

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	DP 265 (WELB)									
School(s)	St Anthony's PS, Bellarena - 2032265									
Proposal	Closure									
Minister's Decision	Approve									
Date of Decision	10/03/2015									
Minister's Comments	Agreed									
Additional Notes	<p>A copy of the final press release can be found at; http://www.deni.gov.uk/news.htm</p> <p>Statistical information for 2014/15 school year is based on provisional census figures.</p>									
Information Redacted	<p>Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Key</th> <th>Details</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>■</td> <td>redaction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>*</td> <td>refers to less than five cases where data is considered sensitive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>#</td> <td>means figure has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information under rules of disclosure</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		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
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FROM: Dorina Edgar
Area Planning Policy Team

TRIM ref: DE1/14/272729

DATE: 26 February 2015

To: JOHN O'DOWD MLA

see copy distribution below

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO. 265 (WELB) – PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ST ANTHONY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL (PS), BELLARENA

Issue: It has been proposed that St Anthony's PS, Bellarena should close from 31 August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Timescale: Routine

Financial / Resource Implications: St Anthony's PS had a cumulative deficit of £7,453 at March 2014. The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) projects a deficit of £125,825 by March 2017. Any closing deficit will have to be written off in full from ELB Centre Funds. The WELB Funding Authority considers the school's financial plans unacceptable, with an irrecoverable deficit.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) have been unable to quantify the teaching redundancy costs associated with the closure at this time. There are currently two teachers in the school.

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

Legislation Implications: None.

Presentational Issues: This will be of interest to media in the Limavady area. *(The Communications Team will clear a Press Release with you following your decision.)*

Recommendation: That you:-

- approve the proposal to close St Anthony's PS; and
- agree that this submission (with any appropriate redactions) can be published on the DE website.

Background

On 29 October 2014, the WELB, at the request of CCMS, published Development Proposal (DP) No. 265, proposing that St Anthony's PS should close from 31 August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter. The statutory two month objection period ended on 29 December 2015. A copy of the proposal is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. The approved admissions and enrolment numbers of St Anthony's PS are 15 and 106 respectively.

3. CCMS initiated a consultation regarding the future of this school in light of the *Policy for Sustainable Schools* and the ongoing Area Planning process. CCMS's Case for Change in bringing forward the DP is set out in **Appendix C** and statistical information relating to the proposal is provided at **Appendix D** below. The main points may be summarised as follows:-

- Enrolments indicate that the school is not viable. There was one pupil in the Primary 1 intake at the school in the 2013/14 school year and the enrolment has reduced to 14 pupils in the 2014/15 school year. This is significantly below the minimum enrolment threshold of 105 for rural Primary schools specified in the *Policy for Sustainable Schools*.
- Enrolments have been decreasing over a number of years (61 pupils in 2004/05 to 14 pupils in 2014/15).
- The quality of education is difficult to maintain due to composite classes involving three and four year groups.
- There are sufficient unfilled places locally to accommodate the St Anthony's PS pupils. There is spare capacity (298 places) at several other local Catholic Maintained schools within a five mile radius.
- The children will move to larger classes where they will have access to greater social interaction and a greater opportunity for healthy intellectual involvement with peers.
- A deficit of -£125,825 is forecast by March 2017 which is deemed to be irrecoverable.

Alternative provision

4. There are currently 298 spare places in two WELB Catholic Maintained schools locally. Inclusion of a nearby North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Catholic Maintained school increases the number of spare places to 344. This is set out in detail in Appendix D below.

Financial Position

5. St Anthony's PS had a cumulative deficit of -£7,453, or -4.24% of available delegated resources, at March 2014, the most recent set of finalised data available. The WELB Funding Authority considers the school's financial plans unacceptable and its deficit irrecoverable. The forecast position is a deficit of -£125,825 or -243% of available delegated resources at March 2017. Any closing deficit will have to be written off in full from ELB Centre Funds.

WELB Primary Schools Area Plan

6. In the most recent WELB Primary School Area Plan (23 June 2014), the following commentary was provided regarding St Anthony's PS:-

A number of issues in the school/local area have been identified.

