

Cover Note

DP No.	267 (NEELB)	
School(s)	Cullycapple Primary, Coleraine	
Proposal	Closure	
Minister's Decision	Approve	
Date of Decision	29/5/2013	
Minister's Comments	Approved	
Additional notes	-	
Information redacted	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.	
	Key	Details
	■	redaction
	*	refers to less than five cases where data is considered sensitive
	#	means figure has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information under rules of disclosure

**From: Lorraine Finlay
Area Planning Policy Team**

Date: 24 May 2013

**To: JOHN O'DOWD MLA
Minister for Education**

Copy distribution below

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 267 (NEELB) – Proposed closure of Cullycapple Primary School, Coleraine

Issue: The proposed closure of Cullycapple Primary School.

Timescale: **Urgent** – it is proposed that the school close with effect from 31 August 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Financial/Resource Implications: The financial costs associated or needing to be addressed in the event of closure are estimated to be:

- £79,000 teaching redundancy costs
- £23,000 non-teaching redundancy costs
- £20,000 contingency funding to schools receiving transferring pupils

FOI Implications: This submission is likely to be fully disclosable.

Presentational/Contentious Issues: Should you agree to the recommendation, a draft press release announcing your decision is attached at Appendix E (cleared by Communications Team).

Recommendation: It is recommended that you:
(i) approve the proposal; and
(ii) agree the draft Press Release at Appendix E.

Background

On 6 March 2013 the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) published Development Proposal No. 267 which proposes the closure of Cullycapple Primary School (PS) with effect from 31 August 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter.

2. The statutory two-month objection period ended on 7 May 2013. A copy of the proposal is attached at Appendix A.
3. Cullycapple PS is a controlled co-educational primary school situated in the rural townland of Aghadowey, approximately eight miles south of Coleraine. Most of the children live within a radius of two miles. Enrolments have been decreasing - in 2008/09 the enrolment was 34 pupils and in the current school year (2012/13) there was no Primary 1 intake and the enrolment was 20 pupils.

4. The NEELB initiated a consultation regarding the future of this school in light of the Sustainable Schools Policy and the ongoing Area Planning process which was commissioned in September 2011.

Sustainable Schools Policy

5. The Department's Sustainable Schools Policy outlines a number of quantitative and qualitative criteria and indicators which are used to inform consideration of the longer term viability and sustainability of a school. The key criteria are: quality educational experience, stable enrolment trends, sound financial position, strong leadership and management by Boards of Governors and Principals, accessibility and strong links with the community.
6. An assessment of Cullycapple PS's viability against the sustainability criteria and associated indicators is attached at Appendix B. The key issues are summarised below:
 - Enrolments indicate that the school is not viable. There was no Primary 1 intake at the school in the 2012/13 school year and enrolments have reduced to 20 pupils, of which 4 are in Year 7. This is significantly below the minimum enrolment threshold of 105 identified in the policy.
 - There are alternative primary schools in the area with adequate surplus capacity to cater for the current enrolment. Some of the schools have been identified in exploring local area planning solutions.
 - The per capita financial allocation for children attending Cullycapple PS is substantially higher than the average for a NEELB primary school.
 - There were no letters of objection or support received by the Department during the statutory two-month period.

Area Planning

7. As part of your autumn statement to the Assembly in September 2011, you commissioned the process of strategic area planning. The draft NEELB Area Plan for primary provision was published on 19 March 2013 for consultation. The plan proposes 'local area solutions' for 4 out of the 5 alternative schools in the area.
8. Information from the NEELB indicates that children will be transferring to schools other than those listed within 5 miles and with available places.
9. There is no legislative provision to delay Departmental consideration and decision of a published Development Proposal. Decisions will be in the context of Departmental policies.

Alternative Provision

10. There are alternative primary schools in the area, including Culcrow PS, which is closest to Cullycapple PS at 2.7 miles away. Garvagh PS is the furthest from Cullycapple PS at 5.1 miles away. A map showing the location of alternative primary schools is attached at Appendix C.

Financial Implications

School Budget

11. The school had a surplus at March 2012 of circa £5,000. The NEELB consider its finances to be unacceptable, with forecasts of a deteriorating financial position over

the next three years, and a deficit by March 2015 that is very substantial in percentage terms.

