

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	251 (SEELB)	
School(s)	St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo 403-6036	
Proposal	Establishment of a Nursery Unit	
Minister's Decision	Approve	
Date of Decision	16/07/2014	
Minister's Comments	Agreed	
Additional notes	Implementation date September 2014	
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

TRIM REF: DE1/13/211011

Date: 11 July 2014

To: JOHN O'DOWD MLA

copy distribution below

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL No. 251 – ESTABLISHMENT OF A NURSERY UNIT
AT ST MALACHY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL KILCOO**

Issue: Proposal to establish a 26 place part-time nursery unit at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo, with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Timescale: *Urgent - an early decision would clarify the position for interested parents.*

**Financial / Resource
Implications**

School Funding

A high-level funding estimate of a 26 place part-time nursery unit at St Malachy's PS for the 2014/15 financial year is £44,000 (full year) and £25,000 (in-year).

Staffing

A nursery teacher and a nursery assistant will need to be provided for the part-time session at a total cost of approx. £30,000.

Accommodation

The DP proposes that the Nursery Unit would be based in the pre-school facility which presently houses Kilcoo Playgroup. However, these premises do not meet the standards of the Building Handbook. Estates Advisory Branch has recommended that purpose built premises are provided and estimated construction costs at £245,000 plus any site purchase costs.

FOI Implications:

The content of this submission is likely to be fully disclosable.

**Legislation
Implications:**

N/A

**Presentational /
Contentious Issues:**

It is likely that there will be a low level of media interest in your decision. If you are content, the Communications Team will issue the press release to announce your decision.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that you:

- **approve the establishment of a new statutory nursery unit offering 26 part-time places at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo;**
- **agree the wording of the draft press release (Appendix D) attached; and**
- **agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) can be made available on the Department's website following the relevant notifications to the proposer.**

Background

On 8 January 2014, the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) published Development Proposal (DP) No. 251 which proposes the establishment of a 26 place part-time nursery unit at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo, with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter. The statutory two-month consultation period ended on 8 March 2014.

2. St Malachy's is a grant maintained co-educational primary school situated on the Ballymoney Road in the village of Kilcoo, four miles south of Castlewellan. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 the Tollymore 1 area is placed 379 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 being least deprived) 42.58%. Entitlement to Free School Meals is 34% (44)

3. The proposal involves the replacement of the existing playgroup namely Kilcoo Playgroup which operates in purpose built accommodation close to the primary school on the Dublin Road in Kilcoo, Co Down. The playgroup has been in receipt of Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) funded places for approximately 14 years; and in 2013/14 had 17 funded places. Indications for September 2014 show 22 pupils admitted to the playgroup. The playgroup's current accommodation was provided in 1998 through funding of £84,000 from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund.

Policy Context

4. Level of Provision and Pattern of Attendance

- The Programme for Government 2011-15 includes a commitment to ensure 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 is an intention to 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.

Development Proposal

5. Statistical information relating to the proposal is contained in **Appendix B**. The key issues are summarised below:

- St Malachy's PS serves a rural population. The primary school's approved P1 admission and enrolment numbers are 24 and 165 respectively.
- Enrolments since 2011 have remained steady between 130 and 133. In 2013/14 school year there were also two reception pupils. Indications for 2014/15 show 19 pupils admitted to the primary school.
- The current proposal is that the Nursery Unit would replace the existing playgroup and reception and would be based in the purpose built pre-school facility already in existence. However, this facility does not meet handbook requirements and it has been recommended that purpose built facilities should be provided. Further details are included in **Appendix B**.
- The playgroup is registered for up to 24 children and in the 2013/14 school year offered 17 funded places. Indications for September 2014 show 22 pupils admitted to the playgroup.
- Since 2012/13 no protestant pupils have enrolled in the playgroup.
- The numbers of pre-school places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for 2013/14. Within a two mile radius of St Malachy's PS, for 2013/14 there were 19 pre-school places (17 pre-school and 2 reception) for 24 P1 children – a level of 79.2%.
- Approval of the development proposal as is stands would result in an overall increase in provision of 7 pre-school places.
- Alternative pre-school provision in the area is 4.4 miles away. Between 4.4 miles and 4.5 miles there are three playgroups. Enrolments in all three playgroups increased from 2012/13 to 2013/14.
- Alternative reception and nursery provision is also located between 3.1 miles and 4.6 miles away.

- The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) have carried out 2 inspections of the playgroup, both of which required follow-up activity. The quality of provision in the Playgroup remains an area of concern and the ETI has stated that 'it will be imperative that an appropriately qualified teacher, with early years' knowledge and expertise, is appointed to help bring about the necessary improvements in the quality of the educational provision'.

CCMS Rationale

6. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) hold the view that pre-school education should be delivered by a qualified teacher in appropriate accommodation and preferably under the management of the Principal and Board of Governors of an adjoining Primary School. A summary of their key points as provided are as follows:

- There is no pre-school provision within a five mile radius.
- CCMS believes that the skills and expertise of a qualified teacher would contribute significantly to raising standards and levels of achievement of the local children.
- The Management Committee and staff of Kilcoo Playgroup are aware of the employment implications should the proposal be accepted.
- Should the proposal be accepted, it would mean the closure of Kilcoo Playgroup at the same time as a new Nursery Unit is established at St Malachy's PS.
- Staff at the Playgroup could apply for vacancies created by the establishment of the new Nursery Unit.
- St Malachy's PS would cease to admit children to a Reception Class in the school.
- The Department may wish to consider vesting the existing building so it becomes part of the overall St Malachy's PS site.

Financial Implications

7. A high-level funding estimate for a 26 part-time place Nursery Unit has been calculated at approximately ££44,000 for a full year (and £25,000 in-year funding for first 7 months). The two Reception class pupils recorded at Census 2013 have already been funded in the school's 2014/15 formula allocation; estimates above are net of these costs. PEAG funding for the playgroup in the 2013/2014 year was 17 places at £178.70 per place per month i.e. £3037.90 per month. For 12 months this totals almost £36,500. This is the only funding the playgroup receives.

8. In the current financial climate, School Finance Team are concerned that approval of this Development Proposal will increase pressure on an already severely stretched Aggregated Schools Budget.

9. **Staffing costs** for one nursery teacher and a nursery assistant have been estimated at approximately £30,000.

10. CCMS initially advised that no capital funding would be required to provide appropriate **accommodation** for the Nursery Unit as the playgroup is located in accommodation which was provided through the Peace and Reconciliation Fund. (The building, the adjoining land and the car park belong to the Parish of Kilcoo.) However, these premises do not meet the standards of the Building Handbook. Estates Advisory Branch has recommended that purpose built premises are provided and estimated construction costs at £245,000 plus any site purchase costs. Full EAB comments are included in **Appendix B.**

Early Years Team Comments

11. The Early Years Team is not supportive of this proposal on the basis that:-

- The proposal simply replaces one type of provision with another and provides no evidence of added value to early learning and development;
- The figures do not indicate any pressing need for additional places and any increase in the number of pre-school places in the area may lead to the enrolment of underage children.

