

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	DP 538	
School	Gaelscoil na bhFál	
Proposal	Gaelscoil na bhFál will decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.	
Permanent Secretary Decision	Approve	
Date of Decision	30 April 2018	
Permanent Secretary Comments	<p>The school is clearly sustainable when assessed against the criteria set out in the Sustainable Schools Policy. Nevertheless, in light of its trend in admission and enrolment numbers over a number of years it clearly make sense to “right size” the school, particularly against the backdrop of Area Planning considerations and the current provision of Irish Medium places in the neighbouring schools.</p> <p>Therefore I am content to accept the recommendation set out at paragraph 64 of your submission.</p>	
Additional notes		
Information redacted	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.	
	Key	Details
	■	redaction
	*	refers to less than five cases where data is considered sensitive
#	means figure has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information under rules of disclosure	

From: Dorina Edgar
Area Planning Policy & Shared Education Campuses Team

Date: 26 April 2018

To: Derek Baker
Permanent Secretary

Copy distribution below:

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 538 – GAELSCOIL NA BHFÁL

Issue: Gaelscoil na bhFál will decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Timescale: Routine.

Financial/Resource Implications: Capital – no accommodation implications.
Resource – as this proposal seeks to align approved numbers with actual and projected enrolments, there are no resource implications.

FOI Implications: The contents of this submission are likely to be fully disclosable.

Statutory Duty Implications: Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

Presentational Issues: There may be local media interest in your decision. If approached the Press Office can draw upon the content of this submission.

Recommendation: It is recommended that you:

- Approve DP 538: “Gaelscoil na bhFál will decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter”.

When a DP is approved to modify a school’s approved numbers, in line with the proposal, the revised admissions number would normally apply from the effective date noted in the DP (or as soon as possible thereafter) and it would be standard practice to then

incrementally phase-in decreases or increases to the enrolment number annually (in consultation with the school, the Education Authority, and where appropriate, CCMS) with a view to meeting the eventual final enrolment number as stipulated in the DP. In this case given the number of children currently at the school it is likely that no phasing would be required and both admissions and enrolment numbers would be set in line with the DP (if approved) from September 2018.

- Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) will be published on the Department's website once the school and the Education Authority have been informed of your decision.

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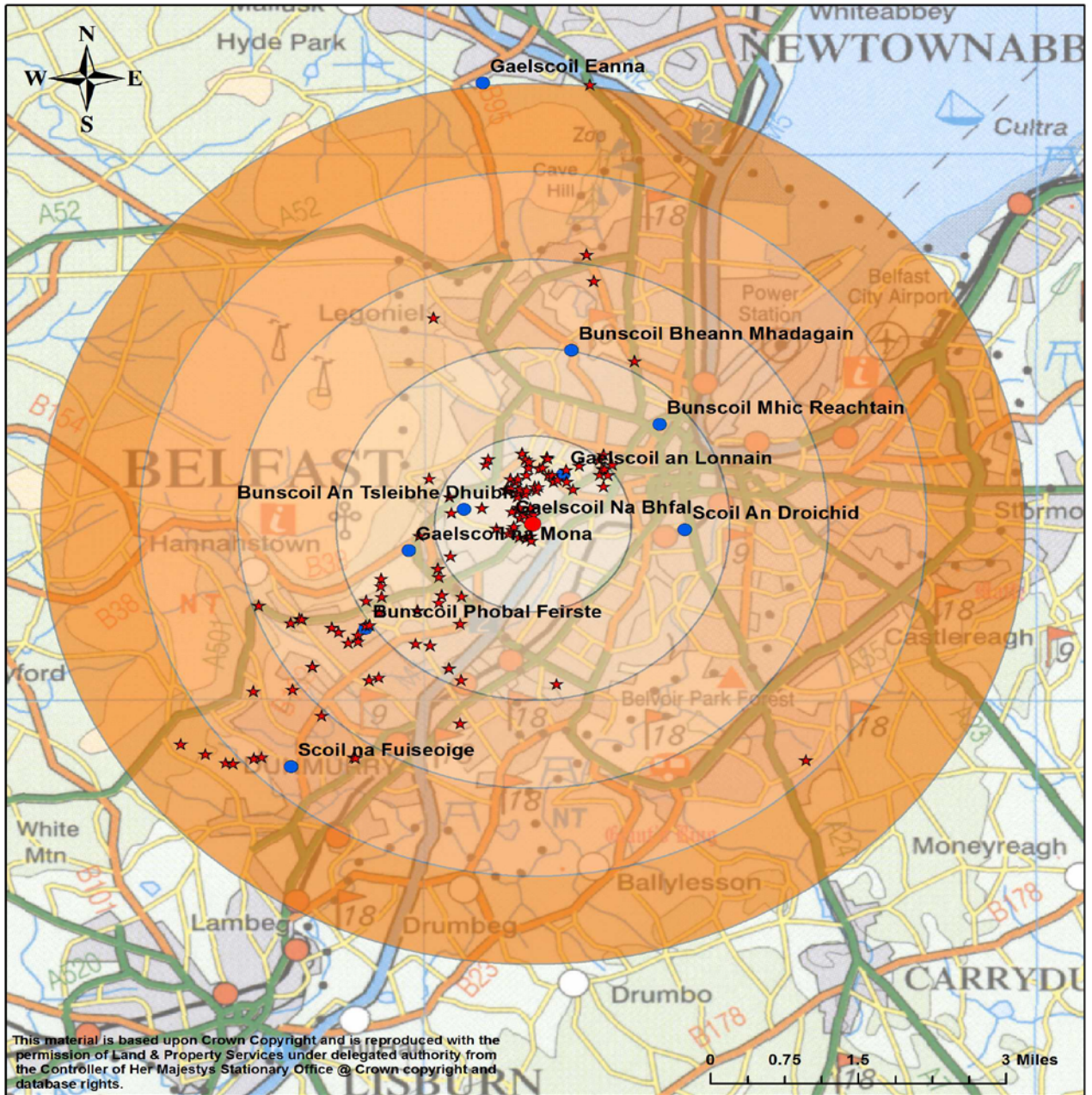
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APPENDIX D	Education & Training Inspectorate Comments
APPENDIX E	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta Comments
APPENDIX F	Annual Area Profile