12. The NEELB advised that the projected cumulative surplus at 31 August 2013 will be transferred to the LMS Contingency. There is a requirement for the Board to provide contingency funding of around £19,599 in the 2013/14 financial year, based on 16 pupils, to schools receiving transferring pupils.

Teaching / Administration

13. The estimated redundancy cost for those teaching staff taking voluntary redundancy in the event of the school closing is £78,851.

14. The NEELB advised of projected redundancy costs of £22,742 for non-teaching staff.

Transport

15. The Board may incur additional expenditure transporting pupils to alternative sites. A Board bus currently operates that transports pupils to a number of schools in the area including Garvagh PS and Gorrán PS, and it is hoped this service could be revised to include eligible pupils from Cullycapple PS. Some pupils may be eligible for an annual allowance or Translink sessional ticket at the cost of £649 per pupil.

NEELB Position

16. The Board has recommended closure of Cullycapple PS given the marked decline in the school's intake and enrolment figures, and the spare capacity in neighbouring schools which is readily available and accessible to parents. It is accepted that the school has become unsustainable.

Consultation

17. The NEELB followed the consultation procedures set out in Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 as amended by Article 24 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003.

Objections / Support

18. The Department did not receive any letters of support or objection during the statutory 2 month objection period.

Conclusion / Recommendation

19. The school is not considered to be viable and the closure proposal is supported and has been brought forward by the NEELB. The ETI support the proposal. It is noted that there is sufficient surplus capacity at other controlled primary schools which could cater for the modest number of remaining pupils. It is recommended that you approve the proposal for closure.

20. Attached for your consideration are the following:
 - Appendix A: Published Development Proposal
 - Appendix B: Analysis of Sustainability Criteria and Indicators
 - Appendix C: Map showing alternative primary schools
 - Appendix D Map showing location of pupils
 - Appendix E: Draft Press Release



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Development Proposal**NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO: 267

In accordance with the terms of Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 (as amended by Article 24 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003) the North Eastern Education and Library Board, at its meeting on 29 January 2013, agreed to publish the following Development Proposal:

Cullycapple Primary School will close with effect from 31 August 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter.

A copy of the proposal may be inspected at offices of the Board located at 52-56 Ballymoney Street, BALLYMENA, Co Antrim, BT43 6AN between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm.

Any comments or objections to this proposal should be lodged with the Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, BANGOR, Co Down, BT19 7PR within two months of the date of publication of this Notice.

NOTE: The Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards operate a regime of openness under the Freedom of Information Act. Letters of objection and information supplied to the Department of Education and to the North Eastern Education and Library Board are open to disclosure under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, if requested. (A fee may be charged for supplying this information).

S N S McCurdy
Chief Executive

Analysis of Sustainability Criteria and Indicators

As outlined in the Sustainable Schools Policy, there are a number of quantitative and qualitative criteria linked to consideration of the longer-term viability of a school.

1. Quality Educational Experience

The school was inspected in May 2009. The report states that in most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching observed was satisfactory and on a majority of occasions good or better.

However, the ETI support the proposal to close the school, in the best interests of all, but of the children primarily. This is predicated on the grounds that the school falls short on a range of important viability measures, notwithstanding the quality of the provision that the school provides, or could possibly be expected to provide, given such adverse circumstances.

The Sustainable Schools Policy recommends a minimum of four teachers at a primary school. There is one full-time teacher, one part-time teacher and a Principal.

2. Stable Enrolment Trends

The Sustainable Schools Policy states that a rural (i.e., outside Belfast and Derry City Council areas) primary school should have a minimum enrolment of 105 pupils. The enrolment has declined steadily and intakes have been below the minimum threshold over recent years. The following table highlights the very low intakes and corresponding enrolments. Enrolments indicate that the school is not viable.

Historical Intakes and Enrolments

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Intake	*	*	0	*	0
Enrolment	34	31	30	25	20

Enrolment by Year Group 2012/13

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
0	*	0	*	*	7	*	20

3. Sound Financial Position

Although the school had a surplus of circa £5,000 at March 2012, the NEELB consider the school's finances to be unacceptable, with forecasts of a deteriorating financial position over the next three years. There is no scope for further cuts in staffing levels.

