COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	245 (SEELB)
School(s)	St Mark's Primary School (403-6134) and St Luke's Primary School (403-6081), Twinbrook.
Proposal	To be amalgamated to form a new co-educational Primary with effect from 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter.
Minister's Decision	Approve
Date of Decision	28/11/2013
Minister's Comments	Agreed
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
[redacted]	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: 20 November 2013

TO: JOHN O'DOWD, MLA **See Copy Distribution list below**

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 245 – AMALGAMATION OF ST LUKE'S AND ST MARK'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS, TWINBROOK

Objective:	**To decide on Development Proposal No 245.**
Issue:	**Development Proposal that St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School Twinbrook, be amalgamated to form a new co-educational Primary with effect from 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter.**
Timescale:	**Routine**
FOI Implications:	**This submission is likely to be fully disclosable.**
Financial Implications:	○ **Savings of £75,000 in recurrent funding have been estimated;** ○ **CCMS has indicated that they will bid for capital funding for a new school estimated at £2.4m-£2.7m**
Presentational issues:	**This is likely to attract media attention. A draft Press Release is attached for your approval at Appendix F. If approached for further comment the Communications Team will draw upon this submission and liaise with relevant officials.** ***(This has been cleared with the Communications Team).***
Recommendation:	**That you approve the Development Proposal and agree the draft press release at Appendix F.**

Background

At the request of CCMS the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) published Development Proposal 245 on 6 August 2013, proposing that St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School be amalgamated to form a new co-educational primary school with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter. This proposal will in effect require the closure of the two aforementioned schools and the opening of a new school. The 2 month objection period ended on 6 October 2013. The proposal as published is shown in **Appendix A**.

Area Plan

2. This proposal forms part of the Council for Catholic Maintained School's (CCMS) proposals for the area which are detailed in the SEELB's draft primary area plan dated 21 March 2013. These include a decrease in the approved enrolment numbers of Good Shepherd Primary School and St Kieran's Primary School, Poleglass, an increase in the approved enrolment of Christ the Redeemer and a review of Ballymacward Primary School.

St Luke's Primary School

3. St Luke's PS is a maintained co-educational primary school located on Glasvey Drive, in the Twinbrook Area , Dunmurry. St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School are 1.5 miles apart. St Luke's Nursery School which is adjacent to the primary school provides 52 full-time places. The primary school has a staffing complement of Principal plus nine permanent teachers plus a part-time Special Educational Needs (SEN) support teacher.

St Mark's Primary School

4. St Mark's is a maintained co-educational Primary School located on Gardenmore Road, in the Twinbrook Area , Dunmurry. The school has a nursery unit which also provides 52 full-time places. In addition there is a reception class which offers a further 26 places to pre-school children. St Mark's has a staffing complement of Principal plus fourteen teachers, including a reception teacher and two nursery teachers.

5. CCMS has confirmed that while both school sites are large enough to cater for all the children currently attending both schools, St Luke's accommodation is brighter, more minor works have been completed over the past number of years and all children could be educated in the main building. St Luke's 300 m^2 hall is also more suitable for a school of about 500 than the 165 m^2 hall in St Mark's thus making it the preferred option for the site of the amalgamated school. CCMS has advised that the new school should cater for approx 555 pupils.

6. The St Luke's Nursery school is not included in the amalgamation proposals. The nursery is purpose built, stands in its own large grounds and is financially sound.

Development Proposal

7. Detailed statistical information relating to the proposal is given in

Appendix B. The key points are summarised below:-

- Enrolments at both schools have declined over the past number of years. Enrolment at St Luke's PS has declined from 213 in 2008/09 to 185 in 2012/13. Enrolment at St Mark's has fallen more significantly from 378 in 2008/09 to 185 in 2012/13. This decline is of concern as the schools may not be sustainable in the long-term, if they continue to operate separately.
- The combined approved enrolments for both schools total 1,276 yet in 2012/13 the combined actual enrolment of both schools totalled 495 pupils.
- The unverified enrolment figures for 2013/14 show a further decline with only a total of 79 pupils enrolling at both schools. The combined approved admissions numbers for both schools total 177.
- St Mark's PS includes a 52 full time place nursery unit and a Reception class. In the 2012/13 school year 25 children were enrolled

in the Reception class. Fourteen children in the nursery unit were not in their final pre-school year.