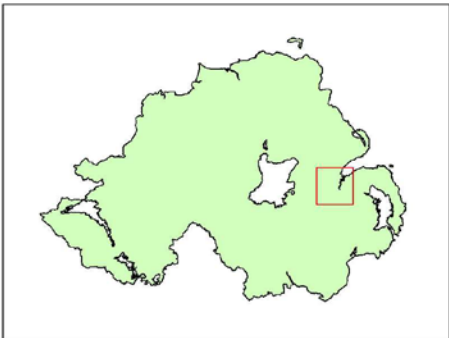
Map 1: Gaelscoil na bhFál Pupil Locations

Gaelscoil na bhFál - All IM Provision / Pupil locations (5 mile radius)



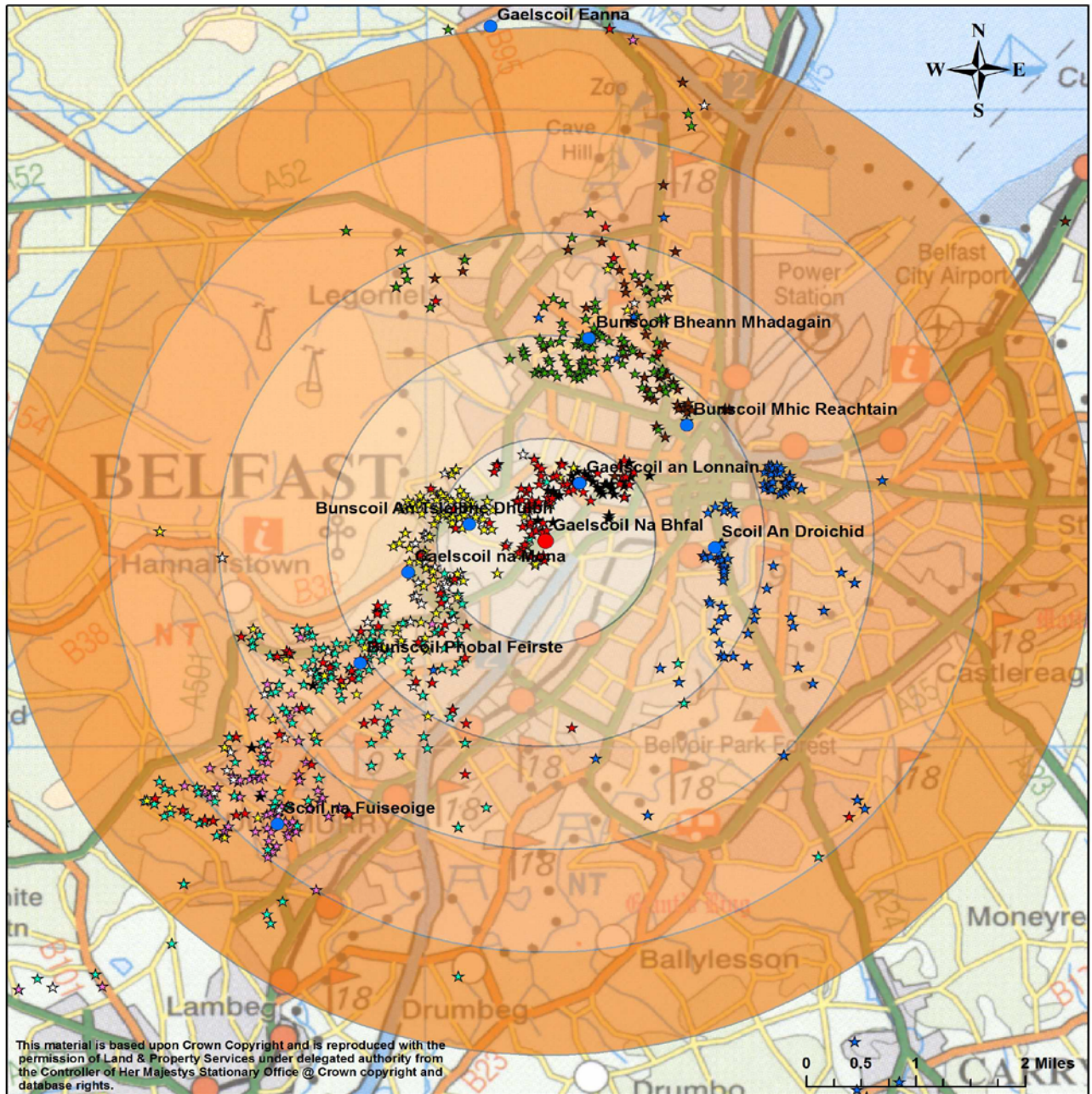
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- Gaelscoil na bhFál
 - ★ Gaelscoil na bhFál pupil locations
 - Irish Medium Primary Schools
- Buffer Distance in miles**
- ◇ 0.00 - 1.00
 - ◇ 1.00 - 2.00
 - ◇ 2.00 - 3.00
 - ◇ 3.00 - 4.00
 - ◇ 4.00 - 5.00

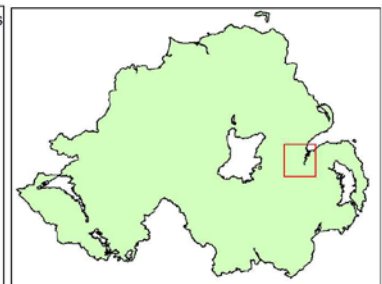


Map 2: Neighbouring IM schools and pupil locations

Gaelscoil na bhFal - IM Pupil locations (5 mile radius)

