

**Part 2  
Appendices DP 623**

**Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter;**

**(This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal 625)**

**Appendix A**

Area Planning Case for Change	
Straid Primary School  Development Proposal No 623  Proposal to: Discontinue	
Case for Change: Supporting Information - Summary/Overview	
Area Planning District	Antrim and Newtownabbey

Development Proposal Number	623
Proposer	Michele Corkey Director of Education Education Authority
School(s) Name	Straid Primary School
School(s) Reference	301-0570
Sector	Primary
Management	Controlled
Development Proposal Publication Date	Week commencing 20 September 2021
Proposal	<b>Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter</b>

Case for Change: Statutory Consultation

*Note: It may be necessary for documentary evidence to be provided to show that the statutory procedures have been followed. It is essential that relevant parties retain this information.*

The following is to be completed by the Proposer and signed off by them.  
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

**Proposer**

Provide detail of consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils.

Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before publication of the DP?

Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 10 March 2020 to 21 May 2020

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority’s Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 3.30pm
- Board of Governors: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 5.30pm
- Parents/Guardians: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 7.00pm
- Local Schools (32): Letter – 12 March 2020

Re-Start Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

On 18 March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced that schools would close to pupils at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March 2020. This resulted in area planning activity being stood down. Area planning activity was given permission to resume by the Department of Education on 8 October 2020.

In recognition of the time period from the pre-publication consultation, 10 March 2020 to 21 May 2020, it was considered that a re-start of the pre-publication consultation should be undertaken.

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority’s Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Board of Governors: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Parents/Guardians: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Local Schools (32): Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

The Education Authority received a total of 89 responses. The information below provides a summary/emerging themes of the responses received.

Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Total
Board of Governors		1		1
Board of Governors – Affected Schools		2		2
Governors	1	1		2
Staff – Teaching/Non-Teaching		1		1
Parents/Guardians		43		43
Pupils		4		4

Other - Past Pupil/Parent of Past Pupil		5		5
Other - Grandparents		5		5
Other - Straid Village and District Community Group and Women's Institute		2		2
Other – Local Residents		17		17
Other – Local Business		1		1
Other – Controlled Schools' Support Council			1	1
Other – Unknown	1	4		5
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>89</b>

A summary of comments in support of the proposal:

- Enrolment numbers clearly indicate that there is no longer viable support from within the community. With small numbers children do not have the breadth of experience or opportunity that will prepare them fully for secondary school.
- Smaller classes do not equate to better teaching and small staff numbers make the logistics of fulfilling all the roles and responsibilities difficult and expensive.
- One larger school would mean that students would get access to a more enriched education and this could be more attractive to new teachers. It would also be a more efficient use of money. Ballynure PS site may need to be relocated to a new, bigger site as it doesn't have scope for expansion and has poor outdoor space.




A summary of comments not in support of the proposal:

- We are told the six criteria in the Sustainable Schools Policy are equally weighted.
- The activities of EA related to Area Planning have undermined this provision by repeatedly putting the future of the school up for debate.
- It must be noted that the argument to close small schools, it seems, is to save money.
- It is of prime importance at this time that we consider the needs of our children. In the last 18 months they have experienced tremendous and damaging upset to their education and social life.
- Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where the numerical viability headcount is the same in small rural communities as in much larger urban settings.
- The closure of the school creates difficulty in the drop up and pick up of children.
- Other schools in the area, like Ballynure PS or Ballyclare PS, have already heavy pedestrian and vehicle traffic at both those schools.
- Do not wish to see the additional traffic that is likely to be brought by additional parents and children attending Ballynure PS.
- The school fosters positive community links with eg the WI, village association and church.
- At present class sizes are small allowing teaching and non-teaching staff to cater for the needs of all children including those with SEN. The school provides quality teaching and learning opportunities as evidenced in the inspection report. There is a high level of pastoral care where the children feel valued, safe and supported.
- Straid PS is an integral part of the rural community
- The community in Straid depends on the school, for a place to gather and hold meetings, to bring people together.



- The larger sized schools and classes do not suit every child and a one size fits all approach cannot be applied to education. Many children require a smaller, more personal approach in order to thrive. Therefore, the closure of these schools is a discrimination against those children.
- Believe that the number of pupils to teacher ratio would allow our child to receive a greater 1:1 tuition than any large school can offer.
- Should be given time and opportunity to re-build their numbers without the threat of closure putting off perspective parents.
- Some parents have started to move their children because of the way the consultation is written as if it is a foregone conclusion that the school will close - which is completely unfair and sneaky.
- When the current Principal was appointed, she was assured by the EA that she would be given time to work to turn things around at Straid. The EA did not honour its commitment to support the school through the brief downturn in numbers.
- Parental choice to choose a small rural primary school is being denied.
- The impact on pupils' emotional wellbeing, together with Ballynure PS being overcrowded, reduced outdoor space and parking and traffic will also be an issue.
- Consultation at this time has already caused a significant increase in stress and is unfair and unjustified at this time.
- Disgusted with only one meeting directly before Covid lockdown.
- Awaiting responses to questions submitted.
- Straid PS is a very safe environment in respect of covid-19 protocols and restrictions. Due to the small size of the school, social distancing has been adhered to at all times.
- The EA's definition of rural is totally inadequate. To claim that anywhere outside of Belfast and Londonderry is rural shows a total lack of understanding of truly rural communities.
- Children are being discriminated against for living in a rural setting.
- Would like to point out that the document produced is factually incorrect, in that it repeatedly states that the school enrolment numbers have consistently declined over the past years, when in fact the numbers have increased since 2018/2019.
- It is felt that the EA has not taken into account the increase in live births within the Ballynure electoral ward.
- The EA has not fully considered the 3 Tier Model and should have more evidence included for improved quality of education and the benefits of removing composite classes.
- The school shouldn't close because it's been there for 190 years.
- My teachers are the best and I don't want to be separated from my friends. We know each other very well as there are not many other boys and girls in the class.
- I'm scared about going to a new school.
- Would appeal to the Education Authority to rethink its plans for Straid PS. This school is central to our community and our members have supported the school for many years. The closure of Straid PS would mean the closure of the Straid's Women's Institute, an educational and social facility for the women of this district.
- Historical Society have a great desire to retain the unique identity of our village and the retention of Straid PS is key to this.
- Straid PS has been an integral part of the area for many years, closing it will force children to travel unnecessarily while tearing the heart out of the village community.

Section 75

	<p>15 responses commented on Section 75. These responses, together with all of the responses to the consultation, have been taken into account when undertaking the equality and rural screening of the proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Straid PS is an all-inclusive school who caters for the individual needs of children to the highest order! It is necessary to keep the lines of communication wide open in the active community.</li> <li>• The support that students with learning difficulties and disabilities will be impacted and their ability to adapt to a new environment will be deeply challenged. The plan offers no support in this.</li> <li>• I have some great friends at school, and they are in all different age groups.</li> <li>• Kids can all go to Straid PS and it doesn't matter what their religion is and they can all be friends.</li> <li>• If the closure gets the approval from the board at the EA this will have an adverse effect on the mental wellbeing of children.</li> <li>• Closing the school would prevent people of different religions and age coming together.</li> <li>• The proposal discriminates against anyone to have the choice to send their child to a rural school with reasonable class sizes. This takes away the identity of rural children and forced them to travel further for education.</li> </ul>																
Confirmation by the Proposer	<p>I confirm that the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of pupils of Straid Primary School were consulted on 10 March 2020 and 6 May 2021. Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="456 1077 1316 1301"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	7 September 2021								
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Associated Proposals	<table border="1" data-bbox="456 1323 1469 1668"> <tr> <td>Proposal</td> <td colspan="3">Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in the enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DP Number</td> <td>625</td> <td>Date Published</td> <td>Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposal</td> <td colspan="3">Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DP Number</td> <td>624</td> <td>Date Published</td> <td>Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Proposal	Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in the enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.			DP Number	625	Date Published	Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021	Proposal	Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.			DP Number	624	Date Published	Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021
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Case for Change: Statutory Consultation

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

The following is to be completed and signed off by the E.A.

The Education Authority (EA)

I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021 with a return date of 21 May 2020 (suspended) and 1 July 2021.

Name:	Michele Corkey
Office Held:	Director of Education
Signed:	
Date:	7 September 2021

Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.

Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).

Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.

Dates of EA meetings e.g. Education Committee/ Board etc.

Details of issues raised by members of EA Board

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021, to schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 32 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 21 May 2020 (suspended) and 1 July 2021.




Two responses were received from affected schools. One response was received from the Controlled Schools' Support Council.

**Doagh PS and Toreagh PS - Do not support the proposal**

- Wish to express our support for Straid PS in their campaign against closure in September 2023. A village school is more than a place for teaching and learning – it is a hub of the community for everyone and we sincerely and strongly support them in their endeavour to remain an essential part of Straid village as they have been for years.
- The Governors of Toreagh PS would ask that Toreagh is put forward as an alternative school for the children of Straid when it closes. As a school, we would like to take those children for whom Toreagh is the closest school.

**Controlled Schools' Support Council**

- Notes the low enrolment in Straid PS and recognises the challenges this presents for the Board of Governors and staff. In all aspects of the consultation CSSC would request that the educational experiences of the pupils and staff are paramount.
- Without pre-empting the decision to progress these proposals and ultimately the outcome, CSSC would emphasise the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity in alternative controlled schools for those children displaced from Straid PS.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the Education Authority is minded to progress the proposal to discontinue Straid PS, CSSC would support the proposed increase to the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure PS whilst being mindful of the potential for parental preferences to indicate a preference for other controlled provision in the area.</li> </ul> <p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2021.</p>								
<p><b>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS</b>  In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 824 651 1070"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	7 September 2021	<p>The Education Authority, as the proposer, supports Development Proposal 623 that Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Pre-publication consultations were undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians outlining the Education Authority's Case for Change detailing the rationale for the proposal. During the consultations undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians the following recurring themes emerged:</p> <p><b>Availability of places and accommodation in local schools</b>  The Education Authority will, should the proposal be approved, liaise with the parents, local schools, managing authorities and the Department of Education to endeavour to ensure that pupils affected by the proposal be accommodated, where possible and within current guidance/policies. The Education Authority recognises that there are limited places within the local area, hence the associated Development Proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers in Ballynure Primary School. The Education Authority also acknowledges there are other schools within the local area with some additional capacity.</p> <p><b>Children with Special Educational Needs</b>  The support which the Education Authority provides for the pupils will continue regardless of the school they attend, to ensure that the needs of all children are met and they reach their full potential.</p> <p><b>Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</b>  The Education Authority has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and delivering public services. The areas from which Straid Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The discontinuance of Straid Primary School will have an impact on the local area. The provision of home-to-school transport will provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria.</p> <p><b>Increased Enrolment Numbers</b></p>
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	7 September 2021								

	<p>Concern was expressed that the consultation document inaccurately reported that pupil numbers had declined since 2009. The final Case for Change has been updated to reflect the upturn of 8 pupils for the 2020/21 year from the previous year and also indicating a projected slight decrease in pupil numbers for 2021/22.</p>
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## 1 BACKGROUND

Straid Controlled Primary School is situated in the village of Straid in County Antrim. The majority of the children attending the school come from the village and within a five mile radius of the school.

The school serves the community surrounding the school and has an enrolment of 53 pupils. In consideration of a declining enrolment, the school was identified in the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan as 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision by March 2019.

Straid Primary School is a three class base primary school, has four teachers with composite classes for Years 1-2, Years 3-4, Year 5-6 and Years 6-7. There are four non-teaching staff.

### 1.1 Statistical Information

The school has an approved enrolment of 119 pupils and an admissions number of 17.

The school experienced a downturn in enrolment numbers from 2015/16 until 2018/19. There was an upturn in numbers of 8 pupils in 2020/21 and there is a projected slight decrease in pupil numbers for 2021/22. Table 1, below, details the historical and current enrolment figures.

	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
2013/14	0	9	13	7	12	13	15	10	79
2014/15	0	11	9	13	7	12	14	15	81
2015/16	0	9	11	9	12	7	13	13	74
2016/17	0	10	9	10	9	9	7	12	66
2017/18	0	7	8	7	6	6	3	6	43
2018/19	0	9	6	8	6	5	3	4	41
2019/20	0	6	8	7	6	7	6	5	45
2020/21	0	10	6	9	8	7	7	6	53

The enrolment statistics show that the school population numbers have declined since 2009 resulting in 53 pupils currently enrolled at the school (based on DE Enrolment census figures).

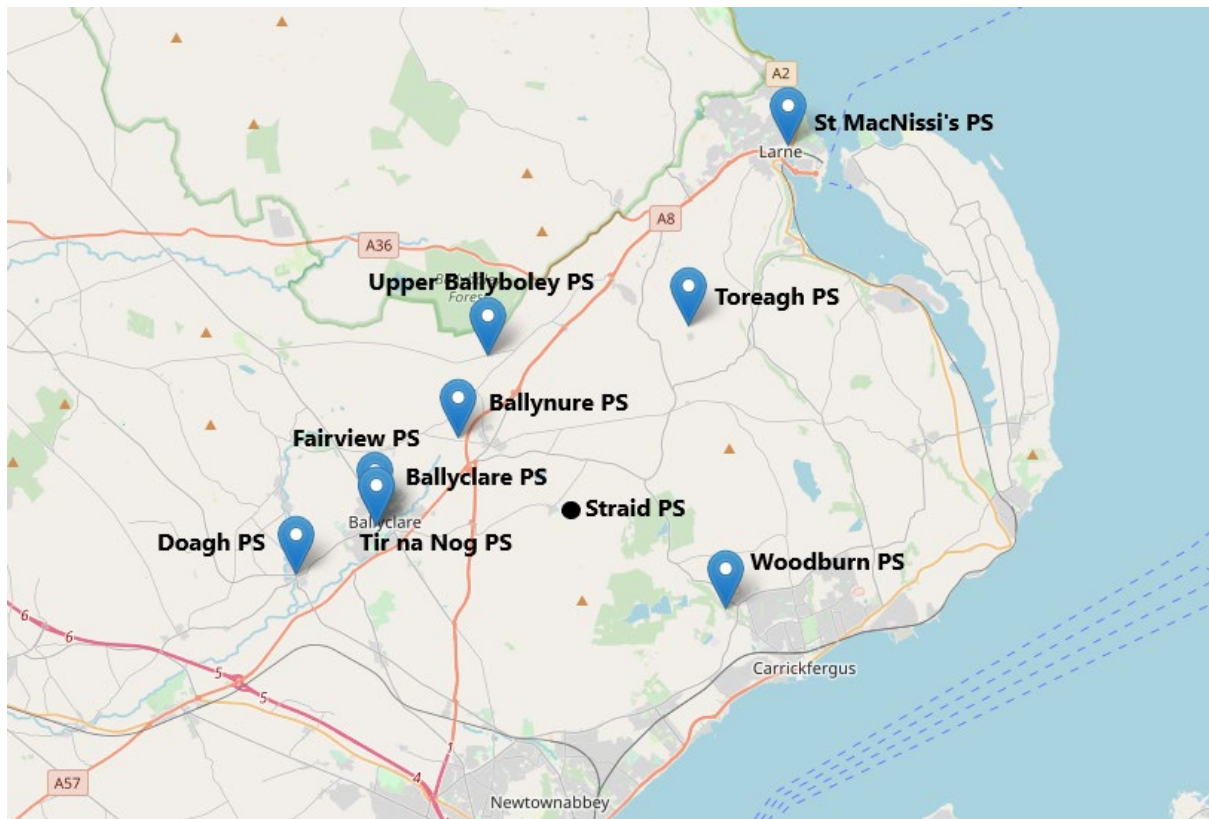
Table 2 lists the schools closest to Straid Primary School. The distribution map below shows in context the pupil distribution and the local schools. There is capacity within the local schools as detailed in Table 2.

	Distance (miles) From Straid Primary School	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places 2020/21
Straid Primary School	-	Controlled	53	119	66
Ballynure Primary School*	1.9	Controlled	148	154	6
Upper Ballyboley Primary School**	5.0	Controlled	28	100	72
Toreagh Primary School	4.7	Controlled	111	105	0
Mossley Primary School	4.9	Controlled	609	610	1
Ballyclare Primary School	3.7	Controlled	555	572	17
Fairview Primary School	4.1	Controlled	501	525	24
St Macnissi's Primary School	5.2	Maintained	185	210	25

Woodburn Primary School	4.2	Controlled	188	193	5
Woodlawn Primary School	5.4	Controlled	180	310	130
Earlview Primary School	5.5	Controlled	227	221	0
Doagh Primary School	5.7	Controlled	115	138	23

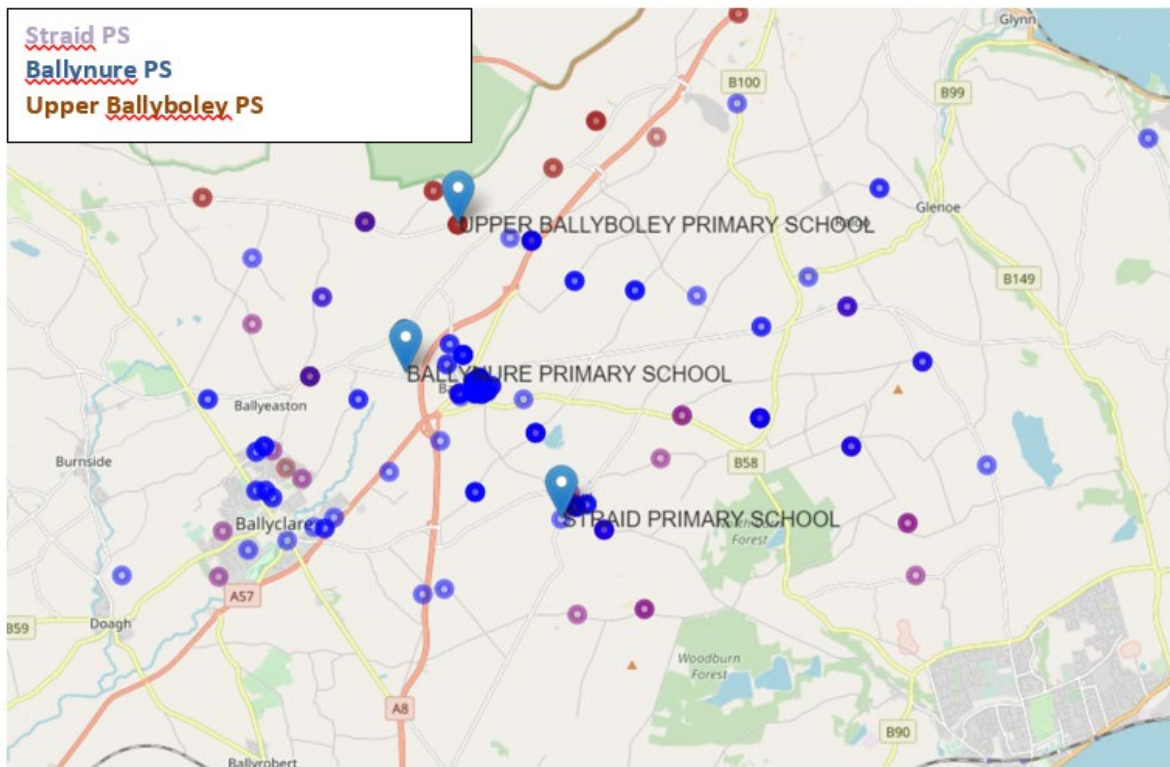
- \* associated proposal to increase the Ballynure Primary School's admission and enrolment number
- \*\* proposal to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

Map 1: Highlights the schools within the surrounding area





Map 2: Highlights the current pupils attending Ballynure Primary School, Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School



Analysis of the above information shows there are a number of available places in the alternative schools. In terms of the existing catchment, there are a number of children within the Straid Primary School area attending other local schools, particularly Ballynure Primary School. The Education Authority is taking forward a development proposal to increase provision within the area through a proposed increase in the admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School.

In consideration of the distance of the local schools, home-to-school transport arrangements will be implemented within transport regulations.

## 2 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The main focus of the Area Planning process is embedded in the Sustainable Schools Policy first published in 2009 and applies to primary and post-primary schools. The policy outlines the criteria that school managing authorities should consider when making decisions affecting the best use of resources in order to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out 6 sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.

### 2.1 Quality of Education

Straid Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in a rural community of approximately 3.8 miles from the town of Ballyclare. The majority of the children attending the school come from the surrounding area. The school enrolment has experienced a decline in pupil numbers over the past number of years.

An ETI inspection was undertaken in October 2011 with the overall findings of the inspection as very good:

The ETI report indicated:

*In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.*

The most recent ETI inspection was conducted in March 2019 (Involving Action Short of Strike), while the inspection still proceeded, it was not possible for ETI to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership and governance; impact of middle leadership; and action to promote and sustain improvement.

### 2.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

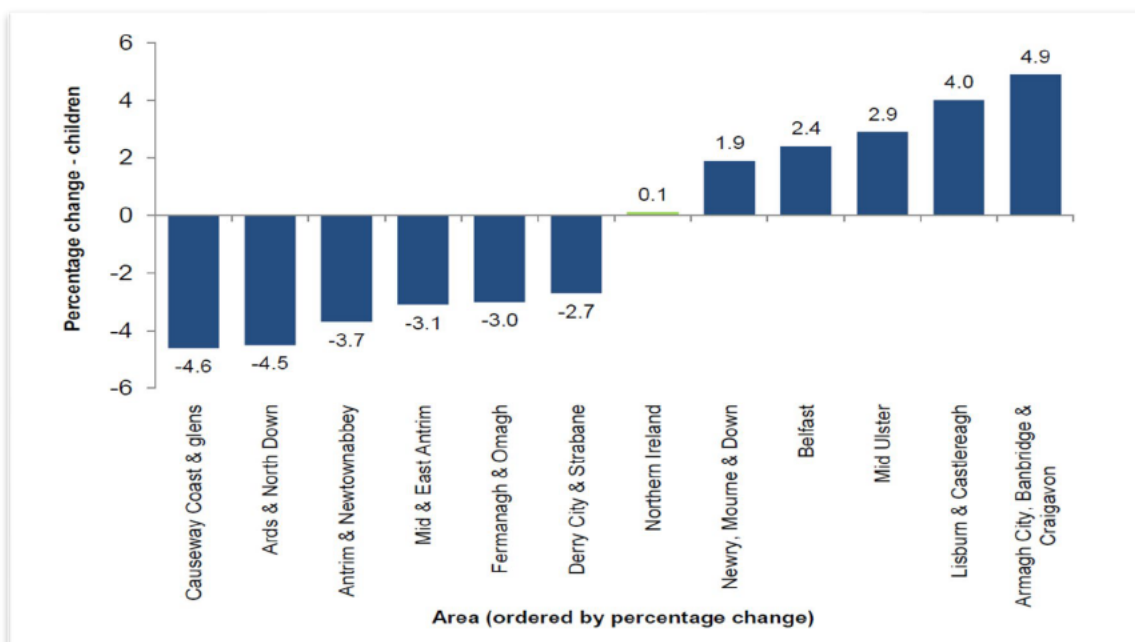
The school experienced a downturn in enrolment numbers from 2015/16 until 2018/19. The September 2019 enrolment was 45 pupils. There was an upturn in numbers of 8 pupils in 2020/21 and there is a projected slight decrease in pupil numbers for 2021/22, see Table 1 above. The school enrolled 10 Year 1 pupils in September 2020, and as a consequence the enrolment is 53 pupils. The school's enrolment falls well short of the Sustainable Schools Policy criteria for a rural school of 105 pupils.

### 2.3 Population Change

Table 3 indicates a projected population reduction of children aged 0-15 years, within the Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In Mid and East Antrim LGD there is also a reduction of 3.1% between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In addition the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency predicts the population of children (4-11 years), in the Antrim and Newtownabbey to decrease by 5.9% (mid-2016 to mid-2026) and similarly the prediction for the reduction of 4-11 year olds in the Mid and East Antrim LGD is 9.4%

**Table 3: Projected Population Change**

Projected Change in Number of Children (i.e. those aged 0-15) by Local Government District (mid-2016 to mid-2026) (Source: NISRA)



The live birth information is:

**Table 4 – Live Births (Source: NISRA)**

Ward Name	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change from 2010 to 2018
Ballynure*	33	27	27	29	34	34	40	35	35	+6%
Kilwaughter	87	93	93	95	88	93	60	74	89	+3%
Glenwhirry	37	28	36	22	36	36	40	29	29	-22%
Doagh	51	46	51	39	52	46	42	53	34	-33%
Ballyclare Nth	51	60	49	44	52	68	49	44	61	+19%
Ballyclare Sth	71	42	63	64	42	47	41	34	42	-40%
Glynn	20	12	20	18	9	16	18	15	17	-15%
Woodburn	32	22	31	23	23	25	24	15	25	-22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>332</b>	
<b>Year 1 - Year</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	

\*Straid Primary School is located in the Ballynure Electoral Ward

## 2.4 Sound Financial Position

Straid Primary School does not operate within its in-year budget. At March 2021 it had a deficit of -£162,922. It is projected that by the end of the current three year financial plan (2020-2023) the school will have a deficit of -£320,561.

Table 5 shows the school's position compared to the sector average:

Table 5: Sector Averages				
Straid Primary School	Sector Average*	Year 1 (2019-2020)	Year 2 (2020-2021)	Year 3 (2021-2022)
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	17.5	15	15.29	15.29
Expenditure per Pupil	£4,477	£5,543	£5,703	£6,111
Staff Costs per Pupil	£4,308	£5,372	£5,438	£5,834

\*Planning assumptions include Cost of Living Pay Award Estimate at 1% each year and estimated rate of inflation for Other Costs as 2% each year  
Small Schools Support

The Small Schools Support factor is intended to target more resources towards smaller primary schools to facilitate the delivery of the curriculum. The amount to be allocated to eligible schools is determined by the number of pupils in the school. A lump sum equivalent to 1.0 times the salary (inclusive of employee and employer contributions) of a teacher on point UPS 1 of the Teachers' Upper Pay Scale as at October 2017, will be allocated to schools of up to 100 pupils tapering to zero at 300 pupils.

Straid Primary School receives the maximum amount of £47,726.

Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula, the level of funding is determined by pupil numbers. In a declining enrolment it is more challenging to live within the budget allocation.

## 2.5 Strong Leadership and Management

Straid Primary School operates with 4 teachers, including a teaching principal, appointed in April 2019 (in a temporary capacity).

The ETI report in October 2011 stated that the quality of leadership and management of the school was very good.

*The Principal has been in post for 12 years, and gives very high priority to the current and future development and sustainability of the school. She has been successful in establishing a wide range of effective links with the local community and further afield through, for example, the Comenius programme. She holds a very high regard for the children's well-being and education and the welfare of the staff.*

*There are appropriate action plans to support the school development plan (SDP) and performance data is being used effectively to identify priorities for development. There is a developing culture of self-evaluation across the school to bring about improvement. There are many examples of where the school has self-evaluated aspects of the provision and put in place developments which have led to improvement. Through this process the school has identified appropriate priorities for further development.*

*The leadership and management of literacy, numeracy, ICT and SEN is very effective. The school has appropriately identified the need to develop the role of co-ordinators further in supporting curricular changes and enhancing professional development.*

It should be noted that subsequent to Straid Primary School's ETI Inspection in 2011 the school has since had two changes of school principal, one of whom has also now moved post and the most recent principal appointment commenced in April 2019 in a temporary capacity at the start of 2019/20 school year.

## 2.6 Accessibility

Straid Primary School is situated in a rural community, with a number of pupils transported to school by bus and car.

Many of the pupils already attending Straid Primary School come from the same geographical area as those pupils attending Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Ballynure Primary School - See Map 2.

#### 2.7 Strong Links with the Community

Straid Primary School has excellent and long standing relationships with parents and the community e.g. The Women's Institute and Straid Historical and Cultural Society are welcomed and encouraged to use the school premises and facilities. The school offers an after school club and a breakfast club. The children benefit from the use of facilities at Straid Congregational Church for PE classes and concerts. The local church also use the facilities in the school for special events e.g. Bicentenary Event and the Christmas Tree lights switch on.

Straid Primary School has for many years cooperated with Tír Na nÓg Primary School, Doagh Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School by organising professional development days, sharing expertise and support. Straid Primary School was also involved with Tír Na nÓg Primary School (closed on 31 January 2020) and Doagh Primary School in a Shared Education Partnership.

The proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan for Northern Ireland aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education. It sets out the key priorities and objectives in providing access to a network of sustainable schools for the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectoral bodies in the light of Department of Education policy, in particular the need to raise standards and close the attainment gap through a network of sustainable schools. The focus of the plan is on the educational best interests of children and young people.

Since 2011, statutory planning authorities and school managing authorities have been engaged in implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Schools Policy through Area Planning. The first four objectives are:

- ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural settings, in accessible, modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation;
- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning; and
- sustain strong, successful and viable schools, well-led by their governors representing local stakeholders, principals and their staff, to be the centre of the education system, supported by effective administrative and strategic direction;

As detailed in above, Area Planning is focused on the Sustainable Schools Policy. In October 2016, in the publication of the draft Education Authority's Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, MLA, stated:

*'The Sustainable Schools Policy, which is implemented through the Area Planning process, focuses on providing children and young people with high quality education that meets their needs and enables them to achieve their full potential.....'*

*The educational experience of our children and young people is greatly enhanced when they attend schools that are educationally and financially viable. The Sustainable Schools Policy is a framework for assessment of the sustainability of primary and post-primary schools. The six criteria and supporting indicators clearly illustrate what a sustainable educational experience should look like. Schools must: deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, offer extensive extracurricular activities, have high quality pastoral care systems and have the confidence of the communities they serve.*

*In primary schools pupils should be in a class with no more than two year groups but ideally they should be in single year group classes. They should be able to interact with peer groups and have the best chances to prepare for successful transition to post primary school. ....*

*However there are still a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. This is particularly evident in the primary sector and, despite the best effort of teachers, it becomes harder to deliver a high quality education if pupils are taught in composite classes. We have too many small primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class. ....'*

The Providing Pathways Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 Annual Action Plans for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools 2018/19 and 2019-21 identified a key issue for Straid Primary School as 'address school provision where sustainability is an issue' with the action 'Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of Straid Primary School by February 2020'. As a result the Education Authority engaged with the Board of Governors of Straid Primary School. Engagement discussions focused on the current position of the school and sustainable options for the school. Discussion focused on five options:

### 3.1 Do Nothing

This option would result in no change to the current provision. In consideration of the Annual Action Plan, the downturn in enrolment numbers and the school's financial position, do nothing is not an option.

### 3.2 Shared Education

Straid Primary School have explored the concept of education together with those of a different religious belief, those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not. Whilst the links with other schools including the shared education project with Tír na nÓg Primary School (closed on 31 January 2020), are to be commended, there is little evidence of an effective partnership that will bring sustainable benefits to pupils and the community beyond. There have been opportunities for some collaboration in areas such as sport between the children.

In order to be more viable and effective partnerships schools should be building towards shared opportunities for learning and sharing of resources across sites that would bring both efficiencies and increased effective use of resources and economies of scale. Both schools were keen to develop 'greater sharing' however, whilst it is accepted that this may be further developed in the future, any change to be affected would be longer term and not a realistic sustainable option.

As the Education Authority has a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education the Education Authority discussed the potential for sustainable shared education within the area. However, a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Straid Primary School.

### 3.3 Federation

A federation would involve local schools coming together either through a soft federation or hard federation. A soft federation would provide each school with its own governing body, own budget, with representatives on a joint committee. The schools would share a Principal, common goals, joint committee recommendations but it would be up to the individual governing bodies to authorise decisions/plans. A hard federation would provide for a single governing body with common goals and while each school would receive individual budgets, these could be used to pool budgets across the schools in the federation. In considering a federation, the sustainability of a federated school within the local area would not provide for a sustainable provision and would not improve the financial position of the school.

The Board of Governors at Straid Primary School identified 'Federation' as their preferred option. Various staffing structures, key stage permutations and options were explored by Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School [in conjunction with the Education Authority and Controlled Schools' Support Council], but no feasible nor sustainable federation option could be identified by the Education Authority.

### 3.4 Three School Model

The Board of Governors of Straid Primary School put forward the option of a Three School Model. The model, see below, would provide for Foundation/Key Stage 1 in Straid Primary School, Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Ballynure Primary School with Key Stage 2 provision in Ballynure Primary School only.



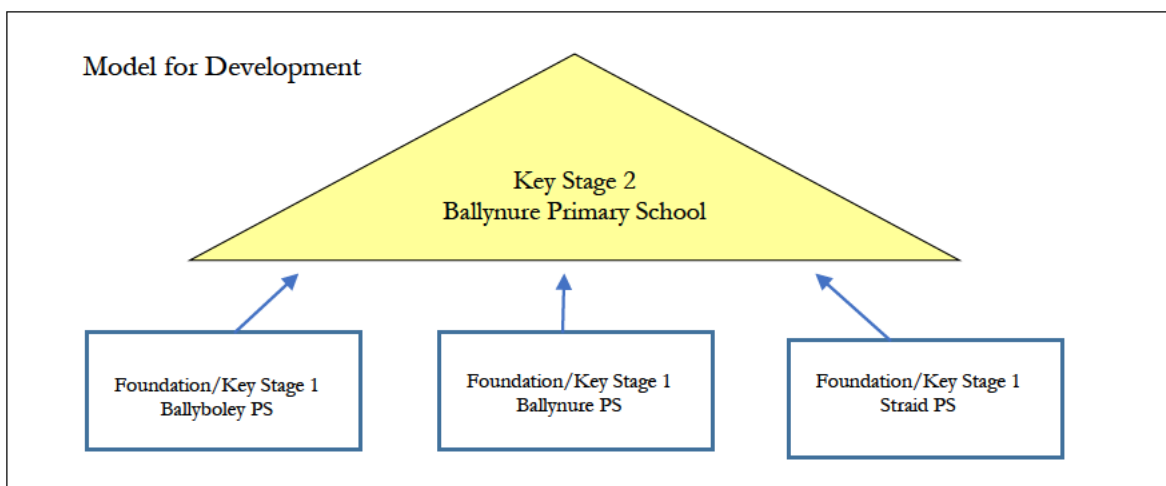


Table 6: Enrolment Projections: Three School Model: based on current 2020/21 enrolments

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
Straid Primary School	10	6	9	8				33
Upper Ballyboley Primary School	1	3	3	11				18
Ballynure Primary School	19	24	20	15	34	35	31	178

Straid Primary School indicated that under the above model:

- A school would be retained in each community.
- Pupils may start school close to home.
- Age appropriate approach and opportunity to use facilities and management tailored to pupil needs and close working relationships and positive pupil experiences promote progression towards Key Stage 3.
- Key Stage 2 provider can benefit from 'natural referral'.
- Overall staffing may be saved, staff development by collaboration in federation.
- Principal led and lead staff with responsibility.
- Single Board of Governors representative of communities with a sub-committee to oversee and review harmonisation.