- *More than 2 composite classes in a single classroom.*
- *2 teachers in 2013/14.*
- *School's enrolment for 2013/14, 21 pupils, is below the minimum enrolment threshold detailed in the Sustainable Schools Policy.*

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

7. The ETI supports the proposal to close St Anthony's PS, making the following points:-

- The school has seen its enrolment reduced by approximately three-quarters over the past 10 years or so.
- The enrolment is not sustainable, with no children in the foundation stage and only three children in Key Stage 1
- The school has difficulty providing a suitable broad and balanced curriculum which reflects the statutory requirements to meet the needs of all the children.
- The area in which the school is situated has restrictions on new residential developments.

Full ETI comment is set out at **Appendix E** below.

Consultation

8. WELB has confirmed that it has fulfilled its statutory duty in relation to consultation and has consulted with all schools likely, in its opinion, to be affected by the DP.

9. Proof of CCMS consultation has been supplied.

Letters of Support/Objection

10. The Department has not received any letters of support or objection to this proposal.

11. The WELB received a letter from the Chair of the Board of Governors (BoG) of St Anthony's. Whilst the BOG raised some staffing and parent/pupil concerns relating to the school closure (staff redeployment, pupils enrolling in new schools) they stated that they were committed to working with CCMS, WELB and DE to ensure everything would run smoothly for all connected with the school.

Conclusion and Recommendation

12. Enrolments in St Anthony's PS have been in decline for a number of years with no expected prospect of recovery. There are 344 spare places in three local Catholic Maintained schools.

13. The quality of education is difficult to maintain due to composite classes involving three or four year groups.

14. The proposal arises from the work undertaken by the CCMS and is reflected in the WELB Primary Area Plan.

15. WELB projects that the school will have a deficit of -£7,453 in March 2014 and is not financially viable. The forecast position is a deficit of -£125,000 in March 2017.

16. ETI supports the proposal to close – the enrolment is not sustainable, the school has difficulty providing a suitable broad and balanced curriculum and there are restrictions on new residential developments locally.

17. The BoG of the school is committed to assisting CCMS, WELB and DE to ensure the closure of the school runs as smoothly as possible.

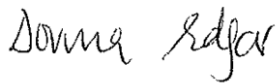
18. In the circumstances, closure appears to be in the best educational interests of the children concerned and it is therefore recommended that you:-

- approve the proposal to close St Anthony's PS;

- agree the wording of the DP decision letter (Appendix F); and
- agree that this submission (with any appropriate redactions) can be published on the DE website.

19. Attached for your consideration are the following:-

Appendix A: Published Development Proposal No. 265
Appendix B: Maps of Area
Appendix C: CCMS Case for Change
Appendix D: Analysis of Proposal
Appendix E: Department of Education and ETI comment
Appendix F: Draft Decision Letter



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Published Development Proposal

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO. 265

ST ANTHONY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELLARENA

Notice is hereby given that a proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, as amended by Article 145 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, and as amended by Article 24 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, has been submitted to the Western Education and Library Board by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools on behalf of the Trustees of the Parish of Magilligan.

The proposal is to the effect that:

St Anthony's Primary School, Bellarena, will close with effect from 31 August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter.

In pursuance of Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 as amended by Article 145 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, and as amended by Article 24 of the Education and Libraries (NI) 2003, this proposal has been submitted by the Board to the Department of Education for approval.

A copy of this proposal can be inspected at the Headquarters Office of the Western Education and Library Board, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh and www.welbni.org (under publications).