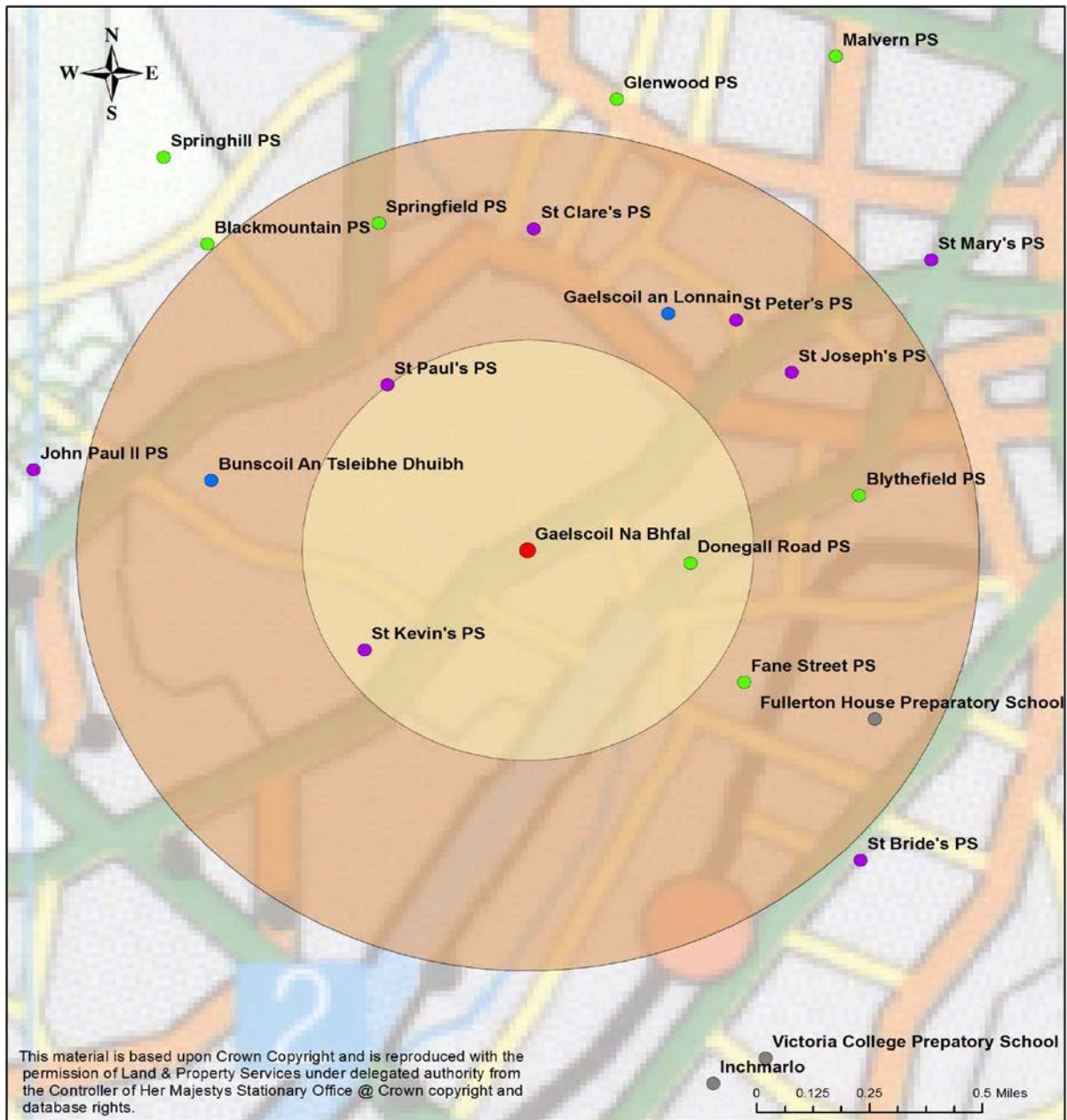


● Gaelscoil na bhFal	★ Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain pupil locations
● Irish Medium Primary Schools	★ Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain pupil locations
★ Gaelscoil na bhFal pupil locations	Buffer Distance in miles
★ Bunscoil an Tseibhe Dhuibh pupil locations	◊ 0.00 - 1.00
★ Gaelscoil an Lonnain pupil locations	◊ 1.00 - 2.00
★ Scoil an Droichid pupil locations	◊ 2.00 - 3.00
★ Gaelscoil na Mona pupil locations	◊ 3.00 - 4.00
★ Bunscoil Phobal Feirste pupil locations	◊ 4.00 - 5.00
★ Scoil na Fuisseoige pupil locations	

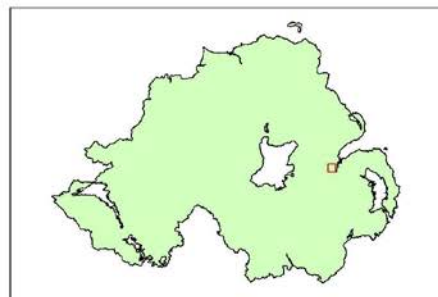


Map 3: All Provision

Gaelscoil na bhFal - All provision (1 mile radius)



- **Gaelscoil na bhFal**
- Irish Medium Primary Schools
- Catholic Maintained Primary Schools
- Controlled Primary Schools
- Controlled Integrated Primary Schools
- GMI Primary Schools
- Voluntary Primary Schools
- ◇ Buffer distance 0.5 miles
- ◇ Buffer distance 1 mile



INTRODUCTION

1. The Education Authority (EA) published Development Proposal (DP) 538 on 18 January 2018, proposing a decrease in the school's admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 (a reduction of 13) and 290 to 196 (a reduction of 94) respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. The two-month objection period ended on 20 March 2018. A copy of the published proposal is attached at Appendix A.

BACKGROUND

3. Gaelscoil na bhFál is an 'other maintained' co-educational primary school situated on Iveagh Crescent, Belfast. The School was founded in 1984.
4. In the 2017/18 school meals census 92 pupils, around 53.5%, were entitled to Free School Meals.
5. In relation to religious balance, approximately 90% are from the Roman Catholic tradition and 10% Other (or religion unknown).
6. The school was last inspected in March 2011 and overall effectiveness assessed as 'Good'. There was a more recent inspection in November 2017, however, it was affected by action short of strike, precluding any assessment of overall effectiveness.

Area Context

7. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 the Beechmount 1 area (where Gaelscoil na bhFál is located) is placed 121 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 being least deprived).
8. The location of Gaelscoil na bhFál and its catchment area is illustrated by Map 1. Map 2 illustrates neighbouring Irish Medium (IM) provision including the pupil catchment areas for each school.
9. The EA's Strategic Area Plan 2017-2010 ('Providing Pathways') was published on 28 April 2017 and includes population projections provided by the NI Statistics and Research Agency for the Belfast Local Government District (LGD). By 2024 the population in the age range 0-15 in the Belfast LGD area is projected to increase by 7.6%.