- There is no policy in place to support or promote the conversion of voluntary provision to statutory status; and
- Actions within the Learning to Learn Framework will introduce protocols for support and intervention which align with those for Every School a Good School, where the quality of provision in DE funded non-statutory early years settings is below standard and measures to establish appropriate support mechanisms to achieve the highest standards of pre-school provision through collaboration and dissemination of best practice.

Their full comments on the proposal are included below in **Appendix B**.

ETI Comments

12. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) support this proposal. Since the playgroup's entry to the Department of Education's Pre-school Programme, the ETI has carried out two inspections, both of which required follow-up activity. The current follow-up process is still ongoing. While the monitoring visits to the setting indicate strengths in a small number of areas, the overall provision remains less than satisfactory.

13. The ETI has always supported the view that 'good' quality provision in the voluntary and private sector should not be displaced in favour of statutory provision. However the ETI states that Kilcoo is an exception to this rule.

14. They consider that the children have a much better chance of receiving quality pre-school education if a suitably qualified teacher with training in early years and child development were to be appointed. How the employment of a qualified teacher would enhance provision is outlined in the full ETI response included in **Appendix B**.

15. They consider that the establishment of a statutory nursery unit under the guidance of the Board of Governors and school principal provides the most favourable option in the best interest of the children of Kilcoo parish. The children's transition from the nursery unit into year one will be made all the smoother through the regular contact between the staff in the unit and the primary school.

16. It is also the ETI's policy to carry out a baseline visit to a new nursery unit to outline for the teacher-in-charge and the principal of the school the high expectations and best practice required to ensure that the children receive the best possible pre-school education. The unit will then be inspected as part of the ongoing programme of inspections. The District Inspector may at any time carry out a monitoring visit; all of which is to try to ensure that the provision for the children is of the highest possible standard.

Support and Objections

17. The Department has received no correspondence in relation to the Proposal. The SEELB received one letter of support during their pre-publication consultation from St Mary's PS, Newcastle.

Consultation

18. The South Eastern Education and Library Board and CCMS have confirmed that they have fulfilled their statutory duty in relation to consultation. Proof of publication has been supplied.

Conclusions

19. The figures detailed in the Early Years Team's response set out in **Appendix B** suggest significant under-provision particularly in the five mile radius of St Malachy's PS. However, this standard measure might not always reflect the full picture when applied in rural settings.

20. Approval of the proposal would lead to an increase of 7 pre-school places on 2013/14 figures. Kilcoo Playgroup is registered for 24 places, but only 17 were filled in 2013/14. Although this suggests that St Malachy's PS may have difficulty in filling all 26 places with target age children which could lead to the enrolment of underage children in the nursery unit, 23 places were funded in 2012/13 and the playgroup has admitted 22 children for September 2014.

21. An ETI Inspection in November 2012 identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings Children's Achievements	Satisfactory
Quality of Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Inadequate

22. ETI colleagues have recently advised that “while the monitoring visits to the setting indicate strengths in a small number of areas, the overall provision remains less than satisfactory” and that “it is imperative that an appropriately qualified teacher, with early years knowledge and expertise is appointed”. ETI has always supported the view that ‘good’ quality provision in the voluntary and private sector should not be displaced in favour of statutory provision. However, they consider that Kilcoo is an exception to this rule. Indeed, the overall policy aim for Early Years Education and Learning is that ‘All children have equal opportunities to achieve their potential through high quality early years education and learning experiences’.

23. CCMS has also consistently held the view that pre-school education should be delivered by a qualified teacher, in appropriate accommodation and preferably under the management of the principal and Board of Governors of an adjoining primary school. Fully qualified teachers are employed in nursery provision but not normally in pre-school provision.

24. Although the proposal is not supported by the Early Years Team, it is supported by the ETI, PEAG and the SEELB. If the proposal is approved, this would also replace reception provision and would not displace ‘good’ quality provision as provision in the playgroup has not been assessed as being of a ‘good’ standard.

25. The key consideration must be the provision of high quality education. While the Learning to Learn Policy contains actions which in the future will provide a “Formal Intervention” type approach to address inadequacy it is not current fully

developed. There is therefore a risk that at least one more cohort of children will be going through the playgroup having a less than satisfactory pre-school experience and will not be best prepared for P1.

26. The ETI also raise the issue of the impact of the rural location of the provision and the difficulties this poses for attracting staff with the right skill set and experience. They have indicated that this may be overcome if the provision was statutory and could attract a qualified teacher.

Accommodation

27. The Development Proposal proposes that the Nursery Unit would be based in the purpose built pre-school facility which presently houses Kilcoo Playgroup. However, these premises do not meet the standards of the Building Handbook. Estates Advisory Branch has recommended that purpose built premises be provided and have estimated construction costs at £245,000 plus any site purchase costs. This is likely to be a longer term solution to housing the nursery if approved. However, approval of the development proposal does not extend to approval of a preferred option for accommodation as this would be dependent on approval of a business case and availability of capital resources. It will be a matter for CCMS, if the proposal is approved, to make the necessary arrangements for the provision of suitable accommodation which complies with all health and safety regulations.

Recommendation

28. Given the particular circumstances surrounding the provision of pre-school education in Kilcoo and in light of the concerns about the quality of the education currently being provided in the playgroup, it is recommended that you approve the establishment of a new statutory nursery unit at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo to provide 26 part-time places from 1 September 2014 and that with this approval the school will cease to admit pupils to reception.

29. Attached for your consideration are the following:

Appendix A: Published Development Proposal

Appendix B: Statistical information relating to the proposal

Appendix C: Maps
Appendix D: Draft Press Release



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Published Development Proposal



SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

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

PROPOSAL NO. 251
AREA NO. 9 Downpatrick and District

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, on behalf of the trustees of the Parish of Kilcoo, proposes a statutory nursery unit be established at St. Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo, to provide 26 part time places with effect from 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter.

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

Statistical information relating to the proposal**Table1: Primary Enrolment (2013/14 approved 165)**

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
117	120	130	133	131	133

Table 2: P1 Intakes (2013/14 approved 24)

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
15	19	21	15	24	19

Table 3: Primary Enrolment by Year Group (2014/15)

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
19	24	16	22	19	16	17	133

Table 4: Reception

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
5	6	5	9	*

Table 5: Playgroup Historical Enrolment

Ref No		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14	
		F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T
4AB0437	Kilcoo	16	26	19	30	17	24	23	25	17	22

F = funded T = Total

Table 6: Alternative Pre-school Provision

Ref No		Distance in miles	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14	
			F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T
5AB0420	Leitrim	4.4	22	22	24	24	24	24	24	24	26	26
4AB0435	Castlewellan	4.5	16	30	25	32	24	36	26	32	26	34
4AB0163	Naiscoil Uachtar Tire	4.5	13	20	26	30	26	33	22	28	23	32

F = funded T = Total

Table 7: Alternative Reception and Nursery Provision

Ref No		Distance in miles	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		Approved 2013/14 P1
	Reception		R	P1	R	P1	R	P1	R	P1	R	P1	
503-1653	St Matthew's	3.1	0	13	0	4	0	11	*	10	0	12	12
503-3003	St Paul's	3.5	5	10	0	13	*	10	*	10	*	12	11-13
403-1671	St Patrick's	4.2	*	8	*	10	*	5	*	9	0	9	14
401-1599	Castlewellan	4.6	*	9	*	13	*	8	*	5	*	5	16
	Nursery Unit												
403-6454	St Malachy's Castlewellan	4.3	26		26		26		26		27		26f/t

