APPENDIX A

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 760

THE WALLACE HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT

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

The Wallace High School Preparatory Department will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2027, 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, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ, 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

APPENDIX B

The Wallace High School Preparatory Department

Case for Change

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

March 2026

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OVERVIEW – SUMMARY TABLE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICT AREA	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC)
DP NUMBER	760
PROPOSER	Board of Governors of Wallace High School
SCHOOL NAME	The Wallace High School Preparatory Department
SCHOOL REFERENCE	462-0051
SCHOOL TYPE	Preparatory-Primary
MANAGEMENT	Voluntary
DP PUBLICATION DATE	Week commencing 7 September 2026
PROPOSAL	To discontinue the current provision of The Wallace Preparatory School on 31 August 2027 or as soon as possible thereafter.

THE PROPOSER'S CONSULTATION

What consultation was carried out?

How was the

THE CONSULTATION

1. Detail of the Consultation Carried out by Proposer & Detail of Equality Screening/EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

DETAIL OF CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT BY THE PROPOSER

[Provide detail of consultation with the BOGs, teachers and parents – 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.]

The Pre-Publication Consultation period was set to 8 weeks, disregarding school half-term, opening on Friday 17th October 2025 and closing on Friday 19th December 2025. The Consultation was launched at two in-person information sessions (staff/parents) on Thursday 16th October 2025. In addition, the issue was an agenda item at the Senior School Student Executive Council, followed by a paper consultation. A summary of consultation returns is provided below. All Consultation documentation and responses considered are available here.

Type of Response

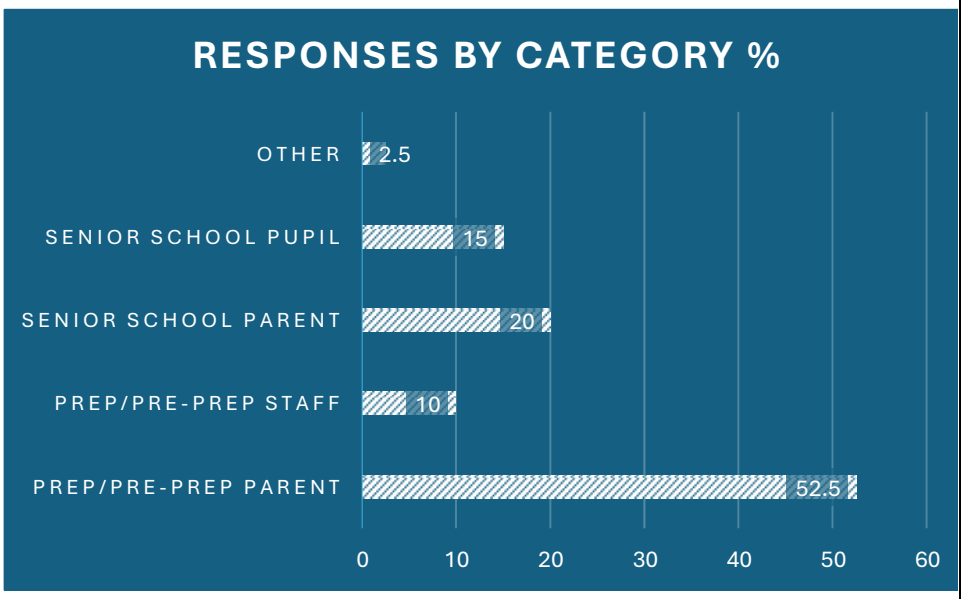
Type	Responses Received
Google Form Consultation Response	33
Consultation Email Response	8*
Pupil Consultation Response (Paper)	6
Other Documentation	3 documents**

* 7 respondents had also completed the Google Form Consultation Response.

** The Prep Parents Group submitted two additional documents: a Rebuttal Document and a Business Case. NEU submitted a Union Response to the School directly.

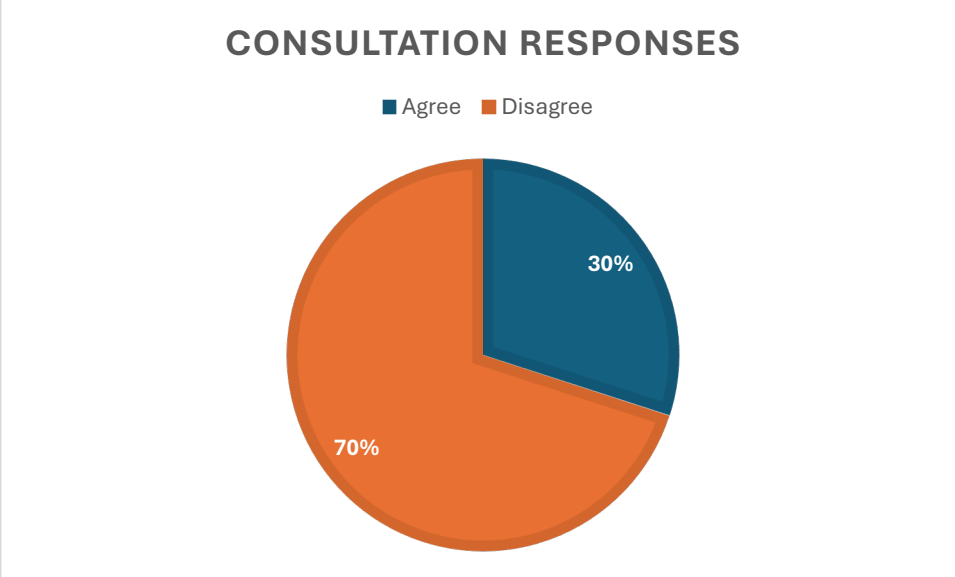
Responses by Category

The graph below sets out the responses by category:



Summary of responses to the Consultation

The Board of Governors of The Wallace High School propose to discontinue the current provision at Wallace Preparatory Department from 31st August 2027 or as soon as possible thereafter. Please indicate below whether you agree or disagree with this proposal.



- 30% of respondents agreed with the Proposal
- 70% of respondent disagreed with the Proposal*

*NEU's response was included within the disagree category. Where duplicate responses were sent from the same person (Consultation Form and Email), the content of both responses was considered in full by the Board of Governors, but the response was counted once.

In considering the individual responses received, the Board of Governors summarised key themes which emerged below, categorising these into those who disagreed with the proposal and those who agreed with the proposal.

Disagree

The following themes/issues were raised:

1. Educational Impact

- Wallace Prep is a unique environment that serves a market that is not met by the State Sector
- WHS presents a 'softer' mainstream environment for those with Special Educational Needs including greater individualised attention within a less hectic environment than mainstream

	- Inclusive environment – non-denominational and multi-cultural - Academic excellence – 92% of children move into the Grammar sector, with high scores achieved in standardised tests - Outstanding pastoral care - Access to Grammar School facilities - Allocation of Primary 1 places in state sector is uncertain for parents/Prep Sector protects parental choice and provides certainty - Allows for continuity of education that cannot be replicated in the state sector **Summary of Board's consideration:** The Board acknowledged the quality of education and endorsed the efforts of staff. However, Governors concluded that this could not outweigh the significant issues of declining enrolment, shrinking peer groups and the inability to sustain small class provision within the financial constraints. 2. Impact on wellbeing - The mental health and wellbeing of pupils is/will be impacted **Summary of Board's consideration:** Governors recognised the validity of these concerns and discussed the need for carefully managed transitions, pastoral support and collaboration with receiving schools. They concluded that while emotional impact must be acknowledged, it could not override responsibility to ensure there was sustainable, long-term provision. 3. Governance and Management The current crisis was sparked by mismanagement rather than a lack of market demand - Lack of effective marketing strategy - Poor communication, particularly January to June 2025, leading to climate of uncertainty and falling enrolment - Limited engagement with parents - One respondent suggested there has been a covert attempt to close the Preparatory Department for several years by management and Governors **Summary of Board's consideration:** The Board confirmed there was *no evidence* of any pre-determined attempt to close the Prep. It was noted that the purpose of the Development Proposal process is not to review past operational decisions but to determine the most appropriate and sustainable educational provision for current and future pupils. They noted significant marketing investment, acknowledged communication

	challenges, but concluded these issues did not outweigh structural concerns around enrolment and financial sustainability. 4. Flawed Report The report considered by Governors and subsequently issued to staff and parents is inaccurate and is not an appropriate basis on which to make such a consequential decision - Sustainable Schools Criteria is based on the Bain Report and is outdated - The data which suggests there is likely to be a demographic decline in Primary School age children in Lisburn is inaccurate and ignores house building within the area - The report relies on inaccurate and outdated information from the Department of Education about available primary school places within the area - The report exaggerates the impact of VAT and underplays the mismanagement issues set out above - Past surpluses have been ignored – the more recent deficit is partly due to exceptional staffing costs such as backdated pay rises/maternity leaves - The report fails to explore any other alternatives to closure **Summary of Board's Consideration:** Governors reviewed each claim and were satisfied that the report used the statutory Sustainable Schools Criteria required for the Development Proposal Process and relied on publicly available DENI/NISRA data and standard Area Planning methodology. They concluded that consultees had been provided with accurate, detailed, and sufficient information to participate meaningfully. 5. Alternative Options to be considered - A Business Case was presented which focused on: aggressive marketing campaign; review and re-structure of fees; investment from private sources, request for finance from Senior School parents and emergency loan from EA to support through re-build. - The School could explore option of different management authority more actively - One respondent suggested altering Admissions Criteria to ensure that every Prep student had a confirmed place within the Grammar School **Summary of Board's consideration:** The Board reviewed the options presented in the Business Case and found them to be high-risk and speculative. They concluded that proposed enrolment assumptions lacked evidence and financial projections did not address the scenario of optimistic

	enrolment targets being missed. Not all suggested sources of funding were deemed appropriate/credible. 6. Consultation Process By consulting on the preferred option, the consultation looks pre-determined. **Summary of Board's Consideration**: Governors confirmed that consulting on a preferred option is entirely consistent with case law and with recent Development Proposals for other Prep departments. They were satisfied that all consultees received full information and that the Board entered the process with no predetermined outcome. 7. Timing - A new Principal and Head of Prep are in position this year; curriculum hours have been extended with enrichment provided; there is new Admissions Criteria for the Senior School. This has created a renewed, positive climate that hasn't been given sufficient time to grow numbers - The poor timing of the Pre-Implementation proposal creates a climate of uncertainty which is likely to impact on enrolment for 2026/2027 - One respondent who disagreed with the Proposal, felt the Prep School should be closed earlier than the proposed date **Summary of Board's considerations:** Governors acknowledged recent improvements but concluded that delaying action carried significant financial risk and would prolong uncertainty. They also noted that parental enquiries about viability required timely transparency. 8. Financial Considerations - Parents currently relieve pressure on the state sector through payment of fees. Closure would ultimately place more financial burden on an already overstretched state sector **Summary of Board's considerations:** The Board noted that the Department of Education has a statutory responsibility to fund education; the Department's duty is to secure a sustainable network of provision for children not to maintain fee paying alternatives and Development Proposals would not be assessed on this basis. 9. Community Impact

	- Loss of heritage. The closure would impact the standing of The Wallace High School in the community. - The Prep currently provides childcare/education options for the children of Grammar School staff on the same campus - Closure would lead to increased travel times to alternative schools **Summary of Board's considerations:** Governors acknowledged the history and community value of the Prep but concluded that such factors cannot override the statutory obligation to ensure sustainable provision. They noted that childcare convenience and heritage fall outside the formal criteria for Development Proposal decisions. **Agree** The following themes/issues were raised: 1. Financial Considerations - Concern over rising deficit within the Prep and its projected increase - Concern that funds will be diverted from the Senior School and that this may hinder investment/expansion opportunities for the Senior School **Summary of Board's consideration:** Governors agreed that the Prep's financial position is significantly and increasingly unsustainable. They confirmed that the Senior School, which operates on a separate funding model, cannot ethically or prudently subsidise the Prep without jeopardising provision in the senior school. Financial sustainability was therefore a major factor in their deliberations. 2. Concern regarding small class sizes - Social skills, a range of friendships and interaction are a vital part of the primary school learning experience. Small class sizes hinder this. **Summary of Board's consideration:** Governors recognised this as a growing and evidenced concern, reflected also in pupils' reasons for leaving since January 2025 (with "shrinking peer groups" being the most cited reason). 3. Governance and Leadership - Governors hold a responsibility to the 1,200 pupils in the High School and must make decisions to protect high quality provision.

Summary of Board's consideration: Governors agreed fully with this view. They reaffirmed that decisions must consider the whole school's welfare, and prolonging an unsustainable Prep provision could jeopardise broader school operations. This reinforced the need to take action.

4. Timing

- Necessary to act now to prevent further financial drain

Summary of Board's consideration: Governors acknowledged these views and concluded that delaying decisions would increase financial risk, prolong uncertainty for families, and reduce the window for planned transitions. They noted that timelines and decisions ultimately rest with DE but agreed that taking action at this stage was prudent.

5. Quality of State Sector Primary Education

- Good state sector primary provision available – Prep education is no longer as sought after by parents given the high quality of provision available in the state sector

Summary of Board's consideration: Governors agreed that system-wide data indicates a sustained decline in demand for Prep provision (a 43% fall NI-wide since 2009/10 and a further 13.3% decline this academic year). This context reinforced their view that the Prep's challenges were part of a wider systemic pattern.

DETAIL OF EQUALITY SCREENING/EQIA AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Equality Consideration (Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act, 1998). The Governors gave consideration to the potential equality impact of the Proposal, taking consideration of the points raised through the Consultation.

Section 75 Responses from Staff and Parents

Category	Major Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact / Not Applicable
Religious Belief	20	3	10
Political Opinions	18	7	8
Racial Groups	19	4	10
Age	23	2	8
Marital Status	17	4	12
Sexual Orientation	17	5	11
Men and Women	14	6	13
Disability	21	1	11
Dependents – with and without	20	3	10

	Potential concerns, evidence for this raised in consultation responses and mitigating actions were discussed and are noted within the Governor's minutes. Following consideration of the evidence, it was unanimously agreed that the Board of Governors were satisfied that there is no significant adverse impact requiring a full EQIA. Rural Needs Consideration: The school is situated in an urban area and the proposal has no implications for rural populations. Due regard has been given, and the Board of Governors are satisfied that a RNIA is not required.
CONFIRMATION BY THE PROPOSER	I confirm that the school(s) BOGs, Staff and Parents of pupils were consulted 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. NAME: Mr Neal Lucas OFFICE HELD: Chair of the Board of Governors SIGNED:  DATE: 26 March 2026

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Case for Change: Statutory Consultation</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION
The following is to be completed and signed off by the EA.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Education Authority (EA)</td><td>I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 21 April 2026 and 20 May 2026 with return dates of 19 May 2026 and 19 June 2026.