10. The Area Plan identifies a number of key emerging issues from analysis of current provision in the Belfast LGD area. Issues relevant to Gaelscoil Na bhFál are as follows:

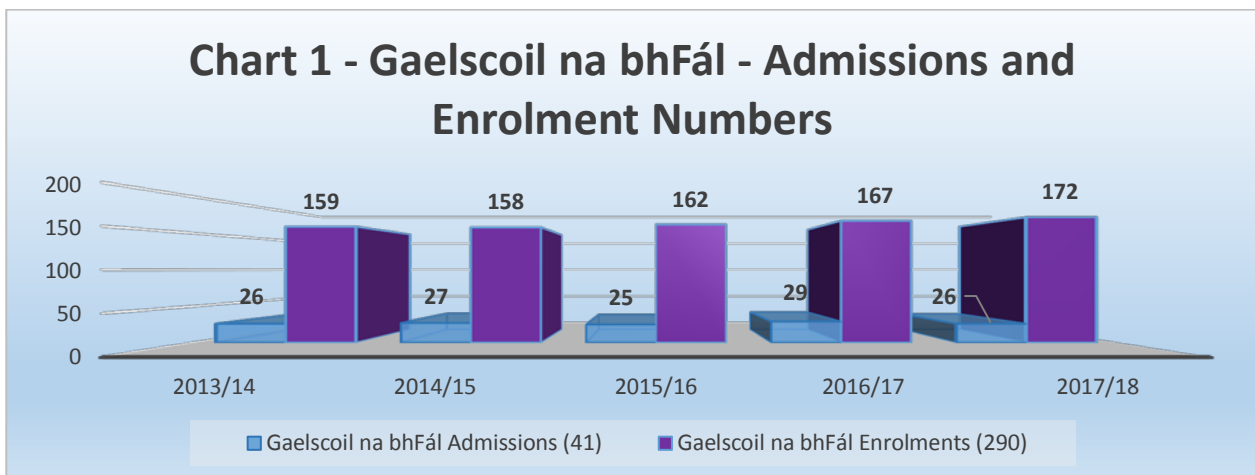
- Number of available places; and
- Potential for Irish Medium (IM) school development.

11. Gaelscoil na bhFál appeared in the EA's Annual Action Plan April 2017- March 2018 with an action attributed to the school's Board of Governors (BoG), requiring consultation on a decrease in enrolment numbers by March 2018.

Admissions and Enrolment Trends

12. Gaelscoil na bhFál's approved admissions and enrolment numbers are 41 and 290 respectively. There were 172 pupils enrolled at the school including 26 Year 1 (Y1) pupils and five pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The school exceeds the Sustainable Schools Policy¹ (SSP) recommended minimum enrolment of 140 pupils for a sustainable urban primary school (excluding SEN pupils).

13. Chart 1 confirms that over the past five years, admissions and enrolments have remained relatively steady with a small growth in enrolments over the past three years. The chart illustrates that the school is significantly below its approved enrolment number of 290.



Note: Admissions and enrolment figures include pupils with statements of SEN.

Source: Annual School Census

14. The EA has confirmed 24 first preference applications were received for 2018/19 with no further preferences received, however, final verified figures will not be available until after the conclusion of the admissions process.

¹ Sustainable enrolment thresholds are identified as 105 for a rural primary school and 140 for an urban primary school, geographically referenced under the SSP (2009) to the former Belfast and Derry City Council areas.

15. Table 1, colour coded for effect, highlights historical admissions and enrolments over the past five years at Gaelscoil na bhFál and neighbouring IM provision within a five mile radius by road. The last column in the table shows the total number of pupils in years 1-7 when pupils with statements of SEN are excluded.

Under approved admissions number		Over approved admissions number		Aligns with approved admissions number
Under approved enrolment number		Over approved enrolment number		2017/18 SEN

Table 1	Distance from Gaelscoil na bhFál (as per Google Maps)	APPROVED NUMBERS 2017/18		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		TOTAL ENROL EXCL SEN	
		ADM	ENROL	Y1	Total	Y1	Total	Y1	Total	Y1	Total	Y1	Total	2017/18 SEN	Enr 17/18 ex SEN
Gaelscoil na bhFál		41	290	26	159	27	158	25	162	29	167	26	172	5	167
Gaelscoil an Lonnain	0.7	20	71	13	49	10	51	11	54	11	60	9	62	*	#
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	1.1	29	203	28	153	28	157	22	159	29	162	28	174	9	165
Scoil an Droichid	2	21	145	24	131	23	125	22	128	23	137	28	147	8	139
Gaelscoil na Mona	2	21	145	21	94	16	93	18	102	15	101	16	107	*	#
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	2.2	20	87	10	61	18	82	15	84	18	92	17	99	*	#
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadigáin	2.6	21	145	21	108	19	116	24	125	28	129	27	138	*	#
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	3	58	406	43	242	44	255	45	263	57	287	51	303	7	296
Scoil na Fuiseoige	5.3	26	145	23	115	18	125	22	127	27	132	21	141	*	#
TOTALS		257	1637	209	1112	203	1162	204	1204	237	1267	223	1343	#	#

Source: Annual School Census

Figures include pupils with SEN except where indicated

16. Table 1 provides evidence of:

- Historic over-supply of IM provision in the area, in both admissions and enrolments; and
- A pattern of increasing IM enrolments in the area.

Gaelscoil na bhFál Nursery Enrolment

17. Table 2 records admissions to Gaelscoil na bhFál's nursery unit (26 full-time places available) over the last five years. In four out of the past five years the nursery has exceeded its approved intake highlighting parental demand for this nursery unit. In 2016/17 the nursery had Temporary Flexibility requests approved for two admissions. The nursery unit consistently fills all of the 26 pre-school places available, however, in 2017/18 there was one underage child enrolled.
18. The Case for Change (CfC) states that applications for the nursery unit come from parents who wish to avail of IM education for their children and whose children already attend pre-preschool facilities in the adjacent Ionad Uibh Eachach. The trend carries forward to Y1 applications where the same cohort of interested parents take the next step in their children's pathway through IM education.

Table 2 – Gaelscoil na bhFál	Approved Intake	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Nursery pupils	26	28	27	29	27	25

Source: The EA. Figures shown are recorded at the conclusion of the admissions process.

	<i>Above approved intake</i>
	<i>Below approved intake</i>

Alternative schools in the area

19. Table 3 provides a snapshot of alternative primary provision in the area within a five mile mapping radius for IM provision, and a one mile mapping radius for other provision. Distances by road may vary from the mapping radius.