The three school model would provide a federated model with a single Board of Governors and Principal with senior teachers within each school.

As indicated in Table 6, there would be fewer than 20 pupils on one site and less than 35 pupils on another site. The small number of pupils would result in financial difficulties for the two Foundation/Key Stage 1 schools as the expenditure would exceed income and result in an accumulating deficit. This model would present particular challenges in the delivery of the Key Stage 1 curriculum in Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School as numbers are small, 33 pupils and 18 pupils respectively. This model could:

- reduce opportunities for pupils to interact with their peer group and between Key Stages and therefore limiting the development of their social and emotional skills - the proposal from the Education Authority supports creating a 7 class base school in Ballynure Primary School thus 'creating a vibrant sustainable primary school where each pupil is in a class with a single year group';
- limit the potential for after school activities including team-based experiences;

- result in staff members having to contend with unduly demanding workloads and fewer opportunities for the delegation of roles and tasks, for example, dealing with the impact of the changes in Special Educational Needs legislation; and
- limit teacher professional learning opportunities, staff will have less scope for professional interaction and mutual support.

For the Three School Model to be a workable solution it would also require the participation of all three schools, Straid Primary School, Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Ballynure Primary School. Having explored in detail the Three School Model this option is not considered by the Education Authority to be sustainable, educationally or financially.

### 3.5 Amalgamation

The Education Authority examined the sustainability of amalgamating Straid Primary School and another local school. The nearest school, by distance, to Straid Primary School is Ballynure Primary School, as outlined in Table 2 above.

As with the options above, sustainability is the most important consideration. In accordance with DE policy on amalgamations (Circular 2018/15) it states that: *'...it should also be helpful to those who are considering a DP to amalgamate two or more schools of a similar size to create a new school regardless of management type'*.

Ballynure Primary School currently has an enrolment of 148 pupils and Straid Primary School has a current enrolment of 53 pupils. An amalgamation with both schools would not be in accordance with DE Circular 2018/15 as the schools are not similar in size.

The Education Authority is also taking forward a Development Proposal for the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School which also has Ballynure Primary School as its closest school (2.6 miles). As with Straid Primary School, Upper Ballyboley Primary School has sustainability issues with a current enrolment of 28 pupils. To expand an amalgamation to include all three schools would again not be in accordance with DE Circular 2018/15 as both Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School are not similar in size to Ballynure Primary School.

Therefore, as such a school could not be identified that would satisfy the requirements of DE policy, an amalgamation was not a suitable option for Straid Primary School. Table 2 identifies the schools within the area where there is surplus capacity with the potential to accommodate pupils from Straid Primary School in the event of discontinuance of education at Straid Primary School.

### 3.6 Discontinue

In considering the future of Straid Primary School, all of the options for the school did not provide a sustainable provision for the school. In discussions with the Board of Governors, there was disappointment that the work of the governors could not provide a sustainable solution for the school. Governors put forward proposals to promote the school, however, these did not provide for future sustainability. The Education Authority recognises the commitment of the governors but the current circumstances would not provide for the curricular provision of pupils currently attending Straid Primary School.

In consideration of the options above, the Education Authority recommends that Straid Primary School discontinues with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.

To provide for available places, the Education Authority is proposing to take forward an associated proposal for the increase in admission and enrolment numbers for Ballynure Primary School.

The Education Authority is also proposing the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School, a school 5.0 miles from Straid Primary School.

#### 4 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

Straid Primary School has experienced a downturn in pupil numbers since 2014/15 when it had an enrolment of 81 pupils. The enrolment has now fallen to 53 pupils. The school was identified in the Annual Action Plans 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019-21, identified as ‘address school provision where sustainability is an issue’ with the action ‘Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of Straid Primary School by February 2020.’

In September 2020, the school admitted ten pupils in Year 1. This has resulted in an enrolment of 53 pupils with projections that the enrolment may fall further in September 2021. This will place increased pressure on the financial resources of the school and also on the teaching staff.

The closure of Straid Primary School in conjunction with the proposal to increase admissions and enrolments in Ballynure Primary School will support an area planning solution for the Antrim and Newtownabbey and Mid and East Antrim areas in addressing issues of sustainability and ensuring that school places are located as required. This is based on children availing of places in other local sustainable schools including Ballynure Primary School, who with an increase to admissions and enrolment numbers, will have sufficient places available to accommodate the pupils from Straid Primary School, consistent with ESaGS, the Sustainable Schools Policy and ‘Providing Pathways’.

The discontinuance of Straid Primary School will result in the redistribution of approximately 53 pupils from Straid Primary School, supported by one further Development Proposal to increase admissions and enrolments in Ballynure Primary School.

The proposal will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with Special Educational Needs realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by Children and Young People Services.

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on the Education Authority to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and designing and delivering public services. The areas from which Straid Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The discontinuance of Straid Primary School will have an impact on the local area. The provision of home-to-school transport will provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria.

In the case of any proposed action at Straid Primary School, the Education Authority has to consider the likely impact of removing controlled provision from the area. The area solution would seek to consolidate controlled provision in the area.

The proposal would provide for the education needs of pupils in the area. Straid Primary School has a declining enrolment and, as a four teacher school, this places pressure on the staff at the school.

The schools within the area received good/very good/ outstanding ETI reports and can provide for the educational needs of the pupils of the area. Some local schools in the area have capacity and an associated Development Proposal to increase the admission and enrolment numbers at the nearest primary school, Ballynure Primary School, will provide places within sustainable provision. Resulting from the outcome of consultations with parents/guardians, discussions will be undertaken with the local schools regarding in year group capacity. The larger local schools have pupil numbers which meet the Sustainable School Policy of no more than two year groups in a classroom. The larger schools may enhance the learning experience of pupils in the provision of after school activities and having class sizes to facilitate participation both in school and inter-school activities eg sports teams and extra-curricular activities.

The pupils from Straid Primary School who have special educational requirements will continue to have these needs met within the local schools and supported through the Education Authority's Children and Young People's Service.

## 6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is for the discontinuance of Straid Primary School. As there are currently unfilled places within some local schools, there will be a requirement for additional accommodation to facilitate the relocation of pupils (to be identified by parental preference resulting from the consultation process). The Education Authority is taking forward an associated proposal to increase the admission and enrolment numbers of Ballynure Primary School.

There will be a cost saving in the recurrent costs of operating a school.

*Finance* The operational cost of Straid Primary School will be a cost saving from this proposal inclusive of a saving of £47,726 in terms of the Small Schools Support Factor would also be made.

*Staffing* The teaching staff is afforded employment protection under the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2 for two years. The non-teaching staff will be afforded employment protection for one year. The Education Authority will meet with staff to discuss options should the development proposal be approved and an action plan implemented for the discontinuance of the school.

*Transport* Most of the pupils attending Straid Primary School live within close proximity to the school and do not receive home-to-school transport. The discontinuance of Straid Primary School would require the provision of home-to-school transport for a larger number of pupils. Communication with the Education Authority transport service is ongoing. Any transport arrangement will be in accordance with transport regulations and identified preference school.

*Accommodation* No additional accommodation needs for Straid Primary School. Additional accommodation needs will be required at Ballynure Primary School as detailed in the Case for Change for a proposed increase in admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School.

## 7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

The proposal is being brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The implementation date for the proposal is for 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable, pending approval from the Education Committee, for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline	
<p>Proposal: Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>	Proposed Timeline
<p>Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents – (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority.</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee. A deputation from the Board of Governors may also choose to attend the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee or the Board meeting.</p>	6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Consultation with other affected Schools (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee.</p>	6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to seek Approval To Publish</p> <p>Case for Change to be taken to the September 2021 Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for consideration.</p> <p>If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period.</p>	7 September 2021
<p>Statutory Objection Period (2 months)</p> <p>Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education</p>	September 2021 – November 2021
<p>Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision</p>	January 2022
<p>Implementation</p> <p>If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>	

Summary of Consultation Responses DP 623 Straid Primary School

No / From	Issues Raised
1.	Extremely concerned about the planned closure of the school. Thinks it will cause many children and families great anxiety. Children’s education would be disrupted, would have to work in larger classes, would lose friends and be forced to make new ones. Family routines disrupted and forced to travel further. Parents would be forced to change working patterns. The closure would have an impact on the local community. Rural schools are a great attraction for parents of young children & new families ensure that a small village survives.
2.	Discriminatory towards all rural residents that you continue to take away rural schools. They are valued in the local community. Straid PS is well supported and ran by the local community. Forcing a disadvantage to both parents and children who have to travel further for an education. Extra stress and worry for children and parents due to small children having to travel on buses without parents. Closure of small schools puts added pressure onto those towns where the children have to travel. Asked the question “Why are rural residents not seen as worthy for a local education?”
3.	Past Pupil & classroom assistant. Thanks Straid for everything achieved in life. Brilliant at setting children up for high school and further. Thinks it is a great school and perfect for growing up in the rural area. Feels as though Straid PS is family. The teachers are so friendly and welcoming. Straid has been around for years and years and would be an absolute shame to see it close.
4.	Thinks the entire process presented by the EA from inception has been disingenuous in nature. Thinks there has been limited communication with stake holders, incorrect data on the written submissions to establish their case. The shortcomings and duplicity in matters has given rise to the view that their engagement has been neither relevant nor sincere. Thinks the EA has been working to both a planned and already predetermined outcome. Thinks it is an act of bad faith to publish a DP 625 to increase numbers in a neighbouring and competing school, as no advance adjudication has been reached regarding Straid PS, so why make accommodating arrangements. States “the EA have eliminated speculative planning or prudent governance by direct linking it to our closure”. Comparing small rural schools against a centralised urban vision is unfair at best if not duplicitous. Suggests it might be more appropriate to eliminate this ill-founded belief that smaller somehow equates with sub-optimal. States that the school’s official inspections show Straid as not failing and has dedicated staff with proven academically objective results. Thinks closure as a default position is wrong. States that information relating pre-publication consultation para2.1 – statistical analysis, Map 2, Para 3.3 – Population change and Para 3.3 – Sound financial position is “misleading”. States that Straid is like every other school dealing with limited resources and challenging budgets and therefore cannot be used as an argument. States that there was no reference made to “the present management’s fiscal diligence which has led to a considerable reduction (£31,220) to the in-year spend, and with continued attention the financials of Straid PS would no longer present a valid reason for closure”. Claims this information about finances has not been mentioned as it reduces “our liability in a core deficiency”. Would like to know if “a costing exercise has been done to justify this expenditure against the cost of continuance? Thinks the EA’s options are only “do nothing or closure” and “why not a policy of actively promoting rural schools, safeguarding the future needs of local communities and making the wellbeing of our children the priority. States he and other residents have a “real depth of anger” towards the proposals.
5.	States that Straid PS was and is the heart of the community. Disappointed to learn of the proposed closure of the school. Thinks the school should be expanding rather than closing based on the size of the village. Thinks it is ludicrous to bus children to another school that



	is almost at capacity. Thinks it would be better to invest and upgrade the school for the current children and future generations.
6.	Thinks the decision to close Straid PS is already taken or alluded to by the EA. Thinks the school and staff have not been treated fairly and there is a definite lack of openness and transparency with the whole process. States that the parents feel bullied by the EA that the school will close.
7	Stated that [REDACTED] (EA) said the Sustainable Schools Policy did not require the six sustainability criteria to be applied equally. Thinks there is a greater weighting to both the enrolment trends and financial position of the school. States there was a decrease in enrolment between 2015 and 2018 due to leadership issues, but have since increased by 20% and therefore demonstrated an upward trend in the past three years. Points out that the figure of 105 is to be applied to new rural schools as per SSP 2009 and for established small rural schools the number at which the EA are recommended to review is if the enrolment is below 60. Thinks that if Straid PS was given the opportunity to develop before publishing the proposal, the school's enrolment would more likely have reached/surpassed this figure. States the EA failed to support the school whilst it negotiated its way out of difficulties due to leadership issues nor has it upheld its promise of giving the new principal three years to develop the school without Area Planning interference. Claims the EA did not record minutes of the meeting between themselves, the principal [REDACTED], the BoG and local representatives in 2018. States the failure to take minutes falls short of the recommendation within the Guidance on the Publication of a Development Proposal that consultation should be "fully documented", "open" and "Transparent." Notes that minutes were not taken on a face to face meeting between the EA and parents on 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2020, that the meeting was placed on hold for 14 months due to Covid and when restarted no further contact with parents was made. States the EA did not respond to parental questions regarding the consultation until 5 months after they were submitted and after the consultation process had ended and notes that "this does not meet the Department of Education's guidance on appropriate consultation having failed to give due regard to the issues raised. States the EA did not provide a robust review of Straid PS's circumstances during the school's time of need and the proposal to discontinue Straid PS is based on sub-standard procedures and incorrect information
8.	Hold the opinion that the Case for Change is misleading and inaccurate and demonstrates the clear intention of creating uncertainty and confusion within the school and community. Thinks this will result in current pupils leaving the school and those who intended coming to the school will no longer do so. States that the EA has given the impression they have already made up their decision and were only going through the motions. States that the members of the group expressed their opinions had been disrespected and ignored, with the whole exercise being cosmetic allowing the EA to be 'seen to be doing' to complete the process having an already desired outcome. Thinks the EA are only focusing on enrolments and finance. Wants to promote and develop the village and residents, the continuance of the school is vital to this as many of the community events are centred around the school, the children and the staff. States the school is highly respected and reputable provider of education and is a 'pull' factor to new and young families. Removal of the school will create a disconnect between the past and future, discourage local inter-generational relationships and a loss of cultural identity. The decision will affect the whole community and its development.
9.	Interprets the decision proposed by the EA to discontinue Straid PS as already taken based on the word "will" in the proposal. Thinks the school has been treated unfairly in recent years, that the process has lacked honesty, openness and transparency. Feels that many of the opinions expressed have not been taken seriously and the manner in which the EA has acted, has at times, come across as derisory, dismissive and largely ignored.
10.	Strongly objects to the proposal. States that Straid meets the SSP in all parts apart from enrolment trends and financial position. Comments that Straid PS had at one point 102

	<p>pupils and the EA were looking at new sites for a new Straid School. Attributes the downturn in enrolment to a previously appointed first time principal at the end of 2014 who alienated families following a catalogue of incidents which led to children being withdrawn from the school. The EA were aware of this and agreed to support the school through this. Holds the EA accountable for this as they gave incorrect advice to ██████ in relation to terminating a member of staff. Stated ██████ returned from retirement to steady the ship and Mrs Boyd commenced employment in April 2019. States the numbers have fallen below 60 when the school was listed in the 2018 area plan which has hindered our recovery. Comments numbers have steadily grown after the appointment of the new principal Mrs Boyd. Finds it hard to believe the EA brought the proposal a few weeks before lockdown. Comments she was laughed at by an EA official when questioned the timing of bringing the proposal and was told “No” when asked if the EA knew the cause of falling enrolments was due to a previous principal alienating families and tried to portray this as a normal trend. Thinks the EA has not honoured its commitment to support the school through the brief downturn in numbers and has not given the new principal time to bring the numbers back up. The school is very important to the community as it brings life to the village and creates strong bonds. It encourages young families to move to the village and the school provides facilities for local groups to use. A list of families is being gathered who intend to enrol their children at Straid PS in the next five years. Accessibility to a local school is paramount, especially in the winter when the surrounding rounds are not salted. Parents have the right to choose to send their children to a school with smaller class sizes as the individual attention they receive means all children leaving Straid can read and write, interact with all age groups in the school and leave primary years as confident members of society. States the school has no Covid cases and social distancing measure were able to be adhered to with the class sizes. Thinks the new census will be more reliable. By approving increased enrolment at Ballynure will only enhance its current traffic problems. Its site is limited for space. Thinks there is animosity towards Straid for filling up their places. Providing places is not good enough when the children are getting a great education in a great learning environment. The proposal will cause unjust upheaval and ignores the welfare of the children and is blatant short term money saving exercise. States that Straid was a strong, successful and viable school before ██████ three year term and that the Straid PS upholds the educational best interests of the children. Includes a table that “proves” the Case for Change goes against the guidelines of the SSP and the Guidance on the Publication of a Development Proposal. Has not seen the EA observing the principles of the consultation charter – Integrity, Accessibility, Disclosure &amp; Fair Representation. States parents were shocked at pre-publication as instead of being presented with a plan on how to support the school they were presented with a proposal to discontinue. Cannot understand why Integration was not considered as an option and the EA representative dismissed this option in a very ignorant fashion. States this is against the SSP as the Department has a duty to encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish medium education. Comments that an official transformation ballot is under way. There is a written petition open with 893 signatures and an online petition with 744 signatures. States her own children have concentration and anxiety issues and she trusts leaving them in Straid PS as it supplies a caring supportive environment. Hopes that by becoming Integrated more children will benefit from the great start to life that children get a Straid PS.</p>
11.	<p>Teacher / Teacher governor. Asks to stop the closure of our school. It is the heart of the community that is thriving under our new principal, with so much potential for future growth. The school has served the community with excellence, and the standard of education is second to none. This community school is the perfect environment for so many rural families to flourish and develop. Would be a tragedy for the school to close. The school hasn't been given a fair chance to grow due to the present threat of closure. Children have been removed due to fear of no spaces being left in neighbouring schools. There is not many extra spaces at the nearest local school – Ballynure – which is now full to capacity. Even schools in Ballyclare are almost full. Thousands of new houses are being built in the local area. Greater tragedy if our school was to close due to the large proportion of LAC children</p>

	in our care, as well as a high percentage having additional needs such as ASD. A change in school due to closure would be traumatic to many of our children.
12.	Member of the Board of Governors for Straid PS and past parent. Saddened and disgusted that Straid PS finds itself on the area planning for closure. Straid PS is lacking only in two areas of the six of sustainability. Each of the criteria are meant to be equally weighed. The EA only look at enrolment. Enrolment has increased by 25% in the last two years under the guidance and hard work of Mrs Boyd. Enrolment had decreased due to previous difficulties of leadership. EA had promised to support the school with the appointment of our current Head and feels this has not be adhered to with area planning commencing 3 days into her new role. Evident that the EA is closing the school. Families with more than one child are scared they won't get the whole family in another school as the schools around us are full to capacity and oversubscribed. Parents moving their children out of fear are losing the right of parental choice. Pastoral care is an integral part of the life of the school. The small school meant each child's need was met. Concerns around mental health of the children and the need to support and guide them through difficult period of life. Children need confidence and security based on a settled and secure life experience. Closing the school is a big disruption of any child's development. At Straid they are educated in an empathetic cultural environment, promoting confidence and reinforces ambition and builds on achievement potential. Ballynure has not got the room/ building area for the children they have. How can a small village like Straid be compared to large towns that are also grouped as "rural"? Small villages are never going to get the magic number of 105. Straid PS is the heart of the community – been in the village for 200 years, school is used by different organisations. Contending with limited resources and challenging budgets is neither new nor uncommon and has therefore limited value as an argument. Straid is in sound financial position, a considerable reduction has been made in in-year spending (£31000 approx.). Mrs Boyd deserves the chance to make a difference to the lives of more children.
13.	Objects to the proposal. Currently a teacher (August 2021). Her experience has shown her how valuable the school is to the local community. It is wonderful school led by a very capable and well-respected principal. Believes there is something truly special in a small school. The pupils are well cared for. The staff are passionate about their work and the pupils are happy. Worries about the impact of the school closing on the pupils as small schools enables them to have a voice, and the staff cater very well for those children with special needs. Wonders why you would close a school that is working so well where the pupils receive good quality education. The children deserve to have their future guaranteed at Straid rather than having worry and anxiety of changing schools and leaving their friends. The staff and principal work hard to create a caring and nurturing environment. Has only been teaching at Straid a short time but it has touched her heart and hops the school can remain open. Straid PS is a truly special and family orientated environment where the pupils are at the centre.
14.	BoG member and parent. Opposes the Proposal. Distressed that the area plan has reached this point and shows a lack of insight into the benefit that a small school can have for the social and educational development of its students, especially those who may suffer in a larger environment. It shows a disregard for the village and community of Straid, and student welfare. The proposal comes at a time when people are struggling with Covid and places distress on parents and students by creating uncertainty about the schools future. The school is a place of support, help and encouragement to many children and families and is key component of the heart of the community. This proposal affects the welfare of the students and is compounded by the stress and strain already inflicted by Covid. The school sits at the heart of a growing village and the children thrive in the close knit environment and feel at home in a supportive and encouraging environment. The promise to our current principal has not been kept, to allow 3 clear years to build up student numbers before any area plan review. The strategy of the EA is closure by stealth, create uncertainty and destabilise a community and reduce support for what is a precious commodity in the centre of Straid. The closure of Straid PS is based on financial cost. Straid scores highly in aspects

	<p>like student welfare, education experience and attainment. A proposal based on one factor is unjustified and unbalanced perception of what is good in regards to education. The closure of Straid appears to be only about cost saving and is an awful reflection on the EA organisation, that is designed to ensure the future of education in NI. Has a child at the school because of the size of the school, the quality of teaching and the social interaction that takes place. Moved to the village six year and were impressed by what they heard about the school. On the BoG because he believes in the school, the ethos and the quality of teaching and wants to ensure it continues. Continually impressed by the professionalism and the care of the staff. States Ballynure PS is already at capacity, with heavy pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and rather than offering better educational experience, the proposal shoves children into an already crowded space, where the level of care and education can only be reduced. Concerned that the closure thrusts children into larger school environments where they may struggle, and not receive as much one to one time and educational support. Thinks the EA are pursuing an aggressive campaign that bigger is better and shows blatant lack of concern for small communities, small schools and their benefits. The area plan is flawed and contains false information about enrolments which is to create uncertainty on the schools future to progress a ridiculous and damaging agenda.</p>
15.	<p>Objects to the proposal. Angry at the decision to restart the pre-consultation at the current stage of the pandemic. Parents are trying to rebuild the damage that lockdown as caused to mental health. The fear of closure has resulted in many of the children friends leaving the school as parents try to fight for a place in another local school. This is having adverse effects on mental health of many children. Ironic that the EA welcomed the launch of the emotional health and wellbeing framework. In total disagreement to the proposal. Has strong generational links to Straid PS and was the only school considered for her children. Important that her children got the best start to their education and believes Straid PS has done this. Great disappointment and sadness about even considering putting an end to the life of Straid PS. The school is the hub of the village. The local community supports the events that take place in the school and thinks that without the school these events will come to a sad end. Closing the school will have a detrimental social and economic effects to the community. Draws attention to the school's enrolments and the reason for the decline due to disagreements between a previous principal and the parents, putting the reputation of the school in jeopardy. Highlights the EA assured that these trends would not be considered when looking at unsustainable schools and that the promise to allow the school to recover under the new principal has not been the case. Believes if it wasn't for the threat of closure and scaremongering that the numbers would continue to increase year on year. The new principal is "breath of fresh air" and is dedicated to the school with a "clear direction and vision for the future. Small classes are an advantage where each child gets excellent attention, tailored to their individual learning needs. The staff provided excellent online learning during the pandemic and were able to provide appropriate social distancing within their classrooms and adequately able to keep each class bubble protected. Finds it appalling the EA place so much emphasis on the 2011 ETI report, suggests that Straid meets the broad and balanced curriculum, that composite classes allow children to better interact with a range of peers and questions if an impact assessment has been done on the proposed increase in traffic that will take place as a result of the proposed increase at Ballynure. States that the Principal of Ballynure has acknowledged "the problem" and is highlighting it to the PSNI.</p>
16.	<p>Objects to the proposal and it doesn't make sense as the village is expanding and developing in size therefore increasing demand for the school. Ballynure is at capacity with little opportunity for expansion. The school is the centrepiece of the village which is involved in many community activities. Believes the Department of Education has a responsibility to listen to the needs of Straid village.</p>
17.	<p>Objects to the proposal. Attended the school with her siblings. Believes the rural location of the school is beneficial to the pupils. The village is expanding. Continuous closures of rural schools means the "bigger urban" schools will not be able handle the influx, which will lead</p>

	to the EA building new schools. Straid primary school would be an ideal setting for “outdoor learning/play”
18.	Wants to prevent the EA from closing Straid PS. Recently moved to the area, the small local school was the big selling point. Excited at the thought of sending their daughter to Straid. Heard so much good about the school, they were surprised to learn the EA had plans to close it. Moved to the village with the intention of sending their children to the local school. Many children do not thrive in larger schools and didn't think they would have to worry about this. Begs to reconsider closing the school.
19.	Straid is a good quality centre, with strong links to the community. Closing it would be detrimental for the pupils and their education. The staff are dedicated. Want the Department to have into account their work and contribution to the community life. The number of pupils have been increasing recently. Reconsider the decision and not close the school.
20.	Asks to reconsider closing Straid PS. Country schools are better with smaller teacher to pupil ratios, means a more personalised and better education. Current resident numbers are not accurate as there has been a recent increase in birth rate. Similar policy of closing country schools in England was realised to have negative impacts on local village economies and have now stopped this approach. Local business will be affected as it relies on business from parents.
21.	Objects to the proposal. Easy target to close to keep slightly larger schools open (which are thousands of pounds in debt)
22.	Expresses dismay at the proposal and must be reversed. Expecting children to go to another school will cause more pollution and disruption. Government expect children to walk to school for the exercise. We need to protect the future of the local children and surrounding area.
23.	Considers the decision to be wrong and a body blow for the local community. Were able to integrate with the local community through the school. The school provided the best education we could have hoped for. Wishes their grandson to attend the school. States there was an upward trend in enrolment followed by a sudden decline with an obvious cause. Thinks that the numerical viability headcount is the same in small rural communities as in much larger urban settings and thinks it is particularly grizzly, if not Orwellian form of social engineering to close these schools.
24.	States upwards of 150 people attended a public meeting concerning the threat to Straid PS. Not one voice spoke in favour of the closure. Owner of local businesses. No doubt in my mind that a thriving Primary School is at the heart of most village communities and the atmosphere of a successful village community contributes to its economic and social well-being. Straid Village and District Community Group is a very active group and has been instrumental in improving the quality of village life. One of the pillars on which it stands is the Primary School.
25.	Objects to the proposal. Member of BoG. The school has a long history of serving the rural village of Straid. The local school is the heart of social welfare by educating the children and knitting together community life and activity. Only enrolment and finance are important the process of assessing the school while the other 4 factors are very positive for Straid. This differs with approaches taken in the rest of the UK. It appears to the governors that differing sectors, geographical locations and management types are treated differently in a number of cases. Integrated, Irish Medium and Maintained schools all have interest groups supporting them but the same cannot be said for Controlled schools. Accepting that no alternative was available despite the work undertaken was crushing. The school has worked hard to provide a quality learning experience for it pupils but despite the parameters set out in the SSP and the provision of these seemed to count for nothing against the financial constraints used by the EA. The school was given assurance that it would not close at a meeting with the EA, but less than a week after the new principal took up post the school appeared on the Action plan for closure. Believes this is case of “constructive closure” and “a pre-ordained process was followed and the consultations with the school and the Governors carried no weight. The publication of inaccurate data in the Area Plan further put the future of the school at risk.

	In the rest of the UK school management in rural area is driven by the Rural Schools Policy. Straid PS actively tries to play a part in the community by the use of its facilities. There seems to be an assumption that closing small rural primary schools and dispersing the remaining pupils across a range of schools will improve the overall standards and raise the quality of the schools estate, along with the assumption that school closures will reduce the overall cost.
26.	Principal. Objects to the proposal. Straid PS has strength in 4 of the 6 areas of sustainability with weakness in finance and enrolment. The school cut its in year overspend in 2019/20 and did not overspend in 2020/21. The school had increased enrolment by 19% 2019/20 with improvements in staff ratio also. Straid PS delivers a high quality of education as evidence in its inspections reports. The school is inextricably linked to its community and its grounds are used by local groups. The school works with other schools for pupil interaction and staff development. The staff and BoG are committed, passionate and professional and are always driving and moving forward to deliver the best education. Has Serious questions on the openness and transparency of the EA and thinks the area planning process causes schools involved to find themselves being “constructively closed”. Makes references to issues of concern that were highlighted throughout the pre-publication process and to the fact that research evidence from Queens University (Small Rural Schools in NI 2009) was submitted to a meeting on 7 September 2021, which appears was not taken into consideration with any discussion as with over 100 pages of evidence and fact from the school. Other areas of concern are serious traffic issues in the Ballyclare area, schools in the Ballyclare area who have also objected to Straid PS closure because they have no spaces for pupils, the real cost of provision for Ballynure PS to accommodate an extra 56 pupils, and is adding an additional classroom at Ballynure that will take up more play space in line with the well-being policies and the outdoor play best practice polices of the EA. Asks the question “have the EA truly considered the additional impacts in the Ballyclare area for the long-term future as opposed to implementing quick-fix solutions for the immediate future?” Thinks that Straid meets all of the requirements set out by the EA in their own documentation “schools must: deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. Offer extensive extracurricular activities, have high quality pastoral care systems and have the confidence of the communities they serve”, that the children are the people at the heart of our community and our school.
27.	Teacher. Has deep regret at the proposal and implores to reconsider the decision. Privileged to be part of a unique and caring school community. The school has a lasting impact on all involved in it. The education and life experiences delivered are of the highest quality. Thinks it is simply impossible to cater for children as individuals in the way they undoubtedly deserve within a large class setting after having taught in both large and small schools. Has been able to glean a unique insight on pupils as individuals. Wants to continue teaching and making a difference and the nurturing setting of Straid PS.
28.	Staff. Disappointed at the situation. The school is extremely successful and very important to the community. It has been the heart of the village for over 190 years. The pupils get more attention, teaching and support than those in a larger town school. Each member of staff has a bond with each pupil so they would be aware of any signs of problems, both with school and home. The staff are like one big family who are accommodating and supportive to both children, parents and visitors. It would be very distressing and traumatic for staff, pupils, parents and the community if the decision was taken to close the school.
29.	Staff. It is heart breaking to consider a possible school closure. It is a close knit area and must remain open to make a “big mark” on past and future generations to come. Seeing children mature and flourish is such a rewarding experience. It is my utmost desire to ensure Straid PS remains on the “map”.
30	Staff. Strongly objects and is aghast to the proposal. The school has been at the heart of this rural hard working community for 200 years. The education and pastoral care the pupils and the community has received is second to none. It will have a devastating effect on this rural community with the school playing so many roles to bond the community. The school

	has such potential to grow and deliver a first class education to this rural community and we need the opportunity to prove this.
31.	Parent. Deeply distressed at the lack of insight into the benefits that a small primary school can have on the social and educational development of its students and also the timing as everyone is already struggling with the impacts of Covid. The proposal has created an air of uncertainty about the future of the school, which is a place of support, help and encouragement to many children and families and is key component of the heart of the community. There is consideration of the welfare of students and the local community. The school has an incredible reputation and I am continually impressed by the professionalism and the care by staff that is shown in every facet of school life. Concerned that there is no thought to the already heavy pedestrian and vehicle traffic at other schools in the area and the school closure thrusts children in larger school environments where they may struggle. The proposal shows a blatant lack of concern for small communities, for small schools and their benefits and an absolutely shocking disregard for the welfare of pupils.
32	Parent. Objects to the proposal. Straid PS is a fantastic community where the children are nurtured and gently encouraged to achieve their full potential. Visited several schools but felt Straid was the right school for our family coming from a small farming community. Praises the school's holistic approach taken in getting the children through the pandemic, caring about their physical and mental health, without putting undue pressure on the children or the parents. Feels fortunate that their son was in a composite class allowing him to bubble with older P2s allowing him to grow in confidence. Believes that a composite class has given him an extra secure foundation on which to build in P3. Aware that the numbers in the school dropped and suffered 2 separate rift under new leadership. The EA promised to worked with the school and allow time to regain numbers, but reneged on the promise, which is bitterly disappointing. The school grew in P1 intakes even after the pre-consultation which is a firm indication of the schools potential for growth under the new head mistress. The local community is a lifeline for people like us. To take the school out of Straid means a huge part of our families' social structure would be destroyed. Wants to preserve this integral aspect of our community for future generations as it would be an immense loss to us.
33.	Strongly objects to the proposal. Lived in the village for nearly 40 years, it can-not be overestimated how important the school is to the community. Enjoys the social events put on at the school. Previously worked at the school and seen the children benefit from a small school and hopes future generations will still be using the school as it is important to the village.
34.	Parent. Choose Straid as it is our local school at the heart of the community. Discussions around closure results in scaremongering that ultimately stops people selecting Straid as a preference. Disappointed that the EA proposes to close such a fantastic school and struggles to understand justification for closing a school that has such potential. The teachers are immensely dedicated to the children. Asks who is taking responsibility for the additional stress that closing the school will have and is the EA taking accountability for the undue fear and anxiety this closure will cause the children. Is of the understanding the reason for the closure is due to funding and asks what funding derelict schools could need that could not be better utilised in a fully operational school.? Thinks it is futile for parent to choose their preferred primary school if the child will not get finish their schooling there. Noted that Ballynure has limited outdoor space which will be reduced further if mobiles are utilised and that an additional 50 families driving through Ballynure every morning and afternoon is extremely dangerous. Has the intention to send youngest son to Straid and knows of other families who will do the same. States the school has potential to grow and prosper if the closure discussions would cease.
35.	Resident of Ballynure who objects to the proposal. Does not wish to see additional traffic in Ballynure that is likely to be brought by additional parents/children attending Ballynure PS. Believes the education of the pupils would be of a higher standard if both locations were kept separate. Past pupil of Straid and received a first class education. The school is the heart of the community, which bring parents, pupils and various groups that use the school



	to the area. Closing the school would have a major impact on local businesses, causing further heartache to the area. Finds it incredibly alarming the citizens of Ballynure would not have been consulted on this matter as it affects the residents of Ballynure. The school had an issue with a previous principal which saw a sharp decline in pupil numbers on which the EA prefer to “bulldoze” in and close the school stating the school “will close in 2023” which makes parents question sending their children and is an unfair tactic being used by the EA.
36.	Grandparent. Commends the teachers of Straid who are extremely committed to the education of the children and provide a safe and nurturing environment where effective learning is taking place. States her grandson would find it difficult in large classes but is thriving in the small classes at Straid. Smaller schools with smaller classes are safer in our current Covid climate. Ballynure is woefully inadequate for the number of children who would attend from Straid and the playground space is fairly limited, which would impact negatively on their physical and mental health. To close a perfectly functioning school which has a caring ethos, to transfer children to a school where they will be squashed in together is surely a backward step and a huge mistake. Wants the opportunity for her grandchildren to have good quality education in a safe and caring environment which is provided by Straid for many years to come.
37.	Parent. Feels it would be an atrocity if the school was to close. Chose the school because of its incredible ethos, care and compassion. Urges to rethink the proposal. Feels it is the only school within traveling distance that suits their child. It has an extremely high level of pastoral care, caring staff, smaller classes with better teacher/pupil ratios which means each child gets a high level of attention and any difficulties or problems that arise are quickly noticed and put right in a timely fashion, which is not the case in larger schools and therefore harder to fix. Smaller classes means that children feel more secure and confident and gets the opportunity to participate in all areas of school, unlike larger schools. Pupils also received higher levels of individual communication during home learning throughout the pandemic. The school has excellent facilities which cannot be said for alternatives close by. Each member of staff cares deeply about each child and seeks to ensure they are met. If the school closed it would have a detrimental effect on our child, on his mental health, education and future. Changing a child's schools, during this time, would give unnecessary worry and anxiety to them. Children from rural schools are being discriminated against as clearly their education does not matter the same as those who started out in larger schools. Rural schools should be protected and as the EA are reviewing their planning policies this process should be halted. The review of area planning shows the definitions used to form this consultation are out of date and not fit for purpose. The EA have not provided a robust review of Straid and the recommendations are entirely based on sub-standard procedures and incorrect information. Straid suffered a drop in enrolments due to an inexperienced principal being appointed, leading to a number of difficulties. Since a change in principal the number began to climb and if the school was given time, this trend would have continued. The community of Straid depends on the school, for a place to gather and to hold meetings and events. Local business will be affected and the sense of community will be lost should the school no longer exist. By closing rural schools you are removing the right as parents to choose to send our children to a small rural school. Notes that equal weighting does not have to be given to sustainability criteria but it is evident that greater weighting has been given to both enrolment trends and financial position. Highlights there are a number of flaws with this consultation and answers to questions still have not been received. Feels the EA have not shown any care or concern for the children and their parents of Straid PS. Comments there is no support from the community, parents, staff or anyone who has experience of Straid PS and the staff provide a safe, secure, loving and highly educational experience.
38.	Parent. Does not agree with the proposal. Child was not approved for first choice school. Straid was next choice as no other small, country schools within the area. Closing Straid we are being discriminated against by wanting to send our child to this type of school. The numbers began to rise in 2019. The decline was mainly due to an inexperienced principal