- The planned amalgamation is in line with the SEELB primary area plan which proposes a number of changes in the area including a reduction in the enrolment numbers of Good Shepherd PS and St Kieran's PS Poleglass, a review of Ballmacward PS and an increase in the enrolment of Christ the Redeemer PS**.**
- Development Proposals to decrease the enrolments at Good Shepherd PS and St Kieran's PS were approved by you on 7 October 2013.
- The Development Proposal for Christ the Redeemer was brought forward in advance of these other proposals and was rejected on 30 April 2013. CCMS has indicated that this proposal will be republished.
- The quality of education being provided at St Luke's PS has been assessed by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) as 'very good' and as 'good' at St Mark's PS.
- CCMS proposes that if the development proposal is approved, all pupils would move off the St Mark's site and all would be accommodated at the St Luke's PS site.
- CCMS has indicated that a bid for capital funding for a new school will be made.

SEELB Comment

8. The SEELB supports the proposal – see full comments in **Appendix C**.

Financial Considerations

9. Anticipated savings in recurrent funding of approximately £75k have been projected. Further detail is included in **Appendix B**.

10. St Luke's PS, Twinbrook had a deficit of -£45,423 or -7.39% of available delegated resources at March 2013, from the SEELB's 2013 workbook. The Board has expressed significant concerns about the school's financial plans. These plans show the current deficit reducing to -£19,840 (-3.07%) at March

2014, then moving into a surplus, which is forecast to stand at £75k, or 10% of available delegated resources, at March 2016.

11. St Mark's PS, Twinbrook had a deficit of -£66,094 or -6.17% of available delegated resources at March 2013, from the SEELB's 2013 workbook. The Board has expressed significant concerns about the school's financial plans. These plans show the current deficit moving to a surplus of £15,775 (1.41%) at March 2014, which is forecast to increase to £69k, or 6% of available delegated resources, at March 2016.

12. A surplus held by either school coming together will normally be carried forward to the amalgamating school; a deficit held by either school will normally be met by Education and Library Board (ELB) Centre Funds provided that both Boards of Governors, in conjunction with the Employing Authority, can demonstrate compliance with all requirements and direction specified by the ELB Funding Authority in the process of preparing for amalgamation.

13. CCMS' application for funding for St Mark's and St Luke's under the School Enhancement Programme was rejected on the basis that the development proposal was still under consideration and that it would be more cost effective for the school to have a new build. CCMS has confirmed that a bid for capital funding for a new school will be made which has been estimated at £2.4m for a 20 class-base (556-585) or £2.7m for a 21 class-base (586-615).

14. CCMS has confirmed that it is anticipated that all teaching staff will transfer to the new amalgamated school. However, it is only when the collective agreement is issued, that individual staff members will make their decision known. Until such times as the needs of the new school have been established, the level of non-teaching staff cannot be determined. CCMS has stated that it would be reasonable to assume that there will be some non-teaching staff who will not be re-deployed

Pre-school Provision

15. In its background paper to the Development Proposal, CCMS acknowledges that the Reception class in St Mark's PS has a detrimental impact on other pre-school providers in the area and notes 'it is inevitable, given the surfeit of places, that reception provision at St Mark's will cease to be funded, leading to at least one further redundancy'. Removal of the reception provision would be an effective measure to address the issue of the admission of underage children in the school and would also be in line with the policy objectives of the Learning to Learn framework in regard to Reception provision. As a continuation of existing provision, the retention of 52 full-time places at St Mark's Nursery School is also considered to be compatible with the Learning to Learn framework.

Consultation

16. CCMS and the SEELB have confirmed that they have fulfilled their statutory duty in relation to consultation.

Objections/Comments

17. No letters of support or objection were received by the Department in relation to the proposal during the 2 month statutory consultation period.

Conclusions

18. In conclusion, the proposed amalgamation of Luke's PS and St Mark's PS, will create a sustainable, co-educational local primary school.

19. The proposal is in line with the SEELB primary area plan and is part of CCMS' plans for the reorganisation of provision in the area.

20. The proposal is supported by CCMS, the SEELB and the ETI.

Recommendation

21. It is therefore recommended that you approve this proposal and also use the amalgamation as the vehicle to cease Reception provision currently at

St Mark's Primary School, while retaining the current level of pre-school nursery provision.

Attached for your consideration are the following:

Appendix A:	Published Development Proposal
Appendix B:	Statistical Information
Appendix C:	SEELB Comments
Appendix D:	ETI Comments
Appendix E:	Early Years Comments
Appendix F:	Location Map
Appendix G:	Draft Press Release

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Published Development Proposal **Appendix A**

SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

DRAFT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

PROPOSAL NO. 245

AREA NO. 15 Lisburn and District

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools proposes that St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School be amalgamated to form a new co-educational Primary School with effect from 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter.

This proposal will in effect require the closure of the two aforementioned schools and the opening of a new school.