Alternative Irish Medium Provision

20. As illustrated by Table 3, there are eight alternative IM schools within five miles of Gaelscoil na bhFál, and Map 2 illustrates the extent of overlap in pupil catchment areas. In 2017/18 there were 1,343 pupils enrolled across these schools, with 346 available places.

Other Alternative Provision

21. As illustrated by Table 3, there are five alternative Catholic Maintained schools. In 2017/18 there were 1,929 pupils enrolled across these schools, with 622 available places. There are four alternative Controlled schools. In 2017/18 there were 786 pupils enrolled across these schools, with 737 available places. There are no alternative integrated primary schools in the immediate area.

TABLE 3 School Name & DE Ref No.	Postcode / Distance (google maps, miles)	Appr'd Enrol 2017/18	DP's Approved - Final Numbers	2015/16 Enrol	2016/17 Enrol	2017/18 Enrol	2017/18 SEN Stage 5 Pupils	2017/18 Available Places	Appr'd Adm 2017/18	2017/18 Total 1 st Pref Applics.	2017/18 Final Y1 Applics. Accepted	2017/18 Over / Under Subscribed Y1 Pref. Applics	2017/18 Actual Y1 Admissions	ETI Report Date / Overall Effectiveness
Gaelscoil na Bhfal 104-6571	BT12 6AW -	290		162	167	172	5	123	41	27	27	U	26	March 2011 - Good. Nov 2017 - ASOS
Irish Medium														
Gaelscoil an Lonnain 104-6672	BT12 4PD 1	71		54	60	62	#	11	20	9	9	U	9	March 2017 - To address important areas for improvement
Bunscoil an Tsleibhe Dhuibh - 104-6593	BT12 7JL 1.2	203		159	162	174	9	38	29	28	28	U	28	Feb 2016 - Demonstrates a high level of capacity for sustained improvement
Scoil an Droichid 104-6641 (MCIT) *	BT7 2EP 2	145	203 29	128	137	147	8	6	21	28	28	O	28	June 2015 - Good
Gaelscoil na Mona 104-6671	BT11 8QB 2.1	145		102	101	107	#	41	21	15	15	U	16	June 2011 - Good Jan 2017 - ASOS
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain 101-6647	BT15 1EZ 2.8	87		84	92	99	#	0	20	16	17	U	17	June 2013 - Good
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste 104-6501	BT11 9QS 2.8	406		263	287	303	7	110	58	50	50	U	51	Oct 2012 - Outstanding
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain - 104-6596 ** DP Nov 2017	BT14 6HP 2.9	145		125	129	138	*	9	21	29	23	O	27	Oct 2016 - To address important areas for improvement
Scoil na Fuiseoige 404-6600 ***DP 267	BT17 0DF 5.3	145	182 26	127	132	141	*	8	26	20	20	U	21	June 2014 - Outstanding June 2017 - ASOS
Sub-total		1637		1204	1267	1343	#	346	257	222	217		223	
Maintained														
St Kevin's PS 103-6565	BT12 6EN 0.7	610		564	579	595	11	26	87	86	86	U	83	Feb 2015 - Very Good.
St Paul's PS 103-6624	BT12 7NN 1	416		264	290	338	5	83	59	39	40	U	48	Feb 2017 - Demonstrates a high level of capacity for sustained improvement
St Peter's PS 103-6620	BT12 4JD 1.2	547		307	325	332	11	226	78	42	43	U	46	March 2015 - Good
St Joseph's PS 103-6621	BT12 4LD 1.3	340		217	228	262	15	93	49	43	43	U	46	March 2013 - Very Good
St Clare's PS 103-6630	BT13 2SE 1.5	581		433	418	402	15	194	83	53	53	U	52	May 2016 - To address important areas for improvement. Dec 2017 - ASOS
Sub-total		2494		1785	1840	1929	57	622	356	263	265		275	

TABLE 3 contd. School Name & DE Ref No.	Postcode / Distance / (google maps, miles)	Appr'd Enrol 2017/18	DP's Approved - Final Numbers	2015/16 Enrol*	2016/17 Enrol*	2017/18 Enrol*	2017/18 SEN Stage 5 Pupils	2017/18 Available Places	Appr'd Adm 2017/18	2017/18 Total 1 st Pref Applics.	2017/18 Final Y1 Applics. Accepted	2017/18 Over / Under Subscribed Y1 Pref. Applics	2017/18 Actual Y1 Admissions	ETI Report Date / Overall Effectiveness
Controlled														
Donegall Rd PS 101-6060	BT12 6HE 0.5	316		225	252	256	11	71	45	28	28	U	27	June 2017 - Demonstrates the capacity to identify & bring about improvement
Blythefield PS 101-6207	BT12 5HX 1.2	513		90	103	116	6	403	73	25	28	U	28	Feb 2017 - Demonstrates the capacity to identify & bring about improvement
Fane St PS 101-6205	BT9 7BW 1.4	495		200	210	235	#	262	71	22	23	U	30	May 2017 - Demonstrates the capacity to identify & bring about improvement
Springfield PS 101-0221	BT12 7DJ 1.6	172		174	175	179	8	1	25	29	25	O	25	Nov 2014 – Very good
Sub-total		1496		689	740	786	#	737	214	104	104		110	
Grand Totals		5627		3678	3847	4058	#	1705	827	589	586		608	

* Scoil an Droichid - Major Capital project - business case approved for a new 7 class-base school (enrolment & admissions numbers of 203/29)

** DP 538 - Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain – DP approved 15.03.2018 to increase the approved numbers from 145/21 to 182/26, from September 2018, or asap thereafter.

*** DP 267 - Scoil na Fuisseoige - DP approved 27.8.2015 to increase the approved numbers from 145/21 to 182/26, from 31 August 2016, or asap thereafter.

Note: ASOS = Action Short of Strike, indicating that ETI assessment was constrained where this appears within the table.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Duty to Encourage and Facilitate IM Education

22. There is a statutory duty on the Department under Article 89(1) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium education.
23. Further to the Article 89 duty, a 2011 Judicial Review decision determined that the Department may facilitate and encourage the development of the IM sector in ways that it need not for other sectors, by taking positive steps or removing obstacles which inhibit the statutory objective.
24. The Article 89 statutory duty does not equate to a duty to grant every proposal brought forward on behalf of an IM school, however it must be considered alongside the Department's duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 whereby pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, and under Managing Public Money to ensure effective and efficient use of public funds.