<table><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>1 September 2026</td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td>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></td><td>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 21 April 2026 to schools and 20 May 2026 to preparatory schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 55 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded a copy of the proposal. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 19 May 2026 and 19 June 2026.

No responses were received from affected schools. One response was received from a parent and one response received from a constituent.

The information below provides a summary of overall responses and emerging themes of responses received.

• The Board of Governors did not consider an alternate financial business plan.
• The limited amount of time taken to consider responses by the Board of Governors.
• Closure of the preparatory school will remove choice.
• Lack of clarity of the process and communication by the Board of Governors.
• Independent analysis undertaken identified two critical factors that severely eroded the market position:
- Missed Strategic Windows: marketing efforts consistently missed the primary Education Authority admissions windows, failing to reach prospective parents when they were making decisions.
- Messaging Flaws and Delayed Spend: internal messaging inadvertently discouraged new families, and the subsequent increase in marketing spend occurred too late in the cycle to be effective.</td></tr>
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<table>
<tr><td></td><td>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 1 September 2026.</td></tr>
<tr><td>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><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>1 September 2026</td></tr></table></td><td>The Education Authority acknowledges the management authority responsibility of The Wallace High School to take forward Development Proposal 760 for the discontinuance of The Wallace High School Preparatory Department with effect from 31 August 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter.

The Board of Governors have explored other options, as outlined in the Case for Change, but are of the view that continuation of the current provision at The Wallace High School Preparatory Department is neither educationally nor financially viable.

The Education Authority also acknowledges the impact the discontinuance of The Wallace High School Preparatory Department will have on the parents and pupils however, it is noted that there are available places in the Lisburn and Belfast areas.

In consideration of the above, and the Case for Change, the Education Authority is proposing to publish Development Proposal 760 the week beginning 7 September 2026.</td></tr>
</table>

THE PROPOSAL

What is proposed?

Where does it come from and in what context?

THE PROPOSAL

2. This chapter introduces the proposal derived from the case for change

FORMAL PROPOSAL

2.1. The Governors of The Wallace High School propose to discontinue the current provision at The Wallace High School Preparatory Department from 31 August 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the statutory consultation and Development Proposal process.

Legislative and Policy Context

2.2. This Proposal has been prepared in accordance with:

- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1980, as amended
- Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which sets out the requirement for a Development Proposal for significant changes to school provision
- The Department of Education's Development Proposal Guidance (October 2024), including Section 4.1 and Section 5 regarding the "Need for a Development Proposal"
- Advice and support provided by the Education Authority (EA) as the statutory planning authority
- Input and guidance from the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) as the sectoral body

2.3. The Preparatory Department of a Voluntary Grammar School is not a grant-aided primary school, and therefore Section 5.10 (Primary Schools) of the DE Guidance does not apply. Instead, the relevant guidance is Section 5.11 point ii., which includes the requirement for a Development Proposal where a managing authority seeks 'to add or remove a key stage (KS) of education hence changing the age profile of the pupils attending the school. (KS3, KS4 or Post-16 at any grant-aided post-primary school and Foundation, KS1 or KS2 in a preparatory department attached to a grammar school).'

Background to the Proposal

2.4. Over the past 12–18 months, The Wallace High School Board of Governors has undertaken consideration of the sustainability of the Preparatory Department.

2.5. During this period:

- Enrolment at Wallace Prep fell by more than half within one year, from 109 pupils in September 2024 to 52 pupils by October 2025.
- The decline was heavily weighted toward early years, resulting in very small classes and composite class groups.
- This rapid fall in numbers created a significant and worsening financial deficit, with medium-term projections indicating sustained annual losses and a cumulative deficit that would exceed £1m within three years.
- The fall in enrolment and rising deficit took place within the wider context of declining prep-sector enrolments across Northern Ireland, the introduction of VAT on fees and demographic decline in the 0–4 population.

2.6. The Board concluded that the current model of provision is not sustainable educationally or financially.

Purpose of Bringing Forward the Proposal

2.7. The purpose of the Proposal is to ensure:

- That pupils can access stable, sustainable, high-quality educational provision in line with the Sustainable Schools Policy indicators
- That the school meets its statutory responsibilities to ensure provision is educationally and financially viable
- That the financial position of the wider school (WHS) is not compromised by escalating and prolonged deficits within the Preparatory Department
- That decisions are taken transparently and in accordance with public law principles and DE guidance

Status of the Proposal

2.8. In line with DE and EA guidance:

- No implementation of the Proposal has taken place
- Pupil places have continued as normal, and no child has been required or requested to transfer
- Staffing is being managed in accordance with statutory processes and school procedures
- Wallace Prep will remain open unless and until a final decision is made by the Minister for Education or the Permanent Secretary

Summary Statement

2.9. Having carefully considered the evidence, the Board of Governors is bringing forward this Proposal to discontinue the current provision at The Wallace High School Preparatory Department. The Board recognises the long history and valued contribution of the Preparatory Department but

must act to ensure compliance with statutory planning duties and to protect the educational and financial sustainability of The Wallace High School as a whole.

BACKGROUND

Who is Wallace Prep?

How does it compare to other local primary and preparatory schools?

BACKGROUND

3. This chapter outlines the background to the school and wider local school capacity

BACKGROUND

Governance, Origins and Location

3.1. Wallace Prep is governed by the Board of Governors of WHS, which provides strategic oversight. The Head of Preparatory Department provides leadership, acting in a similar way to a principal in a grant-aided primary school.

3.2. WHS is a co-educational voluntary grammar school situated in Lisburn. It was founded in 1880 by a bequest from the estate of Sir Richard Wallace, local landowner and MP, as the Lisburn Intermediate and University School on a site fronting the Antrim Road. The earliest recorded reference to the Prep school was through mention of a "Kindergarten" in Board of Governor minutes dating from 1937.

3.3. Land was purchased at Clonevin Park (Lisburn), initially for playing fields, and when the Antrim Road site proved inadequate, the decision was taken to build a new school in these extensive grounds. Pupils and staff moved to the new building in 1976. The Prep school moved with WHS, and its facilities physically adjoin the High School today.

Vision & Values

3.4. Wallace Prep takes pride in offering an exceptional primary and pre-preparatory education in a warm, inclusive environment. Their vision - *Creating Confident Children* - shapes a school experience where pupils are encouraged to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. They follow a holistic, whole-child approach that balances high academic standards with strong pastoral care, tailored learning support, and a deep commitment to developing each child's confidence, and creativity.

3.5. Wallace Prep's CORE values—Commitment, Opportunity, Respect, and Excellence— offer a nurturing, future-focused education where every child is known, valued, and inspired.

Curriculum & Cross Curricular Skills

3.6. Pupils currently benefit from a rich and varied curriculum including extensive sporting, musical, and artistic opportunities, alongside an exciting outdoor learning programme that promotes curiosity, resilience, and wellbeing. Their distinctive location affords pupils rich opportunities for outdoor education, complemented by direct access to the extensive resources of WHS.

3.7. The prep follows the NI Curriculum and notes the major strategic review of the NI educational curriculum published in June 2025.

Staffing & Class Configuration

3.8. Staff numbers and roles have generally followed enrolment numbers over the last decade.

- Overall staff numbers have fallen slightly over the period. With significant changes made in 2025. In September 2025, there were two full-time teachers (down from long-term trend of seven) and five part-time teachers, for a full-time-equivalence (FTE) of 5.1 staff (down from 8.5 FTE staff in 2023/24).
- There has been one constant part-time Learning Support role across the period.
- From 2016/17 until 2021/22 there was a part-time principal, who was followed by a non-teaching Head of Preparatory Department for two years (2022/23 to 2024/25). The Head of Preparatory role was then merged with a 4 day teaching role for 2025/26.
- Staff restructuring, led to consolidated classes for Years 1 & 2, and Years 3 & 4.

3.9. This is illustrated via the staffing tables below:

Table 3A: Summary of Wallace Prep Staffing 2016/17 to 2025/26

Staff	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
FT	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	2
PT	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4
PT - LS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total Staff	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**10**	**10**	**9**	**8**
Total FTE	8	8	8	8	8	8	8.5	8.5	7.5	5.1
Head of Prep (Also 3 day week Teacher)										
Head of Prep (FT, Non-Teaching)										
Head of Prep (Also 4day week Teacher)										
Enrolment (Prep)	126	126	121	136	135	145	138	124	109	52

*55 as at 01-Sep-25, but 52 as at 10-Oct-25 (School Census Day)

Table 3B: Staffing Structure & Enrolments (as of 01-Oct-25)

Year Group / Area	2025-26	Enrolments
Primary 1/2	2 x 2.5 day Job Share (including Senior Teacher TA1)	8 (5 in Yr 1; 3 in Yr 2)
Primary 3/4	2 x 2.5 day Job Share	9 (8 in Yr 3; 1 in Yr 4)
Primary 5	2 x 2.5 day Job Share	5
Primary 6	Full Time Teacher	7
Primary 7	Full Time Teacher (Head of Prep TA4)	23
Learning Support	Part Time Teacher (2 days +1 day class committed)	-

3.10. Since September 2025, three permanent teachers have left. The part time staffing structure has been adjusted, and two temporary teachers employed.

SEN Provision

3.11. In 2025/26 Wallace Prep has [redacted] children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Over the last five years it has an average of 4.5 SEN children per annum.

ENROLMENT TRENDS

3.12. Enrolment trends for Wallace Prep, the wider Prep Sector and the overall Primary School sector are contained in the "School Enrolment Analysis" section of the Consultation Presentation. This also maps neighbouring primary and prep school provision. Total Wallace Prep (Year 1 to Year 7) enrolment from 2000/2001 to 2025/26 is outlined in Appendix I.

IMPACT OF VAT

3.13. In the 2024 Autumn Budget announced the imposition of VAT (@ 20%) on private school fees from 01-Jan-2025. In doing so, the Labour government fulfilled a publicly stated commitment and expected that the net effective VAT rate would be 15% (after offsetting). The Office for Budgetary Responsibility (OBR) forecast the policy would result in around 35,000 fewer private school pupils by the end of 2029/2030. Representing 6% of the then current number of private school pupils, the higher end of a think tank report's estimate in 2013 that the government had been heavily relying on. [See House of Lords report (Sep25), opposite, for more information and background on the introduction of VAT on private school fees].



3.14. In January 2023, there were 1,750 independent (private) schools in England. By January 2025 this had fallen by 5.5% to 1,653 schools. The Independent School's Council (ISC) polled 1,150 private schools*, which showed that there were 16,696 fewer students in September 2025 compared to a year earlier. Equating to a drop of 3.6%, with girls' schools (4.5% down) worse off than boys' schools (2.7%). The figures are likely to be an underestimate as 81 private schools were believed to have closed between July 2024 and September 2025. *as reported in The Times/Sunday Times article ("Girls schools hot hardest by VAT on fees") on 05-Oct-2025, by Louise Eccles and Joey D'Urso

3.15. There are an estimated 556,000 pupils in private schools, with slightly more boys (282,000) than girls (274,000). The ISC believes the government has underestimated the impact of VAT on pupil numbers, as they note a drop of 24,929 pupils between September 2023 and September 2025.

3.16. The English Department for Education's own research found that between January 2024 and January 2025, independent schools were down 5.9% at Age 4, and down 5% for Age 7, which was over twice the decline shown in state primary schools over the same period. According to the ISC overall prep school numbers in England fell by 4.6% compared to 2.9% for senior schools.

> **"I think the fall in pupil numbers is shocking but not surprising… it is hitting the lower-cost, small schools, the most - the ones that are embedded in their local communities."**
>
> Rudolf Eliot Lockhart, Chief Executive of the Independent Schools Association (membership of 770 head-teachers).

3.17. DENI system level enrolment figures for the 2025/2026 academic year show a drop of 13.3% in Preparatory Department enrolments. Primary School enrolments are down by 1.6%.

SUSTAINABILITY

Is the school sustainable?

What are the financial implications?

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

4. This chapter assesses the school's ongoing sustainability

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS POLICY

Sustainability Criteria Indicators

4.1. This section summarises Wallace Prep's position against the six sustainability criteria set out in the Sustainable Schools Policy (DENI, 2009) and reaffirmed in DENI's Development Proposal Guidance (2024).

Table 4A: Sustainable Criteria Indicators

Sustainability Criteria	Sustainability Indicators
Quality of Educational Experience	a) Attainment levels of pupils. b) No more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary level. c) There are 4 teachers at a primary school. d) The ability of a school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs. e) The standards and the quality of teaching and learning at the school. f) The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children. g) The quality of the physical environment for learning and teaching. h) The quality of, and arrangements for pastoral care.
Stable Enrolment Trends	a) The enrolment trends in the school in the past three years and projected demand in the area. b) Ideally a primary school should have at least seven classrooms (one for each year group). The minimum (not optimal) enrolment for an urban school should be 140 pupils.
Sound Financial Position	a) The school's annual finances indicate that it can live within its budget. b) The school's financial trends indicate that it will continue to be able to live within its annual budget. c) The school's three-year financial plans, based upon realistic assumptions, indicate that where there is a deficit this can be reduced or recovered.
Strong Leadership and Management by the Board of	a) Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. b) Composition of the Board of Governors-skills and experience of Board members and the number of vacancies. c) Management of staff attendance and absenteeism.

Sustainability Criteria	Sustainability Indicators
Governors and the Principal	d) Levels and nature of staff turnover and unfilled staff vacancies. e) Teacher morale. f) Management of curricular and organisational demands on the Principal and staff. g) Ensuring that the resource is available so that the Principal has at least one day per week to attend to leadership and management duties. h) There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives. i) Pupil behaviour, expulsions, suspensions, and non-attendance as well as positive behaviours such as involvement in school management (e.g., buddying and mentoring schemes).
Accessibility	a) Home to school travel times of less than 30 minutes. b) Distance to another suitable primary school. c) Capacity in nearest schools.
Strong Links with the Community	a) Degree and quality of parental involvement. b) Number of children in the vicinity attending (and not attending). c) Contribution of the school to the community. d) Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit. e) Multi-functional use of buildings outside formal education, for example, sport, voluntary and community use.