Distance as per Multimaps

Table 8: Alternative Nursery by Age

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12			2012/13			2013/14		
Age	2	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4
St Malachy's Castlewellan	-	26	-	-	25	1	-	26	-	-	26	-	-	27	-

Table 9: P1 Admissions in Alternative Provision (within 4 mile Buffer)

School	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Approved Admission
St Matthew's	13	4	11	10	12	12
St Paul's	10	13	10	10	12	11(to 13)
St Patrick's	8	10	5	9	9	14
St Malachy's	47	38	45	55	46	50
Total	78	65	71	84	79	87

Input from Early Years Team

Introduction

The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), at the request of the Council for Catholic Maintained schools (CCMS), published Development Proposal Number 251 in the week commencing 6 January 2014; this proposed that a statutory nursery unit providing 26 part time places be established at the school by 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter and that Kilcoo Playgroup cease to operate.

Background

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.

St Malachy's Primary School does not currently have a nursery unit. Kilcoo playgroup, located adjacent to St Malachy's, has been in receipt of PSEP funded places since the 2001/02 school year. It is registered for up to 24 children and in the 2013/14 school year offered 17 funded places.

CCMS advise that in February 2012, the Management Committee of Kilcoo Playgroup wrote to the Principal of St Malachy's PS asking that the possibility of converting the Playgroup to a statutory nursery unit of the school be explored. The Development Proposal to establish nursery provision at St Malachy's PS is, therefore, contingent on provision at Kilcoo PG ceasing and would effectively transfer pre-school provision from the voluntary to the statutory sector with an accompanying increase in funded provision from 17 to 26 places (based on 2013/14 intake).

At the date of the 2013 School Census, St Malachy's PS two children were enrolled in the Reception class. This number may increase throughout the year as children enrol on reaching their 4th birthday (subject to the overall enrolment number of the school). The Development Proposal states that the school will cease to admit pupils to reception provision if the nursery unit is established.

St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo serves a rural population and the Development proposal notes that Kilcoo Playgroup is the only pre-school provider within a five mile radius of the village: there is, however, a cluster of pre-school provision around Castlewellan.

Provision levels

In determining need, the Department assumes a level of provision at 95% of target age children, predicated on the application rate for pre-school places, which was

92.3% for 2013/14 admissions. This standard measure might not always reflect the full picture, however, when applied in rural settings.

The numbers of pre-school places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for 2012/13 and 2013/14 as indicated.

Level of Provision - 2 mile radius of St Malachy's Primary School

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

2012/13 (Source: 2012 School Census)

Level of provision – 32 pre-school places for 15 P1 children (213.3%)

Reception provision – 9 of 32 places (28.1%)

Statutory nursery places filled by under 3s - none

2013/14 – (Source: Provisional 2013 School Census figures)

Level of provision – 19 pre-school places for 24 P1 children (79.2%)

Reception provision – 2 of 19 places (10.5%)

Statutory nursery places filled by under 3s - none

2014/15 (As proposed)

26 places for 24 P1 children (108.3%)

Level of Provision - 5 mile radius of St Malachy's Primary School

2012/13 (Source: 2012 School Census)

Level of provision – 138 pre-school places for 196 P1 children (70.4%)

Reception provision – 17 of 138 funded places (12.3%)

Statutory nursery places filled by under 3s - none

2013/14 – (Source: Provisional 2013 School Census figures)

Level of provision – 124 places for 219 P1 children (56.6%)

Reception provision – 6 of 124 funded places (4.8%)

Statutory nursery places filled by under 3s – None

2014/15 (As proposed)

131 places for 219 P1 children (59.8%)

These figures, particularly in the five mile radius suggest significant under-provision, compared to the Department's standard measure of need; however this is not reflected in the low intake at Kilcoo Playgroup, which filled 17 of its 24 registered places in 2013/14.

Officials have also considered NISRA local birth rates and population predictions to identify potential future trends:

- Birth statistics by academic year for all wards which have a significant proportion falling at least partially within a 5 mile radius of St Malachy's PS indicate a reduction of 15 in the pre-school cohort between September 2013 admissions and September 2016 admissions (332 to 317).
- Population projections for 3 year olds for Down, Banbridge and Newry and Mourne District Council areas for the same period predict an increase of 10 (3426 – 3436) and a further 12 from 2016 to 2020 (3436 – 3448), but it should be noted that these figures relate to a very large geographic area.

Whilst these figures can only be indicators of the future pre-school population and do not fully take into account population migration and other factors, they suggest

that the overall demand for pre-school places in the immediate vicinity is likely to slowly decrease over the next few years, although this may be mitigated by increases in the wider area.

Approval of the proposal would lead to an increase of 7 pre-school places on 2013/14 figures. Kilcoo Playgroup is registered for 24 places, but only 17 were filled in 2013/14. This suggests that St Malachy's PS could have difficulty in filling all 26 places with target age children which could lead to the enrolment of underage children in the nursery unit.

PEAG/Board Comments

The PEAG met in January 2014 and agreed to support the Development proposal as published on the basis that:

- The Management Committee and staff of the playgroup are in favour of the proposal.
- The closure of the playgroup will result in a shortfall of pre-school places with no alternative provision in the vicinity.
- The rural location of the school – there will be no impact on existing provision.
- The forthcoming removal of reception provision and the current numbers attending Kilcoo Playgroup indicate sustainability.
- There is already sufficient and satisfactory accommodation available.

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. A key action of learning to Learn is legislating to remove the ability of primary schools to admit underage children to reception classes. The

Development Proposal, if approved, will cause reception provision at St Malachy's PS to cease.

ETI Advice

In its advice in relation to this development proposal, ETI has raised concerns about the quality of provision at Kilcoo Playgroup. The playgroup was last inspected in November 2012 and the overall finding was that 'In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively'. It found that both children's achievements and quality of provision were satisfactory while leadership and management were inadequate.

ETI has concluded that it would be content to support the Development Proposal provided due attention is given to the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced teacher who can provide quality educational provision for the pre-school children in Kilcoo parish.

EYT consideration

There is no early years policy to transfer pre-school provision from the non-statutory to statutory sector; the Pre-School Education Programme values both statutory and non-statutory provision equally. Learning to Learn contains a series of actions aimed at ensuring that every child can access high quality early learning experiences that equip them to develop improved cognitive, social and emotional skills and which lay important foundations for future learning and development. As these actions are taken forward, they will provide improved scope to address the concerns raised by the ETI.