	<p>being appointed and causing issues within the school. Is the current principal had been given time, the numbers would continue to rise. The threat of closure has done further damage to the school. Closing the school would have a major impact on all the children at the school, by breaking up friendships and the sense of community. Our child has grown in ability and confidence due to the incredible teaching staff, friendly, encouraging and supportive atmosphere of the school. There will be no point of meeting for people in the community as the school will not be there to bring people together. Rural communities will be pulled apart by the closure and the history of the area will be destroyed as Straid has had a primary school on site over 100 years. The EA have shown a number of failings during this consultation, questions not answered, the school not supported and best practice not followed. Asks the EA what is benefit of closing Straid and to consider if our children's education only comes down to money? To disrupt the children now would severely impact on their mental well-being and future development.</p>
39.	<p>Objects to the proposal. EA did not provide a robust review of Straid's circumstances and recommendations are based on sub-standard procedures and incorrect information. A greater weighting appears to be given to both enrolment trends and financial position. Straid has demonstrated an upward trend in enrolment in the last three years. If the school had been given the opportunity to develop before the proposal was published the school's enrolment would have surpassed 60 at which a review by the EA is triggered. The EA failed to support the school whilst it negotiated its way out of difficulties resulting from several issues with leadership from 2015-2018, nor has it upheld its promise of giving the new principal three years to develop the school without Area Planning interference. The EA did not take minutes of a meeting in 2018 in which this promise was made, which falls short on the recommendations within the guidance that the consultation should be "fully documented", "open" and "transparent". The EA did not respond to questions asked on 3/2/21 until 5 months later which was after the pre-publication period had ended, this does not meet the guidance on "appropriate consultation" having failed to "give due regard" to the issues raised.</p>
40.	<p>Objects to the proposal. Greater emphasis appears to be given to both the enrolment trends and the financial position of Straid. Enrolment trends in the past three years are on the increase. Had the school been given the opportunity to develop before the proposal was published the school's enrolment figures would more likely have surpassed the 60 as which the EA is recommended to review. The EA promised that once a new principal was appointed, they would be allowed to go about the task of increasing enrolment for three years without area planning interference. This was broken and they failed to record minutes of the meeting which falls short of the recommendations within the Guidance on the Publication of a Development Proposal that consultation should be "Fully documented", "open" and "transparent". The EA's actions did not the guidance on "appropriate consultation" having failed to "give due regard" to the issues raised and they did not provide a robust review of Straid PS's circumstances and their recommendation is based on sub-standard procedures and incorrect information. The proposal would be harmful for the local community, detrimental to the mental health of the young people enrolled at the school, and it fails to acknowledge the part the school plays in wider society.</p>
41.	<p>Parent. Objects to proposal. The EA has failed in its duty to provide an appropriate consultation on the matter. The EA assured that the new principal would be given time (three years) to work to turn thing around at Straid without any input from area planning but within days of this meeting the EA pushed forward "hell-bent" on closing the school and they apparently have no record of that formal meeting as no minutes were taken. This amounts to gross maladministration and falls short of the recommendations within the Guidance on the Publication of a Development Proposal that the consultation should be "fully documented", "open", and "transparent". States that a review is taking place in the EA in terms of how the processes currently underway are undertaken and the failure to not wait for the publication of new guidance suggests a lack if integrity and fairness. Also states that the proposal ignores the increase in live birth in the Ballynure Electoral ward, the EA own report on strong</p>

	<p>leadership and management. Fears that SEN children would be most disadvantaged if Straid were to close. States the proposal goes against the EA's commitment to "ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural setting, in accessible, modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation" and their ethos of the Small Schools Support Programme. The pre-publication document evidences a failure to fully engage with Straid's proposal of a Three School Model. The proposal to increase enrolment at Ballynure PS is illogical and unviable as they do not have enough room for the pupils they have, never mind adding more. Restarting the process during the Covid pandemic evidence the EA's perpetuity of acting in bad faith and has made it more difficult for interested parties to physically meet which is unfair and put the school at an unreasonable disadvantage. The closure of the school would have a decimating effect on the community of Straid, where the school acts as an important community hub. Believes all the information above is a gross malpractice and if the proposal is approved will present the information to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. Also believes the proposal will negatively impact on the Roman Catholic community due to closing Tír na nÓg PS before considering Straid's proposal of shared education without any evidence of actually exploring this solution in a remotely robust way. Reiterates the negative effect the closure would have on mental health of the pupils at Straid and the detrimental impact it would have on the tight-knit rural community and if the proposal is approved will be considering every legal avenue possible to reverse what would be an utterly shambolic and unjustified decision.</p>
42.	<p>Feels closing the school will deny their parental right to choose a small primary school. Straid has played a central role in our family for many generations and is a huge part of our community. The community are all very involved in the life of the school. Teaches in small rural primary schools and could not believe the difference between my childhood experiences at a largely populated school compared to that of the pupils now in my care. Wants her daughter to be part of a family atmosphere in a small class where she would receive more one to one attention and feel part of the community by attending her local school. Having taught in composite classes this has an advantage too. The children each have a role in activities throughout the school which children in bigger schools do not benefit so much as the opportunities and resources must be shared among so many. Smaller classes mean the teacher knows each child, builds up a rapport with them, works alongside them and challenges them to the best of their capabilities. Straid primary's latest inspection report gives high praise for its level of pastoral care, quality of education and community links. It meets all four criteria set out in the SSP. Straid primary was beginning to flourish again after a "blip" and the appointment of a new principal saw the school go from strength to strength. Feels if the school remains then numbers will continue to grow and asks that the school is given the chance under new leadership to stay open and prove its value in the community. Feel that Ballynure primary and other local schools are not appropriate for our child and Woodburn and Toreagh are at full capacity. The closure of Straid would be extremely detrimental to the emotional well-being of our child due to some of her earliest life experiences. Small classes help with more individual attention in a quiet and nurturing environment and having the same teacher two years in a row has helped my child to feel secure. Feel very upset that our child should have to go through such an unsettling time after she has made such progress and other children will face similar emotional issues if the school closes. Implores that the proposal is scrapped in favour of giving the school time to build upon its growing success and that parents should have the right to be able to choose small schools for their children.</p>
43.	<p>Objects to the proposal. EA did not provide a robust review of Straid's circumstances and recommendations are based on sub-standard procedures and incorrect information. A greater weighting appears to be given to both enrolment trends and financial position. Straid has demonstrated an upward trend in enrolment in the last three years. If the school had been given the opportunity to develop before the proposal was published the school's enrolment would have surpassed 60 at which a review by the EA is triggered. The EA failed</p>

	<p>to support the school whilst it negotiated its way out of difficulties resulting from several issues with leadership from 2015-2018, nor has it upheld its promise of giving the new principal three years to develop the school without Area Planning interference. The EA did not take minutes of a meeting in 2018 in which this promise was made, which falls short on the recommendations within the guidance that the consultation should be “fully documented”, “open” and “transparent” . The EA did not respond to questions asked on 3/2/21 until 5 months later which was after the pre-publication period had ended, this does not meet the guidance on “appropriate consultation” having failed to “give due regard” to the issues raised.</p>
44.	<p>Family have been educated at Straid for three generations and is friendly, community based, and nurturing environment for our children. The education provided is excellent as stated in the EA’s report. The staff are acutely aware of the mental health needs of the children. My youngest child has settled into the school due to the attentiveness of his teachers and the creation of positive experiences for him. My other son has progressed a great deal and has a lovely relationship with his teacher and the caretaker has taken him “under his wing” . Mrs Boyd help our daughter through a time of extreme anxiety, her understanding and gentle nature encouraged her but also helped us as parents through this difficult transition. The result of closure would be devastating and would a weakened rural community. The effect on our children would be huge and if sent to large class would be lost. The next two closest schools are filled to capacity and Ballynure does not have the same important values as Straid. We feel the mental health and well-being is not given the emphasis that it should and the inflexible regimented manor in which it is managed makes in an unacceptable choice for our family. We cannot underestimate the emotional and mental upheaval for a child with ASD, and making new friends and adjusting to new teachers with different teaching styles would be mammoth. Doesn’t understand why our rural schools are not protected as in the rest of the UK. Straid has good “educational performance”, an excellent “quality of leadership and management” and fantastic “community support” . The EA has not provided an adequate and balanced report of Straid’s circumstances and has not carried out due procedure. The failure to take minutes of meetings falls short of the Guidance on the Publication of a Development Proposal. The EA has failed to support staff, parents and pupils of Straid PS by being aware that the drop in numbers owe to difficulties with leadership in the school and seized the opportunity to act with a public consultation to close the school recanting on a promise of 3 years to allow the new principal to develop the school with Area Planning interference. The schools numbers increased by 20% even with the consultation hanging over us. To close Straid would be a great ice to the great quality education the children are receiving and shoehorning children into an already overcrowded Ballynure with no room to for development could not be the best way forward.</p>
45.	<p>Objects to the proposal plans. Child has just P1 even though I knew of the potential closure but knew it was the correct decision for my child. The teaching staff are dedicated to each child individually and work tirelessly behind the scenes to fight for our school. Fail to see how a primary school that has been open for 100 years suddenly seems to be no longer viable, taking into account the population increase in the village and surrounding area. The future of Straid should be solely made on behalf of current and future generations of children’s education and happiness. Worried if the school closes what effect and impact this would have on my child and other children attending.</p>
46.	<p>Parent. Strongly disagrees with the proposal and surprised that it is being considered so soon after the pandemic and believes the impact of the of it on children has not yet been fully understood and therefore more time should be taken to consider this impact before making any changes to any pupil’s current normal life in school. Does not think the documentation evaluating the school is a fair evaluation of what is currently happening at Straid as the new principal has not been given time to establish positive changes. Have a long line of family members attending the school. Believes the pupil teacher ratio gives a grater 1:1 tuition than any large school can offer and the quality of teaching is second to none. Anything seen of the school has been positive and is very capable of continuing to</p>

	<p>move with the technical aspects of modern teaching. Closure of the school will affect personal arrangements with the greatest fear being the detrimental impact it will have on my son. Closure of the school will have a decline of the local Congregational church, cause the housing market to fall, leading in a major impact in a number of households in the community. Believes the information gathered in 2011 for the proposal and only partially completed in 2019 should be revisited to clarify it is correct. The decline in pupils joining was impacted by issues within the school at a time with the previous principal, however under the new principal there has been an increase in pupils joining and believes if she was allowed more time to promote the school there would be a more substantial increase in pupils joining.</p>
47.	<p>Parent. Whole heartedly disagrees with the proposal. Living through the pandemic has been very stressful and emotional for our children. The threat of closure is going to impact hugely on their mental health. My son's confidence is growing and this down to the care and attention he gets in this safe, caring and small school environment. Fourth generation child to attend Straid. Asks how the problem of adding more children to an already overcrowded school with insufficient parking facilities will be addressed. The proposal at Ballynure seems to be increasing numbers on paper but it is obvious this school doesn't have the space to take any more children and why keep adding mobile classrooms when there is space at Straid. Was aware about the closure but were confident that Straid primary was the best school for our child. The promises made by the EA to allow the principal a grace period to settle in to repair the damaged relationships from the previous principal and time to increase numbers have not been kept. The school contributes so much to the community, is the heart of the village and would a tragedy for the village and its residents and have a financial effect of the village businesses. By enforcing the closure our right to choose where we send our children to be educated is being removed. Appeals to remove the closure notice, to give the principal the period of grace promised and give the people the option of having their child educated in a small rural setting.</p>
48.	<p>Objects to the proposal. Parents of two children who are happy and content in their school. Straid PS is a place where they learn and develop into happy, content members of the life of Straid school and village. The school's mission statement "every child matters" is not just a strap line, but is practical principal embedded into everyday school life, demonstrated by Mrs Boyd and the amazing teachers and staff alike. The learning experience and pastoral care my children receive has given them confidence and has made them feel part of an extended family. My daughters are very anxious and worried about the effect of having to uproot to a new school as they feel they won't fit in, in new and unfamiliar surroundings. Closing the school will have a negative effect on the staff, our children and the entire village, as the school plays an important part of community life and provides a place for the community to come together. This has been fundamental to us as a family settling into our rural lives 7 years ago. If the school closes we feel it would mean no school- no heart- no heart- no life- no life- no village. Mrs Boyd needs more time to rebuild the school and continue the amazing work her team has begun.</p>
49.	<p>Object to the proposal. Eldest child was home educated and started Straid in P3 and couldn't have asked for a more a welcoming and nurturing school. Everyone at the school is approachable and like a big family and is as close an environment as we could have find to home educating. As a substitute teacher, I have found that large classes are overwhelming for the children and the teachers. Mental health is a big concern and a rural school offers a place for children not to feel under pressure to the latest in life, but offers them a chance to play outside and protect their innocence. It would be shame to lose the school which is the heart of the village. Worried about our children attending Ballynure as it is already full, with small outdoor space than Straid and classes are at capacity, and concerned that our children have had such good teacher to pupil ratios that if they move they will find it hard to adapt. Please take into consideration the long term effects closing the school will have on the children and the community.</p>

50.	Grandchild started Straid PS after being home educated and settled in so quickly and have thrived. I choose to send my own children to a rural school which the benefited enormously from. Delighted to find out my grandchildren were going to get the same positive start. Shocked to hear about the proposal as I feel small schools are a vital part of the rural community. Surprised to see other parts of the UK support and protect their rural schools and feel this needs to happen in Northern Ireland. Can't put a price on the importance of the right early educational experience. My grandchildren will be distraught if they have to move and lose the education they love so much. Straid PS's mission statement that "every child matters" describes the dedicated staff and wonderful learning environment that "every" child there receives.
51.	Strongly opposes the plans to close this rural gem that is the heart of the village. Has seen his grandchildren grow in confidence and thrive academically at Straid and benefit massively with the wonderful teacher/pupil ratios. Concerned that this will be disrupted and have a detrimental effect on their lives academically and their mental health. The staff are approachable and you can see their caring and supportive nature. Rural schools in other parts of the UK are protected and I feel Northern Ireland needs to follow suit, as a one size fits all to education doesn't work. The closure of Straid PS will be heart breaking for my grandchildren.
52.	Objects to the proposal. The school has been a huge part of the community for over 150 years and is the social heart of the village. The school has been unfairly treated buy the EA and has received the supported needed between 2015-2017. Straid PS has always provided an excellent quality education and produced great students. A large number of homes are being built in the borough and hold potential for more students. Many children do not function well in a large class. The policy of closing rural schools is discriminatory.
53.	Objects to the closing of the school. It is the only school in the area with sufficiently low pupil numbers to facilitate the particular needs of my great nephew and niece who suffer from ADHD and autism. A move to a large school would materially damage their mental health and their ability to achieve.
54.	Parent and had children at the school .Dismayed to learn of the decision to shut the school. Objects to the proposal on a number of fronts. Shutting schools such as Straid limits the choices open to parents which reflects very badly on those running our schools and elected to positions of leadership within our community. The school provides regular footfall to these businesses and if this goes, we may lose these important amenities. It provides life and vitality to the village which will be lost if the school closes. Closing the school will deny children a fantastic education. Shutting Straid Primary School will have a very negative impact not only on Straid but on the wider Newtownabbey area.
55.	Parent and had children at the school. Dismayed to learn of the decision to shut the school. Objects to the proposal on a number of fronts. Shutting schools such as Straid limits the choices open to parents which reflects very badly on those running our schools and elected to positions of leadership within our community. The school provides regular footfall to these businesses and if this goes, we may lose these important amenities. It provides life and vitality to the village which will be lost if the school closes. Closing the school will deny children a fantastic education. Shutting Straid Primary School will have a very negative impact not only on Straid but on the wider Newtownabbey area.
56.	Resident and former pupil of Straid. Dismayed to learn of the decision to shut the school. Objects to the proposal on a number of fronts. Shutting schools such as Straid limits the choices open to parents which reflects very badly on those running our schools and elected to positions of leadership within our community. The school provides regular footfall to these businesses and if this goes, we may lose these important amenities. It provides life and vitality to the village which will be lost if the school closes. Closing the school will deny children a fantastic education. Shutting Straid Primary School will have a very negative impact not only on Straid but on the wider Newtownabbey area.

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58.	Teacher. Objects to the proposal. The school focuses on child centred provision where each child is given the opportunity to develop educationally, socially, and morally reaching their own unique potential. A school culture of achievement and improvement exists. Effective interventions are in place to meet the needs of all learners. The highest standard of safeguarding and pastoral care is evident. The standard of teaching and learning is high with a broad and balanced curriculum being provided. The teachers are committed and enthusiastic and self-evaluate in order to improve their practice. They use flexible teaching methods and strategies to engage all pupils. The school works closely with statutory and voluntary agencies to support the pupils. The school also has strong links to the local community and is seen as the 'hub' of the village. Community groups regularly use the school premises and support school based activities such as the Christmas performance and fairs etc. If the school was to discontinue it would be an upheaval to expect children who are happy, safe and thriving in their current school environment to have to uproot and make new friends in a new environment.
59.	Objects to Straid school closing as it will affect my business. The majority of my customers are parents who would pick their kids up from school and children who would get their after school meal from my cafe. If the school closes this will drastically reduce my footfall and may potentially result in closure in the future.
60.	Oppose the discontinuation of Straid PS. Highlights that the new Principal was not afforded the full length of the recovery plan to increase enrolment at the school. Other schools in the area are not easily accessible as many of the pupils are already travelling to Straid from their rural homes. The small class sizes at Straid ensure all pupils receive the support they need regardless of socio-economic background. The school has also implemented uniform swaps and second-hand sales which are a great help for those on a low income. There should also be a gendered analysis of the impact of any discontinuation. As has become particularly clear over the pandemic caring responsibilities tend to fall to women. Having to travel further on the school run, perhaps to a school without an affordable wrap around provision, would negatively impact the opportunities for parents, especially mothers, to access training and employment. The impact of closing the school would be negative not only for the pupils and teachers, but also the parent and the wider community including businesses in Straid.



## MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

 PRE-BRIEF MEETING

<b>DATE AND TIME OF MEETING:</b>		1 November 2021 4:00pm Room 315	
<b>TITLE/ORGANISATION:</b> [Include INV number where possible and ensure title on re-brief and meeting notes are the same]		INV-0155-2021 - Meeting with Trevor Clarke and Straid PS Community group in relation to DP 623	
<b>VENUE:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Rathgael	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<b>LIST OF ATTENDEES:</b> (As follows)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input type="checkbox"/> SpAd:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister PS	<input type="checkbox"/> Minister APS
<b>OFFICIALS:</b> P	Mrs Sharon Taylor - Grade 7, Area Planning (North Region) [REDACTED] – SO, Area Planning (North Region)		
<b>OTHERS:</b> [include PDF copies of any presentations delivered]	Trevor Clarke MLA Mrs Dawn Boyd (Principal) Cllr Stephen Ross [REDACTED] (Community Group) – Main speaker [REDACTED] (BoG) Cllr Norrie Ramsey Steve Aiken MLA Paul Girvan MP Cllr Vera McWilliam Cllr Jeannie Archibald – Brown John Blair MLA [REDACTED] (Parent)		
At the end of the meeting the Minister was given two papers, Presentation to DE – Reasons for Challenge, and Cross Referencing Information, both these documents are saved in Content Manager as detailed below:			



- Challenge to DP 623 –Presentation to DE – Reasons for Challenges 1 November 2021 – ED1/21/313174
- Challenge to DP 623 – Cross Referencing information – 1 November 2021 – ED1/21/313171

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:**

- Trevor Clarke thanked all in attendance and indicated that [REDACTED] (Community Group) would act as the main speaker.
- [REDACTED] thanked the Minister for taking the time from her busy schedule to meet with local representatives. He raised issues regarding the Education Authority (EA) having a pre-determined “decision” in relation to DP 623 with their use of words in the Case for Change (CfC) which is the word “will” discontinue Straid Primary School (PS).
- He referenced the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) 2009 quoting that “the central focus must be the quality of education provided” and rejected the basis on which the EA has based the CfC on enrolment numbers and the schools financial standing.
- He stated that enrolment is only one aspect of sustainability considerations and that schools will not automatically be considered for rationalisation but will be subject to review against all the sustainability criteria and indicators.
- There were 96 objections to the closure made during the pre-consultation period for DP 623 with one in support and 48 objections to Ballynure (DP 625).
- Several issues were raised in reference to the CfC, which the group believes were misleading, lacked clarity, openness and transparency, leaving the information provided open to interpretation:
  - How the EA make continued reference to enrolments and finance with no regard to the other four SSP criteria;
  - No mention that Straid’s enrolment increased by 22% over the past three years;
  - Failure to acknowledge that Ballynure’s enrolment decreased by approximately 4%;
  - The “masking” of local trends (the raise in local birth rates estimated at 6%) with the use of national statistics (which show a decrease in population within the area);
  - Misleading data in relation to the schools finances (it only makes reference to cost savings £46k) and does not provide information on a feasibility study, cost analysis, or any other projected outcome required to facilitate the proposed DP’s (either environmental or otherwise);
  - Refers to Rural Needs Act but does not consider the local community etc.

- The Group stated that there was no substantive evidence that alternative options were fully investigated by the EA.
- Straid and Upper Ballyboley PSs are keen to develop greater sharing and the Department has a duty under the Shared Education Act (NI) 2006 to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education.
- Questions were raised in relation to the Federation option explored. Clarity was asked for in relation to the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC) agreement with the EA with regards to federation as again no evidence was provided and it is requested to what extent the CSSC agreed with the EA.
- The EA did not discuss the option of seeking Integrated status as an alternative to closure especially when the Department has a duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated Education.
- Concerns were raised around the EA not recording minutes of any of their meetings between themselves and BoGs and therefore leading to disputed views and accounts of what was said or actions agreed, this was confirmed with outcome of subsequent FOI request.
- Reference was made to a meeting on Tuesday 7 September 2021 with Straid PS and its representatives and the EA, which brings into question the openness and transparency of their procedures. It was highlighted that [REDACTED] (EA) stated the weighting of the six criteria did not have to be applied equally and this was challenged under page 10 of the SSP in which it states “but will be subject to review against all the sustainability criteria and indicators”. [REDACTED] indicated that the sustainable number for a rural school was 105, however there was an understating within the community that this only applied to new schools and that 60 applied to established schools page 22 SSP.
- Attention was brought to an “understanding” that took place during a meeting between the BoGs and the EA in 2018, where it was stated that the school would not be subject to Area Planning interventions for a period of three years due to the placement of a new principal (Mrs Boyd). It was pointed out that [REDACTED] did not state if she was present at the meeting but “highlighted a difference in opinion of the reported understanding”.
- Paul Girvan stated “I have three signed affidavits stating what was said and I am prepared to go to court if needed”. Reference was made to page 23 of the SSP in which “records of meetings should include issues raised”.
- Mrs Boyd point pointed out that she was dissatisfied that it took five months to receive a reply to questions raised at the meeting. This was attributed to an administrative error by the EA. Concerns were raised about how this

issue was handled and documented and questions were asked of the integrity of the organisation.

- It is the view of the community group that the EA has built their case for closure on two SSP criteria ie enrolments and finance with no regard for the other four. It was highlighted that the proposal should not be about saving money or closing a school because of falling enrolment but is about the children and the continuance of a successful school. Enrolments at Straid PS have increased marginally but there is belief (from the community group and the village) that if the school was given time, enrolments would increase further still.
- Trevor Clarke stressed the importance of having the school in the local community, he understood current pressures to “find savings”, however a promise had been made in 2018 to “not close the school” and there would be no Area Planning interventions. He stated that the “clock needed to be reset” to allow the principal time to grow the school and the EA could then review the position in three years.
- Mrs Boyd, Principal stated that in her first year enrolment was up 19%, overspend was reduced by half, and in in her second year the school manages within its allocated finances. Enrolments were discussed and Mrs Boyd indicated on 6 May 2021 the enrolment was 53 pupils, however as a direct result of the pre-consultation exercise a number of families have left the school and the enrolment is currently 38 pupils.
- Steve Aiken stated there were three issues to be considered:
  - EA “moving the goal posts”;
  - EA’s assumptions in relation to births in the area are incorrect as there is the potential of 1000 new homes being built; and
  - Costs of the development of the Ballynure site have to be considered and fully examined as an extension/new build could be in the range £1.5-2m.
- Steve Aiken also stated that a request was made to “reset” the school three years ago, to allow the school the opportunity to grow/improve under the original “agreement” and that the school would not be interfered with under Area Planning for three years.
- It was also stated at the meeting that the proposal should not be about political outcome in regards to meeting ministerial priorities as identified in DP 625.
- John Blair stated that more people are working and spending more time at home, the local community needs the school and it would become sustainable.

- The Minister asked the group “have they approached Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) about transformation”? Yes, a parental ballot is to take place this month (November).
- The Minister asked if there was a plan for developing the school and was advised there is a three year plan. The development of an outdoor play area has been completed. A Nurture room is being developed. Data tracking, development of ICT and remote learning, and the school is moving forward in supporting children’s literacy and numeracy skills. Children are fully engaged in the school and the school has also implemented the new three stages of SEN.
- The Minister asked if the school considered Shared Education. Yes, the school considered Shared Education, however Straid PS cannot pursue this option as the school (Tír na nÓg) identified was unsustainable and suddenly closed by the Council for Catholic schools (CCMS).
- It was pointed out that since Mrs Boyd (principal) has been in place, the school has settled and is making progress (after a previous principal alienated local families resulting in them withdrawing their children resulting in the enrolment dropping to 40 pupils). There has been good community response to integration and it is hoped to hold a ballot during November. The school is 190 years old, the community makes full use of the schools facilities, and the area needs young families and does not want to become a “retirement village”.
- Questions were asked regarding the capacity at Ballynure PS, how the school will support the increase, where would additional classrooms be located, and how would the increased demands going to be met as no viability study has been provided to answer these questions. They were told “the portacabins were going to be placed on site in the playground” and from observation the Ballynure site is not appropriate for development. They are unhappy that the development of Ballynure PS is “predicated” on the closure of Straid PS.
- A question was raised in relation to “understanding the relationship between the EA and the Department”. The Minister replied that the EA as planning and managing authority for Controlled Schools brings forward proposals and Department officials prepare a submission for my consideration.
- The Minister was thanked for her time in listening to the concerns and the Minister thanked everyone for coming.

**ISSUES AGREED:** None.

**ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:** None.

**NOTE WRITTEN BY:**

**[REDACTED] & Sharon Taylor**

**DATE:**

**11 November 2021**



**Controlled Schools' Support Council**  
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Stranmillis University College  
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T: 028 9531 3030  
E [info@csscni.org.uk](mailto:info@csscni.org.uk)

18 November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Development proposal 623 Straid Primary School**

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) was set up in September 2016 to represent and support the interests of the controlled sector in Northern Ireland. CSSC supports controlled schools, which are open to all faiths and none, in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together, within the ethos of non-denominational Christian values and principles.

The diversity of the controlled sector is evident in the age range of pupils it serves, 3 to 19, as well as in the types and locations of the schools which it represents. CSSC celebrates the inclusion of Nursery, Primary, Special and Post-Primary schools within its wide-reaching community, which welcomes all young people, whoever they are and from wherever they come. The controlled sector is the largest education sector in Northern Ireland accounting for 49% of all schools and catering for over 146,000 pupils.

CSSC notes the publication of the Development Proposal to discontinue provision at Straid Primary School with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter. CSSC also notes the publication of associated proposals to discontinue provision at Upper Ballyboley Primary School and to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School. CSSC has consulted with Straid Primary School and other controlled schools in the area and welcomes the opportunity to make representation in the interests of the controlled sector.

CSSC welcomes the Minister's commitment to support sustainable educational provision in rural areas and acknowledges the priority to support provision where each pupil is in a class with a single year group. CSSC notes the low enrolment in Straid Primary School and recognises the challenges this presents for the Board of Governors and staff. Without pre-empting the outcome of this proposal, CSSC has confirmed its support for the associated proposal to increase admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School which provides an option for parents to secure placement in a sustainable rural school for children who could be displaced from Straid Primary School.

In the event of a decision being taken to discontinue Straid Primary School, CSSC acknowledges that not all parents will identify Ballynure Primary School as a first preference

**Controlled Schools' Support Council** [www.csscni.org.uk](http://www.csscni.org.uk)  
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and that there are other controlled primary schools in the locality which offer an alternative due to geographical location and other pragmatic considerations for parents.

In all aspects of the decision making process CSSC would request that the educational experiences of the pupils and the welfare of pupils and staff are paramount. CSSC therefore requests a timely decision to minimise uncertainty for the whole school community. Should a decision be taken to approve the proposal CSSC seeks assurances that staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are supported in the process of redeployment and/or voluntary severance in keeping with the School Re-organisation Agreements.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Baker  
Chief Executive

## ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

DP 623

**Date of last ETI report:** Primary inspection (involving Action short of strike) in May 2019

**Web link:** <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/asos-primary-inspection-straids-primary-school-ballyclare-county-antrim-301-0570.pdf>

**Date<sup>1</sup>:** 12-10-21

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

- The enrolment in Straid Primary School for September 2021 is 38 children with an intake of four children in Year 1.
- A new teaching principal took up post in the third term of 2019.
- There are currently 3.4 full-time teaching staff employed in the school and a teaching principal.
- There are 3 composite classes.