Wallace Prep – Sustainability Assessment

4.2. The criteria have been applied to Wallace Prep as follows:

Table 4B: Sustainable Criteria Indicators as Applied to Wallace Prep

Sustainability Criteria	Sustainability Indicators
Quality of Educational Experience	• Of 98 Wallace Prep pupils (from 2020/21 to 2024/25) sitting the transfer exam, 90 transferred to Grammar School with 6 transferring to an Integrated School and two to a Non-Grammar. • Wallace Prep has a P1/P2 composite, a P3/4 composite and separate classes for P5, P6 and P7. On current enrolment numbers, there will be a need for broader composite classes next academic year. • Wallace Prep has seven teachers (2 FT, 5 PT). • Wallace Prep has had an average of 4.5 children with Special Educational Needs per annum over the last five years and caters effectively for them in a smaller group setting. • Wallace Prep has recently invested in expanding Pre-Prep facilities and has access to the extensive WHS grounds and facilities. • The most recent full ETI inspection report is dated May 2013. There have been significant leadership and staffing changes subsequently.
Stable Enrolment Trends	• Enrolment over the last five years is as follows: 145 (2021/22), 138 (2022/23), 124 (2023/24), 109 (2024/25) and 52 (2025/26). This means that enrolments have more than halved within 12 months. [See School Enrolment Analysis and Appendix I for more detail].

Sustainability Criteria	Sustainability Indicators
	• Current enrolment as of 01-March 2026 is 42 pupils, with 23 pupils in P7, and two further pupils having given notice. • Since 2008/09 Wallace Prep has secured the 140 minimum enrolment threshold for an urban school only once (2021/22). • Enrolment is heavily weighted towards older age groups, with Year 7 alone accounting for 46% of total enrolments. Year 7 is also the only class surpassing the minimum threshold per year group (20). • Due to reduced enrolments, four year groups have consolidated into two composite classes.
Sound Financial Position	• Wallace Prep had actual deficits of [redacted] in 2024/25. Therefore, the deficit in the most recent full year was over ten times that of the previous year. • Wallace Prep forecasts a deficit of [redacted]. • Wallace Prep forecasts indicate over the four year period between 2024-25 and 2027-28 the cumulative deficit will be over £1m, rising to over £2m by the end of 2031/32. • These deficits are after 10% rise per annum in tuition fees, and staff restructuring in 2025. • The Financial Forecasts are outlined in Appendix II.
Strong Leadership and Management by the Board of Governors and the Principal	• WHS has eight trustees, and eighteen Governors (excluding the Principal). Together they bring significant skills, talents and experiences to call upon in support of the school. As of December 2025, the Board of Governors has been reconstituted. There are no Trustee or Governor vacancies. The Board operate a Preparatory Department Sub-Committee to review operational matters within the Prep Department. • Head of Preparatory Department left in June 2025 after nine years at the school. • From 2016/17 until 2021/22 there was a Teaching Head of Preparatory Department, who was followed by a non-teaching Head of Preparatory Department for three years (2022/23 to 2024/25). For 2025/2026 the Head of Preparatory Department, again became a teaching role with one day a week release to attend to leadership and management duties.[See s3.11 for full staff changes]. • There is a high level of parental confidence in the new Head of the Preparatory Department • One permanent PT teacher took redundancy (leaving 30-Sep-25). As of February 26, Wallace Prep has lost 3 further members of teaching staff (who have moved jobs) and has used a combination of permanent staff on increased days and two temporary staff members to ensure continuity of educational provision. • Wallace Prep has just completed a 3 Year School Development Plan. With a new Head of Prep in place, they have a 1 year Interim Plan for the 2025/26 academic year. Furthermore in March 2025, Wallace Prep announced an enhanced curriculum with extended hours for junior school agreed for the 2025-2026 academic year.
Accessibility	• WHS is under ten miles from Belfast City Hall. It is located close to the M1 motorway, main roads and public transport connections (bus and rail). There is an extensive car park with EV chargers.

Sustainability Criteria	Sustainability Indicators
	• 93.8% of Wallace Prep pupils live within 5 miles of the school, with 98.0% of pupils living within 10 miles of the school.
Strong Links with the Community	• A Wallace Prep PTA (Parent Teachers Association) has been in place for over 40 years. • The Preparatory Department adjoins the main school building and recently extended their Pre-Prep facilities. The Pre-Prep facilities can accommodate two years - Pre-School and the immediate preceding year. • WHS plays a key role in the wider community, by opening its facilities outside school hours. Over 35 community, voluntary and sporting groups along with private hire use the facilities per year. • WHS is a pioneer in iPad use, renewable energy and carbon reduction; and shares their learnings with other schools, civil servants and the general public. NB Demographic and enrolment trends are contained within School Enrolment Analysis

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Prep Schools

4.3. For reference the alternative Prep School Provision within NI is as follows:

Table 4C: NI Prep School Enrolment & Proximity to Wallace Prep

NI Prep Schools*	2025/26 Enrolment	Miles (by Road)	Minutes' Drive
Methody Prep	150	8.6	22
Campbell College	155	15.8	26
Friends School	151	0.4	2
Inchmarlo	104	7.7	18
Strathearn	115	15.7	25
Sullivan Upper	158	15.8	25
Regent House	112	20.1	38
Royal School Armagh	19	30.6	43
Victoria College	114	7.9	19
Wallace Prep	52	-	-

**Ben Madigan Preparatory School is excluded as it has submitted a Development Proposal to close the school on 31-August-2026*

4.4. The latest figures are for 2024/25 and indicate there is capacity within the wider NI Prep sector. There is:

- One Prep school within half a mile.
- Three Prep schools within 20 minutes' drive (from Wallace).
- Seven Prep schools within 30 minutes' drive.

Neighbouring Primary & Prep Schools

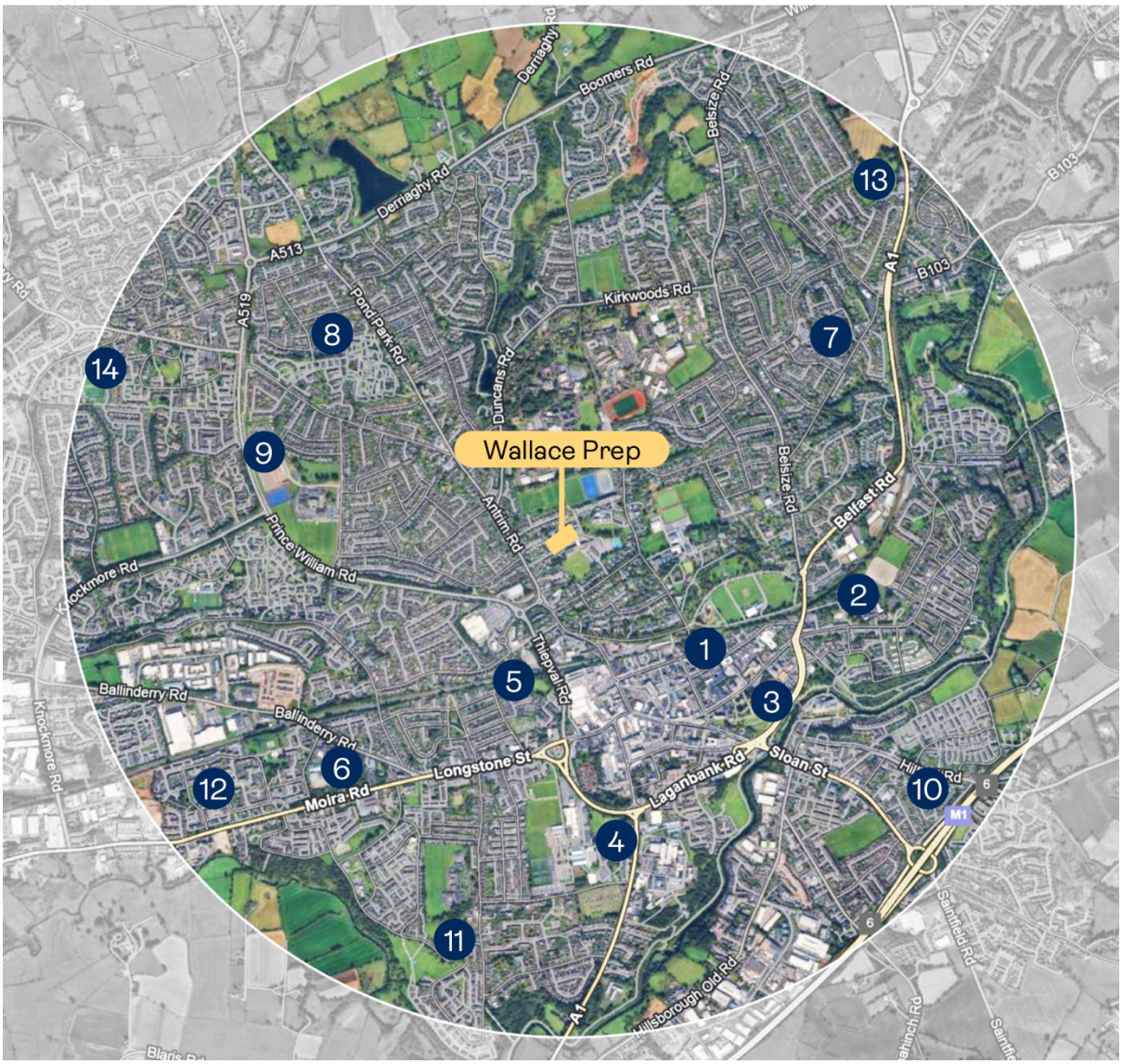
4.5. There are 14 primary schools and one other Prep school within two miles (by road) of Wallace Prep.. The most recent published data (2024/2025) indicates the following available places in local primary schools.

Table 4D: Neighbouring Primary & Prep School Enrolment & Proximity to Wallace Prep

Primary School	Miles	Enrolment	Available Places 2024/25	Available Places 2025/26
1. Brownlee	0.8	196	5	15
2. Fort Hill Integrated	1	210	16	22
3. St Joseph's	1.1	395	18	23
4. Lisburn Central	1.1	203	21	29
5. Tonagh	1.1	228	52	67
6. St Aloysius	1.2	490	93	103
7. Harmony Hill	1.4	609	17	6
8. Pond Park	1.4	610	14	18
9. Killowen	1.5	420	66	69
10. Largymore	1.6	196	14	10
11. Old Warren	1.6	196	88	88
12. Knockmore	1.7	212	84	99
13. St. Colmans	2	348	1	0
14. Ballymacash	2	406	29	28

4.6. The schools are mapped out on the following page, with the numbers referenced above. All schools are within 10 minutes' drive (via Google Maps). Published 'available places' do not equate to confirmed in-year admission availability and may vary by year group, but published data indicates unfilled places across the Lisburn area. Moreover, the DENI school enrolment numbers suggest there are more primary school places available within the greater Lisburn area, moving beyond this two mile zone.

Map of Neighbouring Primary School's to Wallace Prep



AREA PLANNING IMPACT

What about other local schools?

What impact will it have on local primary provision?

AREA PLANNING IMPACT

5. This chapter outlines the impact on local primary provision

Purpose of this Section

5.1. This section provides a factual overview of local primary provision, patterns of provision in the Lisburn area, and the potential area planning implications arising from this Proposal. Information is based on publicly available data, including DE school census and published capacity figures.

Local Primary and Preparatory School Provision

5.2. There are a number of grant-aided primary schools and preparatory departments located within the Lisburn area. These include:

- controlled, maintained and integrated primary schools; and
- preparatory departments attached to other voluntary grammar schools.

5.3. Wallace Prep is situated within a dense network of primary providers, with schools located within short travel distances by road. Travel times, based on Google Maps (off-peak), are typically within 5–10 minutes for neighbouring provision.

Published Capacity and Enrolment Data

5.4. Published school capacity data for 2024/25 indicate that a number of primary schools within the local area operate below their approved enrolment, while others operate close to capacity. This pattern reflects wider variation seen across the primary sector. Published “available places” figures indicate where enrolment is below the school’s approved enrolment, but do not equate to confirmed in-year admission availability, which may vary by year group. The data provides an indication of local provision and potential capacity within the area.

Potential Area Planning Implications

5.5. If the Proposal were approved:

- Pupils enrolled at Wallace Prep (current P1 – P5 and future enrolments) would require alternative primary provision within the area.
- There are currently 19 pupils within P1 – P5, two of whom have accepted places elsewhere and have given notice to leave. Thus, the number of pupils requiring alternative provision is small relative to the overall scale of local primary provision.
- Relocation of the current Prep cohort is not anticipated to create a material impact on the capacity or sustainability of other local schools.
- Neighbouring preparatory departments may absorb pupils.

Summary

5.6. The pattern of primary provision in the Lisburn area indicates that:

- There is a range of neighbouring schools within close proximity.
- Published capacity data show variation across local schools.
- The scale of movement associated with this Proposal is small in area-planning terms.

5.7. On this basis, the Proposal is not anticipated to adversely affect the pattern of provision or the sustainability of other primary schools within the area. This will remain subject to the normal DE and Education Authority (EA) area-planning processes.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Is it affordable?

Within available funding?

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

6. **This chapter set out the educational impact the proposal may have and reflects the information required under the Department of Education's Development Proposal Guidance (2024).**

SMALL SCHOOLS

Educational Provision at Wallace Prep

6.1. Wallace Prep currently delivers the Northern Ireland Curriculum within a preparatory school setting for pupils aged 3–11. Pupils have access to facilities appropriate for primary-aged children and additional facilities through the Grammar School. Class organisation reflects current enrolment levels, including the use of composite classes in the lower year groups.

6.2. Support for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is provided in line with statutory guidance and WHS policies and structures.

Educational Considerations if the Proposal Is Approved

6.3. If the Proposal were approved:

- Pupils would transfer to another primary school or preparatory department.
- Receiving schools would continue to deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum in line with DE requirements.
- Transition would follow standard school transfer processes, including the transfer of pupil information in line with DE guidance.
- Parents would be supported to identify alternative provision through normal admissions mechanisms.

Educational Considerations if the Proposal Is Not Approved

6.4. If the Proposal were not approved:

- The school would continue to operate.

- Class structures and staffing arrangements would be reviewed in line with enrolment levels and the financial deficit, potentially requiring larger composite class sets of more than two year groups.

Composite Classes

6.5. The Sustainable Schools Policy - outlined previously - notes that there should be no more than two composite year groups in a single classroom. Whilst currently not the case, enrolment numbers (especially Yr1 to Yr5) and financial realities, may require reviewing this situation regularly in the future.