Under Learning to Learn work is in hand, among other things, to:

- develop protocols for support and intervention which align with those for Every School a Good School, where the quality of provision in DE funded non-statutory early years settings is below standard although it is not anticipated that the protocols will include transforming non-statutory to statutory provision;
- create Early Years Education Support clusters to raise standards by making greater use of the teaching expertise in nursery schools and units, special schools, expertise across other relevant providers and early years specialists; and
- develop a programme for principals, teachers and staff in the Foundation Stage and funded pre-school setting.;

Key points to note

- There is sufficient pre-school provision within the area and current information predicts steady, if not slightly reducing, demand.
- Approval of the development proposal as is stands would result in an overall increase in provision of 7 pre-school places.
- Statistics and past enrolment at Kilcoo PG suggests that St Malachy's PS may have difficulty in filling all 26 places with target age children, which could lead to enrolment of underage children at the nursery unit.
- The success of the PSEP is due in part to the flexibility in capacity and location of pre-school places afforded by the voluntary and private sectors; there is, however, limited alternative provision in the immediate area.
- The request for part-time places is consistent with the moratorium placed on the creation of any new or additional full-time provision in the Learning to Learn Framework.
- A key action under the Learning to Learning framework is the removal of reception provision. If this Development Proposal is approved, reception provision at St Malachy's PS would cease although this would happen routinely once the appropriate legislation is introduced;

- The Playgroup was last inspected in November 2012 and the overall findings were that “in most of the areas inspected the quality of the education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory.”
- ETI’s advice in relation to this Development Proposal states that “while the monitoring visits to the setting indicate strengths in a small number of areas, the overall provision remains less than satisfactory”
- The Department has not, as yet, developed a policy or criteria in relation to the circumstances where it would be appropriate to cease funding an existing PSEP funded playgroup and establish statutory nursery provision as an alternative. Its practice has been not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence, with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. This is set out in the information it provides to non-statutory Pre-School providers.
- While there may be some issues of concern about the PEAG setting, there has been no policy in the past to address such concern. The implementation of Learning to learn will include the development of protocols for support and intervention which align with those for Every School a Good School, where the quality of provision in DE funded non-statutory early years settings is below standard: it is not, however, anticipated that the protocols will include transforming non-statutory to statutory provision.
- Other actions being taken forward within the Learning to Learn framework will establish appropriate support mechanisms to achieve the highest standards of pre-school provision through collaboration and dissemination of best practice.
- Were the Department to recommend approval of a development proposal in order to cease pre-school provision at a non-statutory setting where provision has been formally described as satisfactory, this could set a precedent for future Development proposals for conversion from non-statutory provision. It could also act as a perverse incentive for settings wishing to convert.
- The approval of the proposal would not require any capital expenditure. However, CCMS has suggested that DE vest the property of Kilcoo Playgroup, located adjacent to St Malachy’s PS. Colleagues with experience in estates management issues may wish to comment on this request.

Overall recommendation

The Early Years Team is not supportive of this proposal on the basis that:-

- The proposal simply replaces one type of provision with another and provides no evidence of added value to early learning and development;
- The figures do not indicate any pressing need for additional places and any increase in the number of pre-school places in the area may lead to the enrolment of underage children.
- There is no policy in place to support or promote the conversion of voluntary provision to statutory status; and
- Actions within the Learning to Learn Framework will introduce protocols for support and intervention which align with those for Every School a Good School, where the quality of provision in DE funded non-statutory early years settings is below standard and measures to establish appropriate support mechanisms to achieve the highest standards of pre-school provision through collaboration and dissemination of best practice.

Whilst the EYT is not supportive of this proposal, if the Minister is minded to approve it, EYT would recommend that approval is contingent on confirming that the funded places in Kilcoo Playgroup will be replaced by the new provision and that Reception provision at St Malachy's PS is removed.

Initial Input from ETI

Educational Provision

Kilcoo Cross Community Playgroup has been in receipt of PEAG funded places for approximately 14 years; and currently has 20 PEAG funded places. Since the playgroup's entry to the Department of Education's Pre-school Programme, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has carried out two inspections, both of which required follow-up activity. The current follow-up process is still ongoing. While the monitoring visits to the setting indicate strengths in a small number of areas, the overall provision remains less than satisfactory. During the current

academic year, in an attempt to address the ongoing issues, the management group recruited an entirely new team. However, the quality of the provision remains an area of concern.

Rationale

While the Department of Education will not displace current funded preschool provision in favour of new statutory provision, it is my view, as the early years District Inspector (DI), that the situation in Kilcoo warrants special consideration. As DI, I believe that the establishment of a statutory nursery unit under the guidance of the Board of Governors and school principal provides the most favourable option in the best interest of the children of Kilcoo parish.

I appreciate that there will be other views and opinions that will be considered prior to a decision being made. In my professional opinion, it will be imperative that an appropriately qualified teacher, with early years' knowledge and expertise, is appointed to help bring about the necessary improvements in the quality of the educational provision.

Conclusion

As early years district inspector, I would be content to support this development proposal providing due attention is given to the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced teacher who can provide quality educational provision for the pre-school children in the Kilcoo parish.

Further Detailed Input from the ETI

Background

I have been the District Inspector for Kilcoo Playgroup since 2001. The playgroup had an inspection in 2003 and the outcome was not entirely satisfactory, while the setting had strengths that could be built upon, there were a number of key areas for improvement which needed to be addressed. The original inspection was followed-up in 2004 to evaluate the progress being made in the areas identified for

improvement. The follow-up inspection found that the pre-school setting had made satisfactory progress in most of the areas identified for improvement in the original inspection but that the staff still needed to develop their planning methods. In particular there was a need for the staff to identify more clearly the learning inherent in the activities and to ensure that the programme met more fully the children's individual needs. Subsequently, the playgroup leader was off for an extended period of leave and the key areas for improvement were not addressed. Further monitoring visits were carried out, these raised serious concerns regarding the staff's ability to manage the children's behaviour. The Leader and staff were encouraged to work more closely with the centre's early years specialist. The early years specialist did support the staff in developing strategies, however, during a further monitoring visit it was evident that the staff were not consistent in using the strategies, particularly in relation to behaviour management and again concerns were raised by ETI as this was having a negative impact the children's behaviour and ultimately on their ability to learn.

In 2013 a further inspection was carried out and the quality of education provided by the playgroup was evaluated as satisfactory. The inspection identified areas for improvement including the need to:

- continue to develop the methods of planning, assessment and evaluation to provide a broad and balanced programme of activities that progress throughout the year, that meet the children's differing needs, and which supports all of the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children;
- improve the provision for outdoor energetic physical play;
- ensure that all the staff have a full understanding of child development and the learning potential of the activities provided, in order to ensure that they are able to interact more effectively with the children to develop their language and learning; and
- for the staff, especially the Leader, to work collaboratively in order to bring about the necessary improvement and development within the playgroup's provision.

Following the inspection the leader and another member of staff resigned and were replaced with staff who had limited experience. It is my professional judgement that for too long the children in Kilcoo have not been receiving provision that is good enough. In 1998 the government promised that children, whose parents wished them to have it, would receive 'good' quality pre-school provision. To date Kilcoo playgroup has been unable to deliver a 'good' quality provision despite repeated ETI visits and support, at best the quality of provision remains satisfactory.

One of my main concerns is that the playgroup is unable to attract suitably qualified and experienced staff. This may be partly due to the fact that the playgroup is in an isolated rural setting, given that the group can only offer part-time places and the playgroup offers a lower rate of pay. This does not encourage suitable applications to lead the playgroup from a wider catchment area.