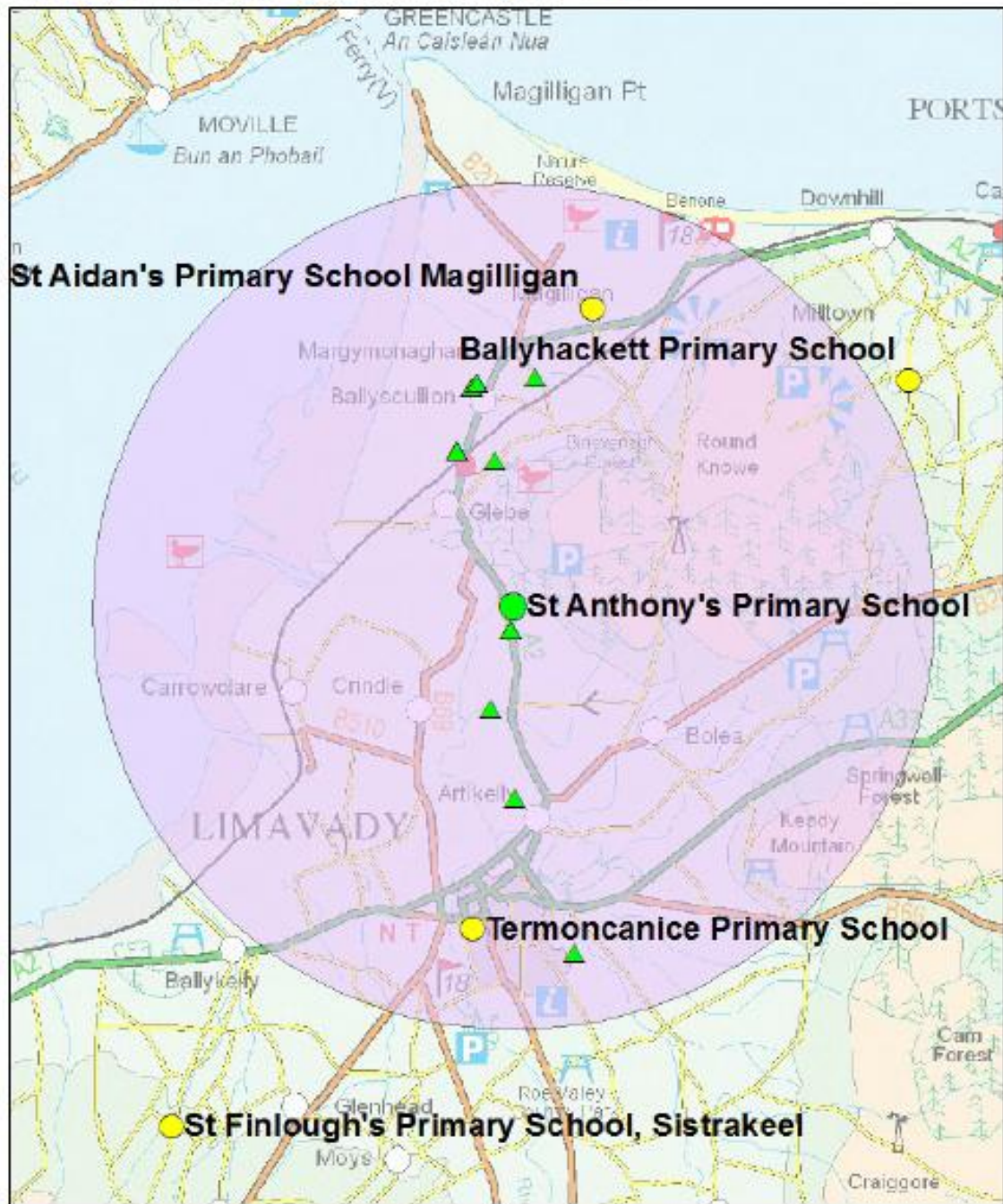
Any comments or objections to this proposal should be made in writing, within a period of two months from this date, to the Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 7PR.

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).

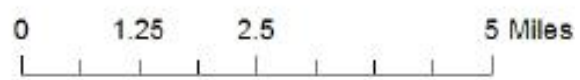
Barry Mulholland Cert Ed., DASE, M.Ed., MBA
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Map of Area

St Anthony's PS, Bellarena



- St Anthony's PS, Bellarena
- ▲ Pupils home address
- Alternative Maintained Schools
- 5 mile buffer St Anthony's PS, Bellarena



CCMS Case for change

1. BACKGROUND

St Anthony's PS is located close to the village of Magilligan and opened in 1956. There are two primary schools in the parish; of the two parish schools St Anthony's PS is closer to Limavady (4 miles). The children who attend the school are from the parishes of Magilligan and Limavady. Magilligan, where St Aidan's PS is located is a remote rural area which is 9 miles from Limavady and on no direct transport route. Both schools are in the Limavady District Council Area.

The parish of Magilligan is located next to the Parishes of Limavady and Coleraine in the Diocese of Derry. The parish has a population of 1200 people. There are two Catholic Maintained primary schools serving the parish each under the management of a single Board of Governors. Other schools in the immediate area include one controlled primary school.