6.6. The Sustainable Schools Policy states that small schools face challenges in providing the full curriculum (that is to go through a major update) and an educational environment which maximises opportunities for pupils both within and beyond the curriculum. This is important for schools, such as Wallace Prep, that promote a more holistic education.

Impact on Social Dynamics, Sports & Activities

6.7. Smaller numbers can have a detrimental impact on group/social dynamics; and the range and depth of extra-curricular experiences available to pupils. With many activities (e.g. choir), sports and clubs requiring a minimum number to operate.

Impact on Teachers & Staff

6.8. A 2022 Queen's University Belfast's study of NI's small rural schools documents the strengths and challenges of small schools, backed up by points made in the Teacher Workload: INTO Research report (2022):

- **Multi-grade teaching:** there is a challenge with there being children of different ages and abilities together in one classroom, however a positive is that they can learn from and support each other.
- **Excessive staff workload:** smaller pupil numbers correspond to a smaller number of staff. This means that everyone, including principals, has to fulfil a range of roles and teach for significant hours. Teachers can become more stressed with this extra administrative workload.
- **Closer relationships**: teachers can forge closer and more personal relationships with the children in their classes, as well as the parents of the children.
- **Limited resources:** principals and teachers have to be creative in obtaining resources for their schools, for example by fundraising or applying for funding schemes.
- **Smaller number of staff:** there will be fewer teachers in small schools which mean fewer specialist colleagues and a greater chance of staff absence.

Proposal

6.9. The Proposal, if approved, would result in pupils transferring to alternative primary provision, where they would continue to access the Northern Ireland Curriculum in settings organised in line with DE requirements. If the Proposal were not approved, Wallace Prep would continue to deliver its educational provision, with class organisation and staffing arrangements reviewed in line with enrolment levels.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

What will be the impact on resources?

On human resources?

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7. This chapter outlines the probable impact on resources

Finance

7.1. Any financial implications up to the date of discontinuance would be managed through WHS's normal financial processes. If approved, the budget relating to the Preparatory Department would no longer form part of WHS's financial planning, and any remaining financial matters would be managed by WHS in line with standard procedures.

7.2. Funding would follow pupils to receiving schools in line with DE arrangements.

Staff

7.3. Teaching staff are afforded employment protection under the School Re-Organisation Agreement 2013/2. Non-teaching staff will be afforded employment protection under the Collective Agreement (JNC Circular 224). The Board of Governors will meet with staff to discuss options should a Development Proposal be progressed and subsequently approved by the Education Minister and an action plan implemented for the discontinuance of the school.

7.4. Detailed staffing and financial implications would be developed if the Proposal progresses to implementation. Any staffing implications arising directly from the Proposal would only be considered if approval were granted. Any staffing matters relating to current enrolment levels continue to be managed separately through WHS's standard staffing processes and are not dependent on the outcome of this Proposal.

Accommodation

7.5. Future use of the Preparatory Department accommodation would be determined by WHS in line with the school's estate needs and DE estate-management procedures.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

What options are available?

How did we get here?

OPTION APPRAISAL

8. This chapter outlines the options considered by The Board of Governors

TIMELINE

Background

8.1. The Board of Trustees discussed the sustainability of Wallace Prep in 2013 and agreed to keep this under review. The deficit and risk involved was monitored by Governors but there continued to be a determination to sustain Prep Education where viable.

8.2. In September 2021, Wallace Prep had 145 enrolments, the highest number for 14 years in contrast to a general decline in Prep School enrolments across NI reflecting an ongoing commitment to the growth of the Prep Department. Conscious of declining birth rates and the general trend downwards in Prep School enrolment, the Governors continued to invest in the future of the Prep Department, committing to:

- A refurbishment of Playground Equipment in December 2021
- Extending the Pre-Prep Department to increase numbers in Pre-Prep (decision 2021/2022 academic year – extension opened September 2023)
- An enhanced Marketing Strategy/Spend (agreed December 2022)
- An enhanced Marketing Strategy/Spend (January 2025) alongside an enhanced curriculum offer with extended hours for P1-P3 for the 2025-2026 year.

By September 2024, enrolments had fallen to 109. In October 2024, the UK government announced that VAT (at 20%) was to be applied to independent school fees from January 2025.

8.3. In January 2025, Wallace Prep Governors met with parents to review the impact of VAT on fees and the financial position of the Preparatory Department. At this stage, there was some decline in enrolment.

8.4. In April 2025, enrolment for the incoming P1 year was substantially lower than considered sustainable. The Trustees reviewed the financial position of the Preparatory Department and agreed that advice should be sought from the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) on the

initial steps associated with the Development Proposal process, including the requirements relating to area planning. At this time, changes to class and staffing structures for 2025/26 were also planned in response to the reduced pupil numbers and associated financial pressures. It was also confirmed that the Head of the Preparatory Department would leave post at the end of the academic year.

8.5. In June 2025, following completion of the staffing review and necessary adjustments for 2025/26, the class structure for the forthcoming academic year was confirmed, including composite arrangements. Enrolment subsequently reduced further between June and the start of the 2025/26 academic year.

8.6. In September 2025, five pupils were enrolled in P1 with 55 pupils enrolled across Year 1 to Year 7. During this period, the school began assembling the factual information required by DE guidance to support consideration of the available options. This included collating enrolment data, financial information, staffing arrangements and high-level area-planning context, in line with the requirements for the early stages of a Development Proposal. By October 2025, enrolment declined further to 52 pupils, of which 23 (44%) were in Year 7. This created a significant budgetary deficit for 2025/26.

Option Derivation

8.7. Consequently, the Board of Governors set out initial options to address the enrolment and financial issues affecting the school in September 2025. These were considered by the Board of Governors at their meeting on the 06 October 2025 and a recommended option was voted on. This recommended option was put forward for consultation with parents and staff.

FEES

Benchmarking

8.8. Before, considering the options (and subsequent discussion on fees) it is important to set Wallace Prep's 2025/26 fees in context.

Table 8A: Comparison of Publicly Available – Annual NI Prep School Fees

Prep School	P1-P3	P4-P7
Campbell College	[redacted]	[redacted]
Friends School	[redacted]	[redacted]
Methody Prep	[redacted]	[redacted]
Inchmarlo	[redacted]	[redacted]
Regent House		
Royal School Armagh	[redacted]	[redacted]
Strathearn	[redacted]	[redacted]
Sullivan Upper		
Victoria College	[redacted]	[redacted]
Wallace HS	[redacted]	[redacted]

Table 8B: Annual NI Prep School Fees (P1-P3)

Prep School	Yr1- Yr3
Royal School Armagh	[redacted]
Strathearn	[redacted]
Inchmarlo	[redacted]
NI Prep School Average	[redacted]
Wallace HS	[redacted]
Methody Prep	[redacted]
Campbell College	[redacted]
Friends School	[redacted]
Victoria College	£[redacted]

Table 8C: Annual NI Prep School Fees (P1-P3)

Prep School	Yr4-Yr7
Royal School Armagh	[redacted]
Strathearn	[redacted]
Inchmarlo	[redacted]
Methody Prep	[redacted]
NI Prep School Average	[redacted]
Campbell College	[redacted]
Wallace HS	[redacted]
Friends School	£[redacted]
Victoria College	[redacted]

Notes & Assumptions

- Fees based on full price before any discount (e.g. sibling, paid in one go etc).
- Fees exclude breakfast club and after-club provision.
- Fees exclude voluntary fees and capital contribution in schools that charge this.
- Prep (Years 1-7) fees are inclusive of VAT.
- Sullivan Upper and Regent House do not provide their fees on their websites.
- Ben Madigan only had 2024/25 fees (ex VAT) on their website; and were excluded.

8.9. Overall, Wallace Prep fees appear above the sector average, as set out below:

- Prep is the fifth highest in NI for Year 1 to Year 3 fees (8.2% below the top fee in NI).
- Prep is the third highest in NI for Year 4 to Year 7 fees (4.3% below the top fee in NI).

OPTIONS

8.10. The Board of Governors considered five options, as follows:

Option 1: No change to the Current Provision

8.11. In recent years, there has been a push to increase enrolment within the Prep Department. This included an extension to increase numbers within Pre-Prep provision. Last academic year, there was an increased recruitment drive. Moreover, the Prep Department developed an enhanced enrichment offer and offered extended hours to the junior school.

8.12. Despite these actions, enrolment has decreased over the past number of years. Any option to maintain current provision would require a material increase in pupil numbers to address the financial and organisational challenges identified.

8.13. A parent suggested supporting promotional activity and potential engagement with Invest NI. Any such approach would require consideration of the financial implications associated with undertaking a new marketing and recruitment strategy.

8.14. Based on current enrolment levels and the financial and organisational considerations outlined in the sustainability assessment, maintaining the current provision would require sustained increases in pupil numbers. The Board noted these factors when considering this option.

Option 2: Increase Fees

8.15. Modelling indicates that significant fee increases would be required to return the Preparatory Department to a financially sustainable position. Modelling carried out for this option indicates that the level of fees required to return the Preparatory Department to financial sustainability would be significantly above the prevailing fee levels charged by other preparatory departments in Northern Ireland. This represents a substantial departure from typical market fee structures within the sector. Further detail is provided in Appendix II.

8.16. Any substantial increase in fees would need careful consideration in terms of affordability and its potential impact on future enrolment.

Option 3: Change Management Type

8.17. Consideration was given to whether the current preparatory provision could continue under a different management type. Under the statutory framework set out in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a change of this nature cannot be made by simply transferring the existing provision. The Preparatory Department would first have to be discontinued, and any new school created in its place would require a separate Development Proposal brought forward by a different managing authority or an approved proposer group.

8.18. Bringing forward a new school proposal would require the full Development Proposal process, including statutory pre-publication consultation, EA consultation with affected schools, and Ministerial approval. A case would also need to be demonstrated that a new preparatory school is required within the local area, supported by evidence of sustained enrolment, long-term demand and alignment with wider area-planning considerations.

8.19. It was noted that this pathway would legally require the discontinuance of the existing Preparatory Department before any new school could be established, and that progressing such a proposal would depend on actions by a different proposer or managing authority. As these steps lie outside the control of WHS, this option was not taken forward for detailed evaluation.

Option 4: Amalgamation

8.20. The feasibility of amalgamation was considered in principle. Amalgamation between two preparatory departments is a complex process requiring three separate Development Proposals under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986: (i) a DP to discontinue Wallace Prep; (ii) a DP to discontinue the partner preparatory department; and (iii) a DP to establish a new amalgamated preparatory school. Each Development Proposal would require the agreement of the relevant managing authorities, statutory pre-publication consultation, EA consultation with affected schools, and Ministerial approval.

8.21. This option would also require alignment of governance structures and agreement across both schools, as well as consideration of operational and estate arrangements. Given the legal, governance and organisational complexity and requirements, and the need for a partner preparatory department and managing authority to initiate and support these processes, it was noted that this option required changes that are outside the control of WHS and it was not taken forward for detailed evaluation.

Option 5: Discontinue the provision at The Wallace High School Preparatory Department

8.22. Following consideration of all available options, with regret, the Board agreed to bring forward a proposal to discontinue current provision at Wallace Prep Department on 31 August 2027 or as soon as possible thereafter for statutory consultation in line with DE guidance.

Alternatives

8.23. During the consultation exercise, a group of parents submitted an "Alternative Business Plan" setting out a range of proposals including revised fee levels, expansion of Pre-Prep provision, additional marketing activity and potential fundraising approaches. This proposal was received as part of the statutory consultation and is within the Consultation Summary and the Board of Governors' response. As this Business Plan was not available during the initial Options Appraisal meeting on 6 October 2025, it has been considered within the consultation process rather than as part of the Stage 1 options exercise.

RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

Why is a decision required?

What option is proposed?

RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSAL

9. This chapter outlines what the proposed option is, and why it is needed.

Rationale

9.1. The Board of Governors has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the Preparatory Department operates in a manner consistent with the Department of Education's Sustainable Schools Policy and the wider area-planning framework. In light of the evidence presented in Sections 2–8, the Board agreed to bring forward this Development Proposal for public consultation in order to seek a formal, system-wide consideration of the future of the provision.

Enrolments

9.2. Enrolment at Wallace Prep has reduced from 145 pupils in 2021/22 to 52 pupils at the October 2025 school census and has reduced further to 42 pupils, with 23 pupils in P7. Current numbers are significantly below the Sustainable Schools Policy's minimum enrolment reference points for urban primary provision, and the distribution of pupils across year groups has required composite arrangements in the lower part of the school. These patterns, summarised in Section 4, have implications for long-term educational, organisational and financial sustainability.

9.3. Financial information set out in Section 7 shows that the Preparatory Department has recorded in-year deficits in recent financial years, and modelling indicates that, at present enrolment levels, the Department would continue to operate at a deficit without substantial and sustained increases in pupil numbers. The scale of increase required to restore long-term financial sustainability is outlined in Appendix II.

Options

9.4. Section 8 summarises the range of options considered by the Board. Options to maintain the existing model, including enhanced recruitment activity or marketing, would require sustained growth in pupil numbers over several years. Options involving changes to management type or the establishment of a new school would require the discontinuance of the existing provision and the involvement of a different managing authority or proposer, together with the statutory Development Proposal process and Ministerial approval. These steps lie outside the control of WHS and were not taken forward for detailed evaluation.

9.5. During the consultation exercise, a group of parents submitted an Alternative Business Plan. The Board considered this submission as part of the consultation process. The approach proposed would require adjustments to fee structures, sustained increases in enrolment and the identification of additional income streams over a prolonged period. The Board considered this alongside the evidence in Sections 4 and 7.

9.6. Taking account of enrolment trends, sustainability indicators, the financial context, and the findings of the Options Appraisal, the Board concluded that it had a responsibility to bring forward this Development Proposal for public consultation. The Proposal does not predetermine the outcome but provides the statutory mechanism through which the Department of Education can consider all relevant evidence and consultation responses before determining the future of the Preparatory Department.

PRE-PUBLICATION CONSULTATION

How was the development proposal formed?

PRE-PUBLICATION CONSULTATION

10. This chapter outlines how the development proposal emerged

Consultation Process

10.1. A pre-publication consultation period ran for eight weeks, beginning on 17 October 2025 and ending on 19 December 2025. Two in-person information sessions were held on 16 October 2025 for staff and parents. Pupils were engaged through the Senior School Student Executive Council, followed by a paper-based consultation.

