quality education in schools that are educationally and financially viable in the longer term. An assessment of Drumahoe PS against the six SSP criteria and their associated indicators is set out below.

Criterion 1: Quality Education Experience

3. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Drumahoe PS in May 2017 concluding that the school continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

Composite Classes and Teaching Staff

4. The SSP recommends there should be no more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level and a minimum of four teachers at a primary school. In 2025/26, the school employed 15.2 full-time equivalent teaching staff which is well above the minimum of four teachers at primary school level as recommended in the SSP. The school operates a 12-class base comprising of no composite classes.

Special Educational Needs

5. In 2025/26 there are 25 pupils enrolled at Drumahoe PS with a Statement of SEN and 22 pupils at SEN stages 1 or 2.
6. The school operates a Specialist Provision Unit (Years 1-7 only) with an enrolment of 13 pupils in 2025/26. The unit comprises an Autism Specific Class (ASC) that can facilitate a maximum of eight pupils (Years 1 to 4) and a Learning Support Class (LSC) which can accommodate up to 12 pupils.
7. ETI input states *"The children in the local area who will move to the specialist provisions after nursery education may benefit from attending nursery provision within the primary school to support a smooth transition"* and also states that *"The establishment of nursery provision within the school may enhance continuity in children's learning, wellbeing and transitions, while enabling earlier identification and support for children with additional needs..... The school has two specialist provisions and the opportunity exists for children to potentially transfer seamlessly from nursery to Year 1."*

8. The Department's SEN Directorate would not oppose this Development Proposal, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively.

Extra-Curricular Activities

9. The school's prospectus details various extra-curricular activities which support the areas of study in the whole curriculum, including: Dance, French, Boys & Girls Football, Netball, Cricket, Hockey, Cross-Country, Swimming, Senior Choir and tuition in String and Woodwind instruments.
10. The school offers Wrap-Around-care, with a Breakfast club available from 8.00am and after school Kadet Klub until 5.30pm where the children can avail of a variety of activities, including art and crafts, games and outside play facilities. The extracurricular activities scheduled throughout the week are also available to children who attend Kadet Klub.

Physical Environment

11. Drumahoe PS building has twelve mainstream classrooms, a two-classroom ASD Specific Centre, three learning resource areas, a computer suite, an assembly hall, two offices, a Learning Support room and five cloakroom/toilet areas to serve the classrooms. The construction of a new purpose-built School Meals Kitchen and Dining Centre was opened in November 2017.
12. The schools sporting facilities include the Assembly Hall, MUGA playground as a 2G area marked for football, netball and hockey, grass area for cricket and mini-rugby.

Pastoral Care

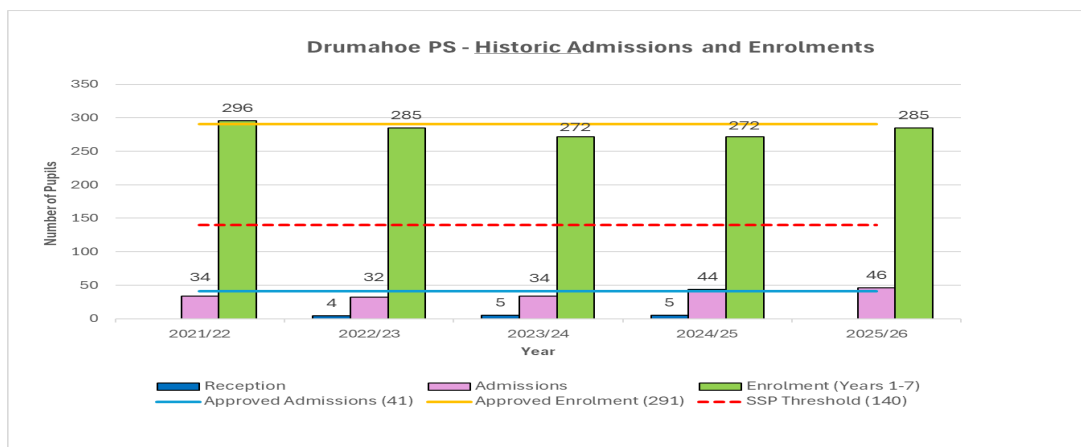
13. There is no up to date information on the pastoral care at the school.
14. The 2017 ETI Sustaining Improvement Inspection Report, although now dated, reported that the school's arrangements for safeguarding continue to reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. During a discussion with a group of year 6 children, they reported that they feel safe and secure in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

15. The SSP recommends a minimum enrolment threshold of 140 pupils for a sustainable and viable urban primary school. The current approved admissions and enrolment numbers at Drumahoe PS are 41 and 290 respectively. In 2025/25, there are 285 enrolled at the school in Years 1-7 including 46 pupils in Year 1. The current enrolment includes 25 pupils (8.77%) with a Statement of SEN.
16. Chart 1: Historic Admissions and Enrolment at Drumahoe PS and Table 1 show that admissions to the school have increased over the past five years. In 2024/25,

the school reached its approved admissions number (41) with 44 pupils, and in 2025/26 this figure was exceeded, with 46 Year 1 pupils admitted (including pupils with a statement of SEN).