The following summarises accommodation in St Anthony's:

Permanent Classrooms:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2@ 41sqm• 1@ 48sqm
Temporary Classrooms:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1978 – 1@ 52sqm – Classroom
Other Accommodation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1@ 10sqm – Staff room• 1@ 16sqm – Kitchen• 1@ 4sqm – Stores
Toilets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1@ 8sqm – Girls - 2WC's• 1@ 9sqm – Boys - 3 urinals, 2WC's• 1@ 2sqm – Staff unisex – 1WC
Grounds:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1@ 2340sqm - Usable grass play areas• 1@ 518sqm - Hard surface play areas• 1@ 80sqm - Car Parking

Alterations/Improvements:

- 1994 – Education reform improvements carried out
- 1996 - 7B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a temporary mobile for office/storage £13,000
- 1996 - 8B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a new phone system for the school £575
- 1997 - 9B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a temporary mobile classroom £18,898
- 1998 - 10B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a new car park and lay by £30,000
- 1999 - 11B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of Health and Safety works to the staffroom and cleaners store £5,150
- 2002 - 12B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of improvements to the office/storage and toilet facilities £88,010
- 2004 -13B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of the replacement of a temporary mobile £15,944
- 2007 – 15B – Security Fencing - £11,750.00
- 2008 – 16B – Special Needs Adaptions – Acoustics £18,436.00
- 2011 – 17B – Door Access Systems - £2,169.80
- 2012 – 18B – FRA - £1,164.7

Applications have recently been submitted and are under consideration for the following:

- Replacement of temporary accommodation
- Provision of a special needs room and resource area

The accommodation does not meet the requirements of the DE Building Handbook.

2. RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

The rationale for this proposal to cease educational provision in St Anthony's PS by 31st August 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter is largely due to population decline in the area and consequently a steady decline in enrolment.

Other options considered:

- School remains open - continued pressure on staff to deliver broad and balanced curriculum to mixed aged classes. Significant deficit in budget – leading to further reduction in staff
- Amalgamation with St Aidan's PS, Magilligan – not progressed as the two schools combined would still fall well below the recommended minimum enrolment number of 105. Also parents did not wish to send their children to Magilligan which is in a more isolated area (up to 8 miles for some)

- Shared Education with Bellerena Controlled PS – not progressed as neither of the two schools are sustainable under the Policy for Sustainable Schools

3. AREA PLANNING IMPACT

3.1 Schools for the Future: A policy for Sustainability [SSP]: 2009.

Under the Sustainable Schools Policy (2009), St Anthony’s PS does not meet two of the criteria and will struggle to meet a third:

- Stable Enrolment Trends
- Sound financial position
- Quality Education Experience
- Strong leadership and management
- Accessibility
- Strong links with the community

The **enrolment** now sits at 18, which is well below the DE recommended minimum enrolment of 105 for rural primary schools.

LMS **funding** is based on pupil numbers and with enrolment in such decline the challenge has become acute, with significant deficits accruing.

The **quality of educational experience** is difficult to maintain due to composite classes involving three and four year groups when department policy proposes no more than two year groups in a class.

The potential closure of St Anthony’s PS will not have any significant impact on other schools. Parents have indicated that they will move their children to other schools in the area. They have not yet indicated which schools.

3.2 Viability Audits submitted to the Minister in February 2012

Prepared jointly by WELB and CCMS, these audits considered the first three criteria above, and formed the basis of proposals for Area Planning as presented to individual schools in 2012. The purpose of the audits was to identify specific stresses at individual schools, and the extent to which they impact on the school’s sustainability.

Viability audits of the two parish schools

	Children’s Educational Experiences	Enrolment Trends	Financial situation
St Aidan’s PS	No stress	STRESS	No stress
St Anthony’s PS	No stress	STRESS	No stress

This viability audit was carried out in 2012. The situation has since changed in St Anthony's PS with the enrolment declining further from 26 to 15 pupils. This has had a significant detrimental impact on the budget (which is now also in significant decline) and is also making it more difficult for the staff to provide a quality educational experience for the remaining children.

3.3 Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future – WELB Strategic Area Plan.

Action for all primary schools was set out in this document. Consideration was given to the Viability Audits and the Sustainable Schools Policy. The following 'action' was identified for the two parish schools:

St Aidan's PS:

Local area/parish solution to be explored. A number of issues in the school/local area have been identified:

- More than 2 composite classes in a single classroom.
- 3 teachers in 2012-2013
- School's enrolment for 2012/13, **38** pupils, is below the minimum enrolment threshold detailed in the Sustainable Schools Policy.