10.2. A total of 33 Google Form responses, 8 email submissions (7 of which duplicated form responses), 6 pupil submissions and 3 additional documents were received. These additional documents included a Rebuttal Document, an Alternative Business Plan from a group of Prep parents, and a submission from the NEU.

10.3. All responses were reviewed in full by the Board of Governors

Quantitative Summary

10.4. Of those who expressed a formal view on the Proposal:

- **30%** agreed
- **70%** disagreed

10.5. Where consultees submitted more than one response, the content of both submissions was considered, but counted once for the purposes of analysis.

Themes Raised by Consultees Who Disagreed with the Proposal

10.6. Eight themes were raised as follows:

(1) Educational Experience

- distinctive character of Wallace Prep
- pastoral strengths and small-school environment

- academic outcomes and transition to grammar school
- continuity from Pre-Prep to P7
- access to WHS facilities

(2) Pupil Wellbeing

- concerns regarding the emotional impact of change
- transition to alternative provision

(3) Governance and Communication

- views on historic communication
- concerns about engagement with parents
- perceptions that decisions or actions earlier in the year contributed to uncertainty

(4) Concerns About the Pre-Implementation Report

- use and interpretation of Sustainable Schools criteria
- demographic context
- capacity analysis
- financial information and VAT
- perceived gaps in the exploration of alternatives

(5) Alternative Options

- fee restructuring
- enhanced marketing
- growth of Pre-Prep
- external fundraising
- exploring alternative management types
- potential adjustments to admissions

(6) Timing

- recent improvements in leadership and curriculum
- concerns that changes should be given time
- the impact of uncertainty on enrolment

(7) Financial Considerations

- impact of Prep parents paying fees on the wider system

(8) Community Impact

- heritage of the Preparatory Department
- convenience for WHS families
- potential increases in travel time

Themes Raised by Consultees Who Agreed with the Proposal

10.7. Five themes were raised as follows:

(1) Financial Sustainability

- concern about rising deficits
- concern about impact on WHS resources

(2) Small Peer Groups

- impact on social development
- limited range of friendships and interactions

(3) Governance and Leadership Responsibilities

- the need to safeguard the interests of all pupils within WHS

(4) Timing

- views that action was required to limit further uncertainty

(5) Local Primary Provision

- confidence in the quality of state-sector primary schools
- perception that demand for prep provision has declined more broadly

Procedural Assurance

10.8. The Board was satisfied that consultees had access to sufficient information to form informed views on the Proposal, that adequate time was provided for engagement, and that all responses were conscientiously considered. The consultation process met the principles of fairness reflected in established Gunning case law.

BOARD RESPONSE

Response to Issues Raised

BOARD RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED

11. This chapter outlines the Board's response to the issues raised during consultation

Appreciation & Consideration

11.1. The Board of Governors discussed each theme raised during the consultation period and considered all responses alongside the evidence set out in Sections 2–8 of this Case for Change. The Board is grateful for the engagement of parents, staff, pupils and stakeholders.

11.2. A summary of the Board's consideration of the issues raised is set out below.

Educational Experience

11.3. The Board acknowledged the quality of the educational and pastoral provision at Wallace Prep and the commitment of staff. However, the Board noted that these strengths must be considered alongside the sustainability indicators, including significantly reduced enrolment and the resulting class-organisation challenges.

Pupil Wellbeing

11.4. The Board recognised concerns about the emotional impact of change and confirmed that, should the Proposal be approved, transition arrangements would focus on pastoral support and liaison with receiving schools.

Governance and Communication

11.5. The Board noted comments regarding previous communication and engagement. The Board considered that the purpose of the Development Proposal process is to determine the most appropriate and sustainable provision going forward, rather than to review past operational matters, and acknowledged the steps taken to provide clear information during consultation.

Concerns About the Pre-Implementation Report

11.6. The Board reviewed all points raised and was satisfied that the report is based on statutory Sustainable Schools criteria, DE/NISRA data, and standard area-planning methodology. Clarifications have been reflected in the updated Case for Change where required.

Alternative Options

11.7. The Board considered the Alternative Business Plan and other suggestions submitted during consultation. It noted that the Business Plan would require sustained increases in enrolment, revised fee structures and additional funding sources over a prolonged period. Based on the evidence in Sections 4 and 7, the Board determined that these elements could not be assured at the level required for long-term sustainability. Structural considerations relating to management-type change are set out in Section 8.

Timing

11.8. The Board acknowledged that recent developments within the school were valued by consultees. The Board considered, however, that postponing action would prolong uncertainty and increase financial risk.

Financial Considerations

11.9. The Board recognised the concerns raised but noted that Development Proposals are assessed on the sustainability of provision rather than the role of fee-paying parents within the wider system.

Community Impact

11.10. The Board acknowledged the heritage and community contribution of Wallace Prep. The Board noted that such factors are valued but fall outside the statutory criteria used by the Department of Education when determining Development Proposals.

Consideration of Supportive Responses

11.11. The Board noted that responses supporting the Proposal raised issues consistent with the sustainability and financial pressures summarised in Sections 4 and 7.

Conclusion

11.12. The Board confirms that all consultation responses were given conscientious consideration. The issues raised were considered alongside the evidence regarding enrolment, sustainability and finance. Having reviewed the issues raised through the consultation, the Board concluded that the concerns expressed did not alter the overall sustainability, enrolment and financial evidence set out in Sections 4, 5 and 7. The Board therefore considered that it remained appropriate to bring forward the Proposal for Ministerial consideration.

EQUALITY SCREENING

How will equality be prioritised?

EQUALITY SCREENING

12. This chapter outlines how equality screening was conducted and what impact was found

Section 75 Equality of Opportunity

12.1. An Equality Screening exercise was completed in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. During the consultation, some respondents expressed concerns about potential adverse impacts for certain equality groups. The Board considered these views as part of the screening process. Having reviewed the evidence, the Board concluded that no significant adverse impacts could be identified under the Section 75 categories and that a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was not required.

12.2. A summary of the screening responses is included in Section 1.

12.3. In addition, the Proposal was screened for rural needs in line with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. As the school is located in an urban area, no rural impact was identified, and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment was not required.

TIMELINE

Timeline of actions

TIMELINE

13. This chapter outlines the actions timeline required to complete the development proposal

Implementation Plan

13.1. The table below shows the proposed implementation plan timeline:

Table 13A: Timeline

	Action	Timeline
A	Selection of proposal for consultation by Board of Governors	Monday 6th October 2025
B	Notice to staff and parents of proposal for consultation	Monday 13th October 2025
C	Meetings with parents and staff (teaching and non-teaching to commence pre-publication consultation)	Thursday 16th October 2025
D	Pre-publication consultation including age-appropriate consultation with pupils	Friday 17th October 2025 – Friday 19th December 2025
E	Consideration of consultation responses by Governors	Monday 19th January 2026 – Monday 2nd February 2026
F	Approval/rejection of proposal following analysis of consultation responses	Monday 2nd February 2026
G	Preparation of Case for Change	February/March 2026
H	Submission of Development Proposal and Case for Change to the Education Authority	W/beginning 23rd March
I	EA Consultation with Affected Schools	4 week period Post Easter
J	EA Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Consideration	W/beginning 7th September
K	If approved, Development Proposal published – 2 month statutory objection period/public consultation	Opening w/beginning 7th September
L	Ministerial Consideration and Decision	Post Objection Period/Public Consultation

APPENDICES

Supporting Information

appendices

APPENDIX I Enrolment Numbers from 2000/01

APPENDIX II Financial Projections & Analysis

ANNEX A **School Enrolment Analysis** **(issued separately within Consultation Presentation)**

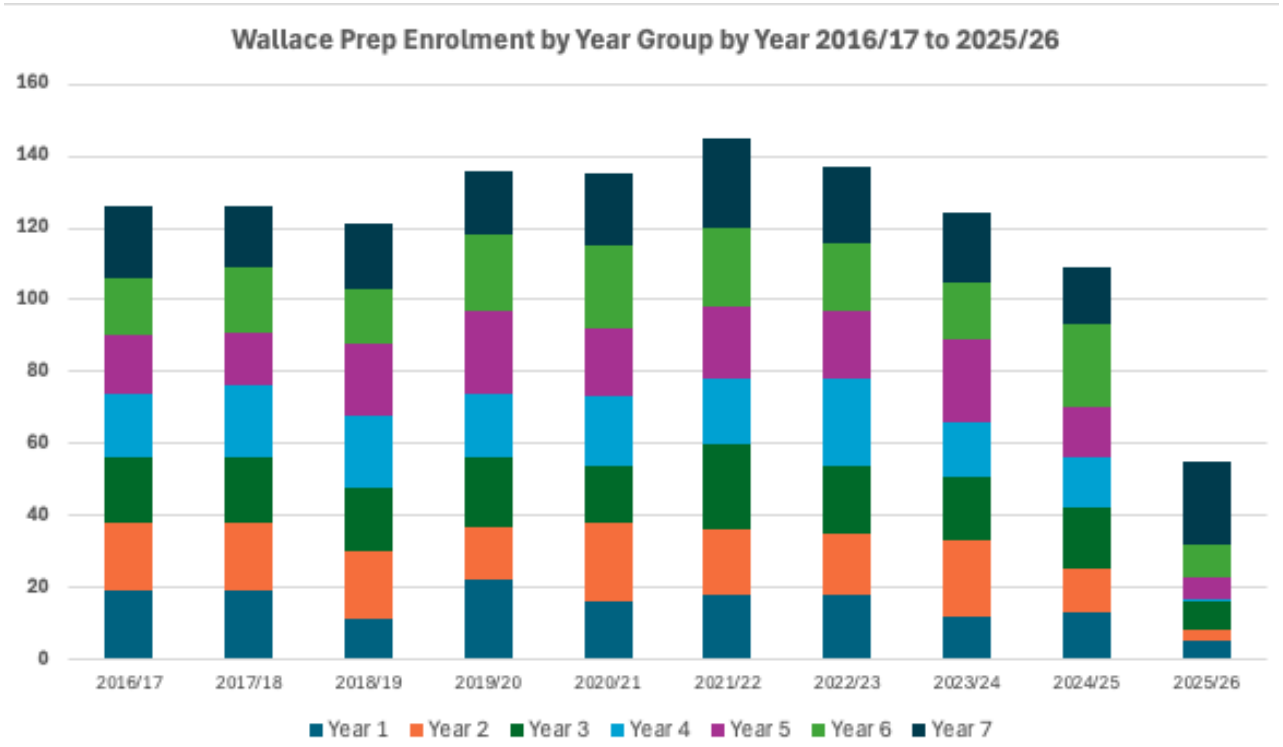
Appendix I Enrolment Numbers from 2000/01

(A) Enrolment numbers from 2000/2001 below.

Academic Year	Enrolment (Prep)
2000/01	192
2001/02	
2002/03	176
2003/04	173
2004/05	
2005/06	157
2006/07	151
2007/08	146
2008/09	129
2009/10	110
2010/11	104
2011/12	109
2012/13	105
2013/14	119
2014/15	127
2015/16	119
2016/17	126
2017/18	126
2018/19	121
2019/20	136
2020/21	135
2021/22	145
2022/23	138
2023/24	124
2024/25	109
2025/26	52

(B) Enrolment Numbers by Year Group 2016/17 to 2025/26

Wallace Prep Enrolment	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Year 1	19	19	11	22	16	18	18	12	13	5
Year 2	19	19	19	15	22	18	17	21	12	3
Year 3	18	18	18	19	16	24	19	18	17	8
Year 4	18	20	20	18	19	18	24	15	14	1
Year 5	16	15	20	23	19	20	19	23	14	5
Year 6	16	18	15	21	23	22	19	16	23	7
Year 7	20	17	18	18	20	25	21	19	16	23
Total	**126**	**126**	**121**	**136**	**135**	**145**	**137**	**124**	**109**	**52**



WALLACE PREP – ACTUAL 2018-19 TO 2024-25 INCOME & EXPENDITURE FINANCIALS

Wallace Prep Historic I&Es	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
INCOME							
DENI Grants	£						

*Combined Prep & Pre-Prep enrolments included within 'Average Tuition Fee per Pupil'

Commentary & Analysis

Over the last seven years the school has had a net surplus of £17,955.

This was due to £231,874 being generated during the Covid years, largely due to one-off Covid funding received and high average Yr 1 to Yr 7 enrolment of over 138.

The deficit was £16,051 in 2023-24, before rising more than ten-fold to £171,945 in 2024-25. Combined this equates to a deficit of £187,996.

2024-25 Teaching and Education costs of £880,036 were noticeably above previous years; and reflect a backdated pay teacher settlement distributed in that year.

Between 2019-20 and 2024-2025 the average tuition fee was £4,150. Prep fees would be higher

WALLACE PREP – 2025-26 TO 2031-32 INCOME & EXPENDITURE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

Wallace Prep Historic I&Es	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
INCOME							
DENI Grants	[redacted]						
Tuition Fees P1-P7							
Pre-Prep Fees							
Other Income							
EXPENDITURE							
Teaching and Education Costs							
Premises Costs							
Administration Costs							
Surplus/Deficit for Year							0
Cumulative Deficit (from 2024-25)							0

*Combined Prep & Pre-Prep enrolments included within 'Average Tuition Fee per Pupil'

Assumptions:

- Reduce staffing to 3.2 FTE, increasing to 4.2 FTE in 2029-30
- Assume 6 new Yr 1 pupils pa
- 4% pay increment pa
- 10% increase in fees pa
- 10% saving on overheads in 2026-27
- Breakfast Club and Afterschool provision discontinued from 2026-2027

Forecast provided by Wallace Prep

Commentary & Analysis

Over the next seven years the school is forecast to have a cumulative deficit of £1.46m. With a £1m+ cumulative deficit by the end of 2028-29. The cumulative deficit would be >£2m by 2032 without staff cost reductions made in 2025-26.