CASE FOR CHANGE

25. The supporting CfC for Gaelscoil na bhFál is reproduced in full at Appendix B, and includes the following assertions:
 - The school has averaged a total enrolment of 161.5 pupils over the past four years (excluding nursery), and therefore a total admissions number of 290 is no longer relevant;
 - Reducing the enrolment number to 196 would reduce the number of unfilled places in the IM sector;
 - Gaelscoil na bhFál has a nursery unit offering 26 full-time places, which it consistently fills;
 - Applications to the nursery unit demonstrate a clear and consistent trend, which carries forward to Y1 applications;
 - This proposal will ensure a single stream entry to the school and prevent any future composite classes;
 - A higher admissions number [i.e. set at the current level] may impact at Y1 where additional pupils enrolled may not have had IM pre-school experience, and as a result would be a major challenge in relation to the lack of Irish language skills of these pupils in comparison to their peers; and
 - There would be minimal impact on the school's budget.

EA Comments

26. The EA supports this proposal, commenting that the school has had a consistent pupil enrolment in recent years and if approved, the proposal would address the anomaly which currently exists between the school's enrolment and admissions numbers. EA comments are reproduced in full within the CfC at Appendix B.

STATUTORY DP PROCESSES

Pre-publication consultation

Board of Governors

27. The CfC confirms that the school carried out a consultation exercise with parents, staff and governors. It is reported that those stakeholders who responded to the questionnaires circulated indicated they were supportive of the proposal.

Education Authority

28. The EA wrote to 187 schools considered likely to be affected by this proposal inviting views. No responses were received. EA evidence of consultation is reproduced within the CfC at Appendix B.
29. Correspondence was received from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) expressing support for the proposal, indicating that it is consistent with CnaG's IM Strategic Development Plan. Sectoral plans must in turn inform the EA's Area Plan, with CnaG represented at all levels of the planning structures that determine its content.

Two month statutory objection period

30. During the two month objection period from 18 January 2018 to 20 March 2018, the Department received one letter of support from CnaG which is reproduced in full at Appendix E. No letters of objection were received.
31. CnaG comment that the proposed reduction is consistent with historic enrolments at the school over the last five years. It is asserted that approval of DP 538 would see a 30% reduction in unfilled places in the Primary IM cluster and would enhance the school's ability to plan ahead and consolidate the quality of education provided.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

32. The Department's SSP sets out six criteria which provide the framework for considering a school's long-term sustainability. The primary objective of this policy is to ensure that all children and young people receive a high quality education in schools that are educationally and financially viable in the longer term.

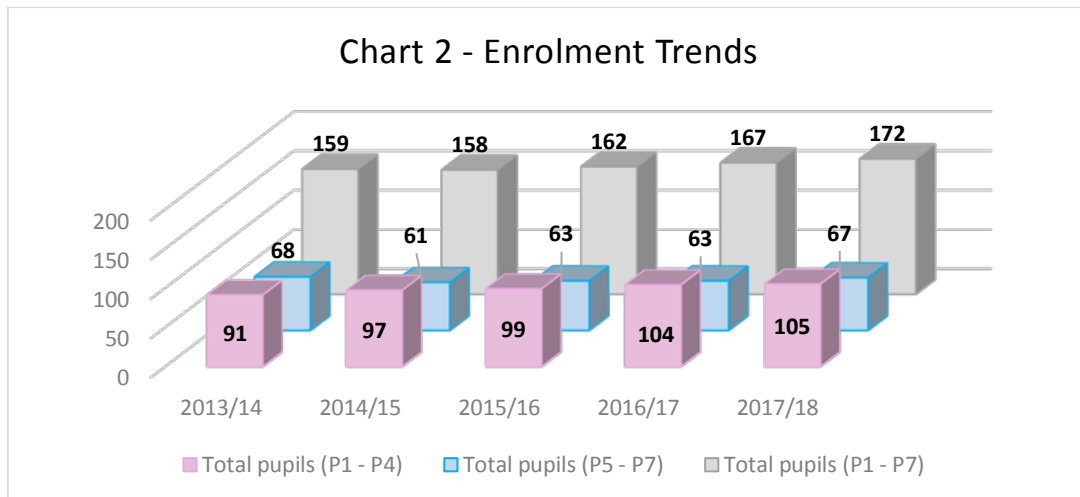
33. An assessment of Gaelscoil na bhFál against the six SSP criteria and their associated indicators is set out below.
34. Action short of strike impacted on the most recent Education & Training Inspectorate ETI inspection evidence (2017), so the following includes references to earlier (2011) inspection evidence. ETI comments are reproduced in full at Appendix D.

Criterion 1: Quality Education Experience

35. The 2011 ETI inspection focused on the quality of the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy; the quality of provision for learning; and the quality of leadership and management. In addition, the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning; and the school's arrangements for pastoral care were evaluated.
36. In the areas inspected (which included the school's Nursery Unit), the quality of education provided by this school was assessed as '*good*', identifying strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection identified areas for improvement which the school demonstrated the capacity to address.
37. In 2017/18 Gaelscoil na bhFál had five pupils with SEN enrolled. ETI evidence (2011) assessed provision for such pupils as '*good*'.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

38. Gaelscoil na bhFál has an admissions number of 41 and enrolment number of 290. As evidenced by Chart 1, over the five year period 2013/14 to 2017/18 the school has had an average intake of 27 pupils to Year 1, and an average overall enrolment of 164 pupils.
39. Chart 2 illustrates that the balance between the school's Year 1-4 enrolment and Year 5-7 enrolment has remained stable across a five year period, with higher numbers evident at Years 1-4, and incremental growth.



Source: Figures shown are recorded as per the annual Census return

Projected Intake and Enrolment

40. Table 4, extracted from the CfC, projects an intake and enrolment consistent with the proposed admissions (28) and enrolment (196) numbers.