ETI has always supported the view that 'good' quality provision in the voluntary and private sector should not be displaced in favour of statutory provision and I still hold firm to that ideology. However, I feel that Kilcoo is an exception to this rule. I feel that the children have a much better chance of receiving quality pre-school education if a suitably qualified teacher with training in early years and child development were to be appointed.

The leadership of the playgroup has been a long standing area for improvement. By appointing a teacher, there is a possibility to attract suitable practitioners from a wider catchment area who have specialised training and knowledge of the pre-school curriculum. Teachers will also have a greater understanding of self-evaluation and there would be greater accountability and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the work within the nursery unit by the senior management within the school.

Roles and responsibilities within the nursery unit will be clearly defined and the teacher will have the responsibility to up-skill her assistant and any other adults who may work with the children.

As part of her role, the teacher will be expected to develop policies and procedures that will guide the work and provision within the unit and all policies would be ratified by the Board of Governors and shared with the parents. The governors are also at liberty to request regular reports and updates on the developmental work of the unit. The developmental work required by the nursery unit will also feature in the school's development plan and have associated action plans which can be monitored by the principal and governors.

A new teacher would be able to avail of ongoing support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) and would also be able to join cluster groups of other teachers for dissemination of good practice.

The children's transition from the nursery unit into year one will be made all the smoother through the regular contact between the staff in the unit and the primary school. The nursery teacher will be able to provide relevant information about each child's ability and stage of development; which will then inform the year one teachers preparation for the foundation stage curriculum by building on the children's previous learning experiences. The settling-in period should be, greatly reduced as the children will already be familiar with the school and the staff .

It is the ETI's policy to carry out a baseline visit to a new nursery unit to outline for the teacher-in-charge and the principal of the school the high expectations and best practice required to ensure that the children receive the best possible pre-school education. The unit will then be inspected as part of the ongoing programme of inspections. The District Inspector may at any time carry out a monitoring visit; all of which is to try to ensure that the provision for the children is of the highest possible standard.

Input from Schools Finance Team

Financial Implications

Please find below a high-level estimate of funding (using 2014/15 Primary funding formula values):

(i) Total Cost of New Nursery Unit

AWPU Factor	$26 * 0.895 * £2,022.1554$	=	£47,056
Premises Factor - Pupil (FTE)	$13 * £87.77$	=	£1,141
Funding			
TOTAL (Full Year)		=	£48,197
TOTAL (In-Year)		=	£28,115

(ii) Cost of Existing Reception Class (2 pupils enrolled at Census 2013)

AWPU Factor	$2 * 1.08 * £2,022.1554$	=	£4,368
Premises Factor - Pupil (FTE)	$2 * £87.77$	=	£176
Funding			
TOTAL (Full Year)		=	£4,544
TOTAL (In-Year)		=	£2,651

(iii) Net Cost of Replacing Reception Class with Nursery Unit (Difference of i and ii)

TOTAL (Full Year)	=	£43,653
TOTAL (In-Year)	=	£25,464

A high-level funding estimate of the net cost of replacing the existing Reception class with a 26 place part-time nursery unit is **£44k (full year)** and **£25k (in-year)**. This assumes replacement of a Reception class with 2 pupils enrolled (based upon Census 2013 data) and use of 2014/15 Primary funding formula factors. The funding requirement may be increased by other allocations, such as the TSN Factor, which cannot be estimated at present as relevant data are not available.

In the current financial climate, School Finance Team are concerned that approval of this Development Proposal will increase pressure on an already severely stretched Aggregated Schools Budget.

School Data

St Malachy's PS, Kilcoo had a budget surplus of £46,567, or 10.49% of available delegated resources, at March 2013, the most recent set of finalised data. The school's Funding Authority (the SEELB) reported a **provisional** March 2014 surplus of £47,962 for St Malachy's PS. Note that this figure is considered provisional until receipt of an audited SEELB outturn statement in the Department. The SEELB have some concerns about the school's finances, but these are not considered significant.

Additional Costs

Staffing

A nursery teacher and a nursery assistant will need to be provided for the part-time session.

Staffing costs from CCMS

Part Time teacher 20 hrs/wk (inclusive of directed time) at mid pt
M4-M5

Basic	17,781
NI	1,423
S/A	2,418
Total	21,622

Classroom Asst 20 hrs/wk at mid pt (based on 46.4 wks/yr)
9(NJE)

Basic	7,591
NI	1,518
Total	9,109

Total of both salaries £30731.

Accommodation

CCMS submitted proposals for the conversion of the pre-school premises for the nursery and these were forwarded to Estates Advisory Branch for their comments which are attached below.

St Malachy's Nursery School, Dublin Road, Kilcoo, Newry, BT34 5HR.

St Malachy's Primary School, Ballymoney Road, Kilcoo, Newry, BT34 5HU.

Existing Play Group Accommodation –

The existing accommodation was purpose built for the playgroup in 1999 on land belonging to the Parish of Kilcoo. The project was funded with grant-aid from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund. The site is shared with a Credit Union facility. The car park is used by visitors to the Chapel and the Graveyard located to the side and rear of the site.

Accommodation includes –

- An entrance foyer
- A playroom of 56m²
- A store of 9.8m²
- A Utility Room of 4.5m²
- Pupil and staff toilets
- A switch/boiler room

A single unit handbook compliant nursery building would have an internal area of 160m², the existing unit measures 98.8m².

St Malachy's Primary School Existing Accommodation –

Current enrolment is 133 with an approval of 165.

The approved enrolment equates to a six class-base school, the current enrolment equates to a five class-base school. At present there are five classrooms one of which is in modular form. Internal Area is 639m² plus mobile of 90m².

LIA of 1140m² is recommended for a new 6 class-base school with a site of 0.95ha)

The site area is 0.52ha with access from Ballymoney Road, into a small car park.

The existing school building does not have spare capacity to accommodate a nursery school provision.

Options to be considered -

Option 1 – Vest the existing playgroup building. (approx. 0.02ha)

Option 2 – Vest the existing playgroup building with the car park area to the front. (approx 0.07ha)

Option 3 – Erect a new nursery connected to the existing St Malachy's building.

Option 4 – Purchase additional land adjacent to the existing school and build new nursery.

Consideration of Options

Option 1 – This option involves vesting the existing playgroup building and immediate area, approximately 0.02ha, and extending the existing building to provide as far as possible the SOA as prescribed in the DE handbook. This option would result in providing a slightly sub-standard handbook provision, with insufficient play area and a facility remote from St Malachy's PS. Access to the facility would have to be provided by a "right of way" across the Chapel/Graveyard/Credit Union car park.

This Option is considered the least attractive as it provides a remote slightly substandard provision with very limited play area, and with child protection and shared access problems.

Option 2 - This option involves vesting the existing playgroup building and car park to the front, approximately 0.08ha, and extending the existing building to provide as far as possible the SOA as prescribed in the handbook.

However it is unlikely that the parish would agree to the vesting of their car park.

This option would provide a remote slightly substandard provision within a site slightly smaller than that desired of 0.1ha.