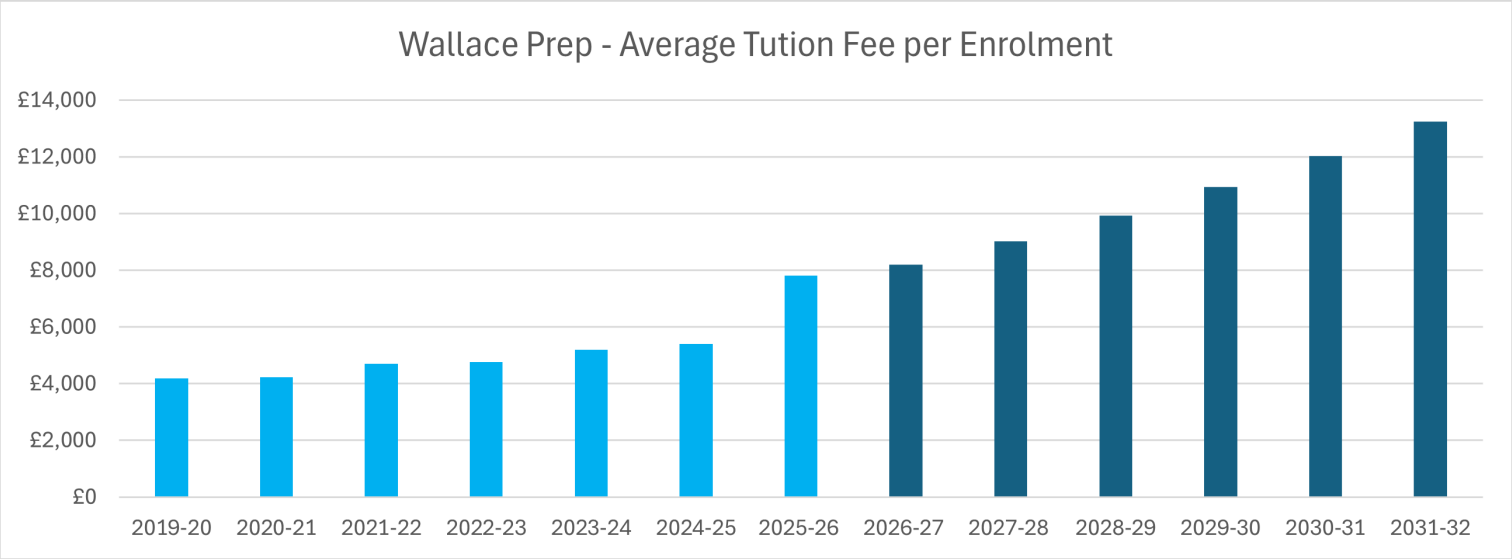
The long-term school P1-P7 enrolment is 42. Six pupils per year group, with six Pre-Prep enrolments graduating to P1 each year.

The seven year average annual P1-P7 tuition fee is over £10,000. This is roughly double the previous seven year stretch. By 2030-31, the annual Pre-Prep Fee will be over £10,000 (£10,850).

WALLACE PREP – 2025-26 TO 2031-32 TUITION FEE RISES

Existing Scenario - Projected Fees	2 [redacted]
[redacted]	

Above, are the projected base fees before any applicable discounts. Below is the average tuition fee per enrolment. These include actual (light blue) and projected (navy) average fees and demonstrate the projected steep increase in fees. Actual average fees for 2019-20 to 2024/25 are based on total fee income received divided by total enrolments. 2025/2026 and 2026/27 figures are based on actual P4-P7 enrolment fees, with 2027/28 fee onwards based on the projected 'Prep Tuition Fee' above.



Pre-Prep Fees – Projected Increase: Pre-Prep fees are predicted to more than double between 2025/26 and 2031/32. Rising faster than Prep-Fees Consequently, as a proportion of Prep Tuition Fees, Pre-Prep Tuition fees increase from 75% in 2025/26 to 90% in 2031/32.

5 Yr Inflation Forecasts:

As of March 2026, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) predicts UK (CPI) inflation to stabilise around 2.0% from 2027 onwards, with an average of 2.3% inflation estimated for 2026

Therefore, a forecast fee rise of 10% (2027-28 to 2031-32) is 4-5 times the perceived rate of

WALLACE PREP – 2025-26 TO 2031-32 INCOME & EXPENDITURE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS – BREAK EVEN FEE ANALYSIS

Projected Breakeven Average Fee Increase		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Surplus/Deficit for Year		(£1							

WALLACE PREP – 2025-26 TO 2031-32 INCOME & EXPENDITURE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS – 'REBUILD' SCENARIO

Wallace Prep Hypothetical I&Es	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
INCOME							
DENI Grants	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]							
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

*Combined Prep & Pre-Prep enrolments included within 'Average Tuition Fee per Pupil'

Assumptions:

- Staffing model adjusted for enrolment numbers start
- Pre-Prep has 24 pre-schoolers pa
- Prep has 20 new Yr 1 pupils pa
- 4% pay increment pa
- 10% increase in fees pa
- 10% saving on overheads for 26/27

Commentary & Analysis

The 'Rebuild' scenario assumes that Wallace Prep rebuilds from the ground (i.e. Pre-Prep) up. Pre-Prep would have 24 pupils, of which 20 would graduate to the Prep per annum. This would take seven years to fully run through and leave the school with a long-term average of 140 enrolments. With any non-P1 enrolments a bonus and/or counterbalance any pre-P7 leavers.

It would take five years of annual net surpluses before the school would have a net running cumulative surplus. Wallace Prep would have to cover a deficit of almost £800,000 (around 2027) before a cumulative surplus would be secured in 2031-2032.

This assumes a full Pre-Prep, with 20 of 24 in the Pre-Prep (which may contain those a year younger and thus ineligible for P1) graduating to P1 every year. It also assumes that they will stay for the full seven years and that they are willing to pay the scaled up fees (discussed previously) despite wider enrolment

APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND KEY STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

Legislative Arrangements for Preparatory

1. Wallace High School (HS) is a Voluntary Grammar School (VGS) which has responsibility for the management of Wallace HS Preparatory Department (Wallace Prep) and as such its BoG is the relevant body to bring forward a proposal. Article 14(2) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (the 1986 Order) is the applicable legislation in the context of the DP process.

2. Although preparatory departments are practically treated as primary schools, they are fundamentally different to grant-aided primary schools. Generally, there is an absence of legislative provisions concerning preparatory departments; however, key Education provisions reflect their peculiar status, including[1]:-

   (i) Article 18(1)(d) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997: which exempts preparatory departments from the statutory requirements regarding admissions criteria and the determination of admission and enrolment numbers etc; and

   (ii) Article 127(4)(c) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989: which enables children in preparatory departments to be charged for various matters including admission to and education provision within that school.

Pre-publication of Development Proposal

3. Any proposed closure of a preparatory department requires publication of a DP as set out in the Department's DP guidance. Section 5 provides guidance on the "Need for a DP". Sections 5.5 – 5.12 sets out when the proposed action appears to represent a 'Significant Change in Character and Size of a School'.

BACKGROUND

Area Context for Wallace Preparatory Department

4. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 the Wallace Park 1 Super Output Area (in which Wallace Prep is situated) is placed 858 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 being least deprived).

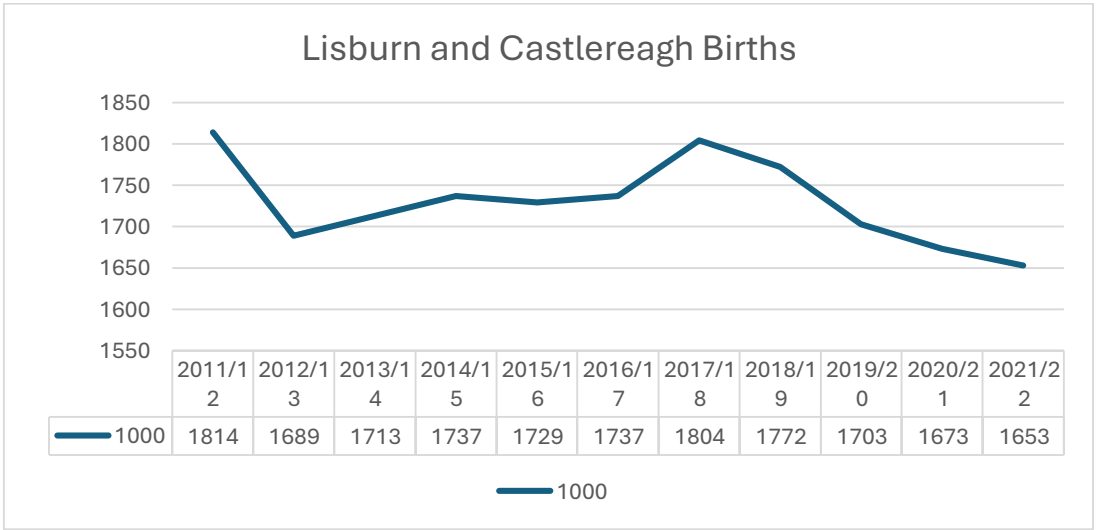
[1] See also Article 42 of Education (NI) Order 1998. Pupils in preparatory departments of grammar schools are not eligible for School Transport Assistance. See paragraph 3.1 of School Transport Circular 1996/41.

5. The EA's second Strategic Area Plan[2] (SAP2) became operational from 1 September 2022 and provides the strategic direction for the five years from (2022 – 2027). It is supported by an Operational Plan (OP2) which outlines the Area Planning activity to be taken forward in the second two years (2024-26) of the programme broken down by Local Government District (LGD).

6. The EA published an addendum to (OP2) in May 2026 which featured a short-term workstream for Wallace Prep *stating "The Wallace High School Preparatory Department is experiencing low pupil numbers. At September 2024, the school had an enrolment of 109 pupils. Wallace High School as the school's Board of Governors is proposing the discontinuance of the preparatory department.*

7. OP2 sets out Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) birth statistics for the Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD area, which indicate a declining birth trend (births data based on academic birth year not the calendar year). While Graph 1 shows the peaks and troughs, since 2011/12 the numbers have fallen from 1,814 to 1,653 in 2021/22.

Graph 1 - Birth Data Lisburn and Castlereagh (source: NISRA)

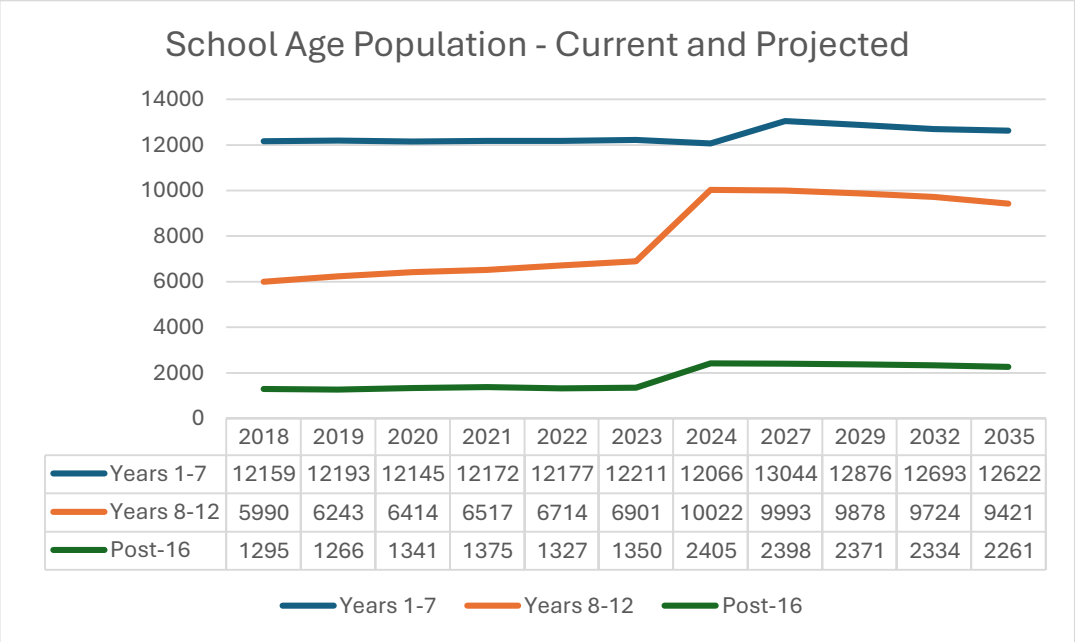


Source: EA Operational Plan 2

8. While primary school figures are expected to peak in 2027 at 13,044, they will face a decline to 12,622 pupils by 2035. Figures for post primary age pupils expected to peak in 2024 and then face a decline as presented in **Graph 2**.

[2] Strategic Area Plans 2022-27 | Education Authority Northern Ireland (eani.org.uk)

Graph 2 Lisburn and Castlereagh School Age Population – Current and Projected



	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2027	2029	2032	2035
Years 1-7	12159	12193	12145	12172	12177	12211	12066	13044	12876	12693	12622
Years 8-12	5990	6243	6414	6517	6714	6901	10022	9993	9878	9724	9421
Post-16	1295	1266	1341	1375	1327	1350	2405	2398	2371	2334	2261

Source: EA Operational Plan 2

Population Projections

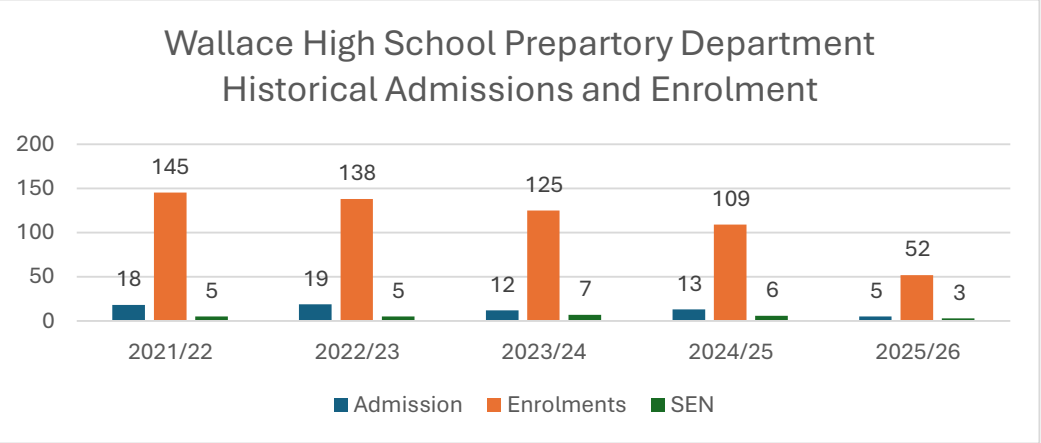
9. Whilst population projections can provide an indication as to future demand for primary places, they are not a perfect measure as there may be mitigating factors not factored in at the time of publication. The projections made by NISRA are revised periodically and as these are estimates are subject to change.