This proposal has been submitted to the Department of Education. Any comments or objections to the proposal should be made in writing to the Department of Education, as detailed below, within two months of the date of publication.

Area Planning Policy Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Bangor BT19 7PR

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

A copy of the proposal may be inspected at the offices of the South Eastern Education and Library Board at Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 2HS during normal office hours.

Gregory P Butler
Chief Executive
SEELB

Appendix B

Background and Statistical Information Relating to this Proposal

Table 1: Historical Enrolments

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Capacity
St Luke's	213	177	184	172	185	665
St Mark's	378	344	307	301	310	611
Total	**591**	**521**	**491**	**473**	**495**	**1276**

Table 2: Admissions

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Approved
St Luke's	33	12	36	24	43	90
St Mark's	55	41	39	39	58	87
Total	**88**	**53**	**75**	**63**	**101**	**177**

Table 3: Enrolments by Year Group @ October 2012.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
St Luke's	43	27	37	12	29	16	21	185
St Mark's	58	39	34	41	45	48	45	310
Total	**101**	**66**	**71**	**53**	**74**	**64**	**66**	**495**

Table 4: 2013/14 Enrolments (unverified)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
St Luke's	35	46	28	35	13	33	17	207
St Mark's	44	60	38	33	41	46	48	310
Total	**79**	**106**	**66**	**68**	**54**	**79**	**65**	**517**

Quality of Education

St Mark's PS – In the report of an Inspection of the school dated April 2010, the ETI assessed the quality of the education provided by the school as 'good'. Some areas for improvement were identified which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

St Luke's PS - In the report of an Inspection of the school dated November 2010, the ETI assessed the quality of the education provided by the school as 'very good'. The report

states that the school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self improvement.

Alternative Provision (within a 3 mile radius)

The South Eastern Education and Library Board also published Development Proposals 239 and 240 on 11 June 2013, proposing that:

The Good Shepherd Primary School, Poleglass reduces its approved enrolment from 823 to 343. This would permit the school to decrease the admissions number from 118 to 49 pupils; and

St Kieran's Primary School, Poleglass reduces its approved enrolment from 650 to 525. This would permit the school to decrease the admissions number from 90 to 75 pupils with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter. These proposals were approved by you on 7 October 2013.

A proposal (No 233) to increase the capacity of Christ the Redeemer PS from 570 to 700 was published by the SEELB on 12 February 2013. On 1 May 2013, your decision to turn down the development proposal was announced by press release. However, CCMS has indicated that this proposal will be republished.

A review of Ballymacward PS, Lisburn (60 pupils in 2012/13 which is below the sustainable Schools Policy threshold) is to be undertaken. However, due to this school's location, its review is likely to involve schools in the North Eastern Board area.

Table 5: Enrolment and unfilled places in alternative schools

Ref No	School	Distance in miles St Luke's	Distance in miles St Mark's	Enrolment October 2012	SEN	Physical Capacity	Unfilled Places
403-6618	Christ the Redeemer	0.7	1.1	573	12	570	9
403-6480	St Kieran's	1.1	1.5	366	9	525	168
403-6591	Our Lady Queen Peace	1.1	1.4	352	9	348	5
403-6285	The Good Shepherd	1.5	1.9	312	8	343	39
403-3307	St Colman's	2.1	2.5	368	26	348	6
103-6688	St John the Baptist *	2.2	2.6	425	11	425	11
103-0868	St Anne's	2.3	2.5	811	15	860	64
103-6576	Holy Child	2.7	3.1	493	16	775	298
103-6602	St Oliver Plunkett	2.7	3.1	583	8	825	250

Total				**4283**	**114**	**5019**	**850**
401-0788	Dunmurry	1.7	1.9	149	*	262	116
401-0882	Seymour Hill	2.0	2.4	194	20	256	82
101-0806	Finaghy	2.5	2.7	423	8	465	50
401-3305	Harmony Hill	2.5	2.9	518	7	588	77
Total				**1284**	**#**	**1571**	**325**
Cumulative Total				**5567**	**#**	**6590**	**1175**
404-6600	Scoil na Fuiseoige	0.3	0.3	113	*	145	34
104-6501	Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	2.3	2.7	235	8	406	179
Total				**348**	**#**	**551**	**213**
Cumulative Total				**5915**	**#**	**7141**	**1388**
406-6611	Oakwood Integrated	1.4	1.8	204	9	203	8
106-6580	Cranmore Integrated	2.9	3.2	188	11	203	26
Total				**392**	**20**	**406**	**34**
Grand Total				**6307**	**182**	**7547**	**1422**