School enrolment for 2014/15 = 46

St Anthony's PS:

Local area/parish solution to be explored. A number of issues in the school/local area have been identified:

- More than 2 composite classes in a single classroom
- 2 teachers in 2012-2013
- School's enrolment for 2012/13, **25** pupils, is below the minimum enrolment threshold detailed in the Sustainable Schools Policy.

School enrolment for 2014/15 = 18

4. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

The educational benefits of this proposal will be that children will move to larger classes where they will have access to greater social interaction. There will be greater opportunity for healthy intellectual competition among peers.

5. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

5.1 Admissions and Enrolment at St Anthony's PS for last 10 years

Year	Year 1 Admissions	Actual Enrolment	Approved Enrolment	Spare Capacity
2005/06	4	57	106	-49
2006/07	5	52	106	-54
2007/08	4	40	106	-66
2008/09	3	31	106	-75
2009/10	1	30	106	-76
2010/11	6	32	106	-78
2011/12	1	26	106	-84
2012/13	3	25	106	-85
2013/14	1	21	106	-89
2014/15	1	18	106	-95

As indicated in the table above, admissions and enrolment have been in steady decline over the past 10 years.

5.2 Profile of Enrolment at St Anthony's PS (2014/2015)

Year	Enrolment
1	1
2	1
3	3
4	1
5	7
6	1
7	4
Total	18

5.2 Financial Implications

The enrolment determines the LMS budget. Schools are only permitted to operate within a + / - 5% surplus / deficit

The most recent budget plan predicts the following annual deficits:

- End of 13/14 -£7,000
- End of 14/15 -£37,000

- End of 15/16 -£71,000
- End of 16/17 -£111,000

6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

6.1 The proposal to close St Anthony's PS on 31st August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter, is based on three critical factors as set out above:

- The low, and decreasing enrolment
- A significant deficit budget within three years
- Difficulty in meeting key educational provision indicators as set out in the Schools Sustainability Policy

6.2 Proposed timetable for action

Proposed Actions	Timeframe
Proposal put to EPC and Derry DEC for consideration.	Spring term 2014
Consultation with governors, staff and parents of St Anthony's PS and 10 weeks response period. (Due to summer holidays)	Summer term 2014
Publication of Development Proposal by WELB	29 th October 2014
DP submitted to DE for consideration re closure of St Anthony's PS	22 nd September 2014
Parents identify primary school of choice to which the children will transfer in September 2015. Engage in transition arrangements with the chosen schools	Spring/Summer term 2015
HR issues addressed re teaching staff [CCMS] and non-teaching staff [WELB]	Spring term 2015
Closure of St Anthony's Primary School	31 August 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications

The closure of St Anthony's PS will have the following impact:

Finance:

- Any budget surplus in August 2015 will be retained by WELB
- Reliance on Small School Support and Principal Release funding will cease
- Excluding AWPU's [allocated elsewhere] all other costs [premises etc] at St Anthony's PS will cease

Staffing:

- Possible redundancy costs for teaching and/or non-teaching staff
- Possible costs re salary protection scheme if the principal is redeployed to a lesser position

Transport:

- Transport costs for pupils: these will be minimal as there are only 18 children currently attending St Anthony's PS

Analysis of Proposal

Quality Educational Experience

The most recent follow-up inspection was conducted in January 2009. This found the quality of education provided by the school was now good and that the school had important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection had identified that the school had demonstrated the capacity to address some other minor aspects of the areas for improvement.

Enrolment Trends

The *Policy for Sustainable Schools* states that a rural (outside Belfast and Derry City Council areas) Primary school should have a minimum enrolment of 105 pupils. St Anthony's PS has an approved admissions number of 11 and an approved enrolment number of 75. The enrolment in St Anthony's PS has been declining steadily over the last few years (see Tables 1 & 2 below). Enrolments indicate that the school is not viable.