<u>Admissions & Enrolment</u>

10. Preparatory Schools do not have approved admissions or enrolment numbers.

11. **Chart 1** shows the historical trend of admissions and enrolment for Wallace Prep. The enrolment has decreased from 145 in 2021/22 to 52 in 2025/26. Admissions have reduced from 18 to just five over the same period. The BoG has advised that from September 2026 this has reduced further to six pupils.

Chart 1: Historical Admissions and Enrolments



Source: Schools Census

Neighbouring Primary Provision

12. **Table 1** (below) provides a snapshot of all primary provision in the area based on the schools illustrated in **Map 1** alternative Preparatory Provision within a seven-mile radius and **Map 2** alternative primary provision within a two-mile radius. Distances by road may vary from the mapping radius and associated journey times will also be impacted by a range of factors including traffic volumes.

13. There are 16 alternative primary schools within a two-mile radius of Wallace Prep, these include Controlled, Maintained, Integrated and one alterative Preparatory school. There are four alternative Preparatory schools within a seven-mile radius.

14. The provision is considered in greater detail below.

Alternative Preparatory School Provision

15. When considering alternative provision in an area the Department does not consider preparatory schools as an alternative as they are considered outside 'state' provision.

16. The Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) does not apply to Preparatory schools as they are not fully grant-aided, do not have approved admissions or enrolment numbers, and their existence is solely at the discretion of the host Grammar school. However, it provides a helpful framework to assess whether pupils can access a high-quality education in an educationally and financially sustainable setting.

17. There are four alternative Preparatory Schools located within a seven-mile mapping radius of Wallace Prep. These are: -

- Friends' School Preparatory Department;

- Inchmarlo Preparatory School;
- Victoria College Preparatory Department; and
- Methodist College Preparatory Department;

18. Considered together, using 2025/26 figures as shown on **Table 1**, of the alternative preparatory schools there were 47 Year 1 pupils enrolled and a total of 519 pupils.

Alternative Controlled Primary Provision

19. **Map 2** shows that there are ten alternative Controlled Primary Schools (PS) located within a two-mile mapping radius of Wallace Prep.

20. Considered together, using 2025/26 verified census figures as shown on **Table 1**, all except Old Warren PS have sustainable enrolments as recommended in the SSP for an urban primary school. The schools have a combined total enrolment of 3,139 (inc. 292 supernumerary places) for the 3,276 approved places, resulting in 429 combined available places. Analysis at the conclusion of 2026/27 applications process show that eight of the schools were undersubscribed at first preference with only Pond Park PS and Harmony Hill PS oversubscribed.

Alternative Integrated Primary Provision

21. **Map 2** shows that there are two alternative Integrated PSs located within a two-mile mapping radius of Wallace Prep.

22. Using 2025/26 figures as shown on **Table 1**, the alternative integrated schools all had sustainable enrolments as recommended in the SSP for an urban primary school. The schools have a combined total enrolment of 397 (inc. 36 supernumerary places) for the 413 approved places, resulting in 52 available places. Analysis at the conclusion of 2025/26 applications process shows that Oakwood IPS was undersubscribed at first preference and Fort Hill IPS was oversubscribed by one place.

Alternative Catholic Maintained Primary Provision

23. **Map 2** shows that there are three alternative Catholic Maintained PSs within a two-mile mapping radius of Wallace Prep.

24. Considered together, 2025/26 figures (as shown on **Table 1)** illustrate that all of the alternative Catholic Maintained schools have sustainable enrolments as recommended in the SSP for an urban primary school. The schools have a combined total enrolment of 1,194 (inc. 86 supernumerary places) for the 1,233 approved places, resulting in 126 available places. Analysis at the conclusion of

2026/27 applications process show that two of the schools were undersubscribed and St Colman's PS was oversubscribed at first preference.

Summary

25. Within a two-mile radius of Wallace Prep there are 15 alternative grant-aided primary schools including Controlled, Maintained, and Integrated settings. In 2025/26 there were 607 available places across these schools. Eleven of the 15 schools were undersubscribed at first preference applications for 2026/27.

26. There are four alternative Preparatory schools within a seven-mile radius, they do not have approved admissions or enrolment numbers. In 2025/26 there were 519 pupils enrolled across the four alternative preparatory schools.

27. The BoG of Wallace HS has confirmed that there will be six pupils enrolled in Wallace Prep from September 2026. As all six pupils are in Primary 7 and will complete their primary education at the end of the 2026/27 academic year, the proposal will not require alternative primary school places because of any closure.

Table 1: Snapshot of Alternative Primary Provision

Wallace High School Preparatory School - Preparatory School Provision - 7 mile radius & All Primary School Provision - 2 mile radius															
DE Ref Number	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Lookup Distance	Distance in miles from Wallace Prep - as per Google maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
Preparatory															
4620051	**Wallace High Prep, BT28 3AD**	**Urban**			**N/A**	**125**	**109**	**52**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**5**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Sep 2019 - ASOS May 2013 - Very good**
4620050	Friends' School Prep, BT28 3BH	Urban	0.34	0.5	N/A	142	143	151	N/A	N/A	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	Feb 2020 - ASOS Jan 2017 - ASOS Mar 2011 - Very good
1620027	Inchmarlo Prep, BT9 6JR	Urban	5.43	6.5	N/A	110	116	104	N/A	N/A	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	Jan 2017 - Identifying and bringing about the necessary improvements in the quality of education
1620264	Victoria College Prep, BT9 6JA	Urban	5.55	6.5	N/A	136	131	114	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	Jan 2017 - Identifying and bringing about the necessary improvements in the quality of education
1620022	Methodist College Prep BT9 6BY	Urban	6.3	8.6	N/A	142	155	150	N/A	N/A	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	Oct 2017 - ASOS Jan 2011 - Good
Sub total					**N/A**	**655**	**654**	**571**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**52**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	

DE Ref Number	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Lookup Distance	Distance in miles from Wallace Prep - as per Google maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
Controlled															
4010885	Tonagh PS, BT28 1DQ	Urban	0.46	1.1	228	202	196	185	24	67	21	30	25	U-5	Sep 2019 - ASOS Sep 2016 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
4010762	Brownlee PS, BT27 4AA	Urban	0.51	0.7	196	198	206	197	16	15	21	28	20	U-8	Nov 2018 - ASOS Oct 2011 - Very good
4016401	Pond Park PS, BT28 3BF	Urban	0.79	1.4	610	626	623	625	33	18	87	87	97	O-10	Jan 2018 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
4010807	Lisburn Central PS, BT28 1JJ	Urban	0.8	1.1	203	189	193	188	14	29	24	29	25	U-4	Nov 2025 - New style report May 2017 - ASOS Nov 2008 - Very good
4013305	Harmony Hill PS, BT27 4ES	Urban	0.82	1.2	609	605	612	627	24	6	88	87	88	O-1	June 2018 - ASOS April 2015 - Good
4016145	Killowen PS, BT28 2UH	Urban	0.85	1.4	420	374	374	374	23	69	44	60	46	U-14	Sep 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
4016144	Old Warren PS, BT28 1QP	Urban	1.11	1.7	196	111	117	123	15	88	14	28	14	U-14	June 2016 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
4013334	Knockmore PS, BT28 1SA	Urban	1.18	1.9	212	233	230	218	105	99	24	30	20	U-10	Sep 2017 - ASOS Oct 2010 - Good
4010743	Largymore PS, BT27 5BT	Urban	1.21	1.7	196	194	195	196	10	10	28	28	16	U-12	June 2017 - ASOS Nov 2013 - Very good
4016441	Ballymacash PS, BT28 2EE	Urban	1.3	2	406	414	405	406	28	28	57	58	56	U-2	Jan 2017 - ASOS Oct 2013 - Good
Sub total					**3276**	**3146**	**3151**	**3139**	**292**	**429**	**408**	**465**	**407**		

DE Ref Number	School Name & Postcode	Urban / Rural	Lookup Distance	Distance in miles from Wallace Prep - as per Google maps	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Enrolment Number	2023/24 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2024/25 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Actual Enrolment (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 Supernumerary Pupils	2025/26 Available Places	2025/26 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2025/26 & 2026/27 Approved Admissions Number	2026/27 Total First Preference Applications	2026/27 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI reports publication date / Overall assessment
Integrated															
4053308	Fort Hill IPS, BT27 4TJ	Urban	0.76	1.1	210	205	212	216	28	22	30	30	31	O-1	Mar 2017 - ASOS Feb 2014 - Very good
4066611	Oakwood IPS, BT17 9HN	Urban	1.93	3	203	187	190	181	8	30	25	29	14	U-15	Nov 2024 - New style report Feb 2017 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Sub total					**413**	**392**	**402**	**397**	**36**	**52**	**55**	**59**	**45**		
Catholic Maintained															
4030897	St Joseph's PS, BT27 4XE	Urban	0.71	1	395	385	392	389	17	23	45	56	53	U-3	Feb 2018 - Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
4033306	St Aloysius PS, BT28 1TB	Urban	0.83	1.4	490	422	410	402	15	103	45	70	45	U-25	Jan 2019 - ASOS Jan 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
4033307	St Colman's PS, BT27 4QS	Urban	1.21	1.9	348	393	391	403	54	0	58	50	71	O-21	Oct 2024 - New Style report Oct 2015 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Sub total					**1233**	**1200**	**1193**	**1194**	**86**	**126**	**148**	**176**	**169**		
Grand total					**4922**	**5393**	**5400**	**5301**	**414**	**607**	**663**	**700**	**621**		

ASOS - Action Short of Strike

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

1st Pref. applications exclude reception & statemented pupils. 1st pref. applications as at 23.3.2026 (conclusion of the PS admissions process for the 2026/27 school year), provided by the EA PS Admissions Office.

DP 724 - Downey House Preparatory School - Closure - approved 16.7.2024. Closure to effect a consolidation of Preparatory Provision within Methodist College - took effect from 20 Dec. 2024

CASE FOR CHANGE

28. The CfC sets out the rationale for the proposed closure of Wallace HS Prep Department. It asserts that over a period of 12-18 months the BoG of Wallace HS considered of the sustainability of the Preparatory Department.

29. *Key assertions as to the rationale of the proposal, as included in the CfC, are as follows: -*

- Enrolment at Wallace Prep fell by more than half within one year, from 109 in September 2024 to 52 pupils by October 2025;
- The decline was heavily weighted toward early years, resulting in very small classes and composite class groups;
- The rapid fall in numbers created a significant and worsening financial deficit, with medium term projections indicating sustained annual losses and a cumulative deficit that would exceed £1m within three years; and
- The fall in enrolment and rising deficit within the wider context of declining prep-sector enrolments across Northern Ireland, the introduction of VAT on fees and the demographic decline in the 0-4 population.

30. The Board concluded that the current model of provision is not sustainable educationally or financially. While they recognised the long history and valued contribution of the Preparatory Department the Board must act to ensure compliance with statutory planning duties and to protect the educational and financial sustainability of the Wallace HS as a whole.

31. The CfC also highlighted the impact of VAT changes noting that in the Autumn Budget of 2024 the Government announced the imposition of VAT (@20%) on private school fees from 01 January 2025. The CfC asserts that DENI system level enrolment figures for the 2025/26 academic year show a drop of 13.3% in Preparatory Department enrolments while primary school enrolments are down by 1.6%.

32. The CfC indicates that the following options for the future of Wallace Prep were considered by the BoG:-

Options

(i) No Change to Current Provision
(ii) Increase Parental Fees
(iii) Change Management Type
(iv) Amalgamation
(v) Discontinue the provision at the Wallace HS Prep

Equality screening and Rural Needs assessment

33. The Department's DP Guidance indicates that Equality screening is to be carried out *by the proposer at the earliest possible stage* **(emphasis added)**. The CfC confirms that Equality screening and statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered. The BoG has indicated that "*Following consideration of the evidence, it was unanimously agreed that the Board of Governors were satisfied that there is no significant adverse impact requiring a full an EQIA [Equality Impact Assessment].*"

34. Further information on the screening requirements and impact assessment is provided in Annex B of the DP Guidance.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

35. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('The Act') requires public authorities designated for the purposes of The Act to comply with two statutory duties. The first duty is the equality of opportunity duty, which requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without. The second duty requires that public authorities have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

36. Wallace HS is not a public authority, and therefore the BoG is not directly subject to Section 75, but it should demonstrate awareness of equality issues that may arise. The CfC notes that the Governors considered the potential equality impact of the proposal taking consideration of the points raised through the consultation. *"The BoG concluded that "Following consideration of the evidence, it was unanimously agreed that the Board of Governors were satisfied that there is no significant adverse impact requiring a full an EQIA [Equality Impact Assessment].*"

37. The CfC can be read in full at **Appendix B.**

STATUTORY DP PROCESSES

38. The CfC confirms that both Proposer and EA pre-publication consultations were carried out as stated in the submission under the ***Statutory DP Process section***.

39. A summary of these consultations and EA commentary can be found in the CfC at **Appendix B**.

Two-month Statutory Objection Period (SOP)

40. There was one response received during the SOP from the Wallace HS BoGs providing updated information in support of the proposal. No objections were received. The BoG response is attached in full at **Appendix D.**

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

41. The SSP does not apply to Preparatory provision which is only partially funded and operates without approved admissions or enrolment numbers. However, the SSP framework is being applied (as per the Department's DP Guidance) as a robust method of assessing such provision albeit that there is no requirement to meet the minimum thresholds.
42. and Training Inspectorate (ETI) of the Wallace HS Preparatory Department, carried out in September 2019, was impacted by Action Short of Strike (ASOS) and no assurance could be provided on the quality of education provision. The previous inspection had been carried out in May 2013 and while now dated when the overall effectiveness of provision at the time was assessed as 'Very Good'.

43. The ETI provided further information in relation to this proposal and noted that from September 2026 enrolment has fallen to six pupils all of whom are in Year 7. There are no concerns about the quality of education for these children in their final year of primary education.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

44. In 2025/26 the school had three pupils with a statement of SEN and catered for them effectively.

Composite Classes

45. The ETI and BoG of Wallace HS have confirmed there are now only six pupils and they are all in Year 7. In terms of teaching staff two teachers remain in the preparatory department on a part-time basis. Each is employed for three days per week, the extra day providing time for a handover, planning and for the teachers to share leadership responsibilities.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

46. **Table 4 below** illustrates that since 2022/23 enrolment trends for Wallace Prep have been below the recommended minimum enrolment of 140 pupils, for a

sustainable urban primary school as described in the SSP. Enrolments have fallen year on year since 2021/22.