Falling rolls indicate that there is no prospect of reversing this position. Income to the school is generated by pupil numbers and the number of children attending the school cannot sustain the school financially.

School Budget

The main component of every school's budget is based on an age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU). The 2013/14 Common Funding Formula allocation is £124,359. The 2013/14 allocation to Cullycapple PS for the Small Schools Support Factor is £41,605.

The surplus of a closing school, if any, is transferred to the ELB Centre Contingency Fund as per the Common Funding Scheme. A deficit, if any, as usual would have to be met from ELB Centre Funds.

Per Capita Allocations

The school's 2013/14 per capita allocation is £6,218; this is substantially higher than the average per capita for a NEELB Primary School of £2,950.

4. Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals

At the time of the May 2009 inspection report, one of the strengths listed of the school was the commitment and dedication of the Principal, however, areas of improvement in leadership and management were identified.

The inspection report did highlight that it is important the employing authority, governors and staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

5. Accessibility

Alternative controlled primary school provision is available in the following schools:

School No.	Alternative Schools	Approximate Distance / Time from Cullycapple PS (miles by road) ¹	Enrolment 2012/13	Approved enrolment	Unfilled Places
301-2065	Culcrow PS	2.7ml/7min	74	77	3
301-6055	Gorran PS	3.4ml/8min	93	120	27
301-0796	Eden PS	4.2ml/9min	83	95	12
301-6447	Balnamore PS	5.0ml/11min	110	111	1
301-6119	Garvagh PS	5.1ml/11min	118	236	118

The draft NEELB Area Plan was published for consultation on 19 March 2013. The following proposals are included:

School	Proposal
Culcrow PS	Local area solution to be explored to include consideration of consolidation with another school on a site to be identified.
Eden PS	Local area solution to be explored to include consideration of combining with another school or schools on site/s to be identified.
Balnamore PS	No change is proposed at present.
Gorran PS	Local area solution to be explored to include consideration of consolidation with Garvagh PS on a site to be identified.
Garvagh PS	Local area solution to be explored to include consideration of consolidation with Gorran PS on a site to be identified.

¹ Source: Google Maps

Gorran PS and Garvagh PS have been identified in the NEELB Area Plan as schools where further consultations on local area solutions have the potential to be considered in the first phase of the final area plan.

The Sustainable Schools Policy notes that a home to school travel time of less than 30 minutes is desirable for primary pupils. Travel times in the event of the closure of Cullycapple PS are unlikely to exceed this; however this is dependent on parents' choice of provision.