Projected Enrolment - Gaelscoil na bhFál								Table 4
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2018/19	27	27	29	24	26	25	23	181
2019/20	27	27	27	29	24	26	25	185
2020/21	27	27	27	27	29	24	26	187

Temporary Variations

41. If a school receives more applications for admission than it has places available it can request a Temporary Variation (TV) of its admissions and/or enrolment number from the Department. The Department may approve TVs to a school's numbers to respond to particular demographic pressures in an area in a particular year. Over the last five years Gaelscoil na bhFál has not requested any TVs.

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

42. At 31 March 2017 Gaelscoil na bhFál held a cumulative closing surplus of £91,177. The EA's 2017-18 accounts have not been finalised and this figure is subject to change.
43. Gaelscoil na bhFál has consistently recorded a closing budget surplus as evidenced by the Annual Area Profile (Appendix F).

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

44. ETI evidence (2011) assessed the overall quality of leadership and management as ‘*satisfactory*’. However, in the most recent ETI report (2017) the evidence states that ‘*The governors are highly committed to the work and life of the school and they play a pro-active role in the school improvement process. They have supported and challenged effectively the recently appointed principal in the restructuring of the school’s leadership teams*’. The report further highlights that roles and responsibilities throughout the school have been clearly defined with an emphasis on building the capacity of leadership at all levels.

Criterion 5: Accessibility

45. The CfC supporting this DP states that the school is readily accessible to families in West Belfast where the school is situated, specifically those in the Iveagh, Lower Springfield Road, St James’s and Falls Road areas. Map 1 illustrates the proximity of pupil locations to Gaelscoil na bhFál highlighting a wide pupil catchment area.

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

46. ETI evidence (2011) states that the school has developed many effective links with the parents and staff communicate using an appropriate range of written information and meetings. Parents are informed of their children’s progress through parent teacher meetings and annual progress reports and they are encouraged to contribute to the school and support their children’s learning. The school has developed effective links with a number of the local primary and post-primary schools to develop further the children’s experiences in drama and sport and has strong links with Ionad Uíbh Eachach, the neighbouring family centre.
47. The CfC states that there are very strong links established with Ionad Uíbh Eachach which offers a range of parent and child support services. Ionad Uíbh Eachach also run Irish classes for parents and members of the community.
48. The CfC further highlights that the school works closely with other schools, and also organises various activities for parents and children within the local community’s amenities, for example:
- breakfast mornings in An Cultúrlann;
 - Gaelic football tournament for IM schools;
 - a drama festival which is part of an All-Ireland competition;
 - outdoor education initiative in conjunction with Belfast City Council; and
 - attendance at a local Irish-medium youth club by school pupils.

Summary of Sustainability Assessment

49. The school currently exceeds the recommended minimum enrolment for a sustainable urban primary school. The trend in school enrolments is upwards and that is projected to continue.
50. There are no significant concerns about the quality of education provided and the school's budgetary position is sound. School leadership and management is considered to be satisfactory, there are no accessibility issues and there is clear evidence of strong links between the school and the local community.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Statutory Duty to IM Education

51. Due regard has been given to the statutory duty within an area planning context, ensuring that Gaelscoil na bhFál itself is sustainable, and that there is a balancing of supply and demand for sustainable IM provision in the area that allows for further growth, consistent with the duty. A pattern of increasing IM enrolments is evident, although Table 3 also provides evidence that there is over-supply of IM provision at present, which this proposal seeks to address in part.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Supply and Demand for IM Places

52. Table 5 shows Y1 applications to Gaelscoil na bhFál and neighbouring IM schools within a five mile radius (as the crow flies) from 2013/14 to 2017/18.

School Name & Ref.	Approved Admissions Number	TABLE 5										
		1st Preference Applications					Applications Accepted					
		2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Gaelscoil na bhFál	41	27	27	25	28	27	27	27	25	28	27	
Gaelscoil an Lonnáin	20	13	12	11	11	9	13	12	11	12	9	
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	29	27	26	23	31	28	27	26	23	29	28	
Scoil an Droichid	21	25	23	24	22	28	26*	23*	24*	22	28*	
Gaelscoil na Móna	21	23	17	18	14	15	23	17	18	15	15	
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	21	23	20	26	35	29	23	20	26**	28**	23**	
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	20	11	15	15	17	16	11	15	15	19	17	
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	58	43	43	46	53	50	45	43	46	53	50	
Scoil na Fuiseoige	26	25	16	23	26	19	23	16	23	26	19	
Totals	257	217	199	211	237	221	218	199	211	232	216	

Source: The EA. Figures shown are recorded at the conclusion of the admissions process.

* Scoil an Droichid granted TVs for additional pupils admitted

** Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin granted TVs for additional pupils admitted. A permanent increase in the school's admissions and enrolment numbers arises from approval of DP 537 in March 2018.

	<i>Above approved admissions number</i>
	<i>Below approved admissions number</i>
	<i>Aligns with approved admissions number</i>

53. Table 5 provides evidence that:

- The majority of admissions to IM primary schools in the area are undersubscribed at first preference stage and also for total applications accepted; and
- There are 257 Year 1 places available across the nine IM schools listed, and at no time have all of those places been required, indicating that there is excess capacity at an area level, which this proposal seeks to address in part.

Impact on other Primary School provision

54. The CfC specifies that no objections were received by neighbouring Irish and English medium schools during statutory pre-publication consultation. There were also no objections received by the Department during the two month statutory period following publication. The absence of objections suggests that there would be little or no impact on neighbouring schools.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Finance

55. The CfC states that the school has had a budget surplus over a number of years due to a combination of factors, however it is mainly due to the experience profile within the school. There are a significant amount of teachers in the early years of their career, however as they gain experience, the pattern of expenditure will change. It is estimated that the school's budget surplus will be within the required 5+% tolerance within the next financial year.
56. As this proposal is a downwards adjustment to the school's approved admissions and enrolment numbers, more closely reflecting actual admissions and enrolment, there should be no impact on the Aggregated Schools Budget.

Accommodation

57. The CfC highlights that currently Gaelscoil na bhFál is located in a purpose built brick building comprising of seven primary classrooms, a nursery area, a Special Educational Needs classroom, a library, a parents' room, a canteen, a P.E Hall, three shared spaces, and administrative area and a Principal's office. There are no accommodation implications arising from this proposal.

Staffing

58. There are no staffing implications arising from this proposal.

CONCLUSION

59. A central aim of area planning is to achieve a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place and have a focus on raising standards.
60. Gaelscoil na bhFál is located in an area where there is currently an excess supply of IM provision. The proposed decrease in the school's approved numbers will

effectively 'right-size' the school, addressing in part the issue of excess supply while still allowing some room for growth as projected in the CfC.