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

- Ballynure Primary School, Sustaining Improvement Inspection in November 2017, the school continued to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
- Upper Ballyboley Primary School, Follow-up Inspection in December 2017, the school demonstrated the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

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

- As a result of enrolling in a sustainable school, it is likely that children will be working alongside peers of a similar age and stage of development.
- The children will benefit potentially from a wider range of extra-curricular activities.
- The children will benefit potentially from a wider range of teacher specialisms.

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<sup>1</sup> This commentary paper is based on the information and evidence available to ETI on this date. Please check the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk) for any new inspection reports that may have published after this date.



- Provision of appropriate transport for children living in an isolated rural community needs to be considered.

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

None

5. The SSP Criteria indicators requiring ETI input (if known and/or for which information is available).

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils, Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.			x
	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.		There are 3 composite classes in the school. Year 1/2 Job share class Year 3-4; and Year 5-6-7 Job share class with Principal Release.	
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.		3.4 full-time teaching staff and a teaching principal	
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.			x
	1.5 The ability at post-primary level to be able to provide suitable access to the entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.		Not applicable	
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.			x

	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.		Engage funding is used to provide one- to- one and small group support for vulnerable children in numeracy and literacy skills focusing on key words in literacy.	
	1.8 The quality of the <u>physical</u> environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.			X
	1.9 The quality of, and arrangements for, pastoral care including the active promotion of the principles of social justice in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum.			X
Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.			X
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.			X
	4.9 Pupil behaviour, expulsions, suspensions and non-attendance as well as positive behaviours such as involvement in school management (e.g. buddying and mentoring schemes).			X
<b>Strong links with the Community</b>	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			X
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			X
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.		No	

## 6. Summary of impact of the proposal

The cumulative effect on the provision of the falling enrolment and pressure on the school budget needs to be considered alongside the associated impact on the learning and teaching resources.

**TRANSPORT AND FOOD IN SCHOOLS INPUT TO DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL  
(DP)**

**DP Title & Number: DP 623 - Straid Primary School, DP 624 - Upper Ballyboley Primary School & DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School**

**Transport and Food in Schools Input:**

**Updated Response date: 17 May 2023**

Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated that the financial implications for the Transport budget would be minimal.

**EWD INPUT:**

No issues or concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff as noted in section 6 (Staff) of the Case for Change.

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

- **TNC 2011/8** - Workload Agreement: should the Case for Change result in an increase to enrolment in a school, or surrounding schools, assurance should be provided regarding how potential impact on teacher workload, as a result of the increased class size, will be managed.
- **TNC 2013/2** – School Reorganisation Agreement and DE Circular 2013/7 – School Reorganisation Allowances: a teacher who suffers a reduction in pay as a result of staff re-organisation or redeployment may be eligible to apply for a school reorganisation allowance.
- **JNC 224** – Collective Agreement for School Reorganisations – Employment protection for Support Staff will apply where the Case for Change may impact on the terms and conditions of non-teaching staff.

**School Admissions Team (SAT) input for:** DP 623: Straid Primary School (301-0570) Proposal to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.

**(NB: This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal 624 and 625)**

## SAT INPUT

Straid Primary School (PS) is a controlled school with approved admissions and enrolment numbers set at 17 (to a maximum of 20 provided the enrolment number would not thereby be exceeded) in admissions and 119 in enrolment.

DP 623 proposes that the school discontinues from 31 August 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter.

### Applications:

Over the past five years the school has received the following applications for admission to Year 1 during the admissions process:

Year	Admissions Number	First Preferences	Total Applications (all preferences)	Admissions*
2017/18	17 - 20	8	8	8
2018/19	17 - 20	9	9	9
2019/20	17 - 20	5	5	5
2020/21	17 - 20	8	9	9
2021/22	17 - 20	5	5	5

\*Excludes statemented pupils and those admitted by appeal

### Temporary Variation (TVs):

If a school receives more applications for admission than it has places available it can request a Temporary Variation (TV) to its admissions and/or enrolment numbers from the School Admissions Team (SAT).

During the last five years Straid Primary School has remained undersubscribed and therefore has not needed to request a TV to its approved numbers from the Department.

### Long Term:

The long term need for places in particular areas is for the area planning process to consider. SAT does not hold data on future demand for places and is unable to make a recommendation on whether the DP should be approved.

**Financial Monitoring Teams'** comments on **DP 623**: 'Proposed Closure of the School'.

The school's **Provisional** Deficit position as at 31 March 2022 is (£190,040).

The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2021 was (£162,678).

The school received a total delegated budget of £193,763 in the 2022-23 financial year for 38<sup>1</sup> FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £5,099. The average for all primary schools is £3,421.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 5<sup>2</sup> pupils, which represents 13.16% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.

The school received £51,863 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 100.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

The school also received £16,420 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.

Details of the school's budget allocation from the Common Funding Formula, for the last 3 years, is as follows:

Factor	2022-23 £	2021-22 £	2020-21 £
Pupil AWPU	97,340	135,764	107,324
TSN – Social Deprivation	3,068	2,454	2,454
TSN – Additional Social Deprivation	135	109	113
Premises Area	4,610	4,610	4,610
Premises FTE	3,246	4,505	3,802
Small Schools Support	51,863	49,807	47,726
Primary Principals Release Time	16,420	16,420	16,420
Foundation Stage	12,701	14,103	13,402
Teachers Salary Protection	823	0	0
	3,558	4,744	5,521
<b>Total School Funding</b>	<b>193,763</b>	<b>232,516</b>	<b>201,371</b>
Pupil FTE (no.)	38.00	53.00	45.00
Per Capita	£5,099	£4,387	£4,475

<sup>2</sup> The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2021 census data was used to determine the 2022-23 CFF allocation). The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year. In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

### **IWD Input:**

It is noted from the Case for Change that Straid PS has issues round sustainability. Attendance at a sustainable school underpins the fundamental principles of the special educational needs (SEN) Code of Practice, which focuses on a continuum of need and a continuum of provision, which may be made in a variety of forms. Children with SEN require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The Case for Change notes that since 2011, implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy through area planning has objectives which include:

- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning.

The Case for Change states that this DP when considered with DP 624 - Upper Ballyboley Primary School to discontinue and DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School to increase its admissions and enrolment numbers, will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with SEN realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by the EA's Children and Young People Services.

SET would not oppose this DP, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively.

### **PST input:**

We note that there are four children looked after attending Straid PS and would have concerns about a school move for them. Whilst we don't know the specifics of how they entered the care system, children looked after are the most vulnerable children in our society having suffered trauma, neglect and/or abuse and have learnt to survive in an unsafe world. They often have very complex needs, including cognitive difficulties linked to developmental trauma. It notes in the information attached that Straid PS has provided a very supportive environment for all of their children which would be of particular significance to these pupils. A lot of times, given a high frequency of placement moves, school can be the only stability a child looked after has and key to this are the relationships formed both with their peers and members of staff – for Straid PS to close and these children to be sent to another school this could be interpreted by them as a further rejection in a life which has been filled with rejection, something which may be very difficult for them to overcome. The DE/DoH draft Looked After Children's Strategy has a central tenet of ensuring stability is prioritised for children looked after, both in terms of their home and school placements. It would be important that if these children are

still in the school at the time of closure that they receive appropriate support to help them transition to a new school.

**SECRET ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL  
DP 623 – Straid Primary School 301-0570 – discontinue**

Current Position

Straid Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Ballynure Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

List of neighbouring <phase> schools provided by Area Planning

School		Programme	Membership
Ref No	Name		
301-0631	Ballyclare PS		
301-6414	Fairview PS	CASE	St Oliver Plunkett PS
301-0404	Tildarg PS,		
301-0754	Doagh PS		
301-0828	Kilbride PS		
301-3332	Toreagh PS	CASE	St John's PS & Woodlawn PS
301-0779	The Thompson PS		
301-0696	Woodburn PS	CASE	Carrickfergus Central PS & Hazelwood Integrated PS
301-6225	Woodlawn PS	CASE	Toreagh PS & St John's PS
301-0817	Greenisland PS		
301-6005	Silverstream PS		

301-6038	Hollybank PS		
301-6249	Earlview PS		
303-6139	St Macnissis's PS		
301-6015	Mossley PS	CASE	St Bernard's PS

5 of these school are currently involved in a partnership funded through Peace IV CASE project.

## **SECRET CONSIDERATION**

### *The Case for Change*

DP 623 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 624 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 625 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal however no reference to Shared Education is contained within the documentation.

There is evidence to suggest that EA has given consideration to Shared Education in this set of Development Proposals, however there is no evidence documented within DP 625.



## **SECRET ASSESSMENT**

There is insufficient evidence in the Development Proposal to suggest a positive or negative impact to Shared Education partnerships in the area.

## **DE Equality Unit**

I have considered the published proposals and the rationales outlined in the Case for Change and I have no comments to make either in relation to equality or rural needs perspectives.



## Screening Template

**PART 1 – POLICY INFORMATION**

## 1.1. Policy title

To discontinue Straid Primary School with effect from 31 August 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## 1.2. Description of policy or decision

**Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools (SSP) – A Department of Education policy published in January 2009**

The Sustainable Schools Policy sets out six criteria and associated indicators that provide a framework for helping to consider issues of school sustainability. The primary objective of the policy is to ensure that all children get a first class education in fit for purpose facilities, regardless of background or where they live.

The policy sets out six criteria to be considered in assessing a school's educational viability, as follows:

- quality educational experience
- stable enrolment trends
- sound financial position
- strong leadership and management
- accessibility
- strong links with the community

Straid Primary School has been assessed against the SSP and the school's assessment against the six criteria is detailed in the case for change.

### 1.2. Description of policy or decision

Straid Controlled Primary School is situated in the village of Straid in County Antrim. The majority of the children attending the school come from the village and within a five mile radius of the school. The school serves the community surrounding the school and has an enrolment of 53 pupils. In consideration of a declining enrolment, the school was identified in the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan as 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision by March 2019.

It is a three class base primary school, has five teachers with composite classes for Years 1-2, Years 3-4, and Years 5-7. There are five non-teaching staff.

The Education Authority has identified the preferred proposal as being to discontinue Straid Primary School.

The aims of the proposal are:

- To ensure every learner fulfils his or her full potential at each stage of development.
- Enhance the quality of provision and raise standards.
- To address declining enrolments at Straid Primary School.
- To ensure a network of sustainable schools throughout the Education Authority capable of delivering the curriculum.
- To reduce the number of available places.
- To ensure the efficient and effective use of the Authority's resources.
- To reduce duplication of provision.

This is consistent with the Education Authority's Strategic Area Plan, Providing Pathways particularly in the Antrim and Newtownabbey area the Education Authority is seeking to:

- Ensure that school places are located as required
- Address school provision where sustainability is an issue

## Screening Template

### 1.2. Description of policy or decision

In considering this option, the Education Authority will ensure:

- Pupils transfer to alternative sustainable schools enhancing the quality of provision
- The reduced number of available places
- The more efficient use of resources
- The reduction of over provision within the controlled sector.

The key factors will be to ensure:

- Pupil transfer with minimal disruption particularly at transition and pupil examination stages, special needs and transport arrangements.
- Staff employment rights are respected, protected and preserved.

### 1.3. Who are the main stakeholders impacted? (Internal and external as well as actual and potential)

Pupils, staff (teaching and non-teaching), governors, parents, local community and trade unions.

### Screening Template

1.4. Is the policy likely to impact people living in rural areas? <i>(If yes, please complete the rural sections of this document)</i>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.5. Are there other policies or decisions with a bearing on this policy or decision?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools</li><li>• The Northern Ireland Curriculum</li><li>• Every School a Good School – A Policy for School Improvement (ESaGS)</li><li>• Entitlement Framework</li><li>• Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022)</li><li>• Area Planning Guidelines/Sustainability Baseline Report</li><li>• Terms and Conditions of Employment (Staff)</li><li>• Education Authority’s Transport Policy</li><li>• Programme for Government</li><li>• The Children’s Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015</li><li>• Children and Young People’s Strategy 2019-2029</li><li>• Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</li><li>• A Fair Start</li></ul>

## PART 2 – EVIDENCE AND MITIGATION

2.1. What information did you use to inform this screening?

***E.g. census data, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), consultation reports, service level data.***

Department of Education Schools Census Data  
Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency data on population  
Department of Education Sustainability Baseline Report  
Department of Education Area Planning Guidance and Ministerial Priorities  
Education Authority Staff Data  
Education Authority Case for Change

Engagement with sectoral support bodies  
Pre-publication consultation meetings held with parents, staff and governors on 10 March 2020. Pre-publication consultation with parents, staff, governors and affected schools took place between 10 March 2020 to 21 May 2020 and Refresh pre-publication consultation from 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021.

### Screening Template

#### 2.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Data - What is the profile of the people that are impacted by this policy or decision?

<b>Section 75 Group 1: Age</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>																																																																																										
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>																																																																																										
	All affected pupils are of primary school age – table 1 details the year group breakdown of Straid Primary School along with an indication of the level of available places at the school. The school has an approved enrolment of 119 and an admission figure of 17.																																																																																										
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #d9e1f2;"> <th colspan="9">Table 1: Enrolment Statistics - Straid Primary School</th> </tr> <tr style="background-color: #d9e1f2;"> <th></th> <th>Year 1</th> <th>Year 2</th> <th>Year 3</th> <th>Year 4</th> <th>Year 5</th> <th>Year 6</th> <th>Year 7</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>9</td> <td>13</td> <td>7</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>15</td> <td>10</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014/15</td> <td>11</td> <td>9</td> <td>13</td> <td>7</td> <td>12</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015/16</td> <td>9</td> <td>11</td> <td>9</td> <td>12</td> <td>7</td> <td>13</td> <td>13</td> <td>74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>10</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>7</td> <td>12</td> <td>66</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>9</td> <td>6</td> <td>8</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>6</td> <td>8</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>10</td> <td>6</td> <td>9</td> <td>8</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>53</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Table 1: Enrolment Statistics - Straid Primary School										Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total	2013/14	9	13	7	12	13	15	10	79	2014/15	11	9	13	7	12	14	15	81	2015/16	9	11	9	12	7	13	13	74	2016/17	10	9	10	9	9	7	12	66	2017/18	7	8	7	6	6	3	6	43	2018/19	9	6	8	6	5	3	4	41	2019/20	6	8	7	6	7	6	5	45	2020/21	10	6	9	8	7	7	6	53
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The staff range in age between <20 to <59.																																																																																											



### Screening Template

*What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?*

#### **Pupils**

As detailed within the Case for Change the pupils at Straid Primary School needs will continue to have their primary education needs met as there are places available in neighbouring schools - see table 2. In addition the Education Authority is progressing a proposal to increase provision at Ballynure Primary School, which is 1.9 miles from Straid PS, to ensure adequate controlled primary provision is available in the area.

Those pupils with statements from the mainstream school, will continue to have their needs met at their receiver school.

**Table 2: Local Schools – Distance from Straid Primary School**

	Distance (miles) From Straid Primary School	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places 2020/21
Straid Primary School	-	Controlled	53	119	66
Ballynure Primary School*	1.9	Controlled	148	154	6
Upper Ballyboley Primary School**	5.0	Controlled	28	100	72
Toreagh Primary School	4.7	Controlled	111	105	0
Mossley Primary School	4.9	Controlled	609	610	1
Ballyclare Primary School	3.7	Controlled	555	572	17
Fairview Primary School	4.1	Controlled	501	525	24
St Macnissi's Primary School	5.2	Maintained	185	210	25
Woodburn Primary School	4.2	Controlled	188	193	5
Woodlawn Primary School	5.4	Controlled	180	310	130
Earlview Primary School	5.5	Controlled	227	221	0
Doagh Primary School	5.7	Controlled	115	138	23

\* Associated proposal to increase the Ballynure Primary School's admission and enrolment number

\*\* Proposal to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

### Screening Template

	<p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>The teaching staff is afforded employment 2 years protection under the School Re-Organisation Agreement 2013/2 (<a href="https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-re-organisation-agreement">https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-re-organisation-agreement</a>).</p> <p>School Re-Organisation Agreement is in place for a period of one year for non-teaching staff (<a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/redeployment-redundancy">https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/redeployment-redundancy</a>).</p> <p>Subject to the approval of the proposal the Education Authority's Human Resources Team will contact each member of staff individually and any concerns or issues can be explored via this engagement.</p>
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### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 2: Dependants</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	In relation to this Section 75 group the Education Authority does not hold data on parents, teaching or non-teaching staff.  Based on the 2020/21 enrolment there are no looked after children attending the school.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	The Education Authority understands there may be a potential impact on relocated staff with dependents, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in travel time may mean additional care costs and difficulties in balancing work/life balance</li> <li>• potential negative impacts of changes in facilities</li> <li>• negative impacts if changes in work patterns are needed</li> <li>• negative impacts if needs are not taken on board if re-training is necessary</li> <li>• need to work near home in case of an emergency</li> <li>• negative impact on part-time workers</li> </ul> <p>All pupils that are under care will continue to have their needs met via the Education Authority's Education Welfare Service.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 3: Disability</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>There are pupils with a statement of special educational needs attending the school – where there are less than five cases the number has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of information about identifiable individuals.</p> <p>The Education Authority does not hold any disability related data for staff.</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> All pupils who have a statement of special educational needs will continue to have their needs met, as specified in their statement. CYPS will contact parents specifically to discuss the school closure, part of the action plan will be to work with parents to meet the needs of the pupil with SEN at any new school.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Reasonable adjustments will be taken into consideration for any staff member with a disability. The Disability Employment Support Service can provide guidance and support to line managers.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 4: Religious Beliefs</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> [REDACTED]</p> <p><b>Staff</b>            The Education Authority does not retain records of religious background for a section of the school staff – releasing breakdowns for a particular section would not be in keeping with GDPR best practice as it may allow for the identification of individuals.</p>

### Screening Template

	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> A controlled school is open to pupils of all faiths and none. There is provision in neighbouring schools within reasonable travelling distance, see table 2 of the Case for Change, and schools in the area continue to work together through the shared education programme allowing children from all communities to work together in an inclusive way.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the closure of Straid Primary School the Education Authority will continue to be in a position to meet the demand for controlled primary places in the area. Table 2 in the Case for Change details the available places in the area – the link below is the published documentation. <a href="#">DP 623 - Straid Primary School</a></p> <p>A separate proposal has been progressed to increase the admission figure and approved enrolment of Ballynure Primary School which provide additional controlled provision in the area that is impacted by the closure of Straid Primary School, the link below is the published documentation for Ballynure Primary School proposal. <a href="#">Link to DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School</a></p> <p><b>Staff</b> Reasonable adjustments will be taken into consideration for any staff member on issues raised.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 5: Gender</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>Pupils – 25 Male / 28 Female</p> <p>Non-teaching Staff – [REDACTED]</p> <p>Teaching Staff – The Education Authority does not hold this information</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> The pupils are currently being taught in a co-educational setting and should the proposed closure of the primary school occur the Education Authority will be able to provide places for the pupils within co-educational provision in the area.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Irrespective of gender staff members will be treated fairly in keeping with agreed policies and legislation.</p>



### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 6: Marital Status</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	The Education Authority does not monitor the marital status of staff - irrespective of the marital status all staff members will be treated fairly in keeping with agreed policies and legislation.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	Not Applicable

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 7: Political Opinion</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	No specific needs or priorities can be identified
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p>The Education Authority engaged with local political representatives in relation to the proposed discontinuance of Straid Primary School and changes planned for primary provision in the wider area. The views expressed during these discussions were taken into consideration when a decision was made to progress with the proposed discontinuance of Straid Primary School.</p> <p>Interested parties have the opportunity to make their views known directly to the Department of Education during the two month statutory objection period after the publication of the development proposal.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 8: Ethnicity</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<b>Pupils</b> There are no newcomer pupils identified within the 2021/22 school census.
	<b>Staff</b> There is no data available on the ethnic background of the staff members.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	The needs of pupils and staff from a minority group will to be met.
<b>Section 75 Group 9: Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	The Education Authority does not hold data on the sexual orientation of pupils or staff.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	There is no evidence at this stage to indicate different needs, experiences or priorities - the needs of all pupils and staff will be met.

## Screening Template

### Impact on Rural Needs

*Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above category impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.*

In 2020/21 there were 53 pupils enrolled with a total of 10 staff.

### What are the social and economic impacts of the policy on people living in rural areas?

*Please consider positive and negative impacts around issues such as access to education or youth provision, transport, broadband accessibility and employment impacts.*

Straid Controlled Primary School is situated in the village of Straid in County Antrim. The majority of the children attending the school come from the village and within a five mile radius of the school, see Map 2 of the Case for Change.

The enrolment statistics, see table 1 of this screening, show that the enrolment of Straid Primary School has failed to meet the approved enrolment of 117 for a number of which has resulted in the school retaining a high percentage of available places across the years. Straid and Ballynure Primary School's attract pupils from a common area, see Map 2 of the Case for Change, and the Education Authority is proposing to increase provision within Ballynure Primary School – the impact of the closure of Straid Primary School on the 53 pupils will be mitigated by the increased provision at Ballynure Primary School along with the availability of places across other schools, see table 2 of the Case for Change.

Were applicable families can apply for transport assistance to their next nearest suitable primary school in accordance with the Departmental Transport Policy – see section 6 of the Case for Change.

The employment rights of permanent staff are protected under the agreed policy – see section 6 of the Case for Change.

The Education Authority is aware of the important community role Straid Primary School plays and will investigate with the community how this can continue should the school close and the Education Authority/Department of Education has decided the accommodation is no longer required for education purposes. However it should be noted that the Education Authority is not in a position to "gift" or otherwise give the property for the use of the local community – as a public body the Education Authority has the abide by Department of Finance's guidance (Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland) in relation to the disposal of accommodation which has been deemed surplus.

2.3. Policy / Decision changes

***In developing the policy or decision, what changes did you make, or do you intend to make to address any equality issues that you identified?***

No changes to the proposal to close Straid Primary School was required – as part of the overall primary provision in the area the Education Authority has brought forward a proposal to increase primary provision at Ballynure Primary School and there is significant available places at alternative primary provision in the area, see Table 2 of the Case for Change.

The teaching staff are afforded two years protected employment under the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2. Those teaching staff affected will be offered alternative posts through transfer of redundancy or voluntary redundancy.

School Re-organisation Agreement is in place for a period of one year for non-teaching staff. Those non-teaching staff affected will be offered redeployment or voluntary redundancy.

The Education Authority will discuss with the local community the future of the school building and site subject to it no longer being required for educational purposes by the Education Authority or Department of Education and with the constraints in relation to the transfer of the property as outlined previously.

***Based on the rural impacts that you have identified, what changes (mitigation) can you make to the policy?***

The Education Authority will consider the potential for community use of the Straid Primary School building and site subject to the limitations placed on it by government guidance on the disposal of public assets.

The review has identified (unfilled) available places in alternative controlled schools within the local area should parents prefer this option. Children will be afforded places in more sustainable schools which will enhance curriculum provision, including interaction with peers. These alternative schools fit with the ethos and religious make-up of the current school.

### Screening Template

**Based on the rural impacts that you have identified, what changes (mitigation) can you make to the policy?**

Due regard has been given to the Rural Needs Act and the consideration of the potential transport impact. This will be accounted for by the Transport section within the Education Authority. Such discussions will be held with parents to support them in making informed decisions based on parental choice.

### PART 3 – GOOD RELATIONS

3.1. If we define Good Relations as ‘tackling prejudice and promoting understanding’, are there any changes to the policy or decision that you would make in this regard?

*(Please enter N/A if not applicable)*

GROUP	Impact on Good Relations	Policy / Decision Changes
Religion	Not Applicable	No
Ethnicity	No	No
Political Opinion	No	No

### PART 4 – SECTION 75 EQUALITY SCREENING DECISION

This section is only relevant to the Section 75 Equality Duties.

4.1. How would you categorise the impacts of the policy or decision? <b>Please refer to guidance notes on categorising impacts.</b>	Major Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Minor Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Please provide reasons for your decision below.</i>		
<p>The Education Authority will work with parents and the school to mitigate any factors which they consider to disadvantage the pupils eg in securing admission to a suitable school; the provision of transport and uniform support in accordance with current policies and induction support for pupils who may find the change of school a challenging experience.</p> <p>There is alternative controlled primary provision within a reasonable travel distance and a proposal to increase the admissions figure and approved enrolment of a neighbouring school will ensure the local community continues to have access to controlled primary provision.</p> <p>The Education Authority will provide advice, support and assistance to staff in respect of potential redeployment opportunities.</p>		

### Screening Template

4.2. Does the policy or decision require a full Equality Impact Assessment?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

*Please provide reasons for your decision below.*

At this stage there is no need to move to an EQIA, there will be continued engagement with the school and multiple stakeholders throughout the rest of the area planning process.

This will be kept under review and if required, a decision to EQIA the closure can be taken based on supporting evidence in line with the Education Authority Equality Scheme commitments.



**PART 5 – DISABILITY DUTIES**

5.1. Does the policy or decision encourage the participation of disabled people in public life? Or is there anything you can do within the policy or decision to encourage participation of disabled people in public life?

	How does the policy encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?	Is there anything further you can do to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?
Please provide details if applicable	As one of the key themes of the Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022) is to: <b>'secure parity of access for all to appropriate pathways'</b> .	.

5.2. Does the policy or decision promote positive attitudes towards disabled people? Or is there anything you can do within the policy or decision to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

	How does the policy promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?	Is there anything further you can do promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
Please provide details if applicable	As one of the key themes of the Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022) is to: <b>'secure parity of access for all to appropriate pathways'</b> .	As in 5.1

## PART 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS

### 6.1. Are Human Rights Relevant?

Article		Relevant (Yes/No)
Article 2:	<b>Right to Life</b>	No
Article 3:	<b>Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment</b>	No
Article 4:	<b>Right to freedom from slavery, servitude &amp; forced compulsory labour.</b>	No
Article 5:	<b>Right to liberty and security of person.</b>	No
Article 6:	<b>Right to a fair &amp; public trial in a reasonable time</b>	No
Article 7:	<b>Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law &amp; no punishment without law</b>	No
Article 8:	<b>Right to respect for private &amp; family life, home &amp; correspondence.</b>	No
Article 9:	<b>Right to freedom of thought, conscience &amp; religion.</b>	No
Article 10:	<b>Right to freedom of expression.</b>	No
Article 11:	<b>Right to freedom of assembly &amp; association</b>	No
Article 12:	<b>Right to marry &amp; found a family.</b>	No
Article 14:	<b>Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights</b>	No
Protocol 1, Article 1	<b>Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions &amp; protection of property</b>	No
Protocol 1, Article 2	<b>Right of access to education</b>	Yes

*If you answered 'no' to all human rights considerations, please go to Part 7 – Monitoring*

### Screening Template

6.2. If you have answered yes to any of the Articles in 6.1, does the policy or decision have a potential positive impact or does it potentially interfere with anyone's Human Rights?

Article number	Positive impact or potential interference?	How?	Any legal issues arise?
Article 2:			
Article 3:			
Article 4:			
Article 5:			
Article 6:			
Article 7:			
Article 8:			
Article 9:			
Article 10:			
Article 11:			
Article 12:			
Article 14:			
Protocol 1, Article 1			

**Screening Template**

Article number	Positive impact or potential interference?	How?	Any legal issues arise?
<p><b>Protocol 1, Article 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>Potential positive impact</u></b></p> <p>The impact on pupils is mitigated by the fact there is alternative primary provision within a reasonable distance, see Table 2 in the Case for Change.</p> <p>These schools are co-educational and have similar ethos and religious make up as the current school.</p>	<p>Provision of a network of viable and sustainable schools that can deliver the NI Curriculum effectively and provide access to a range of education provision that is appropriate to the needs of children and young people, so that every pupil can realise their potential and contribute to a caring, inclusive and progressive society.</p> <p>The UNCRC states that The purpose of education is to enable the child to develop to his or her fullest possible potential. The Education Authority believes the closure of Straid Primary School, and providing the pupils places in neighbouring controlled schools, is in the best interests of the pupils. It would mean the relocated Straid Primary School pupils would be taught in larger classes and allow for improved social interaction between the pupils.</p>	

**PART 7 - MONITORING**

7.1. What data will you collect to monitor the impact of the policy in terms of equality of opportunity, disability duties or human rights compliance?

	Data Collected
<b>Section 75</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Straid Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Straid Primary School.</p>
<b>Disability Duties</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Straid Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Straid Primary School.</p>
<b>Human Rights</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Straid Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Straid Primary School.</p>

Screening Template

**SIGN OFF**

<b>Approved: Head of Area Planning</b>	<i>Michael McConkey, Head of Area Planning</i>
<b>Policy screened by:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Date:</b>	6 September 2022



2 June 2023

To: All Governors, Staff and Parents/Guardians of Straid Primary School

Dear Governor, Staff, Parent/Guardian

Development Proposal 623 for the discontinuance of Straid Primary School was published on 21 September 2021. At the same time Development Proposals for the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School (Development Proposal 624) and an increase in the approved admission and enrolment numbers was published for Ballynure Primary School (Development Proposal 625), subject to a decision on the discontinuance proposals.

Since 2021, Development Proposal 686 for the transformation from Controlled to Controlled Integrated status for Straid Primary School was published on 28 September 2022. As a result, the Department of Education advised: *‘the proposal for Transformation needs to be considered first and this has ultimately led to a delay in the consideration of the three linked proposals Development Proposals 623–625. The assessment of any Development Proposal is a complex process and requires careful consideration of all evidence, any decision to ‘approve’ or ‘not approve’ a school closure is not taken lightly. All decisions are taken to ensure the best interests of all learners’.*

In consideration of the current timescale, nearing the end of the school year, and the fact that a decision has yet to be made on any of the Development Proposals above, nor is there a timescale on when decisions will be made, the Education Authority has liaised with the Department of Education to advise that it would not be in a position to implement either the transformation of Straid Primary School or the discontinuance of either school in this academic year. Therefore, Straid Primary School will operate as a controlled primary school for the 2023/24 academic year.

When decisions on the above Development Proposals are received the Education Authority will be in contact to discuss implementation and next steps.

I appreciate the uncertainty for you as a governor, member of staff or parents/guardians of pupils attending Straid Primary School and I hope this correspondence provides you with some comfort going forward for the 2023/24 academic year.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.



Assistant Director of Education



**Part 3  
Appendices DP 624**

**Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter;  
(This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal 625)**

**APPENDIX A**

Area Planning Case for Change
Upper Ballyboley Primary School  Development Proposal No 624  Proposal to: Discontinue

Case for Change: Supporting Information - Summary/Overview	
Area Planning District	Mid and East Antrim
Development Proposal Number	624
Proposer	Michele Corkey Director of Education Education Authority
School(s) Name	Upper Ballyboley Primary School
School(s) Reference	301-0850
Sector	Primary
Management	Controlled
Development Proposal Publication Date	Week commencing 20 September 2021
Proposal	<b>Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter</b>

Case for Change: Statutory Consultation

*Note: It may be necessary for documentary evidence to be provided to show that the statutory procedures have been followed. It is essential that relevant parties retain this information.*

The following is to be completed by the Proposer and signed off by them.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

**Proposer**

Provide detail of consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils.

Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before publication of the DP?

Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 10 March 2020 to 21 May 2020

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority’s Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 3.00pm
- Board of Governors: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 5.30pm
- Parents/Guardians: Consultation Session - 10 March 2020 - 7.00pm
- Local Schools (13): Letter – 12 March 2020

Pre-publication consultation commenced on 10 March 2020 closing on 21 May 2020. However, on 18 March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced that schools would close to pupils at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March 2020. This resulted in area planning activity being stood down. Area planning activity was given permission to resume by the Department of Education on 8 October 2020, and, as a result, the Education Authority re-started the pre-publication consultation for the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

Re-Start Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority’s Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Board of Governors: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Parents/Guardians: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Local Schools (13): Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

The Education Authority received a total of 28 responses. The information below provides a summary of overall responses and emerging themes of responses received.

Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Total
Board of Governors		1		1
Board of Governors – Affected Schools	2			2
Governors		2		2
Staff – Teaching/Non-Teaching	1	2		3
Parents/Guardians		16		16

Other - Grandparent		1		1
Other - Local Resident		1		1
Other - Unknown		1		1
Other – Controlled Schools’ Support Council (CSSC)			1	1
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>

A summary of comments in support of the proposal:

- Sad to see school closing but has had low numbers for some time.
- Funding given to most schools is NOT anywhere near enough to run a school.
- Small schools are crucial for our pupils as we offer a smaller safe and calmer environment for pupils with SEN and sensory issues which would be lost if small schools are closed.

A summary of those not in support of the proposal:


- Pupils receive a quality education as confirmed by the ETI report in 2017 where the school was classed as ‘Good’. The latest Key Stage 1 and 2 results are above the NI average. Every pupil has opportunity to participate in school plays, sports activities, music and community competitions.
- The school had a stable enrolment but as soon as EA published the Area Plan parents realised that the possible outcome of the proposal and numbers began to fall and the consultation process has done nothing to alleviate these fears.
- School budget is on track to show a positive outcome and there has been a gradual improvement in the large deficit.
- Board of Governors has a balance of professional members in business, education and former pupils of the school. Can provide a broad range of experience which enables us to review the effectiveness of our governance.
- Upper Ballyboley PS is in an area of outstanding natural beauty. There is no public transport access and parents transport the children to school. They attend the school closest to where they live which negates excess travel and makes the school accessible.
- As a school we pride ourselves in our commitment to keep strong links with the local community. Have a strong PTA who regularly hold social gatherings.
- Have been informed at EA training sessions that each criteria carries equal weighting. Upper Ballyboley PS has fulfilled the majority of the above criteria.
- The school should be judged against other schools who have not reached a similar level of the criteria.
- If the only criteria of concern is that it doesn’t reach the magic number of 105 pupils, the parents, pupils, staff and entire community deserve to be told on what premise the school is being forced to close.
- Most importantly, the welfare, health and wellbeing of the pupils has been totally sidelined in this whole process.
- This small rural school has been the hub of Ballyboley community for over 60 years.
- A small school with small classes provides a much richer education for children.
- The school is well managed with excellent teachers and a great PTA who have been dedicated to fundraising to enhance a child’s education.