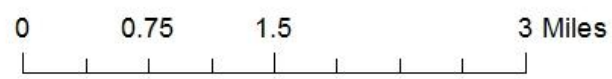
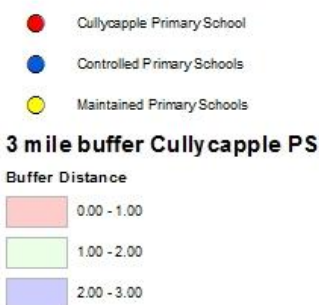
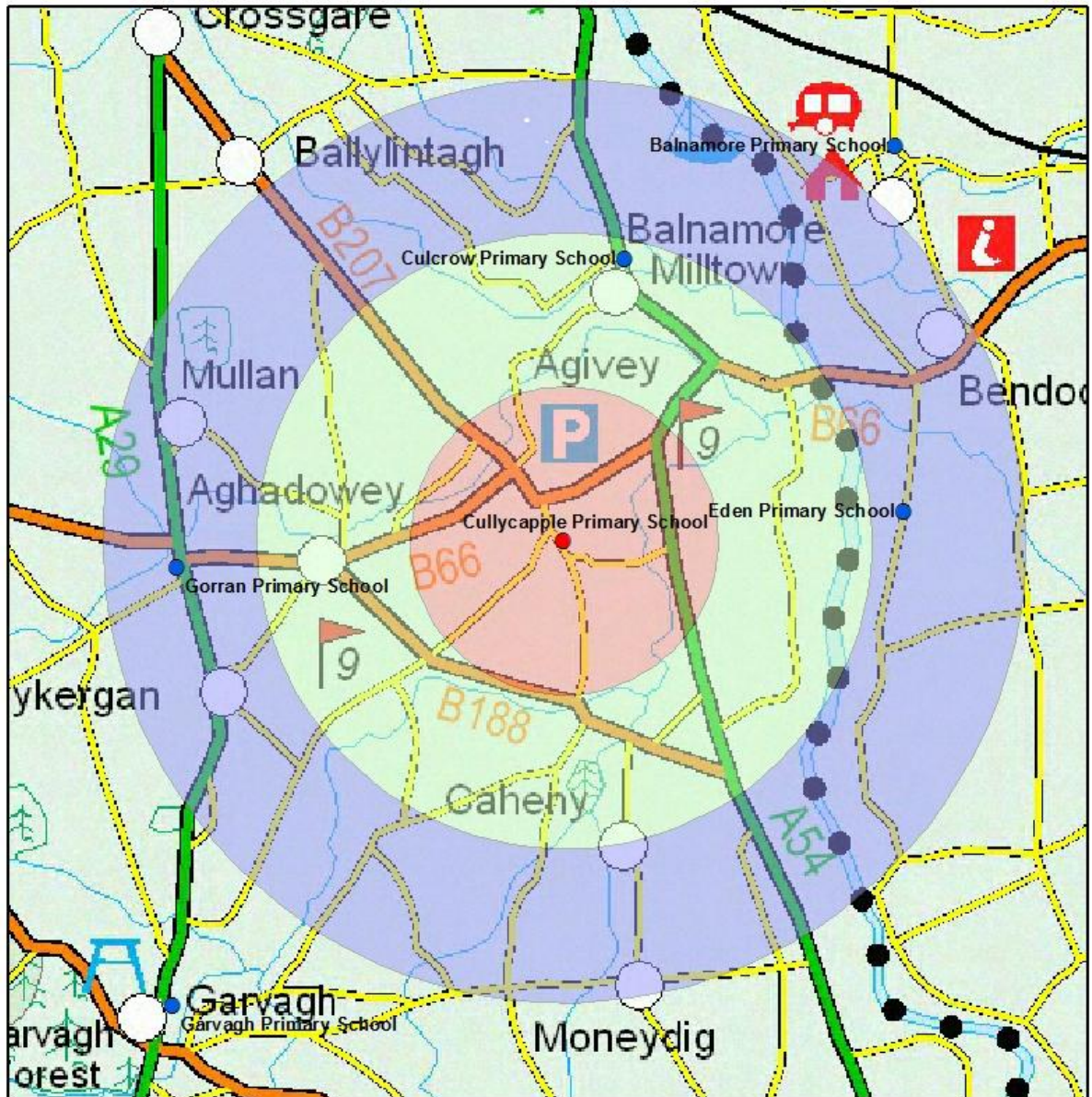
Information from the NEELB indicates that the majority of pupils will be transferring to primary schools located further away than those listed above.

6. *Strong Links with the Community*

There was no specific evidence presented in relation to links with the local community.