SEN = Statement of Educational Need Distance as per Multimap
* St John the Baptist Boys' and Girls' Amalgamated 2011

Table 6: Historical Enrolments in Alternative Provision (includes SEN)

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Capacity
Christ the Redeemer	540	534	536	554	573	570
St Kieran's	363	340	330	355	366	525
Our Lady Queen of Peace	334	350	347	355	352	348
The Good Shepherd	342	336	312	317	312	343
St Colman's	309	321	341	358	368	348
St John the Baptist	-	-	-	415	425	425
St Anne's	800	768	794	804	811	860
Holy Child	488	493	486	486	493	775
St Oliver Plunkett	581	578	553	575	583	825
Total	**3757**	**3720**	**3699**	**4219**	**4283**	**5019**
Dunmurry	138	133	132	136	149	262
Seymour Hill	165	165	168	204	194	256
Finaghy	433	422	416	415	423	465
Harmony Hill	608	584	567	537	518	588
Total	**1344**	**1304**	**1283**	**1292**	**1284**	**1571**
Cumulative Total	**5101**	**5024**	**4982**	**5511**	**5567**	**6590**
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	248	236	233	228	235	406
Scoil na Fuiseoige	119	118	103	107	113	145
Total	**367**	**354**	**336**	**335**	**348**	**551**

Cumulative Total	**5468**	**5378**	**5318**	**5846**	**5915**	**7141**
Oakwood Integrated	207	208	204	204	204	203
Cranmore Integrated	189	195	183	185	188	203
Total	**396**	**403**	**387**	**389**	**392**	**406**
Grand Total	**5864**	**5781**	**5705**	**6235**	**6307**	**7547**

Needs Model
The Needs Model sets the total future planning figures and is based on official published population projection statistics. The needs projections are presented in three subsets (Controlled, Maintained and Integrated). These figures provide a starting point and are subject to change across sectors or areas, by agreement providing the control total plus 10% tolerance for parental preference is not breached. The SEELB primary area plan states that in the maintained sector in the Lisburn City Council area there is a need to reduce the number of places available by 1,623 by 2025.

St Luke's PS
The school's current approved enrolment of 665 equates to a 23 class base school (641-670 pupil range). The proposed combined approved enrolment of 555 equates to the high level figure of the 19 class base category (526-555 pupil range). The school's 2012/13 actual enrolment of 185 would be in the seven class base category (176-205).

St Mark's PS
The school's current approved enrolment of 611 equates to a 21 class base school (586-615). The school's 2012/13 actual enrolment of 310 would be in the eleven class base category. (291-320).

(The calculation for approved enrolments in Primary Schools is set out in DE Circular 2012/12. This specifies a standard class size of 50 m² to accommodate 29 pupils, reducing proportionately for smaller floor areas.)

Manhattan Data 2011/12

St Luke's PS - This calculation, using the room data from the Manhattan database and detailed in tables 7 & 8 below gives an overall capacity figure of 638 pupils for St Luke's PS. The Manhattan data therefore shows that this school would have more than sufficient permanent accommodation to facilitate the proposed total enrolment of 555 (Note: the current Building Handbook standard of 60 m² would reduce the school's capacity further).

St Mark's PS - Table 8 below shows that the Manhattan database calculates the capacity of St Mark's taking account of both permanent and temporary accommodation at 551. With the removal of the temporary accommodation from the calculation, the overall capacity would be reduced to 435 which would <u>not</u> be sufficient to accommodate the amalgamated school.

Admissions and Enrolments

Departmental policy on admission numbers is to maximise parental preference within the related responsibility to maintain a viable estate of schools.

Admissions to individual schools are limited by their approved admissions and enrolment numbers (which take account of the physical capacity of the accommodation available). This is necessary to maintain a viable schools estate.

Table 9: Position following implementation of proposals (schools within a 2 mile radius)

Ref No	School	Original Approved Enrolment	Revised Approved Enrolment	Revised Admissions	2012/13 Enrolment (incl SEN)	2012/13 Admissions
103-6576	Holy Child PS	775	775	111	493	91
403-6285	The Good Shepherd PS	823	343	49	312	50
403-6480	St Kieran's	650	525	75	366	59
403-6591	Our Lady Queen of Peace	348	348	50	352	50
403-6081 & 403-6134	St Luke's & St Mark's	665 & 611	555	80	185 & 310	43 & 58
403-6618	Christ the Redeemer*	570	570*	87	573	90
103-6688	St John the Baptist	425	425	60	425	65
404-6600	Scoil na Fuiseoige	145	145	23	113	22
104-6501	Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	406	406	58	235	39
Total		**5,418**	**4,092**	**593**	**3,364**	**567**

***** Original numbers - DP turned down

Financial Implications

The aim of this proposal is to deliver education within the area in fewer, larger, schools and to eliminate unfilled places, which generally results in a more cost-effective use of resources.