Chart 1: Historic Admissions and Enrolment at Drumahoe PS



Source – DE Census data
Figures include Supernumerary pupils

NB - Children who attend a reception class in a given year and wish to continue their Year one education at the same school the following year, are not required to complete an application for re-admission on transfer to Year one at the same school in the following school year and are therefore not included in the Year one admission figures provided by the EA

17. There has been a slight decline in the school's enrolment over the past five years (296 to 285 pupils), however it remains significantly above the recommended minimum enrolment of 140 for a sustainable urban primary school. Between 2024/25 and 2025/26 the school has experienced an increase in enrolment, rising from 277 to 285 pupils (includes pupils with a statement of SEN).

Table 1: Drumahoe PS – Historical Admissions and Enrolments

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Approved Admissions: 41 / Approved Enrolment: 290					
Reception	0	4	5	5	0
Number of pupils in year 1	34	32	34	44	46
Number of pupils in year 2	42	35	33	34	44
Number of pupils in year 3	35	44	35	37	34
Number of pupils in year 4	40	36	43	33	39
Number of pupils in year 5	48	39	38	44	32
Number of pupils in year 6	49	50	40	41	48
Number of pupils in year 7	48	49	49	39	42
Total pupils (Inc Reception)	296	289	277	277	285
Total pupils (Years 1-7 only)	296	285	272	272	285

Source: School Census data and Schools +
Figures include pupils with a statement of SEN

18. **Table 2** below shows the pattern of applications to the school. The table illustrates that the school has been undersubscribed with first preference applications in four of the past five years. However, since 2023/24, there has been a steady rise in first preference applications and data at the conclusion of

the 2026/27 primary admissions process indicates a further increase in first preference applications (44) for Year 1 in September 2026.

Table 2: Drumahoe PS – Applications to Year 1 - Trends

Year	Approved Admissions	First Preference Applications	Total Applications (all preferences)
2022/23	41	29	30
2023/24	41	26	27
2024/25	41	35	35
2025/26	41	39	39
2026/27 *	41	44	44

Source: EA data at conclusion of Admissions process

*Position at the conclusion of the primary schools' admissions process for September 2026

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

19. Drumahoe PS **provisional** deficit position at 31 March 2026 is **-£696,632**. In the previous year the school's deficit at 31 March 2025 was **-£522,933**.
20. As stated in the EA's guidance on Financial Management Arrangements for Controlled and Maintained Schools funded under the Common Funding Scheme, schools in a deficit or surplus position must not exceed an upper limit of 5% of the school's budget or £75,000, whichever is lesser. Drumahoe PS is not within this tolerance.
21. Based on the Interim Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations, the school received a total CFF budget of **£1,127,545** in the 2026-27 financial year for **285¹** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of **£3,956**. The average for all primary schools is **£4,426**. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **53³** pupils, which represents **18.60%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes.
22. The school received **£9,317** for Small Schools Support funding which represents **14%** of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery and Primary funding stream. The school also received **£2,299** in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.
23. It is stated in the CfC that the school does not operate within its in-year budget. The school's three-year financial plan projects a closing deficit of **-£998,160** by March 2027.

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

24. There is no current up to date information relating to the leadership and management of the school. The April 2017 ETI inspection report, although dated,

³ 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).

noted “*There is a well-embedded culture of self-evaluation as evident in the review of the school development plan. The school's performance data is used rigorously by the leadership team and staff to identify trends, track the progress of the children in literacy and numeracy and to provide appropriate interventions.*”

25. ETI input states that the school has a development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.

Criterion 5: Accessibility

26. Drumahoe PS, is situated in the village of Drumahoe on the outskirts of Londonderry and can be accessed by foot, car and bus. **Map 1** shows that the majority of Drumahoe PS pupils live within a one-mile radius of the school.
27. Table 3 displays the grouped travel distance of pupils for Drumahoe PS (as the crow flies) for the 2025/26 academic year. It illustrates that 62.46% of the pupils travel less than two miles, 19.3% travel between two and five miles and 14.39% travel between five and ten miles, with a small percentage (3.16%) travelling more than ten miles. It should be noted that the addresses of two pupils could not be verified.

Table 3 – Drumahoe PS – Grouped Pupil travel (via OSNI road network)

Row Labels	Number of pupils (%)
A) 0-2 miles	178 (62.5%)
B) >2-5 miles	55 (19.3%)
C) >5-10 miles	41 (14.4%)
D) >10-15 miles	8 (2.8%)
E) >15-20 miles	1 (0.4%)
Unverified	2 (0.7%)
Grand Total	285

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

28. The CfC asserts that the school has well-established links within the community and together with Drumahoe Community PG it works closely with Drumahoe Community Association to host community events and fundraising activities. The Chairperson of Drumahoe Community Association is also the Chairperson of Drumahoe Community Pre-School PG and the school Principal is a member of the pre-school management committee. There is parental involvement in the pre-school management committee and transition mornings for pre-school children are held in the school during term three. Drumahoe PG children complete their weekly PE lesson in the school and visit the school to watch shows etc. The school has links with the local farming community, and the PG has been involved in consultations for Drumahoe District Park.
29. ETI input indicates that this criterion is currently being met by the school.