- It is sad that because of money our small school will suffer and money will be spent elsewhere unnecessarily.
- The objections of the Board of Governors, staff and parents to date, as well as the wellbeing of the pupils and potential pupils were given no consideration whatsoever.
- Many parents in the local area would continue to send their children to Ballyboley PS based on the high standards of education provided and have expressed their extreme disappointment at the imminent closure.
- Provides high quality education through small class sizes. Enable early identification of children with SEN.
- Closure will have a negative impact on economy of local community.
- Proposed expansion of Ballynure PS is not a feasible option. The school is adjacent to a narrow road with limited car parking and is extremely congested at school time.
- Believe that by naming the school on the Area Plan it has been the death nail for the school and that the decision is based on money rather than on education.
- Quality of education at the school is excellent. Believe it would impact negatively on children to send them to a bigger school.
- The school is well managed with excellent teachers and a great PTA who have been dedicated to fundraising to enhance a child's education.
- Small schools are crucial for our pupils as we offer a smaller classes, a safe and calmer environment for pupils with SEN and sensory issues which would be lost if small schools are closed.
- School has strong links with the community. The Ulster Scots Agency granted Ulster Scots Flagship School status to the school.
- Believe the consultation for discontinuation has been taken without due regard of the Rural Needs Act (2016) NI or that a Rural Needs Impact Assessment or Rural Proofing Exercise has been carried out.
- Parents of pupils at Upper Ballyboley PS meet regularly both at school and after school and there is a strong Parents' Teacher Association as was noted at the EA meeting of parents on 10 March 2020.
- The plan to discontinue the school and have a "bolt on" portacabin at Ballynure PS is ridiculous. At present Ballynure PS is oversubscribed and taking into consideration the already congested road at pick up, drop off times I believe this is a pupil/public safety issue. Any increase in numbers would only compound this situation.
- School enrolment at Upper Ballyboley PS had been steady over the last twelve years. Only after the school was publicly named in the Area Planning document have numbers decreased.

#### Section 75




Two responses commented on Section 75. These have been taken into account when assessing the equality impact of the proposed to insert proposal and school.

- Upper Ballyboley PS has been awarded the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Status. It is important to us that our children have the opportunity to celebrate their culture and heritage. They would not receive this opportunity in other primary schools in the area. We feel that it would be discriminatory to them to have this denied.

Confirmation by the Proposer	I confirm that the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of pupils of Upper Ballyboley Primary School were consulted from 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021. Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.			
	Name:	Michele Corkey		
	Office Held:	Director of Education		
	Signed:			
	Date:	7 September 2021		
Associated Proposals	Proposal	Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in the enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.		
	DP Number	625	Date Published	Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021
	Proposal	Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.		
	DP Number	623	Date Published	Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021

Case for Change: Statutory Consultation	
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION <i>The following is to be completed and signed off by the E.A.</i>	
The Education Authority (EA)	I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021 with a return date of 21 May 2020 (suspended) and 1 July 2021.
	Name: Michele Corkey
	Office Held: Director of Education
	Signed: 
	Date: 7 September 2021
Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.	In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021, to schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 13 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and



<p>Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).</p> <hr/> <p>Responses/ Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p> <hr/> <p>Dates of EA meetings e.g. Education Committee/ Board etc.</p> <hr/> <p><u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u></p>	<p>Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 21 May 2020 (suspended) and 1 July 2021.</p> <p>Two responses to this proposal were received from affected schools and one from the Controlled Schools' Support Council.</p> <p>A summary of responses and recurring themes are provided below:</p> <p>Tildarg PS and Toreagh PS - Support the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tildarg Primary School is ready and able to take pupils as and when their parents decide they should look elsewhere.</li> <li>• Governors of Toreagh Primary School would ask that Toreagh Primary School is put forward as an alternative school for the children of Upper Ballyboley Primary School when it closes as Toreagh Primary School is the closest school for some pupils.</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Schools' Support Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSSC notes the low enrolment in Upper Ballyboley Primary School and recognises the challenges this presents for the Board of Governors and staff. In all aspects of the consultation CSSC would request that the educational experiences of the pupils and the welfare of pupils and staff are paramount.</li> <li>• Without pre-empting the decision to progress these proposals and ultimately the outcome, CSSC would emphasise the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity in alternative controlled schools for those children displaced from Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</li> <li>• If the Education Authority is minded to progress the proposal to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School, CSSC would support the proposed increase to the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School whilst being mindful of the potential for parental preferences to indicate a preference for other controlled provision in the area.</li> </ul> <p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2021.</p>								
<p><b>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS</b></p> <p>In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 1742 654 1989"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	7 September 2021	<p>The Education Authority, as the proposer, supports Development Proposal No 624 that Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Pre-publication consultations were undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians outlining the Education Authority's Case for Change detailing the rationale for the proposal. During the consultations undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians the following recurring themes emerged:</p> <p>Availability of places and accommodation in local schools</p> <p>The Education Authority will, should the proposal be approved, liaise with the parents, local schools, managing authorities and the Department of Education to endeavour to ensure that pupils affected by the proposal be accommodated, where possible and</p>
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	7 September 2021								

	<p>within current guidance/policies. The Education Authority recognises that there are limited places within the local area, hence the associated Development Proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers in Ballynure Primary School. The Education Authority also acknowledges there are other schools within the local area with some additional capacity.</p> <p><b>Children with Special Educational Needs</b></p> <p>The support which the Education Authority provides for the pupils will continue regardless of the school they attend, to ensure that the needs of all children are met and they reach their full potential.</p> <p><b>Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</b></p> <p>The Education Authority has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and delivering public services. The areas from which Upper Ballyboley Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School will have an impact on the local area. The provision of home-to-school transport will provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria. The Education Authority has carried out an equality and rural screening of the development proposal.</p>
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## 1 BACKGROUND

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is a Controlled Primary School situated in a rural location approximately midway between Ballyclare and Larne in County Antrim (5 miles east of Ballyclare, 7 miles west of Larne and 2.5 miles north of Ballynure).

The school serves the wider community surrounding it and currently has an enrolment of 28 pupils. In consideration of sustainability concerns, the school was identified in the 2019-21 Annual Action Plan as 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision by February 2020'.

The school has an approved enrolment of 100 pupils and an admissions number of 14.

Over the past number of years the school has experienced low enrolment numbers with a current enrolment of 28 pupils. Table 1, below, details the historical and current enrolment figures.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
2013/14	7	6	5	4	7	5	7	41
2014/15	8	6	5	5	4	8	4	40
2015/16	5	8	6	5	5	5	7	41
2016/17	4	5	8	7	5	5	5	39
2017/18	13	4	5	7	7	5	6	47
2018/19	3	12	3	4	7	7	5	41
2019/20	3	3	12	3	3	7	8	39
2020/21	1	3	3	11	1	3	6	28

The school enrolment numbers have remained stable over the past number of years, however, the numbers fall short of the Sustainable Schools Policy. At September 2020, the school had a total enrolment of 28 pupils with one pupil enrolled in Year 1. It is not predicted that the numbers will increase significantly over the coming years. It is expected that the numbers will fall further in September 2021. (Enrolment figures from DE Enrolment Census).

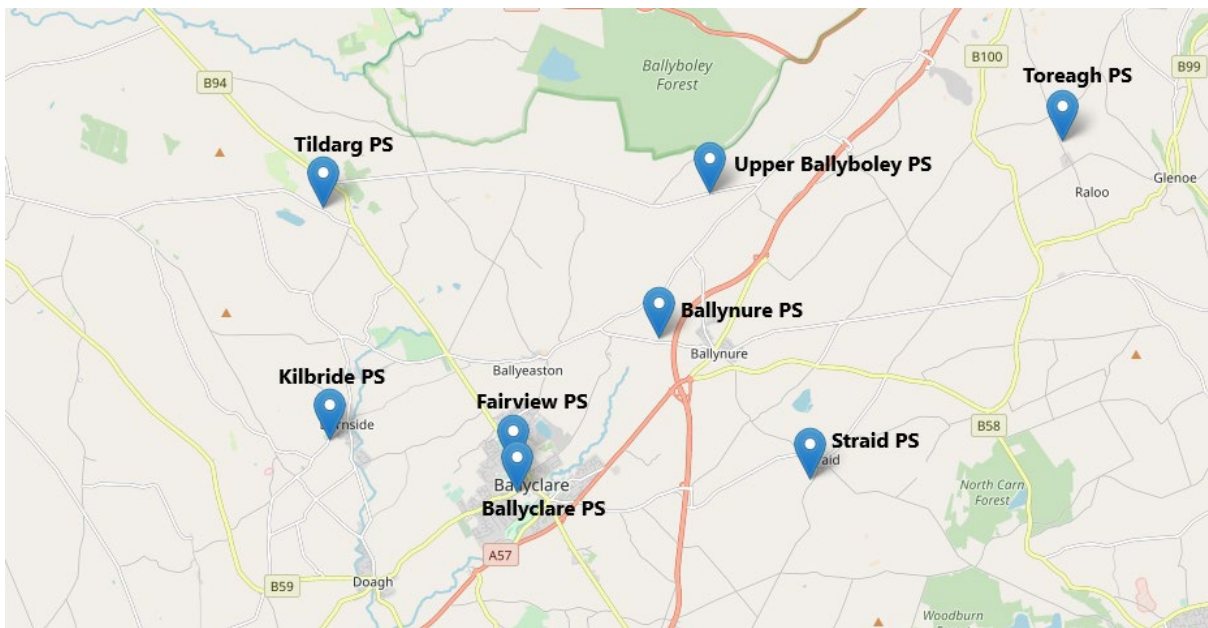
Table 2 lists the schools closest to Upper Ballyboley Primary School. The distribution map below shows in context the pupil distribution and the local schools. There is capacity within the local schools as detailed in Table 2.

	Distance (miles) From Upper Ballyboley PS	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places 2020/21
Upper Ballyboley PS	-	Controlled	28	100	72
Ballynure PS*	2.6	Controlled	148	154	6
Straid School**	5.0	Controlled	53	119	66
Tildarg PS	4.7	Controlled	61	80	19
Ballyclare PS	5.1	Controlled	555	572	17
Toreagh PS	5.2	Controlled	111	105	0
Fairview PS	5.2	Controlled	501	525	24
Kilbride PS	5.9	Controlled	126	135	9

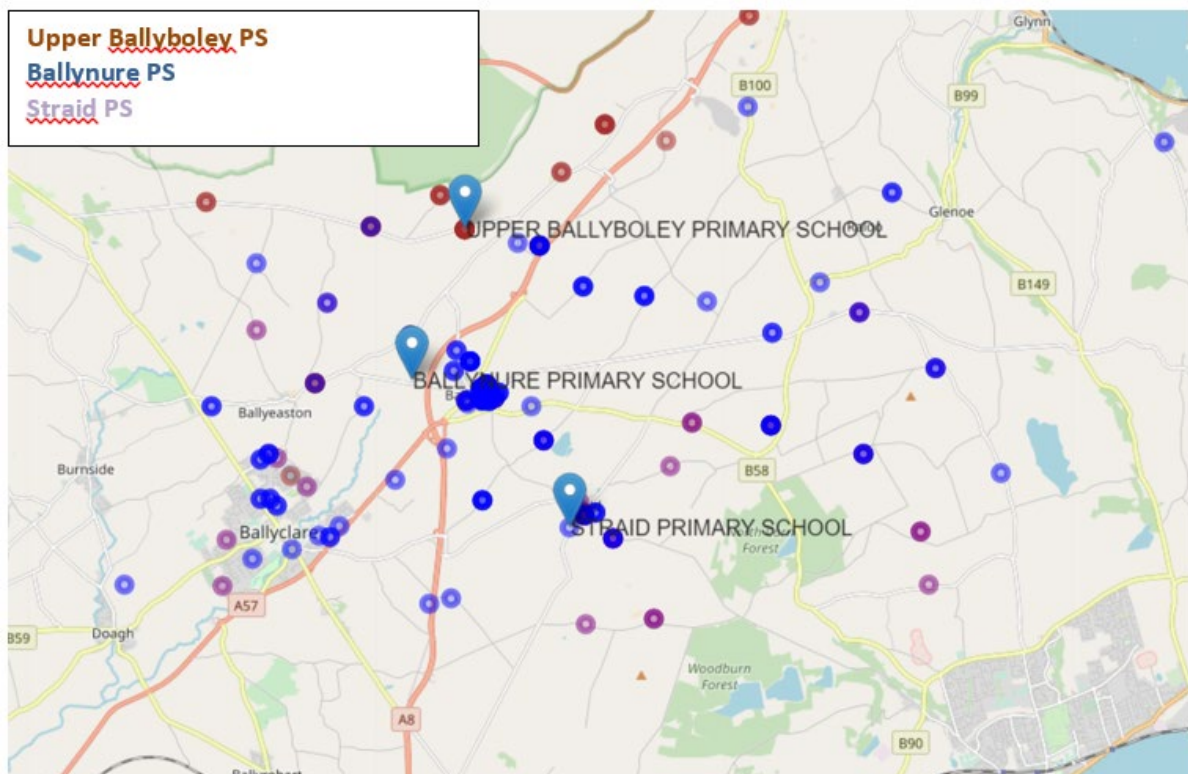
\* associated proposal to increase the Ballynure Primary School's admission and enrolment number

\*\* proposal to discontinue Straid Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

Map 1: Highlights the schools within the surrounding area



Map 2: Highlights the current pupils attending Ballynure Primary School, Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School



Analysis of the above information shows there are a number of available places in the alternative schools. In terms of the existing catchment, there are a number of children within the Upper Ballyboley Primary School area attending other local schools, particularly Ballynure Primary School. The Education Authority is taking forward a development proposal to increase provision within the area through a proposed increase in the admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School.

In consideration of the distance of the local schools, home-to-school transport arrangements will be implemented within transport regulations.

## 2 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The main focus of the Area Planning process is embedded in the Sustainable Schools Policy first published in 2009 and applies to primary and post-primary schools. The policy outlines the criteria that school managing authorities should consider when making decisions affecting the best use of resources in order to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out 6 sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.

### 2.1 Quality of Education

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is a Controlled School situated in the rural community approximately midway between Ballyclare and Larne in County Antrim.

Almost all of the children attending the school come from the surrounding local area. The enrolment has remained low and reasonably static over the last number of years.

The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) undertook an inspection in October 2015 and a follow-up inspection in December 2017.

While the school entered formal intervention in October 2015, with the appointment of a new principal with a focus on education outcomes, Upper Ballyboley Primary School successfully came out of formal intervention in April 2018.

A Follow-up Inspection was completed by ETI in December 2017, the overall findings of the inspection were described as 'good':

#### *Key findings*

- *The outcomes for learners are now good. The children engage enthusiastically with their learning; they are motivated and work productively in pairs, in groups and independently. Across the key stages, the children enjoy their learning in mathematics, talk enthusiastically about their work and engage well in practical activities. The standard of work in the children's books shows good progression and evidence of regular practical problem-solving activities. By KS2, the most able children display a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and processes, are flexible in their approach to mental mathematics and are confident in their use of mathematical language. The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are making progress as expected in mathematics. In English, most of the children are making progress as expected.*
- *The quality of provision is now good. All of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were effective in developing learning and reflected the impact of the improvement work undertaken since the original inspection. The quality of the teachers' planning is consistently good, and concise evaluations of the children's previous learning now informs well future planning. There is a clear focus on developing the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities and practical, engaging opportunities for problem solving and investigation are evident across the curriculum and in all key stages. The good use of information and communication technology engages the children well and supports their learning.*
- *The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement are now good. Leadership at all levels, through the effective analysis of internal performance data and evaluation of learning and teaching, identifies the individual needs of the children and tracks their progress with accuracy. There has been a measured approach to all aspects of school improvement, and staff have responded very positively to the collegial approach to leadership, taking on new roles and responsibilities. There has been significant improvement in how the school communicates with parents and governors.*
- *Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the Department of Education.*

- It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's provision and budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

#### Overall effectiveness

Upper Ballyboley Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- embedding further the self-evaluation processes leading to improvement in the areas identified by the school for future development.'

## 2.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

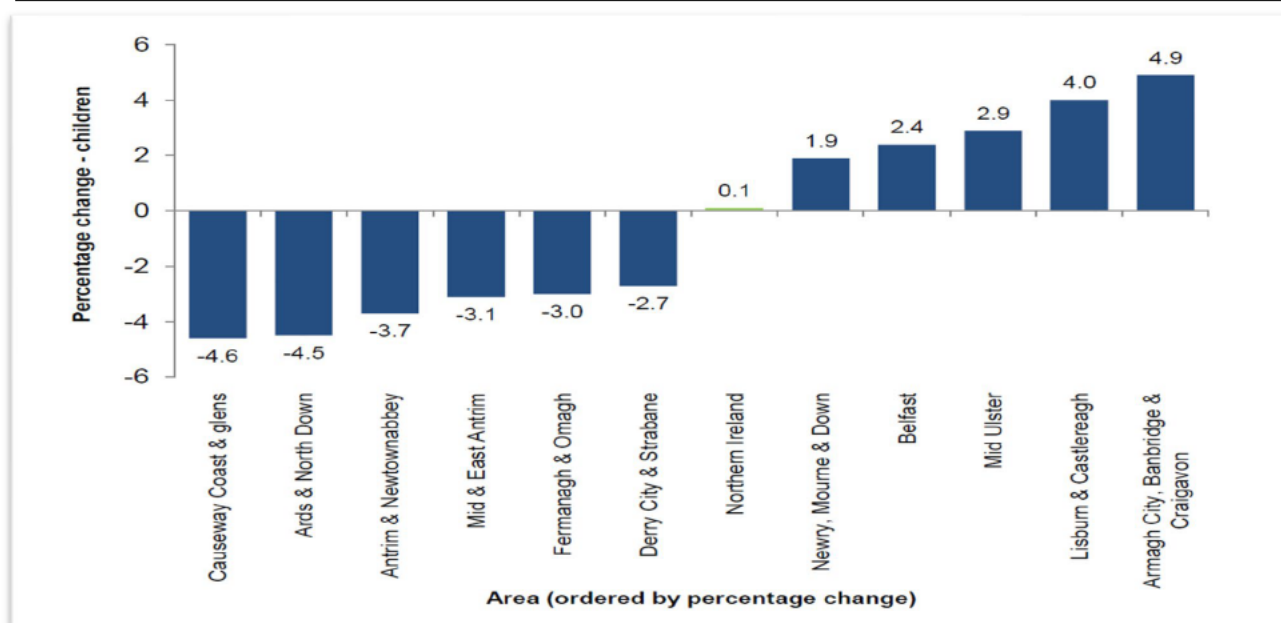
Upper Ballyboley Primary School has experienced consistently low pupil numbers over the last seven years, see Table 1. The school received one Year 1 pupil in September 2020, and as a consequence the enrolment is now 28 pupils for the 2020/21 academic year. The school's enrolment falls well short of the Sustainable Schools Policy criteria for a rural school of 105 pupils. It is not predicted that the enrolment numbers within the area will increase significantly over the coming years as show in Tables 3 and 4.

## 2.3 Population Change

Table 3 indicates a projected population reduction of children aged 0-15 years, within the Mid and East Antrim LGD, of 3.1% between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD there is also a reduction of 3.7% between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In addition the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency predicts the population of children (4-11 years), in the Mid and East Antrim LGD, to decrease by 5.9% (mid-2016 to mid-2026) and similarly the prediction for the reduction of 4-11 year olds in the Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD is 9.4%. Table 4 shows the live birth information for the area, which while showing a slight upturn for available admission numbers in the Kilwaughter Electoral Ward for September 2020, shows a downturn for September 2021.

Table 3: Projected Population Change

Projected Change in Number of Children (i.e. those aged 0-15) by Local Government District (mid-2016 to mid-2026) (Source: NISRA)





Ward Name	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change from 2010 to 2018
Ballynure	33	27	27	29	34	34	40	35	35	+6%
Kilwaughter*	87	93	93	95	88	93	60	74	89	+3%
Glenwhirry	37	28	36	22	36	36	40	29	29	-22%
Doagh	51	46	51	39	52	46	42	53	34	-33%
Ballyclare Nth	51	60	49	44	52	68	49	44	61	+19%
Ballyclare Sth	71	42	63	64	42	47	41	34	42	-40%
Gynn	20	12	20	18	9	16	18	15	17	-15%
Woodburn	32	22	31	23	23	25	24	15	25	-22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>332</b>	
Year 1 - Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	

\*Upper Ballyboley Primary School is located in the Kilwaughter Electoral Ward

The ETI report in October 2015 and again in December 2017 stated that:

*“It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.”*

## 2.4 Sound Financial Position

Upper Ballyboley Primary School does not operate within its in-year budget. At March 2021 it had a deficit of -£55,573. It is projected that by the end of the current 3 year financial plan 2019-2022 that the school will have a deficit of -£17,547. The 3 year financial plan for 2020-2023 is not yet available for the school.

Table 5 shows the school’s position compared to the sector average:

Upper Ballyboley Primary School	Sector Average*	Year 1 (2019-2020)	Year 2 (2020-2021)	Year 3 (2021-2022)
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	17.5	11.8	13.7	14.3
Expenditure per Pupil	£4,477	£4,852	£4,616	£4,169
Staff Costs per Pupil	£4,308	£5,080	£5,187	£5,097

\*Planning assumptions include Cost of Living Pay Award Estimate at 1% each year and estimated rate of inflation for Other Costs as 2% each year

### Small Schools Support

The Small Schools Support factor is intended to target more resources towards smaller primary schools to facilitate the delivery of the curriculum. The amount to be allocated to eligible schools is determined by the number of pupils in the school. A lump sum equivalent to 1.0 times the salary (inclusive of employee and employer contributions) of a teacher on point UPS 1 of the Teachers’ Upper Pay Scale as at October 2017, will be allocated to schools of up to 100 pupils tapering to zero at 300 pupils.

Upper Ballyboley Primary School receives the maximum amount of £47,726.

Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula, the level of funding is determined by pupil numbers. In a declining enrolment it is more challenging to live within the budget allocation.

## 2.5 Strong Leadership and Management

A new principal was appointed in 2015. The ETI Follow-up Inspection in December 2017 stated that the:

*The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement are now good. Leadership at all levels, through the effective analysis of internal performance data and evaluation of learning and teaching, identifies the individual needs of the children and tracks their progress with accuracy. There has been a measured approach to all aspects of school improvement, and staff have responded very positively to the collegial approach to leadership, taking on new roles and responsibilities. There has been significant improvement in how the school communicates with parents and governors.'*

## 2.6 Accessibility

The school is situated in a rural community where the school can be accessed by car and taxi. The majority of the pupils attending the school are from the local area.

With regard to pupil safety and issues with restricted vision, the 2017 ETI Report stated under Health and Safety:

*The restricted vision of ongoing traffic on the main road for vehicles leaving the school premises continues to be a potential hazard.'*

## 2.7 Strong Links with the Community

The school has strong links with the locality as the school sits within the centre of close knit rural community. The school provides a breakfast club, 'wrap around care from 8.15am - 5.00pm and afterschool activities for the pupils including cookery classes, IT club, modern languages and sport's coaching in football, hockey, netball and gymnastics. The school recently were winners of local hockey and football tournaments. The school is twinned with Portleen Primary School in Donegal and is an Ulster-Scots Flagship school. The school has an a strong PTA that is proactive in fund raising and providing support to parents and pupils e.g. Heartstart and First Aid training for both parents and pupils. The local churches are involved weekly in school assemblies and a Good News Club is also held in the school.

The proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan for Northern Ireland aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education. It sets out the key priorities and objectives in providing access to a network of sustainable schools for the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectoral bodies in the light of Department of Education policy, in particular the need to continue to raise standards and close any attainment gap through a network of sustainable schools. The focus of the plan is on the educational best interests of children and young people.

Since 2011, statutory planning authorities and school managing authorities have been engaged in implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Schools Policy through Area Planning. The first four objectives are:

- ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural settings, in accessible, modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation;
- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning; and
- sustain strong, successful and viable schools, well-led by their governors representing local stakeholders, principals and their staff, to be the centre of the education system, supported by effective administrative and strategic direction.

As detailed in above, Area Planning is focused on the Sustainable Schools Policy. In October 2016, in the publication of the draft Education Authority's Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, MLA, stated:

*'The Sustainable Schools Policy, which is implemented through the Area Planning process, focuses on providing children and young people with high quality education that meets their needs and enables them to achieve their full potential.....'*

*The educational experience of our children and young people is greatly enhanced when they attend schools that are educationally and financially viable. The Sustainable Schools Policy is a framework for assessment of the sustainability of primary and post-primary schools. The six criteria and supporting indicators clearly illustrate what a sustainable educational experience should look like. Schools must: deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, offer extensive extracurricular activities, have high quality pastoral care systems and have the confidence of the communities they serve.*

*In primary schools pupils should be in a class with no more than two year groups but ideally they should be in single year group classes. They should be able to interact with peer groups and have the best chances to prepare for successful transition to post primary school. ....*

*However there are still a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. This is particularly evident in the primary sector and, despite the best effort of teachers, it becomes harder to deliver a high quality education if pupils are taught in composite classes. We have too many small primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class. ....'*

The Providing Pathways Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 Annual Action Plans for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools 2018/19 and 2019-21 identified a key issue for Upper Ballyboley Primary School 'address school provision where sustainability is an issue' with the action 'Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of Upper Ballyboley Primary School by February 2020'. As a result the Education Authority engaged with the Board of Governors of Upper Ballyboley Primary School. Engagement discussions focused on the current position of the school and sustainable options for the school. Discussion focused on five options:



### 3.1 Do Nothing

This option would result in no change to the current provision. In consideration of the Annual Action Plan, the low enrolment numbers and the school's financial position, do nothing is not an option.

### 3.2 Shared Education

Upper Ballyboley Primary School has explored the concept of education together with those of a different religious belief, those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not. Whilst the links with other schools, including a previous shared project with Tír Na nÓg Primary School, are to be commended, there is little evidence of an effective partnership that will bring sustainable benefits to pupils and the community beyond. There have been opportunities for some collaboration in areas such as sport between the children. Approval for the discontinuance of Tír Na nÓg Primary School with effect from 31 January 2020 was received in November 2019 and the school has since closed.

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is keen to develop 'greater sharing' however, whilst it is accepted that this may be developed further in the future, any change to be effected would be longer term and not a realistic sustainable option.

As the Education Authority has a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education the Education Authority discussed the potential for sustainable shared education within the area. However, a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

### 3.3 Federation

A federation would involve local schools coming together either through a soft federation or hard federation. A soft federation would provide each school with its own governing body, own budget, with representatives on a joint committee. The schools would share a Principal, common goals, joint committee recommendations but it would be up to the individual governing bodies to authorise decisions/plans. A hard federation would provide for a single governing body with common goals and while each school would receive individual budgets, these could be used to pool budgets across the schools in the federation. In considering a federation, the sustainability of a federated school within the local area would not provide for a sustainable provision and would not improve the financial position of the school.

The Board of Governors of Upper Ballyboley Primary School identified 'Federation' as their preferred option. Various staffing structures, key stage permutations and options were explored by Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Straid Primary School in conjunction with the Education Authority and Controlled Schools' Support Council, but no feasible nor sustainable federation option could be identified by the Education Authority.

### 3.4 Amalgamation

The Education Authority examined the sustainability of Upper Ballyboley Primary School's considered amalgamation with a local school. The nearest school, by distance, to Upper Ballyboley Primary School is Ballynure Primary School, as outlined in Table 2 above.

As with the options above, sustainability is the most important consideration. In accordance with DE policy on amalgamations (Circular 2018/15) it states that: *'...it should also be helpful to those who are considering a DP to amalgamate two or more schools of a similar size to create a new school regardless of management type'*.

Ballynure Primary School currently has an enrolment of 148 pupils and Upper Ballyboley Primary School has a current enrolment of 28 pupils. An amalgamation with both schools would not be in accordance with Circular 2018/15 as the schools are not similar in size.

The Education Authority is also taking forward a Development Proposal for the discontinuance of Straid Primary School which also has Ballynure Primary School as its closest school (1.9 miles). As with Upper Ballyboley Primary School, Straid Primary School has sustainability issues with a current enrolment of 53 pupils. To expand an amalgamation to include all three schools would again not be in accordance with Circular 2018/15 as both Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Straid Primary School are not similar in size to Ballynure Primary School.

Therefore, as such a school could not be identified that would satisfy the requirements of DE policy, an amalgamation was not a suitable option for Upper Ballyboley Primary School. Table 2 identifies the schools within the area where there is surplus capacity with the potential to accommodate pupils from Upper Ballyboley Primary School in the event of discontinuance of education at Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

### 3.5 Discontinue

In considering the future of Upper Ballyboley Primary School, all of the options for the school did not provide a sustainable provision for the school. In discussions with the Board of Governors, there was disappointment that the work of the governors could not provide a sustainable solution for the school. Governors put forward proposals to promote the school, however, with one pupils in Year 1 in September 2020 and current enrolment trends have not provided for projected upturn in numbers. The Education Authority recognises the commitment of the governors but the current circumstances would not provide for the curricular provision of pupils currently attending Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

In consideration of the options above, the Education Authority recommends that Upper Ballyboley Primary School discontinues with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.

To provide for available places, the Education Authority is proposing to take forward an associated proposal for the increase in admission and enrolment numbers for Ballynure Primary School.

The Education Authority is also proposing the discontinuance of Straid Primary School, a school 5.0 miles from Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

#### **4 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL**

Upper Ballyboley Primary School has always been a small primary school with an enrolment over the past five years not exceeding 47 pupils. The school was identified in the Annual Action Plans 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019-21, identified as ‘address school provision where sustainability is an issue’ with the action ‘Managing authority to consult on options for future provision of Upper Ballyboley Primary School by February 2020.’

In September 2020, the school admitted one pupil in Year 1. This has resulted in the enrolment falling to 28 pupils with projections that the enrolment may fall further in September 2021. This will place increased pressure on the financial resources of the school and also on the teaching staff.

The closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School in conjunction with the proposal to increase admissions and enrolments in Ballynure Primary School will support an area planning solution for the Antrim and Newtownabbey and Mid and East Antrim areas in addressing issues of sustainability and ensuring that school places are located as required. This is based on children availing of places in other local sustainable schools including Ballynure Primary School, who with an increase to admissions and enrolment numbers, will have sufficient places available to accommodate the pupils from Upper Ballyboley Primary School, consistent with ESaGS, the Sustainable Schools Policy and ‘Providing Pathways’.

The discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School will result in the redistribution of approximately 28 pupils from Upper Ballyboley Primary School, supported by one further Development Proposal to increase admissions and enrolments in Ballynure Primary School.

The proposal will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with Special Educational Needs realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by Children and Young People Services.

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on the EA to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and designing and delivering public services. The areas from which Upper Ballyboley Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School will have an impact on the local area. The provision of home-to-school transport will provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria.

In the case of any proposed action at Upper Ballyboley Primary School, the Education Authority has to consider the likely impact of removing controlled provision from the area. The area solution would seek to consolidate controlled provision in the area.

## **5 EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

The proposal would provide for the education needs of pupils in the area. Upper Ballyboley Primary School has a declining enrolment and, as a three teacher school, this places pressure on the staff at the school.

The schools within the area received good/very good/ outstanding ETI reports and can provide for the educational needs of the pupils of the area. Some local schools in the area have capacity and an associated Development Proposal to increase the admission and enrolment numbers at the nearest primary school, Ballynure Primary School, will provide places within sustainable provision. Resulting from the outcome of consultations with parents/guardians, discussions will be undertaken with the local schools regarding in year group capacity. The larger local schools have pupil numbers which meet the Sustainable School Policy of no more than two year groups in a classroom. The larger schools may enhance the learning experience of pupils in the provision of after school activities and having class sizes to facilitate participation both in school and inter-school activities eg sports teams and extra-curricular activities.

The pupils from Upper Ballyboley Primary School who have special educational requirements will continue to have these needs met within the local schools and supported through the Education Authority's Children and Young People's Service.

## 6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is for the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School. As there are currently unfilled places within some local schools, there will be a requirement for additional accommodation to facilitate the relocation of pupils (to be identified by parental preference resulting from the consultation process). The Education Authority is taking forward an associated proposal to increase the admission and enrolment numbers of Ballynure Primary School.

There will be a cost saving in the recurrent costs of operating a school.

*Finance* The operational cost of Upper Ballyboley Primary School will be a cost saving from this proposal inclusive of a saving of £47,726 in terms of the Small Schools Support Factor would also be made.

*Staffing* The teaching staff is afforded employment protection under the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2 for two years. The non-teaching staff will be afforded employment protection for one year. The Education Authority will meet with staff to discuss options should the development proposal be approved and an action plan implemented for the discontinuance of the school.

*Transport* Most of the pupils attending Upper Ballyboley Primary School live within close proximity to the school and do not receive home-to-school transport. The discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School would require the provision of home-to-school transport for a larger number of pupils. Communication with the Education Authority transport service is ongoing. Any transport arrangement will be in accordance with transport regulations and identified preference school.

*Accommodation* No additional accommodation needs for Upper Ballyboley Primary School. Additional accommodation needs will be required at Ballynure Primary School as detailed in the Case for Change for a proposed increase in admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School.