It is difficult to predict the financial implications of school amalgamations, due to various uncertainties involved. One way of predicting net costs is by comparison of Common Funding Formula (CFF) allocations for the two schools separately, and the two schools combined. Using 2013/14 CFF values, and assuming that all 572 pupils currently enrolled in St Luke's PS and St Mark's PS HS will be enrolled in the newly-opened amalgamated school, operating in the current premises of St Luke's PS, the result would be a **saving of approximately £75k**. The largest savings result from loss of all Small Schools Support Factor and considerably reduced Premises Factor funding, with smaller savings in other CFF factors (Primary Principals' Release, Mainstream Foundation Stage and Teachers' Salary Protection).

Under the terms of the School Reorganisation Agreement for Schools (SRAS) (TNC 2013-2), there shall be no compulsory redundancy of a teacher who has signed the Agreement in the first two years following a school amalgamation. The costs of teachers who would otherwise be declared redundant must be met from ELB Centre Funds. It is important to consider this aspect in the context of the £75k recurrent savings referred to in the paragraph immediately above.

Schools' Budget Position

St Luke's PS, Twinbrook had a deficit of -£45,423 or -7.39% of available delegated resources at March 2013, from the SEELB's 2013 workbook. The Board has expressed significant concerns about the school's financial plans. These plans show the current deficit reducing to -£19,840 (-3.07%) at March 2014, then moving into a surplus, which is forecast to stand at £75k, or 10% of available delegated resources, at March 2016. An increasing enrolment is projected due to overspill from a nearby school. The SEELB has advised that St Luke's receives funding for a Nurture Group, with 100% funding for the next two years followed by a reduction in 2015/16.

2013/14 CFF Allocation Data for St Luke's PS

Per capita cost:	£3,362
SEELB average per capita cost for a Primary School:	£2,873
Small Schools' Support allocation:	£23,923

St Mark's PS, Twinbrook had a deficit of -£66,094 or -6.17% of available delegated resources at March 2013, from the SEELB's 2013 workbook. The Board have expressed significant concerns about the school's financial plans. These plans show the current deficit moving to a surplus of £15,775 (1.41%) at March 2014, which is forecast to increase to £69k, or 6% of available delegated resources, at March 2016. Enrolment is projected to remain steady over the next few years.

2013/14 CFF Allocation Data for St Mark's PS

Per capita cost:	£3,055
SEELB average per capita cost for a Primary School:	£2,873
Small Schools' Support allocation:	Nil

A surplus held by either school coming together will normally be carried forward to the amalgamating school; a deficit held by either school will normally be met by ELB Centre Funds provided that both Boards of Governors, in conjunction with the Employing Authority, can demonstrate compliance with all requirements and direction specified by the ELB Funding Authority in the process of preparing for amalgamation.

APPENDIX C

South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Comment

In accordance with relevant Education Orders I write to inform you of the Board's view of this proposal. The Board, after considering the relevant information, has decided to support the proposal. This view is based on consideration of the following points:

- the continued decline in demand for places at the two schools has resulted in extensive over provision in the area and the amalgamation of the two schools would allow for the creation of a long term sustainable school serving the area; and,

- taking into consideration the other proposals being progressed for the area, i.e., the reduction in the enrolments at Good Shepherd and St. Kieran's Primary Schools, the overall reduction in the level of maintained primary provision for the area is in keeping with the proposals put forward in the draft Primary Area Plan.

It is hoped that the Minister will give careful consideration to the above issues and support the amalgamation of St. Luke's and St. Mark's Primary Schools.

Yours faithfully

Appendix D

ETI comments

ETI supports the development proposal 245 by the SEELB and CCMS regarding the amalgamation of St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School, Twinbrook into one co-educational primary school.

Option two has merit, as proposed by CCMS; it entails the amalgamation of St Mark's and St Luke's Primary schools on St Luke's site as an interim measure until the provision of a new build. The current nursery unit at St Mark's Primary school would be transferred to St Luke's Primary School as an interim measure. The current St Luke's Nursery School would remain as separate provision.

However, in the event of a new build for the amalgamated schools, the overall pre-school provision in the Twinbrook area would need to be re-evaluated to either extend the nursery school or to include a nursery unit in the new build and thereby maintain the status quo of the nursery school.