Option 3 – This option involves demolishing the P1 hexagonal classroom to the north of the building and building on a new nursery unit to handbook standards. At the same time two new classrooms could be constructed to the rear of the school and the existing mobile removed. See sketch below. However the existing St Malachy's site is already undersized and this option would add to this problem. The school principal would prefer this option above options 1 & 2 above as it would address a number of school accommodation issues. The existing P1 classroom is difficult to use as it is hexagonal in shape. The existing mobile building gives constant problems and a permanent provision would be welcomed.

This option would provide a Handbook compliant Nursery accommodation, two new full sized classrooms with resource area and remove the temporary mobile classroom. However while hard play area could be provided soft play would continue to be provided at the local Gaelic pitches.

Option 4 – This option would see the purchase of additional land adjoining St Malachys PS and the erection of a purpose built nursery to handbook guidelines. Access could be achieved through the existing car park with additional parking provided.

This option is considered the most advantageous as it locates the nursery beside the school and may give opportunity to provide additional land for the school. The other issues the school have, mentioned above, could be addressed through the minor works programme.

Costs

Nursery School Provision (approximate costs);-

Option 1

Alter and extend existing playgroup facility.

Estimate of cost £113,500.00. Site purchase required.

Option 2

As option 1 but including provision of limited car parking, fencing and gate.

Estimate of cost £133,500.00. Site purchase required.

Option 3

Demolish existing hexagonal classroom & construct new nursery.

Provide 2 new classrooms including stores and resource areas.

Upgrade existing M & E services.

Siteworks.

Estimate of cost £440,000.00.

Option 4

Provide new nursery on adjacent site.

Estimate of cost £245,000.00. Site purchase required.

NOTE:-

Estimated costs are for construction works only & exclude site purchase, fees,VAT,etc.

Conclusion

The poorest solution would be Option1 leaving the school with a substandard provision.

Option 2 is just workable but has the disadvantage of a remote small site with a refurbished layout.

Option 3 has advantages for the main primary school building but while it would be preferred above options one and two retains the problems of an already tight/small site.

Option 4 would be considered the most advantageous solution with the new nursery being located adjacent to the primary school. Indeed if a larger portion or portions of ground were available than the 0.01ha required for the nursery, the purchase of Site B&C could provide the paradisiacal option for this undersized school site.

Schedule of Accommodation to be provided within the Nursery Unit.	
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PLAYROOM & QUIET ROOM (Quiet room approx. 8m2)	total 65m2
STORE	7 to 8m2
OFFICE	10m2
PUPILS' TOILET	16m2
LOBBY/CLOAKS	approx. 10m2
CLEANER'S STORE (to service completed nursery building)	approx. 4m2
EXTERNAL STORE	minimum 10m2
COVERED PLAY AREA	25m2

The design must comply with the requirements of the Department's Building Handbook for Nursery Schools. http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/13-schools_estate_pg/13-content-buildinghandbook/13-schools_estate_nursery_pg.htm



Existing Playgroup Site – Showing Credit Union and front Car Park



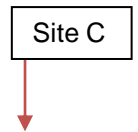
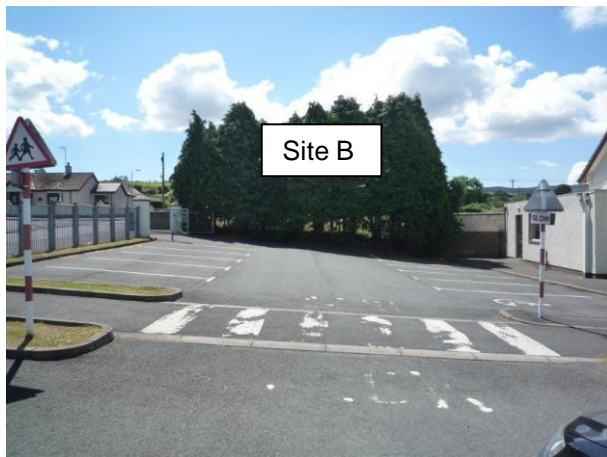
Photo shows Playgroup Building to the left, St Malachs PS to the middle rear and Site B to the right. Looking North across Dublin Road from Tullyree Road



Photo Showing St Malachs PS, Site B and Site C looking south along Ballymoney Road



Photo Showing St Malachs PS, Site B and Site C from Crockoona Park junction with Ballymoney Road