## 7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

The proposal is being brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The implementation date for the proposal is for 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable, pending approval from the Education Committee, for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline		
Proposal: Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter	31 August	Proposed Timeline
<p>Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents – (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority.</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee. A deputation from the Board of Governors may also choose to attend the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee or the Board meeting.</p>		6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Consultation with other affected Schools (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee.</p>		6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to seek Approval To Publish</p> <p>Case for Change to be taken to the September 2021 Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for consideration.</p> <p>If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period.</p>		7 September 2021
<p>Statutory Objection Period (2 months)</p> <p>Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education</p>		September 2021 - November 2021
Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision		January 2022
<p>Implementation</p> <p>If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>		

## APPENDIX B

### Summary of Consultation Responses DP 624 Upper Ballyboley Primary School

No / From	Issues Raised
1.	<p>Parent. Objects to the proposal. Always intended to send children to Upper Ballyboley School. Choose Upper Ballyboley because of it very small class size, to enable support, encouragement and guidance and for the opportunity of individualised standard of education. Believes her daughter has benefited greatly from Upper Ballyboley, where the small composite classes have worked very well for health and well-being. The school has dedicated staff and impressive values and high standards within the school. Praises the school for her daughter's education. Member of the PTA, which is pro-active in fund raising and provides support to parents and pupils. States the school is supported by the Ulster Scots Agency and is 63<sup>rd</sup> school to be awarded Flagship Status. States the children of the school have taken part in numerous activities, and local ministers help lead assemblies over the past number years. Believes uncertainly has been placed on the school by being named in the Annual Action Plan and has impacted on the schools current enrolment and considers further impact was caused by the consultation process. Has suggested to postpone the closure to allow the school a chance to promote itself.</p>
2.	<p>Parent. Objects to the Proposal. Claims enrolment at Upper Ballyboley has been stable for the past 10 years until the school was placed on the Area Planning list, were parents were actively discouraged from enrolling their children by the EA and principals from other local primary schools actively encouraged existing pupils to leave. Thinks if the school was not placed on the list, enrolment would have remained stable. States Upper Ballyboley has served as a close knit rural community for many years, and holds a special place at the heart of the community. The school continues to have strong community links and is also a community hub for local events supported by the wider community. States that Upper Ballyboley PS finances were healthy before this process due to the excellent leadership and management from the principal and BoG. Contributes the fall in enrolment and the negative impact on finances due to the EA placing the school on the area planning list. States the school has a very active and passionate PTA who support the school and the events they organise are strongly supported by the wider community. Thinks there will be no saving if the school closes as the money will need to be provided elsewhere, there will also be extra transport costs and an increased cost in providing increased accommodation at Ballynure PS. Highlights the local infrastructure is a major concern at Ballynure, as they will be unable to cope with the increased traffic as it is already beyond breaking point. Highlights access to Upper Ballyboley does not have concerns, with a safe drop off point and a 20mph speed limit and a current plan to improve the entrance of the school. States the quality of education at Upper Ballyboley is excellent, with highly skilled and motivated teachers to deliver a high level of education within composite classes. Believes that both his children have thrived at Upper Ballyboley within this class environment and to move them to a bigger school would negatively impact their education. Highlights the school offers equal opportunities for all within the school, which allows the children to grow in skill and confidence. Acknowledges the school has been awarded Ulster Scots Flagship School Status and allows them to celebrate their culture and heritage and would be discriminatory to them to have this denied. States the school had excellent management of the Covid-19 Pandemic which prevented any out breaks within the school. Highlights the support given to parents when distance learning was taking place and feels that was possible due to the small classroom sizes. Feels that the process of area planning deliberately targets rural schools and without his process schools would continue to thrive for many years. Thinks is a deliberate act by the EA to force through closures. Feels it was unfair to publically announce their plan one week before national lockdown, therefore limiting the schools ability to reassure and support parents. Feels that Upper Ballyboley is the best place for their children to receive their</p>

	<p>primary education and to close the school would have a detrimental effect on their education and also on their mental wellbeing. Feels that closing the school will lead to disruption in AQE preparations and have a detrimental effect on their future education as moving schools with is stressful enough without the prospect of AQE looming. Will not be sending the children to Ballynure PS as it is not the environment they have chosen for their children.</p>
3.	<p>States the Ulster-Scots Agency has supported a number of programmes in Upper Ballyboley PS, that the school has achieved Flagship status and taken part in related drama, music and dance. It is described how the school took part in a twinning experience linked with a school in the Republic Of Ireland and the activities provided opportunities for teaching and learning aligned with the cultural identities of those in the school. Values the importance of such events and values and strongly supports primary education interventions in the Ballyboley area that strengthen and develop knowledge and understanding of Ulster-Scots and recognises the contribution made by Upper Ballyboley PS. Hope to continue the work and support Upper Ballyboley in respect of Ulster-Scots.</p>
4.	<p>Opposes to the closure of Upper Ballyboley PS. Covid has highlighted the importance of not cramming children in classrooms and the children at Upper Ballyboley could have continued with their education because there was space to allow social distancing. Have witnessed numerous “near misses” at Ballynure PS with children nearly being involved at accidents and to add more children, traffic and drop offs is complete madness as Ballynure PS does not have the resources to cope with increased numbers. Rumours spread by staff and the principal of Ballynure PS has caused the low enrolment at Upper Ballyboley due to families moving their children or not the school to avoid disruption. The school and staff are an asset to the community, which allows the children to build relationships within the community which is important in order to support one another. The lower teacher pupil ratio allows children to get support where necessary and problems get noticed earlier allowing the children to reach their potential. Would like the freedom to choose what size of school is best for their children. Ballyboley offer the best learning environment, with space to grow and develop as individuals while learning about the countryside. The children receive a high standard of education in an environment that is second to none, which allows them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence for their future. The closure of the school will weaken the rural community by not allowing the children to build relationships with other local children. It will affect our working hours and childcare which will cause a knock affect to every aspect of their life. Wants the future of the school to be reconsidered therefore providing some reassurances then perhaps wouldn't have a problem with low numbers.</p>
5.	<p>Objects to the closure of Upper Ballyboley PS. Had two children at the school who had the best quality educational experience. Close attention was paid to the progress of each individual child and interventions were implemented when required. Teachers dedicated additional time to help her daughter with reading and writing allowing her to make excellent progress and improve self-esteem. The teaching staff gave tremendous support and encouragement who nurture each child to their full potential. The school has strong leadership and management and they strive to improve the school. The previous principal made a significant impact on the school which is being continued by Mr Stringer and his team. The teaching staff are extremely dedicated. Every child is valued and the staff work tirelessly for the benefit of the children. The school is the heart of Ballyboley and has strong links with the community. Many generations of families have attended the school as have I and my siblings. The community has shown support by attending many events held in the school. Children attending the school have been able to progress links with their Ulster Scots Heritage taking part in many events. The small class size has benefited the children as they get more individual attention, allowing issues to be identified and addressed quickly. All the children in the school got to participate in activities where in a larger school this is not the case due to larger class sizes, which is not good for a child's self-esteem. Cannot praise the school highly enough and the school was able to meet the</p>



	challenge of home schooling during Covid. Strongly urges to reconsider this closure as it is not about saving money but providing the best educational experience.
6.	Had the privilege of coaching football and sharing Bible talks at Upper Ballyboley for approximately 13 years. There is always a warm welcome from staff and pupils. The children greatly enjoy being part of the school community. Have had the pleasure of witnessing first-hand the excellent leadership and strong sense of pastoral care. The children demonstrate care and consideration for their peers. The school has served generations of families from the local community and would be tragic if no longer operating. Urges to consider keeping the school operational and to invest in it to allow it to continue.
7.	Objects to the closure of Upper Ballyboley PS. Believes the school still has a significant place in the local community. Northern Ireland as a society is enriched by strong local communities and small rural schools form a significant part of this. We should be making every effort to preserve these schools where we can. The rural schools in Ballyclare give parents a choice. Larger schools are not always suitable for every child and children with different needs normally benefit from the smaller school environment. Has helped lead morning assemblies in the school over the past number of years. Has always been impressed by the dedication of the staff, the warm friendly ethos and the excellent pastoral care. Knows some of the families in the area are happy for their children to be at the school. The school is a great asset to the local community and hopes it will continue to serve the community.
8.	Adds support to the groundswell opinion that Upper Ballyboley PS should continue. Can see that smaller primary schools are no less well run than their larger counterparts. Have an advantage in that the teachers know the pupils better but also the families in the community. Development issues are quicker identified and easier to deal with. It has been clearly observed that during the recent pandemic that smaller schools have been better able to cope with restrictions and “bubbling”. Has been a difficult time for all teachers, those in smaller schools appear less stressed and the requirement for isolation has had a much smaller impact on the ongoing education of children. Upper Ballyboley has a long history and tradition in the area, demonstrated by the train engine on the school crest. If the school should close, this and other links of history would be forever lost. The Department of Education have also the grave responsibility of being one of the guardians of the wellbeing of the rural community. Education is much more than numeracy and literacy, it is a sense of belonging, of culture and of holistic development. Rather than closing schools, develop them into focal points for the community, making them even more the heart of the community. In announcing its intentions to close, The Department of Education has precipitated a chain reaction, resulting in the drop in attendance, as some families fear the worst and remove their children from the school. Many feel discussion to the contrary is merely a paper exercise and so become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rural and farming communities have felt overlooked in recent years and not only keeping schools open but expanding their roles would put the Department of Education at the fore front of helping them. Pleads not to close any more rural schools.
9.	Parent and pupil. Objects to the proposal. The school is the heart of the community. The school provides the upmost care with regards to education and there is a fantastic two-way relationship between the pupils and the teachers. Larger classes do not get the level of care, learning and experience that the kids at Upper Ballyboley receive. The kids are encouraged to be the best they can be. The school has its own little community with a sense of belonging as one big family. Shutting the school would have a detrimental and devastating impact on the children.
10.	Objects to the proposal. The school is amazing and gives the children a strong start in life and education. Ballyboley is able to offer more one to one attention which allows them to connect better with their teacher and become more confident and comfortable when sharing ideas. It is beyond ridiculous to close Ballyboley and send them to Ballynure as there is no parking and it is congested at school times and to add more traffic is an accident waiting to happen without wanting to add more. It will take a lot of money to build

	<p>at Ballynure and doesn't make much sense. Closing the school will impact on the children's confidence and social ability by splitting up friendships. Would have sent her children to a bigger school if she wanted too but it was not what she wanted. Upper Ballyboley is the best school round our area. Does not want to send her other child to Ballynure.</p>
11.	<p>Principal. The timing of the proposal was unfair and has limited the communications with the community. All opportunities to fight the proposal through increasing enrolment and stabilise finances have been impossible while the world is fighting Covid 19. The proposal should have been delayed to allow the community to fight the proposal together and properly. The quality of provision is good as stated by the ETI. We are an Ulster Scots Flagship school which allows the children to gain a unique opportunity to learn more about their Ulster Scots traditions which will be taken away if the school closes. Teachers are partnering up with several schools to further develop their teaching and leadership skills under a free partnership scheme developed between principals. Children have access to high standards of teaching in all aspects of the curriculum. One teacher is working with the Open University and UK Literacy Association to lead a professional development group on reading for pleasure, the first and only group in NI. The quality of the educational experience at Upper Ballyboley PS was proven to be good. The school's enrolment trends were stable before the Area Planning proposal, but it was this announcement that impacted the enrolment numbers and nothing else. The ability to calm parents of this announcement was taken away during the pandemic leading to a decrease in enrolments. There has been a small increase in local birth rates which will lead to greater need for school places in the future. There are plans to increase the profiles of the school which will eventually increase and stabilise our enrolment. The proposal should be rejected and allow us to promote the school fairly without fear of closure. With continued engagement there is the potential for growth. The schools budget has been impacted by the proposal. We believe the problem with the budget lies solely at the door of the EA and its decision to place our school on the area plan, therefore ensuring its closure by steadily decreasing pupil numbers over a period of years through panic. The budget shows a monumental deficit and unfairly demonstrates a complete lack of management by the board of governors. The leadership of the school by the governing body and myself has never been stronger. The accountability and direction of the school is clear not just to the staff but the children, parents and wider community. During my short time as the principal I have provided children with a wide range of opportunities to achieve excellence. The distance that our children will have to travel will be increased by the proposal. The school had a well-established and effective PTA who in conjunction with school staff build excellent community links and has been a hub for everyone during the pandemic. Instead of closing smaller schools and forcing them to compete, we should be encouraged and supported in working together as a team of schools which would allow us to share resources and staffing more effectively and efficiently, saving money in the long run and the proposal for Straid Primary School and ourselves should be delayed until current restrictions allow us to fully work together with other schools. The impact on children's mental well-being has not been considered by this proposal. Placing children in larger classes where they do not gain the level of support they gain at Upper Ballyboley will have a long lasting effect on their emotional wellbeing that does not need to be put on children who have already been greatly impacted by the global pandemic. We have plans to restart our Shared Education Programs and plan to share professional development with another school to reduce the cost across both schools. To announce this proposal a week before a national lockdown and then not delay this until restrictions have been fully lifted are unethical and immoral as any chance of improvement has been taken away from us by the pandemic</p>

## MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

 PRE-BRIEF MEETING

<b>DATE AND TIME OF MEETING:</b>		1 December 2021 11:30am	
<b>TITLE/ORGANISATION:</b> [Include INV number where possible and ensure title on re-brief an meeting notes are the same]		INV 0430-2021 – Visit to Upper Ballyboley Primary School (PS)	
<b>VENUE:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Rathgael	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
<b>LIST OF ATTENDEES:</b> ( <i>As follows</i> )			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input type="checkbox"/> SpAd:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister PS	<input type="checkbox"/> Minister APS
<b>OFFICIALS:</b>	Mrs Sharon Taylor – Grade 7, Area Planning (North Region)		
<b>OTHERS:</b> [include PDF copies of any presentations delivered]	Mr Daniel Stringer (Principal) (DS) Mrs Molly Martin (Chair Board of Governors) (MM) [REDACTED]		
<b>KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DS stated that the school provides high quality education to its pupils, demonstrated with the [REDACTED] P7 pupils achieving 97–100 % in the internal practice transfer tests over the last three weeks. The school deserves the chance to continue providing high quality education to the local community. The school promotes rural life and is an Ulster Scots Flagship School, if the</li> </ul>			

school closed the Ulster Scots heritage will be removed from the local community.

- DS stated as a result of the pandemic the school were focused on the health, wellbeing and education of its pupils and did not communicate effectively with parents regarding Area Planning and this resulted in parents and the local community thinking the school would close. He noted that parents would have normally sent siblings to the school, however as a result of the proposal the school had lost a number of admissions and siblings now attend different primary schools.
- MM stated that Upper Ballyboley is a community school and draws its pupils from the surrounding local community.
- DS stated that as a result of Area Planning the enrolment of the school had fallen to 18 pupils, however the school has raised over £300 pounds for the local community and £220 for a SEN school.
- ■■■ indicated that the PTA would have held a number of events prior to lockdown and the last 18 months have been challenging and difficult for the school. She has one child currently in P3 and her previous four children have all attended Upper Ballyboley and go to Ballyclare High School (Controlled Grammar). The education provided in the school is personalised whereas at the grammar school you are placed in a band. The school is able to push academic pupils in the composite class structure. Upper Ballyboley is unique, some pupils could possibly suffer in bigger classes and may not get individual attention. Every child in the school is able to take part in various activities (school play and team events).
- The Education Minister explained why notes of the meeting were being taken.
- DS indicated that when the proposal was brought forward by Area Planning the world was a different place and the 'well-being' of children may not have

been considered. The school have confident staff who deal with individual children's issues instead of counselling services, this has been demonstrated with bereavement in a local family and the school uses the five step plan of mindfulness. Going forward, it is not right to uproot children to a new school and with class sizes of possibly 30 pupils and this could impact negatively on children's well-being for years to come.

- DS stated that the school has development plans, children in the school love to read, use Literacy Tree for reading and have plans for numeracy. He indicated that he came from a primary school in London and the respective P6/P7 pupils did not produce the level of work demonstrated in Upper Ballyboley PS. He indicated that the project work viewed by the Minister by the P6/P7 class had been developed with the pupils and the teacher working together and the pupils had ownership of the project.
- The Minister asked about feeder nursery schools.
- MM indicated that the feeder nursery was closed / taken away, but the school does visit local nurseries in the area.
- DS stated that the school had plans to visit nurseries to explain the school's vision and will use social media to publicise the school. He indicated he wanted to increase the enrolment at the school. The school can prove it delivers sustainable education, links with the community etc. but cannot prove a sustainable finance position.
- DS stated that the area planning process condemns a school when a proposal is published, the local community think the school is closing. The current area planning process is based on finance and numbers, and the Department needs to look at the quality of education provided, peoples futures going forward and should not be considering finance as education is supposed to be putting children first.

- DS stated that since moving to the area he has found it difficult to find rented accommodation (same with a member of staff) as more people are moving to rural communities.
- DS asked if there was an opportunity for the school and their local representatives to have a meeting with the Minister to put their views across regarding the Development Proposal.
- The Minister stated a meeting would only be considered if new evidence was available that was not available during the statutory consultation period and would depend on diary commitments.
- MM thanked the Minister for her time and visiting the school.

**ISSUES AGREED:**

None

**ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:**

None

**NOTE WRITTEN BY:**

Sharon Taylor

**DATE:**

6 December 2021



**Controlled Schools' Support Council**  
 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Main Building  
 Stranmillis University College  
 Belfast, BT9 5DY  
 T: 028 9531 3030  
 E [info@csscni.org.uk](mailto:info@csscni.org.uk)

18 November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Development proposal 624 Upper Ballyboley Primary School**

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) was set up in September 2016 to represent and support the interests of the controlled sector in Northern Ireland. CSSC supports controlled schools, which are open to all faiths and none, in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together, within the ethos of non-denominational Christian values and principles.

The diversity of the controlled sector is evident in the age range of pupils it serves, 3 to 19, as well as in the types and locations of the schools which it represents. CSSC celebrates the inclusion of Nursery, Primary, Special and Post-Primary schools within its wide-reaching community, which welcomes all young people, whoever they are and from wherever they come. The controlled sector is the largest education sector in Northern Ireland accounting for 49% of all schools and catering for over 146,000 pupils.

CSSC notes the publication of the Development Proposal to discontinue provision at Upper Ballyboley Primary School with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter. CSSC also notes the publication of associated proposals to discontinue provision at Straid Primary School and to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School. CSSC has consulted with Upper Ballyboley Primary School and other controlled schools in the area and welcomes the opportunity to make representation in the interests of the controlled sector.

CSSC welcomes the Minister's commitment to support sustainable educational provision in rural areas and acknowledges the priority to support provision where each pupil is in a class with a single year group. CSSC notes the low enrolment in Upper Ballyboley Primary School and recognises the challenges this presents for the Board of Governors and staff. Without pre-empting the outcome of this proposal, CSSC has confirmed its support for the associated proposal to increase admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School which provides an option for parents to secure placement in a sustainable rural school for children who could be displaced from Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

In the event of a decision being taken to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School, CSSC acknowledges that not all parents will identify Ballynure Primary School as a first preference

**Controlled Schools' Support Council** [www.csscni.org.uk](http://www.csscni.org.uk)  
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and that there are other controlled primary schools in the locality which offer an alternative due to geographical location and other pragmatic considerations for parents.

In all aspects of the decision making process CSSC would request that the educational experiences of the pupils and the welfare of pupils and staff are paramount. CSSC therefore requests a timely decision to minimise uncertainty for the whole school community. Should a decision be taken to approve the proposal CSSC seeks assurances that staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are supported in the process of redeployment and/or voluntary severance in keeping with the School Re-organisation Agreements.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Mark Baker  
Chief Executive



## ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

DP 624

**Date of last ETI report:** Follow-up Primary inspection in December 2017

**Web link:** <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/follow-up-inspection-upper-ballyboley-primary-school-ballyclare-county-antrim-301-0850.pdf>

**Date<sup>3</sup>:** 12-10-2021

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

- The enrolment in Upper Ballyboley Primary School for September 2021 is 18 children with an intake of one child in Year 1.
- A new teaching principal took up post in September 2021.
- There are currently three full-time teaching staff employed in the school including the teaching principal.
- There are three classes in the school of which two are composite classes, years 1-4 and years 6-7.

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

- Ballynure Primary School, Sustaining Improvement Inspection in November 2017, the school continued to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

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

- As a result of enrolling in a sustainable school, it is likely that children will be working alongside peers of a similar age and stage of development and benefit potentially from a wider range of extra-curricular activities.
- The children will benefit potentially from a wider range of teacher specialisms.
- Provision of appropriate transport for children living in an isolated rural community needs to be considered.

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<sup>3</sup> This commentary paper is based on the information and evidence available to ETI on this date. Please check the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk) for any new inspection reports that may have published after this date.

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

None

10. The **SSP Criteria** indicators requiring ETI input (if known and/or for which information is available).

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils, Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.			x
	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.		There are 2 composite classes in the school. Year 1-4 Year 5; and Year 6-7 Job share class with Principal Release.	
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.		2 full-time teaching staff and a teaching principal	
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.			x
	1.5 The ability at post-primary level to be able to provide suitable access to the entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.		Not applicable	
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.			x
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for		Engage funding will focus on one to one and small group support for vulnerable children in numeracy and literacy skills.	

	children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.			
	1.8 The quality of the <u>physical</u> environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.			X
	1.9 The quality of, and arrangements for, pastoral care including the active promotion of the principles of social justice in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum.			X
Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.			X
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.			X
	4.9 Pupil behaviour, expulsions, suspensions and non-attendance as well as positive behaviours such as involvement in school management (e.g. buddying and mentoring schemes).			X
<b>Strong links with the Community</b>	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			X
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			X
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.		No	

### 11. Summary of impact of the proposal

The cumulative effect on the provision of the falling enrolment and pressure on the school budget needs to be considered alongside the associated impact on the learning and teaching resources.

**TRANSPORT AND FOOD IN SCHOOLS INPUT TO DEVELOPMENT  
PROPOSAL (DP)**

**DP Title & Number: DP 623 - Straid Primary School, DP 624 - Upper Ballyboley Primary School & DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School**

**Updated Response date: 17 May 2023**

Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated that the financial implications for the Transport budget would be minimal.

**EWD INPUT:**

No issues or concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff as noted in section 6 (Staff) of the Case for Change.

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

- **TNC 2011/8 - Workload Agreement:** should the Case for Change result in an increase to enrolment in a school, or surrounding schools, assurance should be provided regarding how potential impact on teacher workload, as a result of the increased class size, will be managed.
- **TNC 2013/2 – School Reorganisation Agreement and DE Circular 2013/7 – School Reorganisation Allowances:** a teacher who suffers a reduction in pay as a result of staff re-organisation or redeployment may be eligible to apply for a school reorganisation allowance.
- **JNC 224 – Collective Agreement for School Reorganisations – Employment protection for Support Staff** will apply where the Case for Change may impact on the terms and conditions of non-teaching staff.

**School Admissions Team (SAT) input for:** DP 624: Upper Ballyboley Primary School (301-0850) Proposal to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.

**(NB: This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal 623 and 625)**

## Background:

Upper Ballyboley PS is a controlled school with approved admissions and enrolment numbers set at 14 (to a maximum of 17 provided the enrolment number would not thereby be exceeded) in admissions and 100 in enrolment.

DP 624 proposes that the school discontinues from 31 August 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## Applications:

Over the past five years the school has received the following applications for admission to Year 1 during the admissions process:

Year	Admissions Number	First Preferences	Total Applications (all preferences)	Admissions*
2017/18	14 - 17	3	3	3
2018/19	14 - 17	3	3	3
2019/20	14 - 17	3	3	3
2020/21	14 - 17	1	1	1
2021/22	14 - 17	0	0	0

\*Excludes stated pupils and those admitted by appeal

Source : EA – at the conclusion of the primary admissions process.  
Schools Admissions Team have verified 2017/18 data

## Temporary Variation (TVs):

If a school receives more applications for admission than it has places available it can request a Temporary Variation (TV) to its admissions and/or enrolment numbers from School Admissions Team (SAT).

During the last five years Upper Ballyboley Primary School has remained undersubscribed and therefore has not needed to request a TV to its approved numbers from the Department.

## Long Term:

The long term need for places in particular areas is for the area planning process to consider. SAT does not hold data on future demand for places and is unable to make a recommendation on whether the DP should be approved.

**Financial Monitoring Teams' comments on DP 624:**

**301-0850 Upper Ballyboley Primary**

The school's **Provisional** Deficit position as at 31 March 2022 is (£84,244).

The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2021 was (£55,573).

The school received a total delegated budget of £132,346 in the 2022-23 financial year for **18<sup>1</sup>** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £7,353.

The average for all primary schools is £3,421.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **2<sup>4</sup>** pupils, which represents 11.11% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.

The school received £51,863 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 100.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

The school also received £16,420 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.

Details of the school's budget allocation from the Common Funding Formula, for the last 3 years, is as follows:

Factor	2022-23 £	2021-22 £	2020-21 £
Pupil AWPU	46,108	71,724	93,014
	1,227	3,068	3,068
	54	137	141
Premises Area	3,136	3,136	3,136
Premises FTE	1,538	2,380	3,295
Small Schools Support	51,863	49,807	47,726
Primary Principals Release Time	16,420	16,420	16,420
Foundation Stage	12,000	12,000	12,000

<b>Total School Funding</b>	<b>132,346</b>	<b>158,672</b>	<b>178,800</b>
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Pupil FTE (no.)	18.00	28.00	39.00
Per Capita	£7,353	£4,585	£4,405

<sup>4</sup> The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2021 census data was used to determine the 2022-23 CFF allocation). The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year. In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

**IWD Input:**

It is noted from the Case for Change that Upper Ballyboley PS has issues round sustainability. Attendance at a sustainable school underpins the fundamental principles of the special educational needs (SEN) Code of Practice, which focuses on a continuum of need and a continuum of provision, which may be made in a variety of forms. Children with SEN require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The Case for Change notes that since 2011, implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy through area planning has objectives which include:

- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning.

The Case for Change states that this DP when considered with DP 623 - Straid Primary School to discontinue and DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School to increase its admissions and enrolment numbers, will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with SEN realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by the EA's Children and Young People Services.

SET would not oppose this DP, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively.

**SECRET ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**  
**DP 623 – Straid Primary School 301-0570 – discontinue**  
**DP 624 – Upper Ballyboley Primary School 301-0850 - discontinue**  
**DP 625 – Ballynure Primary School 301-0802 – increase admission and enrolment numbers**

Current Position

Straid Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Ballynure Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

List of neighbouring <phase> schools provided by Area Planning

School		Programme	Membership
Ref No	Name		

301-0631	Ballyclare PS		
301-6414	Fairview PS	CASE	St Oliver Plunkett PS
301-0404	Tildarg PS,		
301-0754	Doagh PS		
301-0828	Kilbride PS		
301-3332	Toreagh PS	CASE	St John's PS & Woodlawn PS
301-0779	The Thompson PS		
301-0696	Woodburn PS	CASE	Carrickfergus Central PS & Hazelwood Integrated PS
301-6225	Woodlawn PS	CASE	Toreagh PS & St John's PS
301-0817	Greenisland PS		
301-6005	Silverstream PS		
301-6038	Hollybank PS		
301-6249	Earlview PS		
303-6139	St Macnissis's PS		
301-6015	Mossley PS	CASE	St Bernard's PS

5 of these school are currently involved in a partnership funded through Peace IV CASE project.

## **SECRET CONSIDERATION**

*The Case for Change*



DP 623 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 624 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 625 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal however no reference to Shared Education is contained within the documentation.

There is evidence to suggest that EA has given consideration to Shared Education in this set of Development Proposals, however there is no evidence documented within DP 625.

## **SECRET ASSESSMENT**

There is insufficient evidence in the Development Proposal to suggest a positive or negative impact to Shared Education partnerships in the area.

### **DE Equality Unit**

I have considered the published proposals and the rationales outlined in the Case for Change and I have no comments to make either in relation to equality or rural needs perspectives.



### Screening Template

#### 1.2. Description of policy or decision

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is a Controlled Primary School situated in a rural location approximately midway between Ballyclare and Larne in County Antrim (5 miles east of Ballyclare, 7 miles west of Larne and 2.5 miles north of Ballynure). The school serves the community surrounding the school and has an enrolment of 28 pupils. In consideration of a declining enrolment, the school was identified in the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan as 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision by February 2020.

It is a three class base primary school, has three teachers with composite classes for Years 1-2, Years 3, 4 and 5 and Years 6-7. There are nine non-teaching staff.

The Education Authority (EA) has identified the preferred proposal as being to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

The aims of the proposal are:

- To ensure every learner fulfils his or her full potential at each stage of development.
- Enhance the quality of provision and raise standards.
- To address declining enrolments at Upper Ballyboley Primary School.
- To ensure a network of sustainable schools throughout the Education Authority capable of delivering the curriculum.
- To reduce the number of available places.
- To ensure the efficient and effective use of the Authority's resources.
- To reduce duplication of provision.

This is consistent with the Education Authority's Strategic Area Plan, Providing Pathways particularly in the Mid and East Antrim area the Education Authority is seeking to:

- Ensure that school places are located as required
- Address school provision where sustainability is an issue

## Screening Template

### 1.2. Description of policy or decision

In considering this option, the Education Authority will ensure:

- Pupils transfer to alternative sustainable schools enhancing the quality of provision
- The reduced number of available places
- The more efficient use of resources
- The reduction of over provision within the controlled sector.

The key factors will be to ensure:

- Pupil transfer with minimal disruption particularly at transition and pupil examination stages, special needs and transport arrangements.
- Staff employment rights are respected, protected and preserved.

### 1.3. Who are the main stakeholders impacted? (Internal and external as well as actual and potential)

Pupils, staff (teaching and non-teaching), governors, parents, local community and trade unions.

### Screening Template

1.4. Is the policy likely to impact people living in rural areas? <i>(If yes, please complete the rural sections of this document)</i>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.5. Are there other policies or decisions with a bearing on this policy or decision?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools</li> <li>• The Northern Ireland Curriculum</li> <li>• Every School a Good School – A Policy for School Improvement' (ESaGS)</li> <li>• Entitlement Framework</li> <li>• Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022)</li> <li>• Area Planning Guidelines/Sustainability Baseline Report</li> <li>• Terms and Conditions of Employment (Staff)</li> <li>• Education Authority's Transport Policy</li> <li>• Programme for Government</li> <li>• The Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015</li> <li>• Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029</li> <li>• Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</li> <li>• A Fair Start</li> </ul>

## PART 2 – EVIDENCE AND MITIGATION

2.1. What information did you use to inform this screening?

***E.g. census data, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), consultation reports, service level data.***

Department of Education Schools Census Data  
Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency data on population  
Department of Education Sustainability Baseline Report  
Department of Education Area Planning Guidance and Ministerial Priorities  
Education Authority Staff Data  
Education Authority Case for Change

Engagement with sectoral support bodies

Pre-publication consultation meetings held with staff, governors and parents 10 March 2020. Pre-publication consultation with staff, governors, parents and affected schools took place between 10 March 2020 to 21 May 2020. On 18 March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced that schools would close to pupils at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March 2020. This resulted in area planning activity being stood down. Area planning activity was given permission to resume by the Department of Education on 8 October 2020, and, as a result, the Education Authority restarted pre-publication consultation from 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021.

### Screening Template

#### 2.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Data - What is the profile of the people that are impacted by this policy or decision?

<b>Section 75 Group 1: Age</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>																																																																																									
	<p><i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i></p> <p>All affected pupils are of primary school age – table 1 details the year group breakdown of Upper Ballyboley Primary School along with an indication of the level of available places at the school. The school has an approved enrolment of 100 and an admission figure of 14.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="9">Table 1: Enrolment Statistics – Upper Ballyboley Primary School</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>Year 1</th> <th>Year 2</th> <th>Year 3</th> <th>Year 4</th> <th>Year 5</th> <th>Year 6</th> <th>Year 7</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> <td>7</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014/15</td> <td>8</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> <td>8</td> <td>4</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015/16</td> <td>5</td> <td>8</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>7</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>8</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td> <td>13</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>3</td> <td>12</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>12</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>11</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>28</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The staff range in age between &lt;20 to &lt;59.</p>	Table 1: Enrolment Statistics – Upper Ballyboley Primary School										Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total	2013/14	7	6	5	4	7	5	7	41	2014/15	8	6	5	5	4	8	4	40	2015/16	5	8	6	5	5	5	7	41	2016/17	4	5	8	7	5	5	5	39	2017/18	13	4	5	7	7	5	6	47	2018/19	3	12	3	4	7	7	5	41	2019/20	3	3	12	3	3	7	8	39	2020/21	1	3	3	11	1	3	6
Table 1: Enrolment Statistics – Upper Ballyboley Primary School																																																																																										
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total																																																																																		
2013/14	7	6	5	4	7	5	7	41																																																																																		
2014/15	8	6	5	5	4	8	4	40																																																																																		
2015/16	5	8	6	5	5	5	7	41																																																																																		
2016/17	4	5	8	7	5	5	5	39																																																																																		
2017/18	13	4	5	7	7	5	6	47																																																																																		
2018/19	3	12	3	4	7	7	5	41																																																																																		
2019/20	3	3	12	3	3	7	8	39																																																																																		
2020/21	1	3	3	11	1	3	6	28																																																																																		

### Screening Template

*What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?*

#### **Pupils**

As detailed within the Case for Change the pupils at Upper Ballyboley Primary School needs will continue to have their primary education needs met as there are places available in neighbouring schools - see table 2.

In addition the Education Authority is progressing a proposal to increase provision at Ballynure Primary School, which is 2.6 miles from Upper Ballyboley PS, to ensure adequate controlled primary provision is available in the area.