There is an over-provision of primary school places in the parish. During 2012-13, there was a 61% surplus of places due to the demographic downtown in the area. The combined approved enrolment of the two schools is 1276. The actual combined enrolment for both schools was 495. As a consequence of the reduced pupil numbers, staff redundancies have been implemented and in one of the primary schools, a number of classes are combined year groups.

The educational provision of St Mark's Primary was inspected by ETI in April 2010, attaining a performance level of 'good'.

St Luke's Primary was inspected by ETI in November 2010 and attained a performance level of 'very good'.

St Luke's Nursery School, Twinbrook was inspected by ETI in February 2013 and attained an 'outstanding' performance level.

The amalgamation would facilitate a more efficient use of public resources, in the long term, and create a sustainable educational provision in the area.

Appendix E

DE comments

St Mark's PS currently includes a 52 full time place nursery unit and a Reception class. In the 2012/13 school year 25 children were enrolled in the Reception class. Fourteen children in the nursery unit were not in their final pre-school year.

No change is proposed to St Luke's Nursery School which provides 52 full-time places and, while not an explicit proposal, the DP recognises that the removal of Reception provision at the St Mark's site is inevitable.

Provision levels

Numbers and percentage of pre-school provision, as compared to Year 1:-

Level of Provision - 2 mile radius of St Luke's PS

The statistical information available in relation to the level of funded pre-school provision is as follows:-

2012/13

Level of provision - 90%

Level of provision excluding Reception – 87.6%

Statutory nursery places filled by under 3s – 2.9%

Relevant Policy areas

Under the Programme for Government 2011-15 DE is committed to ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

'Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning' was published 7 October 2013. Among the Key actions of Learning to Learn are an intention to:

- re-define the Pre-School Education Programme to focus on children in their pre-school year. This will include legislating to remove the ability of primary schools to admit underage children to Reception classes; and

- over time standardise patterns of attendance as part of the Pre-School Education Programme. This will involve placing a moratorium on any new or additional full-

time provision in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it.

Discussion

In the current school year the level of pre-school provision in the 2 mile radius of St Luke's PS stands at 90%. This would suggest a shortfall of places given that the application rate is usually around 92% of eligible children. However, four of the statutory settings in the immediate area have admitted a total of 20 underage children; 14 of whom are enrolled in the nursery unit of St Mark's PS.

In its background paper to the Development Proposal, CCMS acknowledges that the Reception class in St Mark's PS has a detrimental impact on other pre-school providers in the area and notes 'it is inevitable, given the surfeit of places, that reception provision at St Mark's will cease to be funded, leading to at least one further redundancy.' It is, however, unclear if the Development proposal is intended to expressly seek the cessation of Reception provision, but its removal would be an effective measure to address the issue of the admission of underage children in the school and would also be in line with the policy objectives of the Learning to Learn framework in regard to Reception provision.

The proposal seeks to retain the current pre-school provision (52 full-time places) within the newly amalgamated school. The Learning to Learn framework has placed a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision. We have considered whether or not the process of a school amalgamation could be deemed to result in new provision but have concluded that it would be reasonable to treat this proposal as a continuation of the existing service. Therefore the retention of 52 full-time places would be considered as compatible with the Learning to Learn framework.