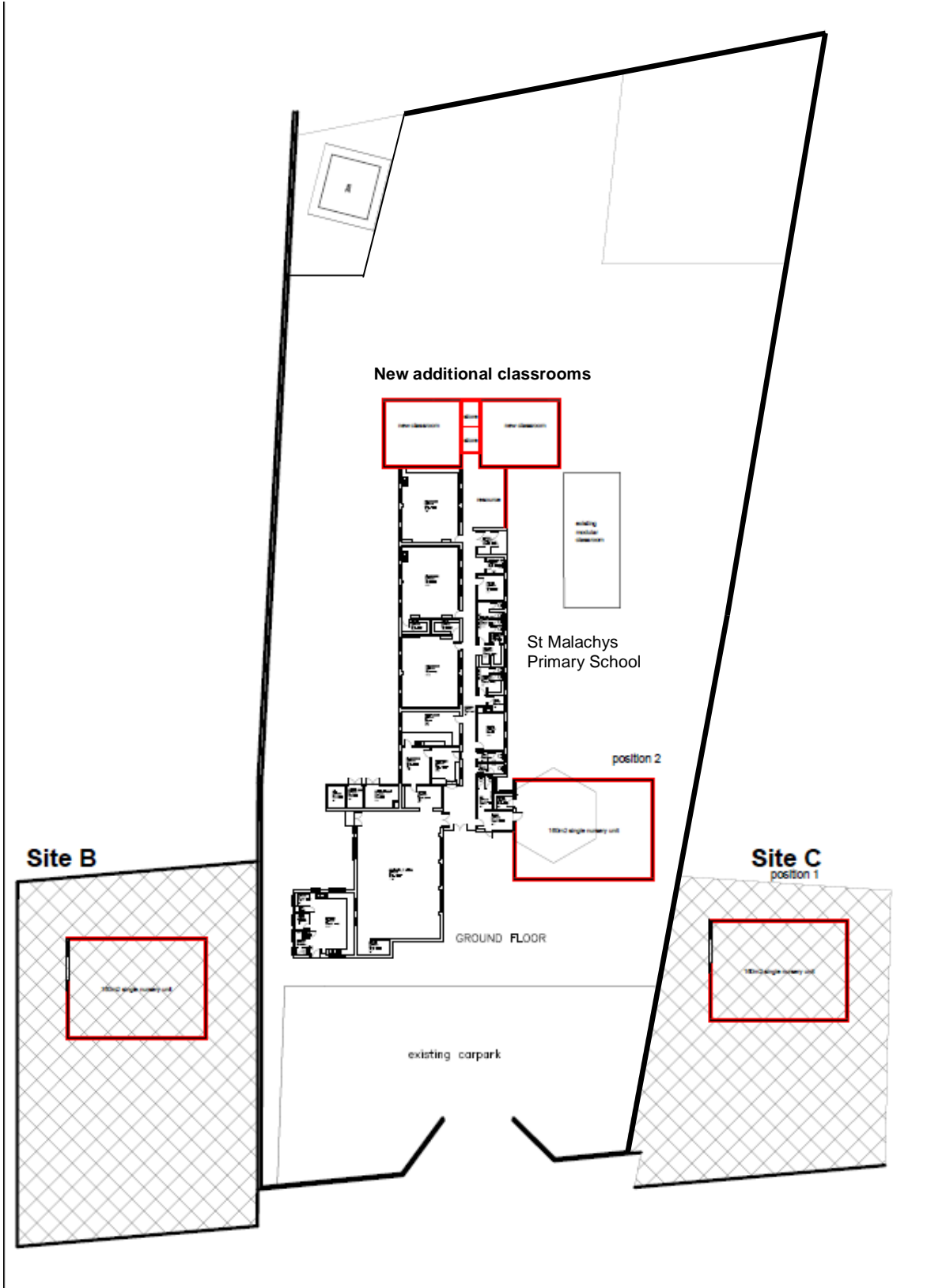
School Car Park Access to Site B

School Car Park Access to Site C

Sketch Showing -

Option 3 – Nursery located in position 2, or

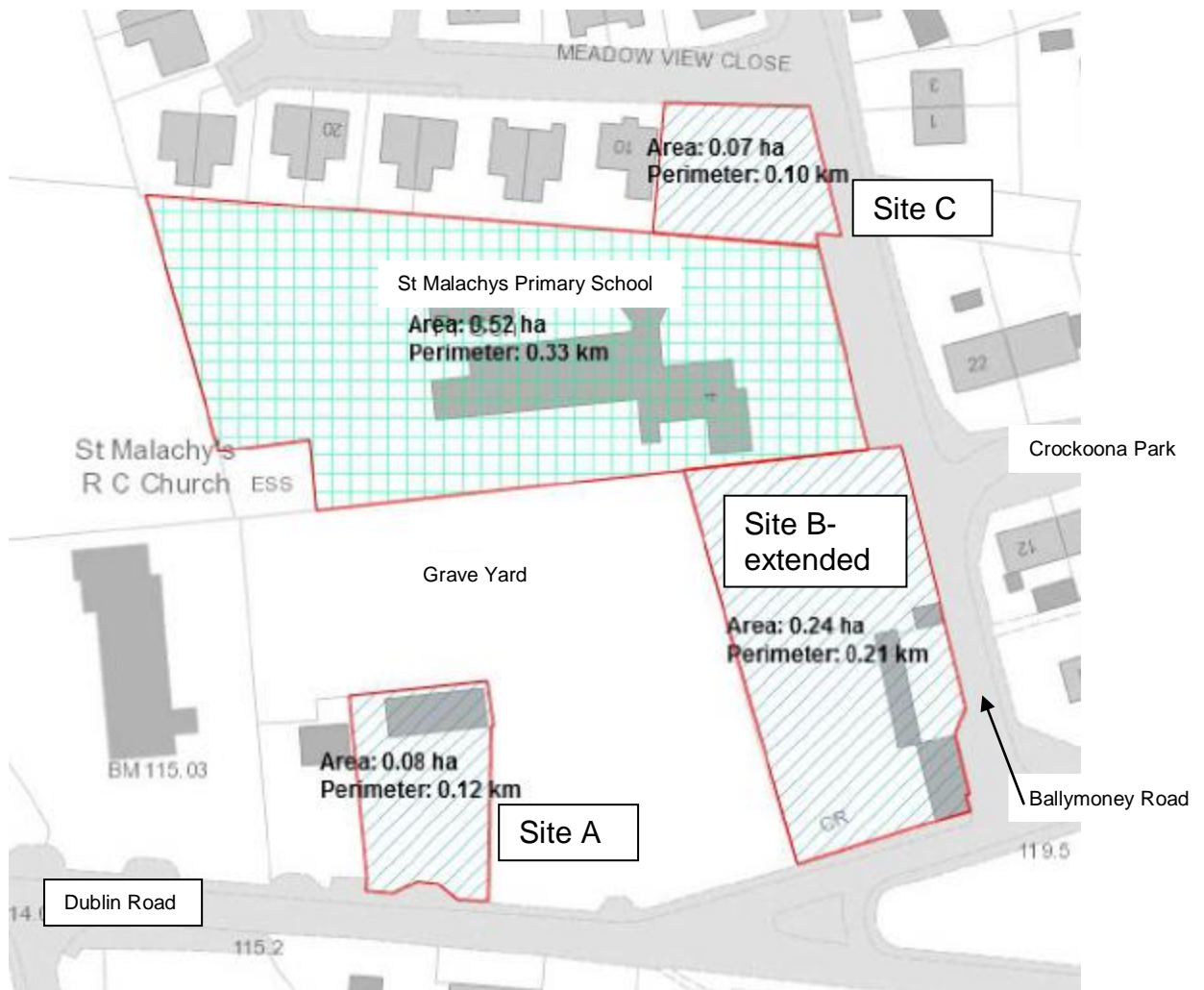
Option 4 – Nursery located on Site B or Site C.



Map Showing Locations of Possible Sites.

