DE PRIVATE OFFICE MINISTERIAL COVER SHEET

Ref No: SUB 0252-2022

Title MOYLE PRIMARY SCHOOL (PS) – REVIEW OF APPROVED NUMBERS

PS/Minister Initials/Comments
Special Adviser Initials/Comments
Noted

MINISTER'S RESPONSE			
Approved/Agreed	✓	Meeting with correspondent	
Noted	✓	Meeting with officials	
Further information required		Accept/Decline	

MINISTER's ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
Noted. I agreed that there is engagement with the school re: findings.

MINISTER

Signed MMI **Dated** 21/3/22

From: [redacted]
School Admissions Team
Cleared by Janis Scallon – 11 March 2022

Date: **11 March 2022**

To: **Michelle McIlveen MLA**
Minister of Education **Copy distribution below**

MOYLE PRIMARY SCHOOL (PS) – REVIEW OF APPROVED NUMBERS

Issue:	To provide an update of our review of the approved numbers at Moyle Primary School (PS).
Timescale:	Routine.
Financial/Resource Implications:	Funding for pupils will follow their placement; therefore, any increase to the approved numbers at the school is likely, given it is over-subscribed and places remain available at other controlled schools in the town, to attract additional funding at the expense of neighbouring schools.
FOI Implications:	Likely to be fully disclosable.
Statutory Duties Implications:	None.
Presentational Issues:	None associated with this submission.
Recommendation:	It is recommended that you note the position in respect of the review and agree that officials engage with the school.

Background

1. You will recall a visit to Moyle Primary School (PS) on 8 December 2021 when you met with the Chair of the Board of Governors (BoG) and Principal at their request to discuss the approved admissions and enrolment numbers at the school.

2. During the meeting and in previous correspondence, the school lobbied for an increase to their approved numbers and queried the legality of a previous change to the numbers in 2014. At the meeting you committed to the Department undertaking a review of the case to allow re-engagement with the school on the matter. A review of the position has now taken place and an analysis is attached at **Tab A**.

Review

3. The review sets out the history of approved numbers at the school; the events leading up to the approved numbers being re-set in 2014; the correspondence between the school and the Department on the matter since 2019; and a recommendation on the way forward.

4. The review shows that the changes in 2014 were legal and were made to regularise the position as the school was having a phased increase to its enrolment implemented when no Development Proposal (DP) to that effect had been approved. It has found that in 2014 the change that was implemented was more favourable than that initially proposed by the Department and reflected the level the school wished the numbers to be set at. It also shows that the school at that time accepted that a DP would be required for further changes.

5. The review also shows that the approach taken at Moyle PS was not unique and had been applied elsewhere; however, allowing a permanent change to be effected at this stage without a DP would not only be unique, but may also have a detrimental impact on a neighbouring controlled primary school, potentially making it unsustainable. It may also set a precedent that could be used by other schools to secure increased numbers.

6. The review finds that the Department has acted appropriately and lawfully in respect of the school's numbers and recommends that the position is held that the school engages with its planning authority to progress a DP if it wishes to secure an increased approved enrolment.

Next Steps

7. If you are content with the information contained within the review, it is recommended that officials proceed to engage with the school in light of the findings, as you had committed to when you met with the school.

8. I am happy to meet with you to discuss the review if that would be helpful.

RECOMMENDATION

9. It is recommended that you note the position in respect of the review and agree that officials engage with the school.

[redacted]
[redacted]*@education-ni.gov.uk*

Cc (by e-mail)
Mark Browne
Lianne Patterson
Linsey Farrell
John Smith
Faustina Graham
Janis Scallon
[redacted]