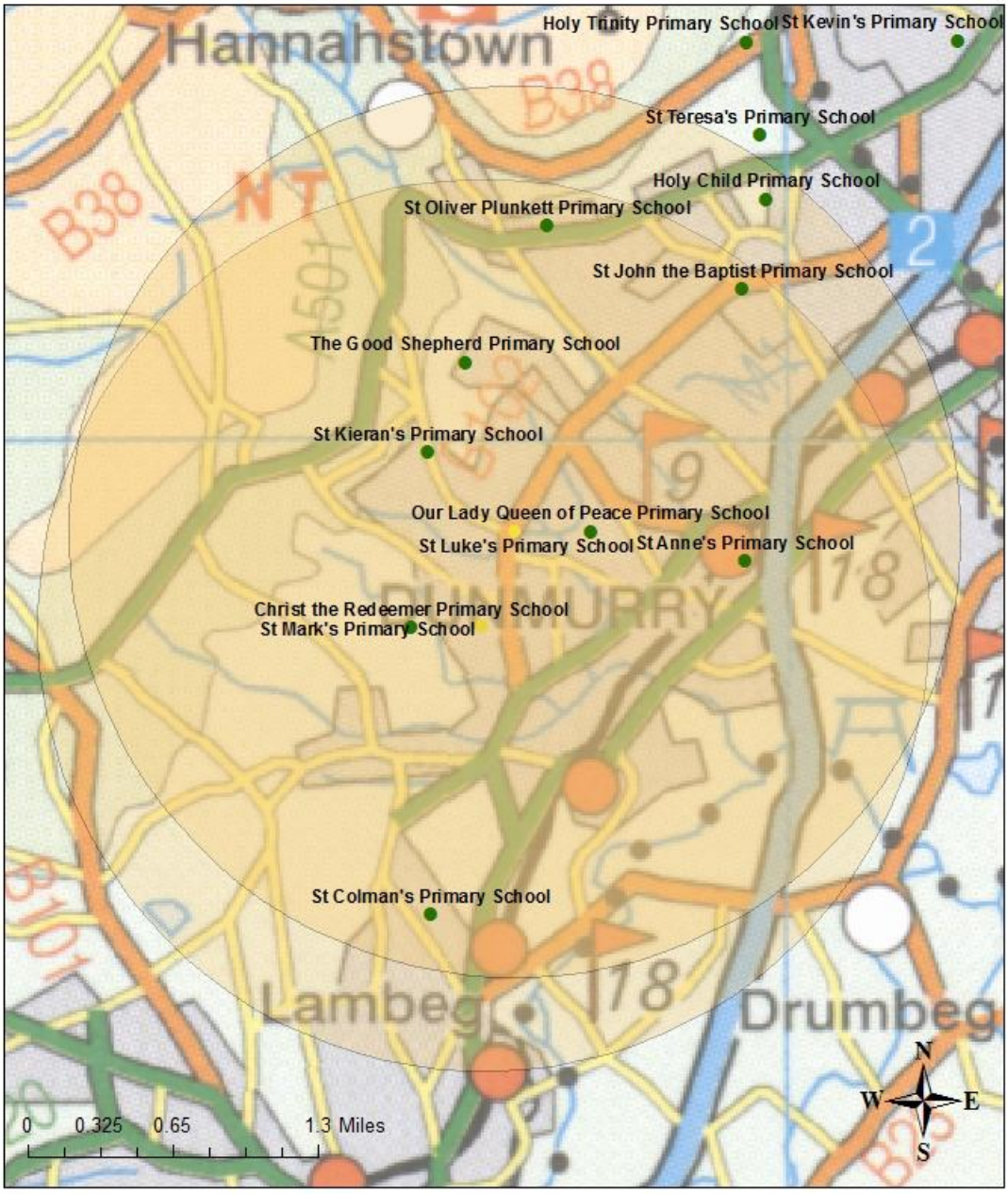
Overall recommendation

The Department has no objection to the proposal to amalgamate the two schools and would recommend that the Minister give positive consideration to using the amalgamation as the vehicle to cease Reception provision while retaining the current level of pre-school provision.