Table 4 Historical Enrolment at Wallace HS Preparatory Department

Wallace High School Preparatory Department	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of pupils in year 1	18	19	12	13	5
Number of pupils in year 2	18	17	22	12	3
Number of pupils in year 3	24	19	18	17	8
Number of pupils in year 4	18	24	15	14	1
Number of pupils in year 5	20	19	23	14	5
Number of pupils in year 6	22	19	16	23	7
Number of pupils in year 7	25	21	19	16	23
Total pupils	**145**	**138**	**125**	**109**	**52**

Source: Schools Census Data

47. From September 2026 the ETI and school Census Return has confirmed that there are now only six pupils all in Year 7. These pupils will complete their primary education at the end of the 2026/27 academic year.

48. Information in **Table 5** regarding preparatory departments, indicates that overall, the number of children in the preparatory sector across Northern Ireland has decreased from 1813 in 2014/15 to 1312 in 2024/25, a fall of 27.63% in the past ten years.

Table 5 Enrolments at Preparatory Schools 2014/15 – 2024/25

Data set	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
No. of Preparatory depts in grammar schools	14	13	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
No. of Pupils in Preparatory depts in grammar schools - Years 1-7	1,813	1,757	1,704	1,710	1,660	1,601	1,560	1,530	1,477	1,429	1,312
Increase/Decrease in No. of Pupils from previous year	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Source: - DE Statistics

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

49. Preparatory schools are essentially a department within the overall Grammar school. In this case Wallace HS is responsible for the running of the Preparatory

school and funding forms part of the Wallace HS's Common Funding Formula allocation.

50. Pupils at the Preparatory school only attract funding from the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (APWU) factor at 0.27 of a weight against the post-primary AWPU cash value, currently (£3199.00), this equates to a funding amount per pupil of £863.73. They do not attract any other pupil related funding (e.g. Targeting Social Need (TSN), Newcomer, Pupil FTE Premises Factor etc.).

51. As Wallace HS is a VGS, the accounting arrangements differ from those of controlled or maintained schools and there is no available data on the school's surplus/deficit position. It is also responsible for 100% capital costs within the preparatory department.

52. Wallace HS received a total Common Funding Formula budget of **£7,575,383** in the 2026-27 financial year for 1,241 FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of **£6,104**. The average for all post-primary schools is **£6,272**.

53. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 69 pupils, which represents 5.80**%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes. The school does not receive Small Schools Support funding.
54. The school's delegated budget includes a total of £328,513 for Landlord Maintenance and Administrative costs factor funding, not applicable for Controlled or Maintained schools.

55. The CfC provided details of the financial position of Wallace HS over the previous seven years from 2019/20 to 2024/25 **(Table 6)** which shows a deficit of £[redacted] in 2023/24, which increased more than ten-fold to £[redacted] in 2024/25. It also provides seven-year projections of the financial position from 2025/26 to 2031/32 (**Table 7)** which states over the next seven years the school is forecast to have [redacted]

Table 6: Actual 2018-19 – 2024-25 Financial Position of Wallace HS Preparatory Department

Wallace Prep Historic I&Es	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
INCOME							
DENI Grants	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

SOURCE: Case for Change

56. An update from the BoG confirmed the projected deficit for the 2025/26 financial year is [redacted].

Table 7: Seven-year Income and Expenditure Projections of Wallace HS Preparatory Department

Wallace Prep Historic I&Es	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
INCOME							
DEN [redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]							
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]							
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

*Combined Prep & Pre-Prep enrolments included within 'Average Tuition per Pupil'
SOURCE: Case for Change

57. The CfC notes that the Governors have also been mindful of the increasing deficits at the school and the worsening financial position. It asserts that "*Governors agreed that the Prep's financial position is significantly and increasingly unsustainable. They confirmed that the Senior School, which operates on a separate funding model, cannot ethically or prudently subsidise the Prep without jeopardising provision in the senior school.*"

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

58. There has been no ETI evaluation of the current Leadership and Management team, however, the ETI has confirmed that leadership and management has significantly changed since the last published report. A new Head of the Preparatory Department was appointed in September 2025. Currently the Head and another teacher are on maternity leave. Two teachers remain in the preparatory department on a job share basis.

59. Wallace HS has eight Trustees and 18 Governors (excluding the Principal) who together have significant experience and skills to support the school. Wallace Preparatory Dept has just completed a three Year School Development Plan and has a one-year interim plan for the 2025/26 academic year.

Criterion 5: Accessibility

60. **Map 1** shows the location of the pupils enrolled at Wallace Prep. The CfC states that being the 93.8% of Wallace Prep pupils live within five miles of the school and 98.0% live within 10 miles of the school.

61. **Maps 2** illustrates that there are alternative preparatory and other primary schools accessible to pupils currently attending Wallace Prep, should the school close.

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

62. The CfC asserts that Wallace HS plays a key role in the wider community by opening its facilities outside of school hours. A Parent Teachers Association for Wallace Prep has been in place for over 40 years.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Article 44 of the Education and Libraries Order 1986

63. Wallace Prep is not a grant-aided primary school, and it receives only a portion of funding from the Department, the rest is made up from fees and Wallace HS finances. The assessment of Wallace Prep against the criteria and indicators of the SSP demonstrates that under the range of modelling scenarios undertaken by the BoG, there is no evidence the falling enrolment can be satisfactorily addressed, without further and substantial financial loss. Consideration could be given to increasing fees to parents, although this action, of itself, could result in further diminution in numbers and further financial loss and exposure.

64. The Department's considerations around the continuation of Wallace Prep cannot ignore the low and falling enrolment combined with school's evidence of the financial loss and modelled projections. These, coupled with evidence generally of falling enrolments across preparatory departments highlight serious concerns about the long-term viability of Wallace Prep.

65. If the proposal is approved, it is not possible to be precise about the financial impact on the education budget given a range of variables. However as all of the remaining pupils will end their primary education at the end of this term there is likely to be no impact in relation to this proposal.

APPENDIX D

The Wallace High School

12A CLONEVIN PARK
LISBURN BT28 3AD

Principal: Mrs J Reid BA (Hons) PGCE PQH

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Submission on Development Proposal No. 760: The Wallace High School Preparatory Development on behalf of the Board of Governors of The Wallace High School

1. Purpose of this Update

Since the Case for Change supporting Development Proposal 760 was prepared and submitted, the position within The Wallace High School Preparatory Department has changed materially.

The Board of Governors considers it important that the Department of Education have access to the most current factual information when considering the Development Proposal. This supplementary submission therefore provides an update on:

- current pupil enrolment;
- the resulting organisation of provision; and
- the updated financial position.

This update should be read alongside the original Case for Change and does not seek to replace or restate the evidence contained within it.

2. Updated Enrolment Position

At the October 2026 census, six pupils remain enrolled in The Wallace Preparatory Department. All six pupils are members of the current P7 cohort.

There are therefore currently:

- 6 pupils in P7; and
- no pupils enrolled in P1-P6.

The remaining P7 pupils are due to complete their primary education at the

end of the 2026/27 academic year.

The current position represents a further material change from that described in the Case for Change and from the position considered during the school's prepublication consultation.

Whilst outside the scope of the Development Proposal, we would note that there are 6 pupils within Wallace Pre-Prep.

3. Current Educational Provision

The school remains committed to providing our P7 pupils with continuity and stability throughout their final year of primary education. Appropriate staffing and educational arrangements remain in place to support the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the pupils' transition to post-primary education.

The change in pupil numbers nevertheless materially alters the organisational position described in the original Case for Change. The Preparatory Department no longer has pupils across the primary age range and there is no current pupil cohort below P7 progressing through the Department.

When planning our staffing for the year ahead and in line with the timelines required by Unions for consultation on potential redundancy, we had anticipated two classes. However, this changed in June 2026, when further families confirmed a transfer to other local schools. The P7 class is taught by 2 teachers, each of whom work a 3 day week. We currently have two teachers who are on Maternity Leave and who will return before the end of the academic year.

4. Updated Financial Position

The financial projections contained within the original Case for Change have been updated to take account of:

- the further reduction in pupil numbers;
- current staffing arrangements;
- the revised fee structure; and
- updated income and expenditure assumptions.

The projected deficit for the 2025/26 financial yea[redacted]. The projected deficit for the 2026/27 financial year to **31 August 2027 only** is [redacted]. Currently, there is no projected enrolment beyond that date but this picture remains uncertain. These costs do not take into consideration any potential staff re-structuring or potential redundancies. We have not yet set our fees for the 2027/2028 academic year but these will have to be set at a level which reflects the financial realities and running costs of Preparatory Department Provision.

The revised financial modelling and assumptions are attached separately.

5. Sustainability Position

The Board considers that the updated position is directly relevant to the sustainability considerations set out in the original Case for Change.

In particular:

- enrolment has reduced to six pupils;
- the Preparatory Department now consists of one P7 cohort only;
- there are no pupils currently enrolled in P1-P6;
- there is therefore no existing progression of pupils through the primary year groups beyond the current P7 cohort; and
- the revised financial projections reflect the impact of the reduced enrolment position.

The Board has deliberately confined this supplementary submission to information that has changed materially since preparation of the Case for Change.

WALLACE HIGH SCHOOL

PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION	ESTIMATE 2027-28	BUDGET 2026-27
2027-28 BUDGET	**£**	**£**
INCOME		
DENI GRANTS (Prep)	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]

APPENDIX E

ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

Date of last ETI report: September 2019

DP: 760

Web link: Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) - The Wallace High School Preparatory Department, Lisburn, County Antrim 462-0051

Date[3]: 15/10/2026

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

The enrolment in the preparatory department has reduced from 145 children in 2021/22 to six children currently, all of whom are in year 7. This is significantly below the school's approved admissions number of 168 children. Leadership and staffing within the preparatory department have changed significantly also since the last published report. A new head of the preparatory department was appointed in September 2025. Currently, the head of the preparatory department and another teacher are on maternity leave. Two teachers remain in the preparatory department on a job-share basis. Each is employed for 3 days each, the extra day providing time for handover, planning and for the teachers to share leadership responsibilities.

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

There are 26 primary schools within a five-mile radius of Wallace Preparatory Department, 18 of which are within a 2-mile radius. These include Friends' School Preparatory Department, and a range of maintained, controlled, integrated and one Irish-medium school. Ten of the schools have specialist provisions for children with special educational needs and the enrolments of the schools range from approximately 100 children to 700 children. There are many strengths in the quality of the provision in several of the other primary schools within the 5-mile radius.

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

The proposed closure will give children access to a more certain and sustainable educational experience, alongside a larger number of peers, supporting their overall educational and social wellbeing.

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

No concerns as all remaining children are currently in their final year of primary education so, by the time of closure, will be transferring to a post primary school for the next stage of their education.

[3] 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.

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 two year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.	✓		
	1.3 A minimum of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.		Currently two teachers on a job-share contract teach the year 7 class	
	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.	✓		
	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

Given the low enrolment of children in their final year of primary education, future cohorts of children will be able to access larger, sustainable school settings that offer wider peer learning opportunities and a more secure educational future.

Approved by ACI: Nicola Byrne

APPENDIX F

DE POLICY TEAM INPUTS

Education Workforce Directorate

No issues or concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff.

Should the case be approved and subsequent staffing issues are identified, assurances should be sought from the Education Authority that any potential impact on terms and conditions of teaching and non-teaching staff is managed in accordance with the following policies:

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

- **TNC 2013/2** – School Reorganisation Agreement and DE Circular 2013/7 – School Reorganisation Allowance: a teacher who suffers a reduction in pay as a result of staff reorganisation or redeployment may be eligible to apply for a school reorganisation allowance;

- **TNC 2010/1 –** Procedure for Handling Teacher Redundancy: will apply where a teacher is considered or wishes to be considered for redundancy;

- **JNC 224 –** Collective Agreement for School Reorganisations – Employment protection for Support Staff will apply where the Case for Change may impact on the terms and conditions of non-teaching staff.

Additional Educational Needs Team

AENT notes that there is no reference in the Case for Change (CfC) to the number of Children of Service Personnel (COSP) enrolled at Wallace High School Prep. In December 2025, the Department issued a survey to a small number of schools with significant numbers of COSP, inviting them to provide information on the challenges experienced by these pupils. Wallace High School Prep was not invited, while Wallace High School was invited but did not respond.

*The school currently has * COSP out of a total enrolment of 52 pupils, representing approximately ** % of the school population. AENT has reviewed other schools in the area and notes that several have significantly higher numbers of COSP. This may mean that other schools in the area have experience or established support arrangements to assist COSP, which should be considered as part of any transition to another school.*

The CfC states that, if the Development Proposal (DP) is approved, pupils will have access to high-quality learning and teaching in their nearest suitable school. The nearest school is Friends School Prep.

AENT would not oppose the DP, subject to the potential impact on the COSP child being fully considered and appropriate arrangements being put in place to manage and support their transition effectively.

SEN Directorate Input

It is noted in the Case for Change (CfC) for the discontinuation of the current provision of the Wallace High School Preparatory Department with effect from 31 August 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter. It is noted that the CfC states that there is concern over rising deficit within the Preparatory Department and its projected increase, along with concern that funds will be diverted from the Senior School and that this may hinder investment/expansion opportunities for the Senior School.

It is also noted that the CfC states that the good state sector primary provision available means that Preparatory education is no longer as sought after by parents given the high quality of provision available in the state sector.

In 2025/26 Wallace Preparatory Department has three children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Over the last five years it has had an average of 4.5 SEN children per annum.

The SEN Directorate would not oppose this DP, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively and that, each child, should the proposal be approved, is placed in a setting which is appropriate to meet their needs

Transport

Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated that the financial implications for the Transport budget would not be significant.

Finance

442-0051 Wallace High School

As a Voluntary Grammar school, the accounting arrangements differ from those of controlled or maintained schools and there is no available data on the school's surplus/deficit position.

Based on the Interim Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations, the school received a total CFF budget of **£7,575,383** in the 2026-27 financial year for **1,241**[1] FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of **£6,104**. The average for all Post-primary schools is **£6,272**.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **69**[4] pupils, which represents **5.80%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes.

The school received **£0** for Small Schools Support funding, which represents **0.00%** of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Post-primary funding stream.

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

The school's delegated budget includes a total of £328,513 for Landlord Maintenance and Administrative costs factor funding, not applicable for controlled or maintained schools.

[4] 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).