Those pupils with statements from the mainstream school, will continue to have their needs met at their receiver school.

**Table 2: Local Schools – Distance from Upper Ballyboley Primary School**

	Distance (miles) from Upper Ballyboley Primary School	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places 2020/21
Upper Ballyboley PS	-	Controlled	41	100	59
Ballynure PS*	2.6	Controlled	157	154	-3
Straid PS**	5.0	Controlled	41	119	78
Tildarg PS	4.7	Controlled	73	80	7
Ballyclare PS	5.1	Controlled	555	572	17
Toreagh PS	5.2	Controlled	97	105	8
Fairview PS	5.2	Controlled	518	525	7
Kilbride PS	5.9	Controlled	126	135	9

\* Associated proposal to increase the Ballynure Primary School's admission and enrolment number

\*\* Proposal to discontinue Straid Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

### Screening Template

	<p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>The teaching staff is afforded employment 2 years protection under the School Re-Organisation Agreement 2013/2 (<a href="https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-re-organisation-agreement">https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-re-organisation-agreement</a>).</p> <p>School Re-Organisation Agreement is in place for a period of one year for non-teaching staff (<a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/redeployment-redundancy">https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/redeployment-redundancy</a>).</p> <p>Subject to the approval of the proposal Education Authority Human Resources will contact each member of staff individually and any concerns or issues can be explored via this engagement.</p>
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### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 2: Dependants</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>In relation to this Section 75 group the Education Authority does not hold data on parents, teaching or non-teaching staff.</p> <p>Based on the 2020/21 enrolment there are no looked after children attending the school.</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p>The Education Authority understands there may be a potential impact on relocated staff with dependants, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in travel time may mean additional care costs and difficulties in balancing work/life balance</li> <li>• potential negative impacts of changes in facilities</li> <li>• negative impacts if changes in work patterns are needed</li> <li>• negative impacts if needs are not taken on board if re-training is necessary</li> <li>• need to work near home in case of an emergency</li> <li>• negative impact on part-time workers</li> </ul> <p>All pupils that are under care will continue to have their needs met via the Education Authority's Education Welfare Service.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 3: Disability</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>There are pupils with a statement of special educational needs attending the school – where there are less than five cases the number has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of information about identifiable individuals.</p> <p>The Education Authority does not hold any disability related data for staff.</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> All pupils who have a statement of special educational need will continue to have their needs met, as specified in their statement. CYPS will contact parents specifically to discuss the school closure, part of the action plan will be to work with parents to meet the needs of the pupil with SEN at any new school.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Reasonable adjustments will be taken into consideration for any staff member with a disability. The Disability Employment Support Service can provide guidance and support to line managers.</p>

**Screening Template**

<p><b>Section 75 Group 4: Religious Beliefs</b></p>	<p><b>Makeup of affected group</b></p>
	<p><i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i></p>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> [REDACTED]</p> <p><b>Staff</b>            The Education authority does not retain records of religious background for a section of the school staff – releasing breakdowns for a particular section would not be in keeping with GDPR best practice as it may allow for the identification of individuals.</p>

### Screening Template

	<p><i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i></p> <p><b>Pupils</b> A controlled school is open to pupils of all faiths and none. There is provision in neighbouring schools within reasonable travelling distance, see table 2 of the Case for Change, and schools in the area continue to work together through the shared education programme allowing children from all communities to work together in an inclusive way.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School the Education Authority will continue to be in a position to meet the demand for controlled primary places in the area. Table 2 in the Case for Change details the available places in the area – link to the Case for Change: <a href="#">DP 624 – Upper Ballyboley Primary School</a></p> <p>A separate proposal has been progressed to increase the admission figure and approved enrolment of Ballynure Primary School which provide additional controlled provision in the area that is impacted by the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School, the link below is the published documentation for Ballynure Primary School proposal. <a href="#">Link to DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School</a></p> <p><b>Staff</b> Reasonable adjustments will be taken into consideration for any staff member with a disability.</p>
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### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 5: Gender</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>Pupils – 13 Male - 15 Female</p> <p>Non-teaching Staff – 8 Female</p> <p>Teaching Staff – The Education Authority does not hold this information</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p><b>Pupils</b> The pupils are currently being taught in a co-educational setting and should the proposed closure of the primary school occur the Education Authority will be able to provide places for the pupils within co-educational provision in the area.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Irrespective of gender staff members will be treated fairly in keeping with agreed policies and legislation.</p>

**Screening Template**

<b>Section 75 Group 6: Marital Status</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	The Education Authority does not monitor the marital status of staff - irrespective of the marital status all staff members will be treated fairly in keeping with agreed policies and legislation.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	Not Applicable

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 7: Political Opinion</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<p>No specific needs or priorities can be identified</p>
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	<p>The Education Authority engaged widely with local political representatives in relation to the proposed discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School and changes planned for primary provision in the wider area. The views expressed during these discussions were taken into consideration when a decision was made to progress with the proposed discountenance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p> <p>Interested parties have the opportunity to make their views known directly to the Department of Education during the two month statutory objection period after the publication of the development proposal.</p>

### Screening Template

<b>Section 75 Group 8: Ethnicity</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	<b>Pupils</b> There are no newcomer pupils identified within the 2021/22 school census.
	<b>Staff</b> There is no data available on the ethnic background of the staff members.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	The needs of pupils and staff from a minority group will continue to be met.
<b>Section 75 Group 9: Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Makeup of affected group</b>
	<i>Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above categories impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.</i>
	The Education Authority does not hold data on the sexual orientation of pupils or staff.
	<i>What are the needs and experiences of the groups that are impacted by this policy or decision?</i>
	There is no evidence at this stage to indicate different needs, experiences or priorities - The needs of all pupils and staff will continue to be met.



## Screening Template

### Impact on Rural Needs

*Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people from the above category impacted by this policy or decision. If the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.*

In 2020/21 there were 28 pupils enrolled with a total of 11 staff.

### What are the social and economic impacts of the policy on people living in rural areas?

*Please consider positive and negative impacts around issues such as access to education or youth provision, transport, broadband accessibility and employment impacts.*

Upper Ballyboley Primary School situated in a rural location approximately midway between Ballyclare and Larne in County Antrim (5 miles east of Ballyclare, 7 miles west of Larne and 2.5 miles north of Ballynure). The majority of pupils school come from the surrounding area, see Map 2 of the Case for Change.

The enrolment statistics, see table 1 of this screening, show that the enrolment of Upper Ballyboley Primary School has failed to meet the approved enrolment of 100 for a number of year which has resulted in the school retaining a high percentage of available places across the years. Upper Ballyboley and Ballynure Primary Schools attract pupils from a common area, see Map 2 of the Case for Change, and the Education Authority is proposing to increase provision within Ballynure Primary School – the impact of the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School on the 28 pupils will be mitigated by the increased provision at Ballynure PS along with the availability of places across other schools, see table 2 of the Case for Change.

Were applicable families can apply for transport assistance to their next nearest suitable primary school in accordance with the Departmental Transport Policy – see section 6 of the Case for Change.

The employment rights of permanent staff are protected under the agreed policy – see section 6 of the Case for Change.

The Education Authority is aware of the important community role Upper Ballyboley Primary School plays and will investigate with the community how this can continue should the school close and the Education Authority / Department of Education has decided the accommodation is no longer required for education purposes. However it should be noted that the Education Authority is not in a position to “gift” or otherwise give the property for the use of the local community – as a public body the Education Authority has the abide by Department of Finance’s guidance (Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland) in relation to the disposal of accommodation which has been deemed surplus.

2.3. Policy / Decision changes

***In developing the policy or decision, what changes did you make, or do you intend to make to address any equality issues that you identified?***

No change to the proposal to close Upper Ballyboley Primary School was required – as part of the overall primary provision in the area the Education Authority has brought forward a proposal to increase primary provision at Ballynure Primary School and there is significant available places at alternative primary provision in the area, see Table 2 of the Case for Change.

The teaching staff is afforded two years protected employment under the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2. Those teaching staff affected will be offered alternative posts through transfer of redundancy or voluntary redundancy.

School Re-organisation Agreement is in place for a period of one year for non-teaching staff. Those non-teaching staff affected will be offered redeployment or voluntary redundancy.

The Education Authority will discuss with the local community the future of the school building and site subject to it no longer being required for educational purposes by the Education Authority or Department of Education and with the constraints in relation to the transfer of the property as outlined previously.

***Based on the rural impacts that you have identified, what changes (mitigation) can you make to the policy?***

The Education Authority will consider the potential for community use of the Upper Ballyboley PS building and site subject to the limitations placed on it by government guidance on the disposal of public assets.

The review has identified (unfilled) available places in alternative controlled schools within the local area should parents prefer this option. Children will be afforded places in more sustainable schools which will enhance curriculum provision, including interaction with peers. These alternative schools fit with the ethos and religious make-up of the current school.

### Screening Template

**Based on the rural impacts that you have identified, what changes (mitigation) can you make to the policy?**

Due regard has been given to the Rural Needs Act and the consideration of the potential transport impact. This will be accounted for by the Transport section within the Education Authority. Such discussions will be held with parents to support them in making informed decisions based on parental choice.

### PART 3 – GOOD RELATIONS

3.1. If we define Good Relations as ‘tackling prejudice and promoting understanding’, are there any changes to the policy or decision that you would make in this regard?

*(Please enter N/A if not applicable)*

GROUP	Impact on Good Relations	Policy / Decision Changes
Religion	Not Applicable	No
Ethnicity	No	No
Political Opinion	No	No

## PART 4 – SECTION 75 EQUALITY SCREENING DECISION

This section is only relevant to the Section 75 Equality Duties.

4.1. How would you categorise the impacts of the policy or decision? <b>Please refer to guidance notes on categorising impacts.</b>	Major Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Minor Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Please provide reasons for your decision below.</i>		
<p>The Education Authority will work with parents and the school to mitigate any factors which they consider to disadvantage the pupils eg in securing admission to a suitable school; the provision of transport and uniform support in accordance with current policies and induction support for pupils who may find the change of school a challenging experience.</p> <p>There is alternative controlled primary provision within a reasonable travel distance and a proposal to increase the admissions figure and approved enrolment of a neighbouring school will ensure the local community continues to have access to controlled primary provision.</p> <p>The Education Authority will provide advice, support and assistance to staff in respect of potential redeployment opportunities.</p>		

### Screening Template

4.2. Does the policy or decision require a full Equality Impact Assessment?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

*Please provide reasons for your decision below.*

At this stage there is no need to move to an EQIA, there will be continued engagement with the school and multiple stakeholders throughout the rest of the area planning process.

This will be kept under review and if required, a decision to EQIA the closure can be taken based on supporting evidence in line with the Education Authority Equality Scheme commitments.

### PART 5 – DISABILITY DUTIES

5.1. Does the policy or decision encourage the participation of disabled people in public life? Or is there anything you can do within the policy or decision to encourage participation of disabled people in public life?

	How does the policy encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?	Is there anything further you can do to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?
Please provide details if applicable	As one of the key themes of the Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022) is to: <b>'secure parity of access for all to appropriate pathways'</b> .	.

5.2. Does the policy or decision promote positive attitudes towards disabled people? Or is there anything you can do within the policy or decision to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

	How does the policy promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?	Is there anything further you can do promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
Please provide details if applicable	As one of the key themes of the Providing Pathways: Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (extended to August 2022) is to: <b>'secure parity of access for all to appropriate pathways'</b> .	As in 5.1

## PART 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS

### 6.1. Are Human Rights Relevant?

Article		Relevant (Yes/No)
Article 2:	<b>Right to Life</b>	No
Article 3:	<b>Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment</b>	No
Article 4:	<b>Right to freedom from slavery, servitude &amp; forced compulsory labour.</b>	No
Article 5:	<b>Right to liberty and security of person.</b>	No
Article 6:	<b>Right to a fair &amp; public trial in a reasonable time</b>	No
Article 7:	<b>Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law &amp; no punishment without law</b>	No
Article 8:	<b>Right to respect for private &amp; family life, home &amp; correspondence.</b>	No
Article 9:	<b>Right to freedom of thought, conscience &amp; religion.</b>	No
Article 10:	<b>Right to freedom of expression.</b>	No
Article 11:	<b>Right to freedom of assembly &amp; association</b>	No
Article 12:	<b>Right to marry &amp; found a family.</b>	No
Article 14:	<b>Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights</b>	No
Protocol 1, Article 1	<b>Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions &amp; protection of property</b>	No
Protocol 1, Article 2	<b>Right of access to education</b>	Yes

*If you answered 'no' to all human rights considerations, please go to Part 7 – Monitoring*

### Screening Template

6.2. If you have answered yes to any of the Articles in 6.1, does the policy or decision have a potential positive impact or does it potentially interfere with anyone's Human Rights?

Article number	Positive impact or potential interference?	How?	Any legal issues arise?
Article 2:			
Article 3:			
Article 4:			
Article 5:			
Article 6:			
Article 7:			
Article 8:			
Article 9:			
Article 10:			
Article 11:			
Article 12:			
Article 14:			
Protocol 1, Article 1			



### Screening Template

Article number	Positive impact or potential interference?	How?	Any legal issues arise?
<p><b>Protocol 1, Article 2</b></p>	<p><b>Potential positive impact</b></p> <p>The impact on pupils is mitigated by the fact there is alternative primary provision within a reasonable distance, see Table 2 in the Case for Change.</p> <p>These schools are co-educational and have similar ethos and religious make up as the current school.</p>	<p>Provision of a network of viable and sustainable schools that can deliver the NI Curriculum effectively and provide access to a range of education provision that is appropriate to the needs of children and young people, so that every pupil can realise their potential and contribute to a caring, inclusive and progressive society.</p> <p>The UNCRC states that The purpose of education is to enable the child to develop to his or her fullest possible potential. The Education Authority believes the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School, and providing the pupils places in neighbouring controlled schools, is in the best interests of the pupils. It would mean the relocated Upper Ballyboley Primary School pupils would be taught in larger classes and will allow for improved social interaction between the pupils.</p>	

## Screening Template

### PART 7 - MONITORING

7.1. What data will you collect to monitor the impact of the policy in terms of equality of opportunity, disability duties or human rights compliance?

	<b>Data Collected</b>
<b>Section 75</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p>
<b>Disability Duties</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p>
<b>Human Rights</b>	<p>During the pre-publication consultation the Education Authority engaged with staff, parents, Governors and affected school in order gather information and understand their needs that related to section 75 characteristics. An outline of the responses received during this consultation is provided in the Case for Change supporting the closure of Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p> <p>The issues raised help form the equality screening process and were taken into consideration before a decision was made to progress with the proposal to close Upper Ballyboley Primary School.</p>

Screening Template

**SIGN OFF**

<b>Approved: Area Planning Lead Officer:</b>	<i>Michael McConkey, Head of Area Planning</i>
<b>Policy screened by:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Date:</b>	6 September 2022



2 June 2023

To: All Governors, Staff and Parents/Guardians of Upper Ballyboley Primary School

Dear Governor, Staff, Parent/Guardian

Development Proposal 624 for the discontinuance of Upper Ballyboley Primary School was published on 21 September 2021. At the same time Development Proposals for the discontinuance of Straid Primary School (Development Proposal 623) and an increase in the approved admission and enrolment numbers was published for Ballynure Primary School (Development Proposal 625), subject to a decision on the discontinuance proposals.

Since 2021, Development Proposal 686 for the transformation from Controlled to Controlled Integrated status for Straid Primary School was published on 28 September 2022. As a result, the Department of Education advised: *‘the proposal for Transformation needs to be considered first and this has ultimately led to a delay in the consideration of the three linked proposals Development Proposals 623–625. The assessment of any Development Proposal is a complex process and requires careful consideration of all evidence, any decision to ‘approve’ or ‘not approve’ a school closure is not taken lightly. All decisions are taken to ensure the best interests of all learners’.*

In consideration of the current timescale, nearing the end of the school year, and the fact that a decision has yet to be made on any of the Development Proposals above, nor is there a timescale on when decisions will be made, the Education Authority has liaised with the Department of Education to advise that it would not be in a position to implement either the transformation of Straid Primary School or the discontinuance of either school in this academic year. Therefore, Upper Ballyboley Primary School will operate as a controlled primary school for the 2023/24 academic year.

When decisions on the above Development Proposals are received the Education Authority will be in contact to discuss implementation and next steps.

I appreciate the uncertainty for you as a governor, member of staff or parents/guardians of pupils attending Upper Ballyboley Primary School and I hope this correspondence provides you with some comfort going forward for the 2023/24 academic year.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature box]



Assistant Director of Education

**Part 4  
Appendices DP 625**

**Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions and enrolment numbers from 22 to 30 and 154 to 200 respectively with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.**

**(This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal Nos 623 and 624)**

**APPENDIX A**

**Area Planning**

**Case for Change**

**Ballynure Primary School**

**Development Proposal No 625**

**Proposal to: Increase admission and enrolment numbers**

Case for Change: Supporting Information - Summary/Overview	
Area Planning District	Antrim and Newtownabbey
Development Proposal Number	625
Proposer	Michele Corkey Director of Education Education Authority
School(s) Name	Ballynure Primary School
School(s) Reference	301-0850
Sector	Primary
Management	Controlled
Development Proposal Publication Date	Week commencing 20 September 2021
Proposal	<b>Ballynure Primary School will increase its admission number from 22 to 30, with an increase in enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter</b>

## Case for Change: Statutory Consultation

*Note: It may be necessary for documentary evidence to be provided to show that the statutory procedures have been followed. It is essential that relevant parties retain this information.*

The following is to be completed by the Proposer and signed off by them.

### EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

#### Proposer

Provide detail of consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils.

Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before publication of the DP?

#### Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 11 March 2020 to 21 May 2020

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority's Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Consultation Session - 11 March 2020 - 3.00pm
- Board of Governors: Consultation Session - 11 March 2020 - 5.00pm
- Parents/Guardians: Consultation Session - 11 March 2020 - 6.30pm
- Local Schools (15): Letter – 12 March 2020

Pre-publication consultation commenced on 11 March 2020 closing on 21 May 2020. However, on 18 March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced that schools would close to pupils at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March 2020. This resulted in area planning activity being stood down. Area planning activity was given permission to resume by the Department of Education on 8 October 2020, and, as a result, the Education Authority re-started the pre-publication consultation on the increase of admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School.

#### Re-Start Pre-Publication Consultation Period: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Education Authority's Area Planning Service undertook pre-publication consultation with:

- Staff: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Board of Governors: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Parents/Guardians: Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021
- Local Schools (15): Letter and Questionnaire: 6 May 2021 to 1 July 2021

The Education Authority received a total of 38 responses. Those who responded as 'Parent/Guardian' represent parents/guardians from both Ballynure Primary School and Straid Primary School. The information below provides a summary of overall responses and emerging themes of responses received.






Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Total
Board of Governors – Affected School			1	1
Governor	1			1
Staff – Teaching/Non-Teaching (Ballynure PS)	7			7
Staff – Teaching/Non-Teaching (Other School)		1		1
Parents/Guardians (Ballynure PS)	16			16
Parents/Guardians (Other schools)		4		4
Other – Straid Village and District Community Group		1		1
Other – Controlled Schools’ Support Council	1			1
Other - Unknown		6		6
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>38</b>

A summary of comments in support of the proposal:




- As a member of staff I feel this is a positive proposal. I am more confident that Ballynure PS could deliver quality education to all pupils. Pupils with SEN would continue to have their needs met.
- To have 7 classes without composite classes would be great.
- To have extra mobile classrooms to accommodate our already growing school would be a great resource for learning.
- In the best interest of the community and school if Ballynure PS went to a 7 class school.
- Agree with proposal but have some reservations including parking, speed of traffic, accommodation, playground space.
- Key thing is the ability to move away from the requirement for composite classes.
- The probability of increased funding to cover extra pupils should also be beneficial in the school providing for a suitable learning environment.
- Phasing in would be required to allow full class numbers in Year 2 and Year 3 when closure of Straid PS and Ballyboley PS happens.

A summary of those not in support of the proposal:




- Why increase the size of Ballynure PS to accommodate the children from Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS when Tildarg PS has the capacity to take them?
- It seems that the EA has an agenda to close all small schools.
- The EA has not considered the whole community area and to ensure that the provision for children of different needs is being provided.
- Tildarg PS should be considered as part of the strategy for sustainability for this area.
- Increasing Ballynure PS could end up harming Tildarg PS.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no parking near Ballynure PS and it is a very dangerous solution.</li> <li>• Ballynure PS is currently unable to accommodate numbers in excess of 200.</li> <li>• Any additional buildings at Ballynure PS would have to be temporary and therefore their longevity and safety would need to be questioned.</li> <li>• Outside space will be reduced if additional buildings are required.</li> <li>• Parking, speed of traffic, accommodation and playground space were noted as being issues.</li> <li>• Covid and future pandemics mean that Ballynure PS’s assembly hall had to be used to ensure social distancing.</li> <li>• In your proposal I quote “Ballynure PS operates with 7.0 teachers, including a non-teaching principal. Therefore, there is only a cost of one teacher if the developmental proposal to increase admissions and enrolment was approved.” The additional cost of the classroom mobile is a significant cost above the cost of one teacher, and will also depreciate over time as they are only a temporary structure with limited lifespan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Section 75</b></p> <p>22 responses commented on Section 75. These have been taken into account when assessing the equality impact of the proposed to insert proposal and school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A positive impact on the children ability to mix, education provisions and of a benefit to the community as a whole. A very positive step forwards that will be a great benefit.</li> <li>• Simply because our children are children they are being discriminated against. This proposal is not in their best interest.</li> <li>• Any person in a rural community is being discriminated against with these proposals driving the closure of rural schools. We are tax payers and contribute greatly to society. Why should our children have to travel further to school and spend longer on transport with less time for homework etc.</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Confirmation by the Proposer</b></p>	<p>I confirm that the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of pupils of Ballynure Primary School were consulted on 11 March 2020 and 6 May 2021. Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="399 1765 1257 1966"> <tr> <td data-bbox="399 1765 635 1825">Name:</td> <td data-bbox="635 1765 1257 1825">Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="399 1825 635 1886">Office Held:</td> <td data-bbox="635 1825 1257 1886">Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="399 1886 635 1966">Signed:</td> <td data-bbox="635 1886 1257 1966"></td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:	
Name:	Michele Corkey						
Office Held:	Director of Education						
Signed:							

	Date:	7 September 2021	
<b>Associated Proposals</b>	Proposal	Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.	
	DP Number	623	Date Published Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021
	Proposal	Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.	
	DP Number	624	Date Published Strategic Planning and Policy Committee – 7 September 2021

<b>Case for Change: Statutory Consultation</b>									
<b>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION</b>									
<i>The following is to be completed and signed off by the EA.</i>									
<b>The Education Authority (EA)</b>	<p>I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021 with a return date of 21 May 2020 (suspended) and 1 July 2021.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	7 September 2021
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	7 September 2021								
<p>Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.</p> <p>Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).</p> <p>Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p>	<p>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 12 March 2020 (suspended) and 6 May 2021, to schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 15 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 1 July 2021.</p>								

<p>Dates of EA meetings e.g. Education Committee/ Board etc.</p> <p><u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u></p>	<p>One response was received from an affected school. One response was received from the Controlled Schools' Support Council.</p> <p><b>Fairview PS – Notes the proposal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like EA to give due consideration to the opportunity to offer places at Fairview PS if Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS close in 2023.</li> <li>• Currently undersubscribed for 2021/22 and forward places show that we will have pupil vacancies in all year groups from 2023 without the need for further teacher employment or further accommodation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Controlled Schools' Support Council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes the low enrolment in Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS and recognises the challenges this presents for the Boards of Governors and staff. Without pre-empting the decision to progress these proposals and ultimately the outcome, CSSC would emphasise the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity in alternative controlled schools for those children displaced from both Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS.</li> <li>• Supports the proposed increase to the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure PS, which will facilitate a seven class based school.</li> <li>• Recognises the proposal will consolidate controlled primary provision in this area and offer a rural school option in the event of children being displaced from alternative rural schools.</li> <li>• Would emphasise that without additional accommodation and other building works Ballynure PS will be unable to accommodate the enrolment proposed. Assurances must be provided that the necessary resources will be made available in a timely manner to facilitate the smooth transition of pupils who could potentially be displaced.</li> <li>• Is mindful that for pupils displaced from Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS parental preferences may be for controlled provision other than Ballynure PS and this also should be supported.</li> </ul>
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	<p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2021.</p>								
<p><b>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS</b>          In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 611 651 943"> <tr> <td data-bbox="225 611 368 674">Name:</td> <td data-bbox="368 611 651 674">Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="225 674 368 768">Office Held:</td> <td data-bbox="368 674 651 768">Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="225 768 368 875">Signed:</td> <td data-bbox="368 768 651 875"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="225 875 368 943">Date:</td> <td data-bbox="368 875 651 943">7 September 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	7 September 2021	<p>The Education Authority, as the proposer, supports Development Proposal No 625 that Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in the enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Pre-publication consultations were undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians outlining the Education Authority's Case for Change detailing the rationale for the proposal. During the consultations undertaken with governors, staff and parents/guardians the following recurring themes emerged:</p> <p><b>Availability of Suitable/Adequate Accommodation</b>          It is anticipated that the cost of providing the enhanced accommodation, modular detached classroom units, would be approximately £200,000. Accommodation will be provided, subject to all necessary approvals etc by the date of commencement.</p> <p><b>Availability of Places in Other Local Schools</b>          The support which the Education Authority provides for the pupils will continue regardless of the school they attend. The Education Authority acknowledges there are a small number of available spaces in other local schools, however, the increase in admission and enrolment numbers proposed for Ballynure Primary School seeks to provide places for pupils attending Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School should their proposals be approved.</p> <p>The proposed discontinuance of education in Straid Primary School (DP 623) and Upper Ballyboley Primary School (DP 624) with the proposal to increase admissions and enrolment in Ballynure Primary School (DP 625) will support an area planning solution for the Antrim and Newtownabbey and Mid and East Antrim Council areas in addressing issues of sustainability and ensuring that school places are located as required and is consistent with ESaGS, the Sustainable Schools Policy and 'Providing Pathways'.</p> <p>The discontinuation of Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School will result in the redistribution of approximately 81 pupils (53 pupils in Straid Primary School and 28 pupils in Upper Ballyboley Primary School). Increasing the admissions number will ensure that Ballynure Primary School will support Ministerial priorities to reduce the number of composites and all Ballynure Primary School to operate as a seven class base.</p>
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	7 September 2021								



## 1 BACKGROUND

Ballynure is a village near Ballyclare in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. It is part of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and had a population of 968 people in the 2011 Census. The development of the A8 by-pass in 2015 facilitated the unification of the village and the Larne Road is now primarily used by access traffic to Ballynure Primary School, Church Road, Lismenary Road and the surrounding rural area.

Ballynure Primary School is currently a 5 class base, operating as a 6 classroom school. This includes one mobile in the grounds of the school.

### 1.1 Statistical Information

Over recent years Ballynure Primary School has experienced an increase in enrolment numbers, operating at almost full capacity, with a current enrolment of 148 pupils. The school has an approved admissions number of 22 and an approved enrolment number of 154 pupils – Table 1 below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
2013/14	21	21	16	18	14	14	20	124
2014/15	16	21	21	15	19	15	14	121
2015/16	22	19	20	22	16	19	15	133
2016/17	24	20	17	20	22	17	19	139
2017/18	15	28	21	19	23	26	18	150
2018/19	22	16	29	23	19	23	25	157
2019/20	23	20	16	28	25	19	23	154
2020/21	19	24	20	15	26	25	19	148

Table 2 lists the schools closest to Ballynure Primary School. Map 1 shows the next nearest primary schools to Ballynure Primary School and the current pupil distribution. There is some capacity within the local schools as detailed in Table 2 below.

	Distance (miles) From Ballynure Primary School	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places
Ballynure Primary School	-	Controlled	148	154	6
Straid Primary School*	1.9	Controlled	53	119	66
Upper Ballyboley Primary School**	2.6	Controlled	28	100	72
Ballyclare Primary School	3.3	Controlled	555	572	17
Fairview Primary School	3.5	Controlled	501	525	24
Tildarg Primary School	4.8	Controlled	61	80	19

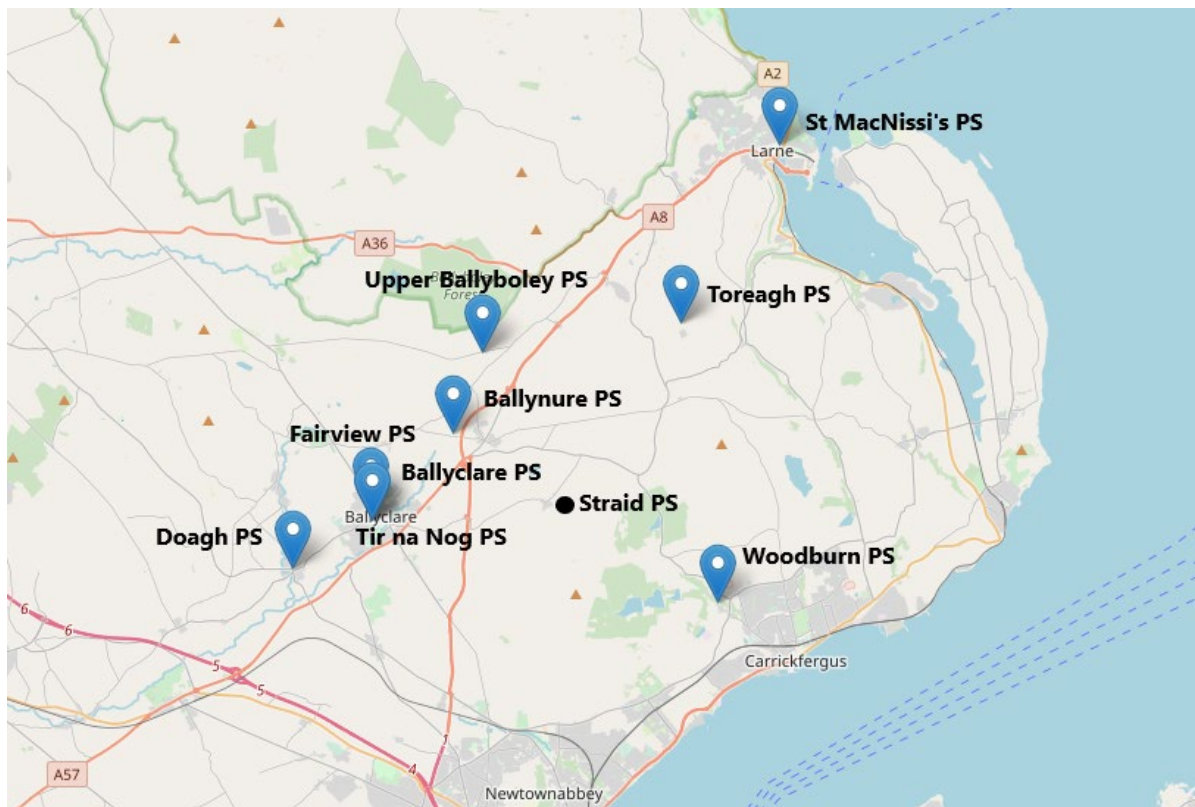
Toreagh Primary School	4.9	Controlled	111	105	0
Kilbride Primary School	4.9	Controlled	126	135	9
Thompson Primary School	5.3	Controlled	183	194	11
Doagh Primary School	5.4	Controlled	115	138	23

\* Proposal to discontinue Straid Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

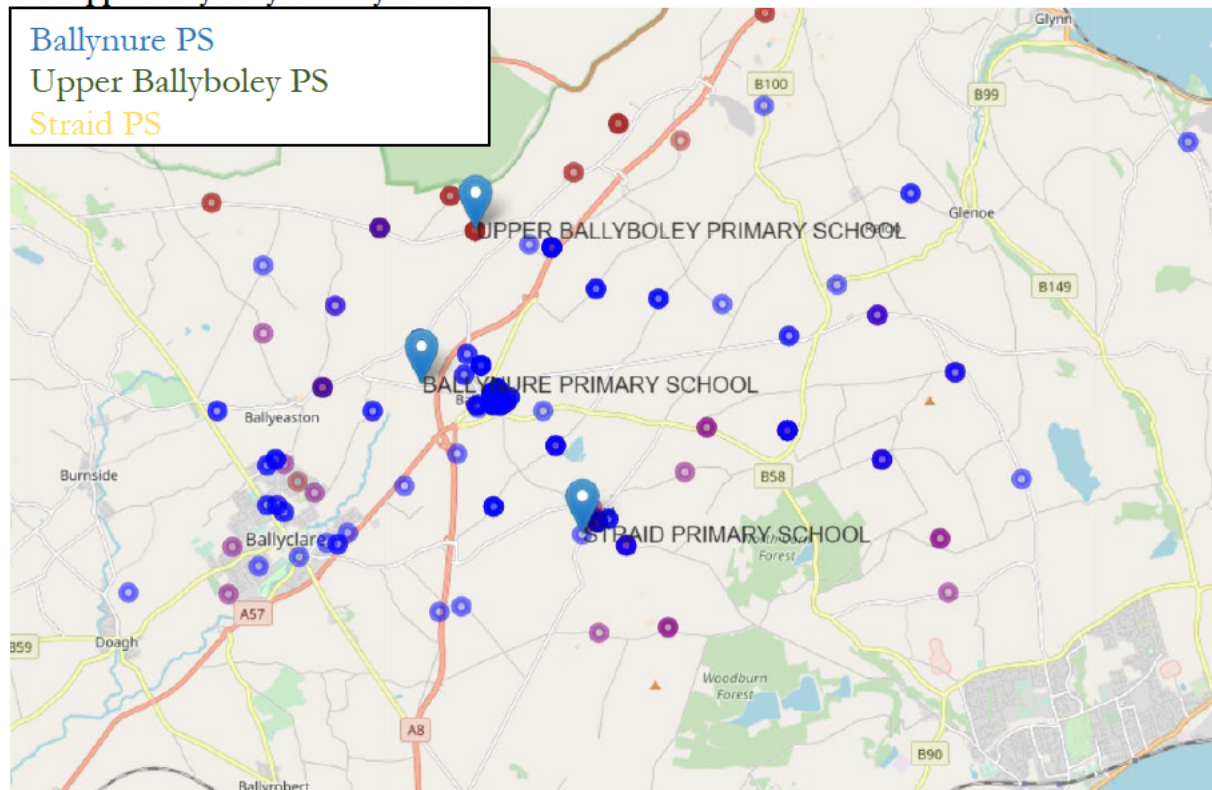
\*\* Proposal to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School is being brought forward by the Education Authority

In consideration of the distance of the local schools, home-to-school transport arrangements will be implemented within transport regulations.