Appendix F

Map 1: Maintained Primary Schools within a 2 mile radius

St Luke's & St Mark' Primary Schools, Twinbrook

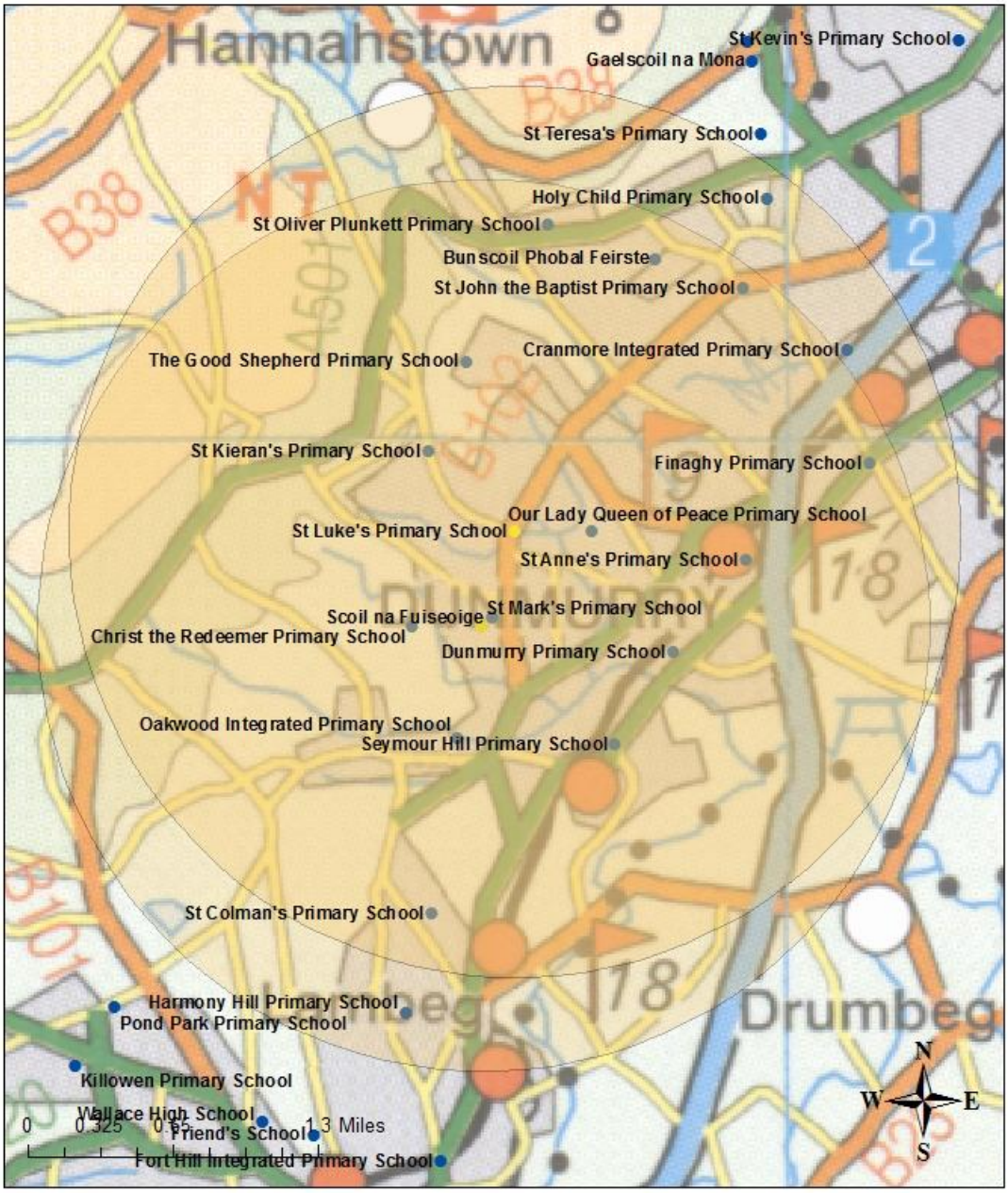


Key

- St Luke's Primary School
- 2 Buffer St Luke's Primary School
- St Mark's Primary School
- 2 Mile Buffer St Mark's Primary School
- Maintained Primary Schools

Map 2: All primary Schools within a 2 mile radius

St Luke's & St Mark' Primary Schools, Twinbrook



Key

- St Luke's Primary School
- 2 Buffer St Luke's Primary School
- St Mark's Primary School
- 2 Mile Buffer St Mark's Primary School
- Primary Schools

Map 3: Pupil Addresses

St Luke's & St Mark' Primary Schools, Twinbrook - Pupils

Key

- St Luke's Primary School
- St Luke's Primary Pupils
- St Mark's Primary School
- St Mark's Primary Pupils
- 2 Mile Buffer St Luke's Primary School
- 2 Mile Buffer St Mark's Primary School

Draft press release **Appendix G**

O'DOWD APPROVES AMALGAMATION OF ST LUKE'S AND ST MARK'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS, TWINBROOK.

Education Minister, John O'Dowd, has approved a development proposal to amalgamate St Luke's and St Mark's Primary Schools in Twinbrook.

The amalgamation will result in a large co-educational primary school serving the Twinbrook area.

Explaining the reasons for his decision, Minister O'Dowd said: **"St Luke's and St Mark's Primary Schools are both long established institutions which have been supported by the parents and children in the locality over many years. I believe that the amalgamation of the schools will be a success for all involved.**

"The amalgamation will ensure a broad, balanced, curriculum in a viable and sustainable school, allowing children access to high quality primary and pre-school provision."

Concluding, the Minister said: **"This amalgamation also negates the need for reception provision in the new school as there will be sufficient pre-school provision for all those children that are in their pre-school year. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the staff and pupils every success in the future.**"

Notes to editors

1. On 6 August 2013, the South Eastern Education and Library Board (BELB) published Development Proposal (DP) number 245, which proposed the amalgamation of St Luke's Primary School and St Mark's Primary School to form a new co-educational primary school with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter.

2. The schools are currently separate maintained primary schools situated in Twinbrook. The proposal will in effect require the closure of the two schools and the opening of a new school which will be on the site of St Luke's Primary school.

3. The Department of Education has not approved new reception provision since 1998/99. Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning' published on 7 October sets out the Department's priorities for early years education and learning and includes an action to introduce legislation (subject to the legislative process) to remove the ability of primary schools to admit underage children to reception classes.

4. Media queries, contact the Department of Education Press Office on 028 9127 9701. Out of office hours, please contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 07699 715 440 and your call will be returned.