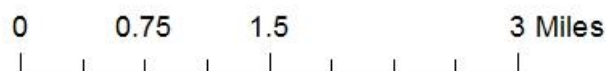
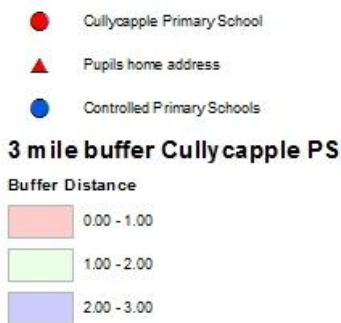
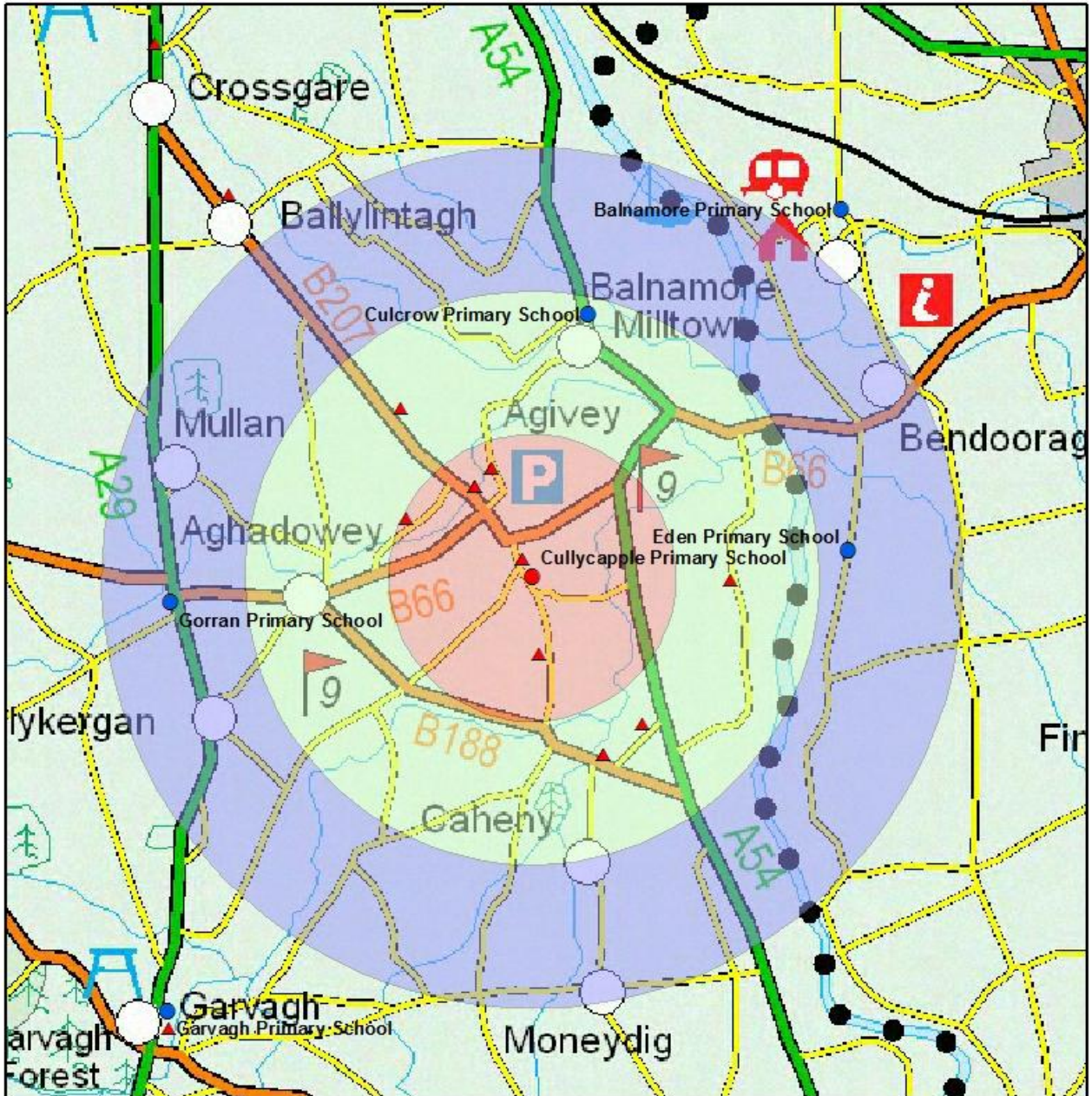
Map showing alternative primary schools

Cullycapple Primary School



Map showing pupils' home addresses

Cullycapple Primary School



Draft Press Release

O'Dowd announces closure of Cullycapple Primary School, Coleraine

Education Minister John O'Dowd has approved a development proposal to close Cullycapple Primary School, Aghadowey.

Commenting on the decision, the Minister said: **“The decline in enrolments has given rise to concern, and at the beginning of this academic year there were only 20 pupils enrolled at the school.**

“There are other alternative primary schools in the area which have sufficient capacity to offer places to the pupils and I am confident that all those involved, including parents and school staff, will ensure a smooth transition for the children.

“I wish all pupils well for the future and I pay tribute to all those connected with Cullycapple Primary School, who for many years have shown their commitment and dedication to the school and its pupils.”

The school will close with effect from 31 August 2013.

Notes to Editors

On 6 March 2013, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) published Development Proposal No 267, proposing the closure of Cullycapple Primary School with effect from 31 August 2013, or as soon as possible thereafter. The two-month objection period ended on 7 May 2013.