**Map 1: Highlights the schools within the surrounding area**



**Map 2: Highlights the current pupils attending Ballynure Primary School, Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School**



Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Straid Primary School are the next nearest schools to Ballynure Primary School. The Education Authority is taking forward two separate development proposals for the discontinuance of education at Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Straid Primary School. In taking forward a development proposal to increase the admission and enrolment numbers Ballynure Primary School, to ensure places are available should the proposal to discontinue Upper Ballyboley Primary School and Straid Primary School be approved, this will provide for a 7 class base school. A single entry (7 class base school) will remove the composite classes within the area and be consistent with Ministerial priorities and Sustainable Schools Policy.



## 2 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The main focus of the Area Planning process is embedded in the Sustainable Schools Policy first published in 2009 and applies to primary and post-primary schools. The policy outlines the criteria that school Managing Authorities should consider when making decisions affecting the best use of resources in order to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out 6 sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.

### 2.1 Quality of Education

As Ballynure Primary School is being considered as part of an area solution, the findings of its most recent inspection were as follows in October 2014:

Overall Performance Level	Very good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Very good

*"In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this primary school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated the capacity for sustained self-improvement." (Pg4)*

An increase to admissions and enrolment numbers in Ballynure Primary School will provide sustainable education going forward, reducing the number of composites and creating a 7 class base.

### 2.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

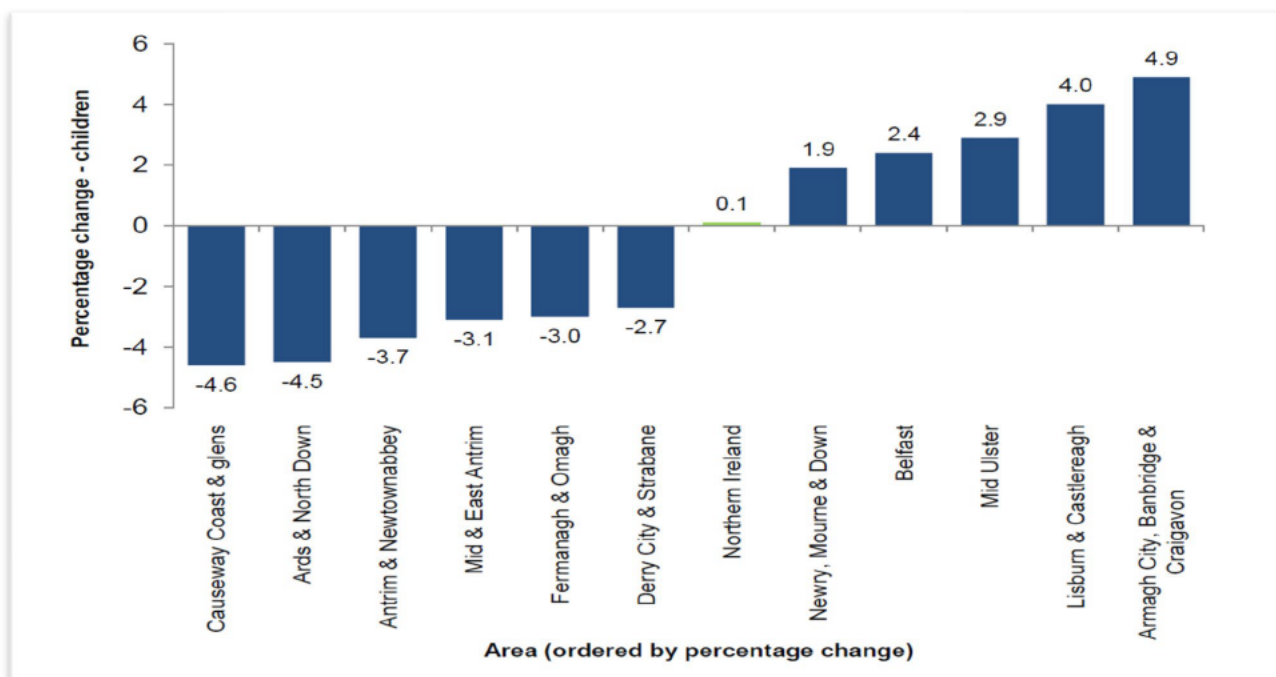
Ballynure Primary School, has grown by approximately 30 pupils in the last 5 years and the proposal for Ballynure Primary School is to increase admissions and enrolment numbers - the current approved admissions number is 22 which equates to an approved enrolment number of 154.

### 2.3 Population Change

Table 3 indicates a projected population reduction of children aged 0-15 years within the Mid and East Antrim LGD of 3.1% between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD there is also a reduction of 3.7% between mid-2016 and mid-2026. In addition the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency predicts the population of children (4-11 years), in the Mid and East Antrim LGD, to decrease by 5.9% (mid-2016 to mid-2026) and similarly the prediction for the reduction of 4-11 year olds in the Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD is 9.4%. Table 4 shows the live birth information for the area which while showing a slight upturn for available admission numbers for September 2020, shows a downturn for September 2021.

**Table 3: Projected Population Change**

Projected Change in Number of Children (i.e. those aged 0-15) by Local Government District (mid-2016 to mid-2026) (Source: NISRA)



**Table 4 – Live Births (Source: NISRA)**

Ward Name	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change from 2010 to 2018
Ballynure*	33	27	27	29	34	34	40	35	35	+6%
Kilwaughter	87	93	93	95	88	93	60	74	89	+3%
Glenwhirry	37	28	36	22	36	36	40	29	29	-22%
Doagh	51	46	51	39	52	46	42	53	34	-33%
Ballyclare Nth	51	60	49	44	52	68	49	44	61	+19%
Ballyclare Sth	71	42	63	64	42	47	41	34	42	-40%
Gynn	20	12	20	18	9	16	18	15	17	-15%
Woodburn	32	22	31	23	23	25	24	15	25	-22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>332</b>	
<b>Year 1 - Year</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	

\*Ballynure Primary School is located in the Ballynure Ward

Even though there was a significant reduction in live births at the time of Year 1 entry in 2018/19, there was a significant rise in the number of primary one admissions to Ballynure Primary School. They have remained consistent, matching the live births in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

## 2.4 Sound Financial Position

Ballynure Primary School does not operate within its in-year budget. At March 2021 it had a deficit of -£17,510. It is projected that by the end of the current 3 year financial plan (2020-2023) the school will have a deficit of -£84,121.

Table 5 shows the school is operating in accordance with the sectoral average: position compared to the sector average:

Table 5: Sector Averages				
Ballynure Primary School	Sector Average*	Year 1 (2019-2020)	Year 2 (2020-2021)	Year 3 (2021-2022)
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	22.2	22.0	22.1	22.9
Expenditure per Pupil	£3,110	£3,063	£3,074	£3,046
Staff Costs per Pupil	£3,032	£3,008	£3,072	£3,041

\*Planning assumptions include Cost of Living Pay Award Estimate at 1% each year and estimated rate of inflation for Other Costs as 2% each year

Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula, the level of funding is determined by pupil numbers. An increase in admissions and enrolment will contribute to greater financial efficiency and sustainability in Ballynure Primary School.

## 2.5 Strong Leadership and Management

Ballynure Primary School operates with 7.0 teachers, including a non-teaching principal. Therefore, there is only a cost of one teacher if the development proposal to increase admissions and enrolment was approved.

The ETI Report from October 2014 found that Leadership and Management was ‘very good’. It outlined:

*The principal’s effective strategic leadership sets realistic and achievable goals for the school’s ongoing development. The principal, staff, parents, governors and children work collaboratively in bringing about continuous improvement in all aspects of the provision.*

- *The school’s processes for self-evaluation include rigorous consultation with the children, staff, parents and governors. The staff make effective use of all of the available information, including the assessment data, to evaluate aspects of the school’s provision and to prioritise future areas for improvement. The action plans are appropriately detailed and indicate how the school will monitor and evaluate their impact.*
- *The governors are well informed about all aspects of school life, including the standards which the children attain and they exercise their challenge function rigorously and supportively. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI’s evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.’*

These findings were further supported in a Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection conducted in November 2017:

*Ballynure Primary School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The Education and Training Inspectorate will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.’*

## **2.6 Accessibility**

The school can be accessed by foot, car and bus. The majority of pupils already attending Ballynure Primary School come from the local area. Accessibility has been enhanced since the creation of a new main road to Larne.

## **2.7 Strong Links with the Community**

The school sits on an open site with a large senior playground and several grassed areas which are used by the children throughout the year. This area is large enough to safely accommodate playtimes for four senior classes of approximately 120 children. The large playground is marked out for hockey, cycling proficiency and playground games. Neighbouring schools request to play their home matches at Ballynure Primary School. Football matches usually take place on the community area at the War Memorial Park, where there is ample space for a large pitch with permanent goal posts and for spectators from both Ballynure Primary School and visiting schools.

The Year 3 children use the playground at the front of the school at playtimes. The Year 1 and Year 2 children use the playground which fronts the Lismenary Road, where there is also a grassed area which the children use in the spring and summer terms. There is scope to extend this playground while preserving the orchard area.

The school currently operates a breakfast club and after schools' clubs include: choir, football, hockey, Bible club, ICT club, ECO club, Cycling Proficiency and Art club.

The school has made contact with Sustrans with a view to improving cycle paths throughout the village, in particular the roads radiating from the school and the development of the existing cycle path in the village which is currently not part of the Sustrans network. This development is now much more feasible following the construction of the A8 by-pass and the unification of the village. The plan will also include application for a Sustrans safe crossing area from the school to the War Memorial Park recreational area.

Ballynure Primary School has links with the local churches, support from local businesses (Co-op, Spar, Jackson's Butchers, local garage Spar, ASDA, Tesco's, Ballynure Greengrocers, Woodside's Retailers - Larne, Newtownabbey Borough Council, Forestry Commission, RSPB), Ballynure Playgroup and the post-primary schools including Ballyclare High School, Ballyclare Secondary School and Larne Grammar School.

The school supports the work with the Ballyclare District Community Association and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council plan to implement the Community Plan to develop the War Memorial Park area opposite the school where planned facilities include a multi-use games area, playground equipment for the very young children, a sports pitch, walking and running paths, cycle track, garden and meeting room. These facilities would serve the school during the day/term-time (sports day, football, hockey, play park equipment for the younger children) and provide a base for the young people and the community during holiday periods and evenings.

### 3 AREA PLANNING IMPACT

As detailed above, Area Planning is focused on the Sustainable Schools Policy. In October 2016, in the publication of the draft Education Authority's Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School provision 2017-2020, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, MLA, stated:

*'The Sustainable Schools Policy, which is implemented through the Area Planning process, focuses on providing children and young people with high quality education that meets their needs and enables them to achieve their full potential...'*

*The educational experience of our children and young people is greatly enhanced when they attend schools that are educationally and financially viable. The Sustainable Schools Policy is a framework for assessment of the sustainability of primary and post-primary schools. The six criteria and supporting indicators clearly illustrate what a sustainable educational experience should look like. Schools must: deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, offer extensive extracurricular activities, have high quality pastoral care systems and have the confidence of the communities they serve.*

*In primary schools pupils should be in a class with no more than two year groups but ideally they should be in single year group classes. They should be able to interact with peer groups and have the best chances to prepare for successful transition to post primary school...However there are still a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. This is particularly evident in the primary sector and, despite the best effort of teachers, it becomes harder to deliver a high quality education if pupils are taught in composite classes. We have too many small primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class...'*

The Providing Pathways Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 Annual Action Plan for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2021 identified a key issue for Straid Primary School to 'address school provision where sustainability is an issue' with the action 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision at Straid Primary School by February 2020'. Similarly, in Upper Ballyboley Primary School, a key issue was to 'address school provision where sustainability is an issue' with the action 'Managing Authority to consult on options for future provision of Upper Ballyboley Primary School by February 2020'.

As a result the Education Authority engaged with the Board of Governors of Straid Primary School, Upper Ballyboley Primary School and more recently Ballynure Primary School. To consolidate primary school provision within the area Ballynure Primary School was considered as part of the area planning solution, hence the three development proposals. Engagement and discussions focused on the current position of the schools and sustainable options for the schools and the surrounding area.

An increase in admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School will support the provision of a seven class base school.

This is part of the strategic area solution for the Antrim/Newtownabbey and Mid/East Antrim Council areas, matching requirements for 'ensuring places are located as required,' consistent with the Annual Action Plan.

#### **4 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL**

The proposed discontinuance of education in Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School with the proposal to increase admissions and enrolment in Ballynure Primary School will support an area planning solution for the Antrim and Newtownabbey and Mid/East Antrim Council areas in addressing issues of sustainability and ensuring that school places are located as required and is consistent with ESaGS, the Sustainable Schools Policy and 'Providing Pathways'.

The discontinuation of Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School will result in the redistribution of approximately 81 pupils (53 pupils in Straid Primary School and 28 pupils in Upper Ballyboley Primary School), supported by one further Development Proposal to increase admissions and enrolments in Ballynure Primary School.

The proposal will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with Special Educational Needs realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by Children and Young People Services.

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a statutory duty on the EA to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and designing and delivering public services. The areas from which Ballynure Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The provision of home-to-school transport will provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria.

In the case of any proposal to discontinue education in Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School, the Education Authority has to consider the likely impact of removing controlled provision from the area and the increase of admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School will consolidate controlled provision in a rural area.

In consideration of the distance of the local schools, home-to-school transport arrangements will be implemented within transport regulations.

## **5 EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

The Education Authority in taking forward proposals for the discontinuance of Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School has identified both schools as not sustainable. Consistent with the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP), in order to have a quality education experience, indicators show that there should be no more than two composite year groups in a single classroom; a minimum of four teachers in a school to recognise the needs of the pupils and demand on teachers. There is no indication that this pattern of enrolment will change in the near future for Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

As a consequence and to ensure planning for primary school places in the area, the Education Authority is proposing to increase the admission and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School. Ballynure Primary School an already sustainable and growing school. Children will have better opportunities to engage in education and a broad and balanced curriculum in larger classes, mixing with their peers, in a 7 class base school with no composites. Account should be taken of all children who would move and particularly the impacts on those with Special Needs. This may be enhanced in a larger school with teachers responsible for one area of co-ordination eg SENCO, which is not the case in schools with 2 or 3 teachers who have to fulfil a number of roles and carry many curriculum responsibilities.

An increase to admissions and enrolment numbers in Ballynure Primary School will provide sustainable education going forward.

Approval of the proposal for Ballynure Primary School would enable the school to operate on an appropriate admission and enrolment number, with the need for appropriate accommodation and infrastructure investment.

## 6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is for an increase in admissions and enrolment for Ballynure Primary School. There are currently unfilled places within the local schools, although there will be a requirement for some additional accommodation to facilitate the relocation of pupils, to be identified by parental preference).

*Finance* The increase to the admissions and enrolment numbers in Ballynure Primary School will increase financial sustainability.

*Staffing* In creating 2 additional class bases, there is the requirement for one additional teacher in Ballynure Primary School (as they currently have 6 teachers and a non-teaching Principal) at a cost of approximately £53,000.

*Transport* Most of the pupils attending Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School live within close proximity to the school and do not receive home-to-school transport. The discontinuance of both primary schools would require the provision of home-to-school transport for a larger number of pupils. Communication with the Education Authority transport service is ongoing. Any transport arrangement will be in accordance with transport regulations and identified preference school, based on eligibility.

*Accommodation* It is anticipated that the cost of providing the enhanced accommodation - modular detached classroom units, would be approximately £200,000. Accommodation will be provided, subject to all necessary approvals etc, by the date of commencement.



## 7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

The proposals are being brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The implementation date for the proposal is 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable, pending approval from the Education Committee, for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline	
Proposal:	Proposed Timeline
<p>Ballynure Primary School will increase its admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in the enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p><b>Associated Development Proposals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Straid Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</li> <li>• Upper Ballyboley Primary School will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</li> </ul>	
<p>Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents – (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority.</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee. A deputation from the Board of Governors may also choose to attend the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee or the Board meeting.</p>	6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Consultation with other affected Schools- (8 weeks)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee.</p>	6 May 2021 – 1 July 2021
<p>Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to seek Approval To Publish</p> <p>Case for Change to be taken to the September 2021 Education Authority’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for consideration.</p> <p>If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period.</p>	7 September 2021
<p>Statutory Objection Period (2 months)</p> <p>Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education</p>	September 2021 – November 2021
<p>Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision</p>	January 2022
<p><b>Implementation</b></p> <p>If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>	

## APPENDIX B

### Summary of Consultation Responses DP 625 Ballynure Primary School

No / From	Issues Raised
1.	Supports the proposal and states the whole school unanimously support the proposal. States the school has served the local community for 91 years and that they have an ambition to become a 7 class base and no composite classes. They have welcomed several families from Straid PS and Upper Ballyboley PS over the past year. States all new pupils settled quickly and are thriving. Would like a smooth transition of any new pupils arriving at the school after the development proposal by the establishment of site development plans as quickly as possible after the consultation period.
2.	Supports the proposal and unanimously supported by the BoGs. Acknowledges the challenges faced by those involved in DP 623 and DP 624, however are pleased that a local rural school will be available to the wider community. Stress that the toilets facilities would need to be addressed to support the numbers and the additional teaching staff would provide a full complement to support the seven-class base.



**Controlled Schools' Support Council**  
 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Main Building  
 Stranmillis University College  
 Belfast, BT9 5DY  
 T: 028 9531 3030  
 E [info@csscni.org.uk](mailto:info@csscni.org.uk)

18 November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Development proposal 625 Ballynure Primary School**

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) was set up in September 2016 to represent and support the interests of the controlled sector in Northern Ireland. CSSC supports controlled schools, which are open to all faiths and none, in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together, within the ethos of non-denominational Christian values and principles.

The diversity of the controlled sector is evident in the age range of pupils it serves, 3 to 19, as well as in the types and locations of the schools which it represents. CSSC celebrates the inclusion of Nursery, Primary, Special and Post-Primary schools within its wide-reaching community, which welcomes all young people, whoever they are and from wherever they come. The controlled sector is the largest education sector in Northern Ireland accounting for 49% of all schools and catering for over 146,000 pupils.

CSSC notes the publication of the Development Proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers of Ballynure Primary School from 22 to 30 and from 154 to 210 respectively with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter and the associated proposals for the discontinuance of provision at Straid Primary School and Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

CSSC has consulted with Ballynure Primary School and other controlled schools in the area. Without pre-empting the outcome of the proposals in respect of Straid and Upper Ballyboley Primary Schools, CSSC supports the proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers of Ballynure Primary School.

CSSC welcomes the Minister's commitment to support sustainable educational provision in rural areas and acknowledges the priority to support provision where each pupil is in a class with a single year group. CSSC notes the low enrolment in Straid and Upper Ballyboley Primary Schools at present and recognises the challenges this presents for the Boards of Governors and staff.

CSSC notes that the enrolment data for Ballynure Primary School demonstrates an increasing trend over a seven year period with 121 pupils enrolled in 2014/15 and 148

**Controlled Schools' Support Council** [www.csscni.org.uk](http://www.csscni.org.uk)  
 Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC107873

pupils enrolled in 2020/21. While the DE census data for 2021/22 is not currently available, the school has confirmed the enrolment of 158 pupils for 2021/22, has exceeded the approved number.

CSSC recognises that the proposed increase to the admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School will facilitate a seven-class based school, aligning with the Minister's priority of supporting provision where each pupil is in a class with a single year group.

Without pre-empting parental preferences, CSSC considers that the proposed increase in admissions and enrolment numbers at Ballynure Primary School provides an option for parents to secure placement in a sustainable rural school for children who could be displaced from Straid Primary School and/or and Upper Ballyboley Primary School.

In the event of a decision being taken to discontinue Straid Primary School and/or and Upper Ballyboley Primary School, CSSC acknowledges that not all parents will identify Ballynure Primary School as a first preference and that there are other controlled primary schools in the locality which offer an alternative due to geographical location and other pragmatic considerations for parents.

CSSC notes the Education Authority's comment that 'accommodation will be provided, subject to all necessary approvals etc by date of commencement' and it is important to emphasise that without additional accommodation and other building works Ballynure Primary School will be unable to accommodate the enrolment proposed. CSSC would highlight the importance of providing the necessary resources in a timely manner to facilitate the smooth transition of pupils who could potentially be displaced and requests that the provision of suitable accommodation is informed by the Principal and the Board of Governors of Ballynure Primary School.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Baker  
Chief Executive

## ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

## DP 625

Report Dates<sup>5</sup>: November 2017 and October 2014

Ballynure Primary School, Antrim. A Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection in November 2017

**Web link:**

[https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/sustaining-improvement-inspection-ballynure-primary-school-ballyclare-county-antrim-301-0802\\_0.pdf](https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/sustaining-improvement-inspection-ballynure-primary-school-ballyclare-county-antrim-301-0802_0.pdf)

and

Ballynure Primary School, Ballyclare Co. Antrim. A Report of an Inspection in October 2014.

**Web link:**

[https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/primary-inspection-ballynure-primary-school-ballyclare-co-antrim\\_0.pdf](https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/primary-inspection-ballynure-primary-school-ballyclare-co-antrim_0.pdf)

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

- The quality of the strategic leadership in Ballynure Primary School is very good as stated in the 2014 inspection report; and, in the 2017, Sustaining Improvement Inspection, Ballynure Primary School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

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

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<sup>5</sup> This commentary paper is based on the information and evidence available to ETI on this date. Please check the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk) for any new inspection reports that may have published after this date.

- There is an associated link between the proposed increase of the enrolment of Ballynure Primary School, DP 625, to the EA proposal to close Straid Primary School and Ballyboley Primary School. Ballyboley Primary School is located within three miles north of Ballynure Primary School. Straid Primary School is located within three miles south of Ballynure Primary School.
- The last inspection report for Straid Primary School in March 2019 was impacted by teacher's industrial action short of strike, subsequently, the ETI was unable to evaluate or quality assure the quality of the education and effectiveness of the school.
- The inspection report for Ballyboley Primary School in October 2015 found that the school should address urgently significant areas for improvement. There were important areas for improvement in the children's achievements and standards and provision for learning and the Leadership and Management required significant improvement. The follow-up inspection of Ballyboley Primary School, in December 2017, found that the school had improved the provision and demonstrated the capacity to bring about improvement in the interest of all of the learners.

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

- The EA case for change suggests that there would be potentially an additional cost of one teacher if the development proposal to increase admissions and enrolment were approved by DE. Such a teaching appointment would facilitate a seven-class base controlled Primary school including a non-teaching Principal thereby reducing the number of composite classes; this would reflect Ministerial priorities.
- Fairview Primary School, Ballyclare, is currently undersubscribed for 2021-22 and forward places show that the school will have pupil vacancies in all year groups from 2023 without the need for further teacher employment or further accommodation. Further detail about how the school's pupil vacancies will align with the year-group profile of the families potentially transferring from other local controlled schools, which may be closing, is required, including the children's access to appropriate school transport.

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

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- Pending the Department of Education's potential approval to increase the enrolment and potential transfer of children from other local schools, Ballynure Primary School would require additional accommodation with the anticipated cost of £200 000 for provision of modular detached classroom units. The latter will have a limited life-span so consideration needs to be given to the provision of permanent classrooms regarding long-term value for money in the expenditure of public funds. In addition, the location of the modular accommodation will potentially reduce the playground space for children.
- Children's/ pedestrians' safety: the risk remains for the children's drop-off and collection times regarding the volume and management of road traffic as the school is situated close to a busy road junction. This needs addressed alongside the additional classroom accommodation.

15. The **SSP Criteria** indicators requiring ETI input (if known and/or for which information is available).

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils, Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.	Yes		
	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.	Yes		
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.	Yes		
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.	Yes		
	1.5 The ability at post-primary level to be able to provide suitable access to the		Not applicable	

	entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.			
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.	Yes		
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.	Yes		
	1.8 The quality of the <u>physical</u> environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.		Approval of the development proposal would mean that new classrooms would need to be put in place at Ballynure Primary School.	
	1.9 The quality of, and arrangements for, pastoral care including the active promotion of the principles of social justice in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum.	Yes		
Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.	Yes		
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.	Yes		
	4.9 Pupil behaviour, expulsions, suspensions and non-attendance as well as positive behaviours such as involvement in school management (e.g. buddying and mentoring schemes).	Yes		
Strong links with the Community	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).	Yes		
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).	Yes		
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.			x

## 16. Summary of impact of the proposal



Approval of DP 625 will require extra classroom infrastructure in Ballynure Primary School and consideration of traffic management in the area particularly at key drop off and collection times.

**TRANSPORT AND FOOD IN SCHOOLS INPUT TO DEVELOPMENT  
PROPOSAL (DP)**

**DP Title & Number: DP 623 - Straid Primary School, DP 624 - Upper Ballyboley Primary School & DP 625 - Ballynure Primary School**

**Updated Response date: 17 May 2023**

Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated that the financial implications for the Transport budget would be minimal.

**EWD INPUT:**

No issues or concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff as noted in section 6 (Staff) of the Case for Change.

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

- **TNC 2011/8 - Workload Agreement:** should the Case for Change result in an increase to enrolment in a school, or surrounding schools, assurance should be provided regarding how potential impact on teacher workload, as a result of the increased class size, will be managed.
- **TNC 2013/2 – School Reorganisation Agreement and DE Circular 2013/7 – School Reorganisation Allowances:** a teacher who suffers a reduction in pay as a result of staff re-organisation or redeployment may be eligible to apply for a school reorganisation allowance.
- **JNC 224 – Collective Agreement for School Reorganisations – Employment protection for Support Staff** will apply where the Case for Change may impact on the terms and conditions of non-teaching staff.

**School Admissions Team (SAT) input for:** DP 625 Ballynure Primary School (PS) (301-0802) Proposal to increase its admissions and enrolment numbers.

**(NB: This proposal should be read in conjunction with Development Proposal 623 and 624)**

## Background:

Ballynure PS is a controlled school with approved admissions and enrolment numbers currently set at 22 (to a maximum of 24 provided the enrolment number would not thereby be exceeded) in admissions and 154 in enrolment.

DP 625 proposes that the school increase its admissions number from 22 to 30 and their enrolment number from 154 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter.

## Applications:

Over the past five years the school has received the following applications for admission to Year 1 during the admissions process:

Year	Approved Admissions Number	First Preference's	Total Applications (all preferences)	Total Admissions*
2017/18	22 - 24	15	15	15
2018/19	22 - 24	21	22	22
2019/20	22 - 24	23	23	23
2020/21	22 - 24	19	19	19
2021/22	22 - 24	20	20	20

\*Excludes statemented pupils and those admitted by appeal

## Temporary Variation (TVs):

If a school receives more applications for admission than it has places available it can request a Temporary Variation (TV) to its admissions and/or enrolment numbers from the School Admissions Team (SAT).

The table below shows the TVs granted to Ballynure PS in the last 4 school years:

	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Temporary Variations approved (to a total of)*	
			Total Admissions	Total Enrolment
2018/19	22 - 24	154		
2019/20	22 - 24	154		
2020/21	22 - 24	154		
2021/22	22 - 24	154		157

\*Excludes statemented pupils and those admitted by appeal

## Long Term:

The long term need for school places in specific areas falls into the area planning process. SAT does not hold data on future demand for places and is unable to make a recommendation on whether the DP should be approved.

**Financial Monitoring Teams' comments on DP 625:**  
'Proposed increase in enrolments and admissions at the school'.

### **301-0802 Ballynure Primary**

The school's **Provisional** Deficit position as at 31 March 2022 is (£4,656).

The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2021 was (£17,285).

The school received a total delegated budget of £511,774 in the 2022-23 financial year for **158<sup>1</sup>** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £3,239. The average for all primary schools is £3,421.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **11<sup>6</sup>** pupils, which represents 6.96% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.

The school received £36,823 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 71.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

The school also received £11,658 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.

Increased enrolments for an individual school typically has limited impact on the ASB for schools – as these pupils would be educated and funded elsewhere.

All other financial considerations (including any in-year costs for pupil growth, in the context of a school with an approved DP to increase its enrolment) would be for the EA to consider as Funding Authority for the school.

Details of the school's budget allocation from the Common Funding Formula, for the last 3 years, is as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> **The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2021 census data was used to determine the 2022-23 CFF allocation).** The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year. **In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).**

Factor	2022-23 £	2021-22 £	2020-21 £
Pupil AWPU	404,730	379,114	367,287
	6,750	4,295	5,522
	296	191	253
Premises Area	7,117	7,117	7,117
Premises FTE	13,497	12,580	13,011
Small Schools Support	36,823	37,853	34,840
Primary Principals Release Time	11,658	12,479	11,987
Foundation Stage	22,514	23,565	23,565
Teachers Salary Protection	6,019	5,369	0
	1,186	1,186	1,104
	1,186	1,186	3,312

<b>Total School Funding</b>	<b>511,774</b>	<b>484,936</b>	<b>467,999</b>
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Pupil FTE (no.)	158.00	148.00	154.00
Per Capita	£3,239	£3,277	£3,039

**IWD Input:**

It is noted from the Case for Change that if the related DPs are approved, an increase in admissions and enrolment in Ballynure PS will contribute to greater financial efficiency and sustainability. Attendance at a sustainable school underpins the fundamental principles of the special educational needs (SEN) Code of Practice, which focuses on a continuum of need and a continuum of provision, which may be made in a variety of forms. Children with SEN require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The Case for Change notes that since 2011, implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy through area planning has objectives which include:

- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning.

The Case for Change states that this DP when considered with DP 623 - Straid Primary School to discontinue and DP 624 - Upper Ballyboley Primary School to discontinue, will meet the outcomes for all including additional support to those who require it, ensuring those children with SEN realise their full potential. Pupils with SEN will continue to have their special educational requirements met within local schools, supported by the EA's Children and Young People Services. SET would not oppose this DP, subject to any impact on pupils with SEN being considered and managed effectively.

**SECRET ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**  
**DP 623 – Straid Primary School 301-0570 – discontinue**  
**DP 624 – Upper Ballyboley Primary School 301-0850 - discontinue**  
**DP 625 – Ballynure Primary School 301-0802 – increase admission and enrolment numbers**

Current Position

Straid Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

Ballynure Primary School is not currently engaged in a funded Shared Education Project.

List of neighbouring <phase> schools provided by Area Planning

School		Programme	Membership
Ref No	Name		
301-0631	Ballyclare PS		
301-6414	Fairview PS	CASE	St Oliver Plunkett PS
301-0404	Tildarg PS,		
301-0754	Doagh PS		
301-0828	Kilbride PS		

301-3332	Toreagh PS	CASE	St John's PS & Woodlawn PS
301-0779	The Thompson PS		
301-0696	Woodburn PS	CASE	Carrickfergus Central PS & Hazelwood Integrated PS
301-6225	Woodlawn PS	CASE	Toreagh PS & St John's PS
301-0817	Greenisland PS		
301-6005	Silverstream PS		
301-6038	Hollybank PS		
301-6249	Earlview PS		
303-6139	St Macnissis's PS		
301-6015	Mossley PS	CASE	St Bernard's PS

5 of these school are currently involved in a partnership funded through Peace IV CASE project.

## **SECRET CONSIDERATION**

### *The Case for Change*

DP 623 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 624 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal, in Section 3.2 of documentation EA acknowledged their SE Duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education but following discussion concluded a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Staid PS.

DP 625 - A number of responses were received, including one from CSSC, as a result of the pre-publication consultation. No reference was made to Shared Education.

EA supports the Development Proposal however no reference to Shared Education is contained within the documentation.

There is evidence to suggest that EA has given consideration to Shared Education in this set of Development Proposals, however there is no evidence documented within DP 625.

## **SECRET ASSESSMENT**

There is insufficient evidence in the Development Proposal to suggest a positive or negative impact to Shared Education partnerships in the area.

## **DE Equality Unit**

I have considered the published proposals and the rationales outlined in the Case for Change and I have no comments to make either in relation to equality or rural needs perspectives.

## **IID Comment**

According to the case for change Ballynure Primary School (301-0850) is to increase its Admissions number from 22 to 30, with an increase in enrolment from 154 to 210- with effect from 1 September 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The case for change proposes 2 additional classrooms for the school however following analysis from colleagues in EAT, they have advised that the school will be entitled to 7 classrooms based on the proposed additional enrolment. As the school currently has 5 plus one Modular classroom, only 1 additional classroom is required to meet the needs of the proposed DP.

It is anticipated that the cost of providing the enhanced accommodation - modular detached classroom unit, would be approximately £300K, full cost cannot be established until the EA are instructed to complete a feasibility report. Provision of the additional accommodation to meet the DP would not be possible by September 2023. It is anticipated that should the DP be approved; it could take up to 18months for the additional accommodation to be provided. EOT will work with the EA to establish if interim measures can be put in place.