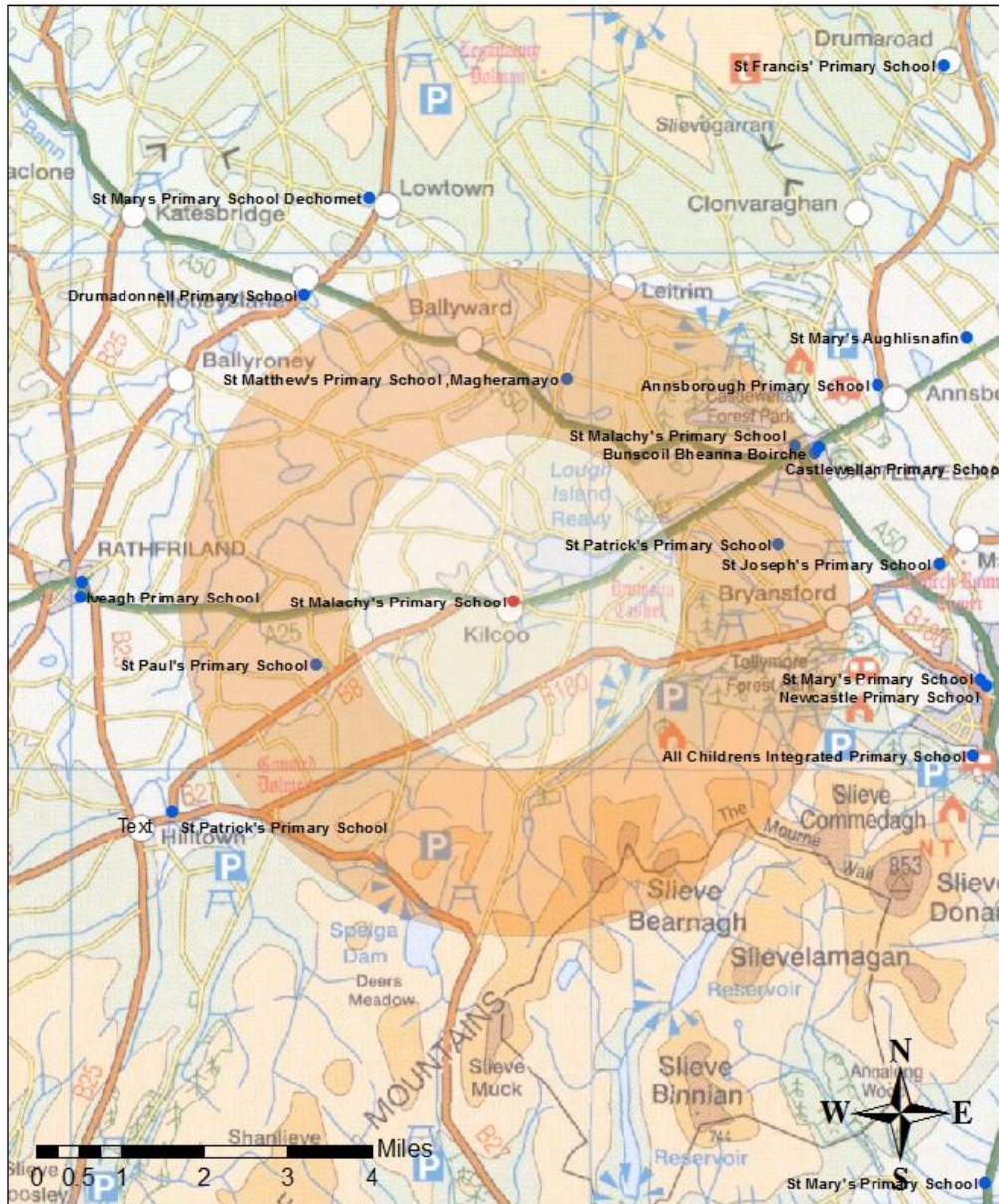
Site A – Option 2

Sites B & C – Option4 showing possible extended Site B



Location Map

St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo

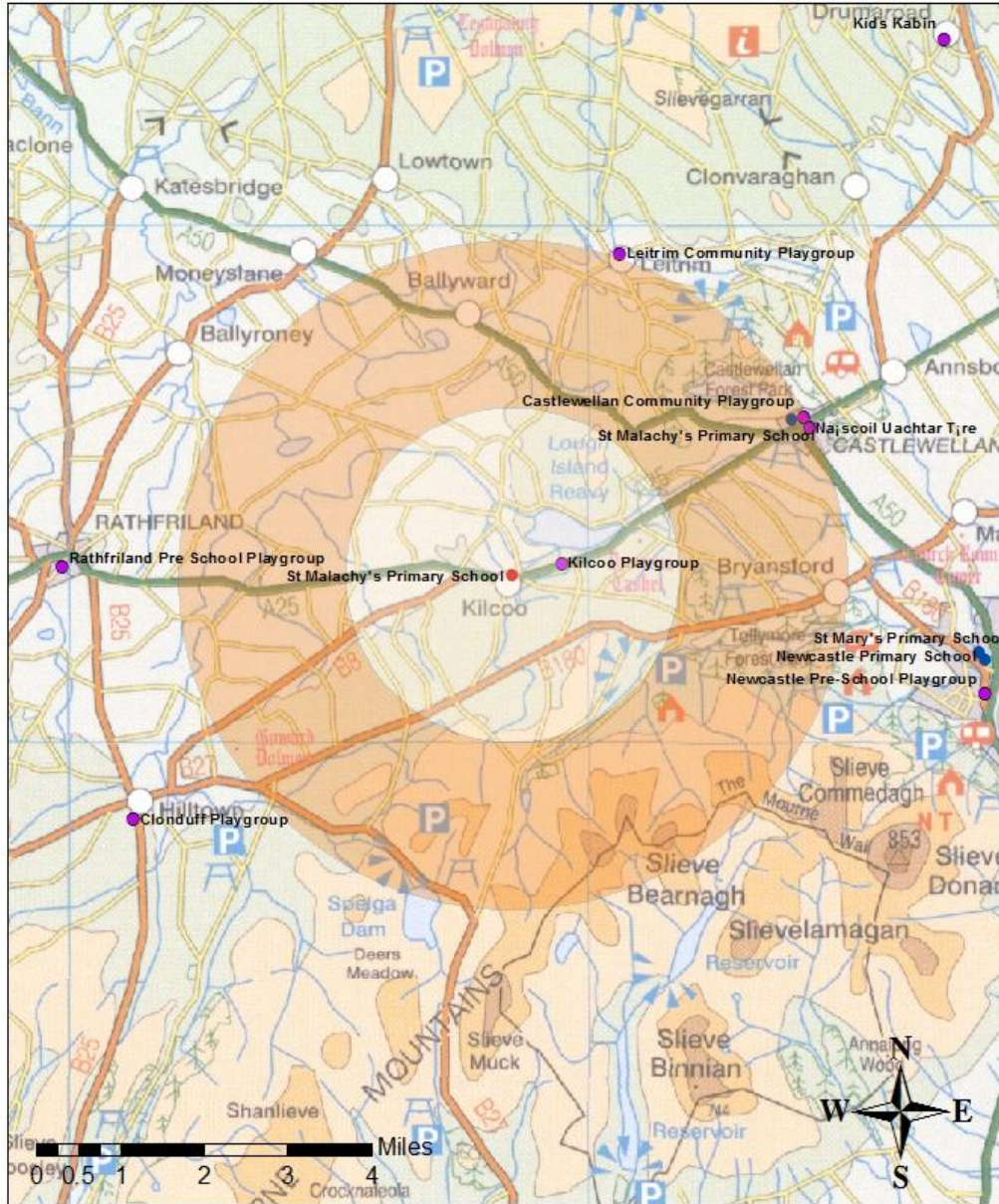


- Key
- St Malachy's Primary School
 - Primary School
- St Malachy's Primary School
- Buffer Distance
- ◊ 200
 - ◊ 400



Nursery/Pre-school

St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo



- Key
- St Malachy's Primary School
 - Nursery
 - Primary Schools with Nursery Units
 - Pre-schools
- St Malachy's Primary School
- Buffer Distance
- ◇ 2.00
 - ◇ 4.00



Draft Press Release

O'DOWD APPROVES NEW NURSERY UNIT AT ST MALACHYS PRIMARY SCHOOL, KILCOO.

Education Minister, John O'Dowd, has approved the establishment of a new 26 place part-time nursery unit at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo. The new nursery unit will replace the current Kilcoo Playgroup and reception class.

Explaining the reasons for his decision, Minister O'Dowd commented: **"It is well-established that high quality pre-school education has a positive impact on children's educational outcomes. To this end, a key Programme for Government target for my Department is to provide a place in their immediate pre-school year for all children whose parents wish it. This new provision at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo will help achieve this aim in the Castlewellan area."**

Notes to Editors:

1. St Malachy's Primary School is a grant maintained co-educational primary school situated on the Ballymoney Road in the village of Kilcoo, four miles south of Castlewellan.
2. On 8 January 2014, the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) published Development Proposal (DP) No. 251 which proposes the establishment of a 26 place part-time nursery unit at St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo, with effect from 1 September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter.
3. 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.