Table 1 Enrolment by Year Group 2014/15 (unverified)

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
0	0	3	0	6	1	4	14

Table 2 Historical intakes and Enrolments

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total Enrolment	30	32	26	25	21	14
Admissions	1	6	1	3	1	0

Accessibility

Table 3 Distances - Alternative Primary Schools to St Anthony's PS

Ref	School	Distance ¹ (miles)	2014/15 Enrolment	Physical Capacity	Spare Capacity
203-2287	Termoncanice PS	4.4	484	746	262
203-3708	St Aidan's PS	5.3	46	82	36
303-2104	Ballyhackett PS	9.3	21	67	46

¹ Distances from Google maps

Table 3 (above) provides detail of available capacity within other local maintained schools. The *Policy for Sustainable Schools* provides a “rule of thumb” home to school travel time of less than 30 minutes (i.e. 1 hour per day in total) for Primary pupils. Travel times in the event of the closure of St Anthony’s PS are unlikely to exceed this threshold.

Tables 4 and 5 provide details of historical enrolments and intakes within other local maintained schools.

Table 4 Historical Enrolments at Alternative Primary Schools

Ref	School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
203-2287	Termoncanice PS	560	557	559	551	484
203-3708	St Aidan’s PS	43	43	38	44	46
303-2104	Ballyhackett PS	43	45	42	42	40

Table 5 Historical Intakes at Alternative Primary Schools

Ref	School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
203-2287	Termoncanice PS	82	78	70	59	60
203-3708	St Aidan’s PS	9	10	4	10	9
303-2104	Ballyhackett PS	6	10	7	3	4

Financial Viability

WELB projects that the school will have a deficit of -£7,453 in March 2014 and is not financially viable. The forecast position at March 2017 is a deficit of -£125,825.

Links with the Community

The WELB received a letter from the Chair of the BoG of St Anthony’s highlighting some concerns pertaining to the potential closure (staffing issues, parent queries and general uncertainty) but also noting that the BoG recognised the impact that the small pupil numbers had on the educational and social needs of the pupils. They pledged to work closely with CCMS, WELB and DE to ensure that the closure of the school ran as smoothly as possible.

Department of Education and ETI comment

School Finance Team

St Anthony's PS had a cumulative deficit of -£7,453, or -4.24% of available delegated resources, at March 2014, the most recent set of finalised data available. The WELB Funding Authority considers the school's financial plans unacceptable and its deficit irrecoverable. The forecast position at March 2017 is a deficit of -£125,825 or -243% of available delegated resources.

The 2014/15 allocation to St Anthony's PS for the Small Schools Support Factor is £42,008.

Per Capita Allocations

The school's 2014/15 per capita allocation is £7,205; this is substantially higher than the average per capita for a WELB Primary School of £3,188.

ETI comment

The Western Education and Library Board published Development Proposal No 265 on 22 September 2014:

St Anthony's Primary School, Bellarena will close with effect from 31st August 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter.

ETI supports this development proposal.

- St. Anthony's Primary School has seen its enrolment reduced by approximately three-quarters over the past 10 years or so. The two teachers have responded very professionally and the school is very well presented; the learning environment is stimulating and very effective use is made of the outdoor areas to support and enhance the children's learning experiences.

However, the enrolment is not sustainable and with no children in the foundation stage and only three children in key stage 1, the opportunities for them to develop their cognitive, personal and social skills, despite the best efforts of the teachers, are limited.

In addition, it is difficult to provide a suitable broad and balanced curriculum which reflects the statutory requirements and provides an appropriately wide range of non-formal and extra-curricular activities to meet the needs of all the

children, with a significantly increasing budget deficit. It is appropriate that the Board of Governors (BoG) has recognised these difficulties in its letter of 9 October 2014.

- The school is situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty with restrictions on new residential developments.

There is another maintained school approximately five miles along the road (St.Aidan's Primary School, Magilligan) whose enrolment has remained above 40 children in four of the last five years (and currently stands at 46). There is a controlled school, Bellarena Primary School, approximately two miles along the road with a steady enrolment of just below 40. These provide the parents with a choice of small, local, rural schools should they not wish to send their children to Limavady, approximately four miles away.

Draft Decision Letter

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 265 – PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ST ANTHONY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELLARENA

I refer to the above Development Proposal, published by the Western Education and Library Board on 29 October 2014, proposing that:-

- **St Anthony’s Primary School, Bellarena should close with effect from 31 August 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter.**

The Minister has given very careful consideration to the proposal and has approved the closure of St Anthony’s Primary School as set out above.