61. The school's nursery unit generally fills to its upper limit of 26 places, providing a sustainable Y1 intake for Gaelscoil na bhFál.
62. The CfC explains that the current admissions number of 41 has a potential downside if pupils enrolled have not had the benefit of a pre-school IM experience, presenting a challenge to both teaching staff and pupils who have embarked upon the immersion journey. Approval of this proposal would ensure continuity of a single stream entry into the school, and remove any risk of future composite classes, ensuring the best possible conditions for effective teaching and learning.
63. Overall this proposal presents a pragmatic sectoral planning response to over-supply of IM provision in the area, in line with the Area Plan, while not constraining growth at Gaelscoil na bhFál in keeping with the statutory duty. Colleagues in the Department's Irish Medium and Integrated Education Team are "satisfied the statutory duty has been appropriately considered."

RECOMMENDATION

64. It is recommended that you:

- Approve DP 538: "Gaelscoil na bhFál will decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter".

When a DP is approved to modify a school's approved numbers, in line with the proposal, the revised admissions number would normally apply from the effective date noted in the DP (or as soon as possible thereafter) and it would be standard practice to then incrementally phase-in decreases or increases to the enrolment number annually (in consultation with the school, the Education Authority, and where appropriate, CCMS) with a view to meeting the eventual final enrolment number as stipulated in the DP. In this case given the number of children currently at the school it is likely that no phasing would be required and both admissions and enrolment numbers would be set in line with the DP (if approved) from September 2018.

- Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) will be published on the Department's website once the school and the EA have been informed of your decision.

Donna Edgar

DORINA EDGAR

☎ 59593

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cc: *(by email)*

Fiona Hepper

Tommy O'Reilly

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Bill Stevenson

Scott Harbinson

Clare Baxter

APPT Correspondence

Press Office

EDUCATION AUTHORITY
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 538
GAELSCOIL na bhFÁL

Notice is hereby given that a Proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 has been submitted to the Education Authority by the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na bhFál, to the effect that:

Gaelscoil na bhFál will decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.

A copy of the Proposal and Case for Change may be inspected at the offices of the Education Authority, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ between the hours of 8.30 am and 4.45 pm and www.eani.org.uk (Schools).

Any objections or support to this Proposal should be lodged with the Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 7PR or emailed to dps@education-ni.gov.uk within two months of the date of publication of this notice. Any letters of objection or support may be published on the Department of Education's website, with appropriate redactions, if they are included in full in the submission on which the outcome of the proposal is decided.

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


Gavin Boyd
Chief Executive

CASE FOR CHANGE – Supporting Information

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

AREA PLANNING DISTRICT	Belfast Region, Education Authority
DP NUMBER	DP 538
PROPOSER	Róisín Brady-Moyes Chair of BOG c/o Gaelscoil na bhFál 34a Iveagh Crescent Belfast BT12 6AW (028)90236877 Email: roisin_brady_moyes@yahoo.co.uk
SCHOOL(S) NAME	Gaelscoil na bhFál
SCHOOL REFERENCE	104-6571
TYPE	Primary
MANAGEMENT	Irish-medium
DP PUBLICATION DATE	Week commencing 15 January 2018
PROPOSAL	The Board of Governors of GAELSCOIL na bhFÁL proposes to decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.


STATUTORY CONSULTATION


<p>PROPOSER</p>	<p>The Board of Governors discussed the case for change at their meetings held on 21/02/17 and 25/04/17. They were consulted on the final draft of the development proposal on 15/09/17 via email to show the change in format after the letter from DENI. All Governors were in agreement regarding the proposal.</p> <p>The staff of Gaelscoil na bhFál were consulted on the development proposal initially on 07/03/17. The staff discussed the final draft proposal on 25/09/17 and were given a questionnaire. (Appendix B) All members of staff fully support the development proposal.</p> <p>The parents of Gaelscoil na bhFál were sent a questionnaire on 25/09/17. (Appendix C) Only a small number of questionnaires were returned but all supported the development proposal.</p> <p>Local schools including both Irish and English medium schools were informed of the development proposal on 25/09/17. (Appendix D) As yet there has been no response from these schools.</p> <p>As there has been no opposition to the proposal as it currently stands, the Board of Governors will proceed forward with the proposal as it currently stands.</p>
<p>CONFIRMATION BY THE PROPOSER</p>	<p>I confirm that the school, Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of Pupils were consulted on and Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out.</p> <p>NAME: Roisin Brady-Moyes OFFICE HELD: Chair-person of Bog</p> <p>SIGNED  DATE 2/10/17</p>

ASSOCIATED PROPOSALS

None

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<p>THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY</p>	<p>I confirm that the schools which the EA consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 10 October 2017.</p> <p>NAME: John Collings</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 11.1.18</p>
<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> <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> <p><u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u></p>	<p>Any schools that may be impacted by the proposal were asked for their views. This consultation took place from 10 October 2017 and ended on 14 November 2017. A total of 187 schools - 157 in the Belfast District Council area, 25 in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Council area and 5 in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area. No responses were received.</p> <p>Correspondence has been received from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in support of the development proposal which indicated that the proposal was consistent with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's Irish Medium Strategic Development Plan. The proposal is in line with the school's approved admissions number of 28 and consistent with the historic P1-P7 enrolment over the last 5 years. The present approved enrolment number is substantially higher than the actual enrolment and means that the school could be open to a potential major influx of pupils across multiple year groups which could have a detrimental impact on the school. The proposal would also reduce</p>

	<p>the number of available places in the primary Irish medium cluster of schools and allow the school to plan for its future as a seven class base school.</p> <p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Committee at its meeting on 11 January 2018.</p>
<p>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS 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> <p>NAME: John Collings</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 11.1.18</p>	<p>The Education Authority undertook formal written consultation with schools that may be affected by the proposal. This consultation phase closed on the 14 November 2017.</p> <p>Within the current Action Plan 2017/18, the Board of Governors indicated that they would consult on a proposal to decrease the school's approved enrolment number.</p> <p>The proposal brought forward is an outworking of the current Action Plan.</p> <p>In accordance with the Education Orders, the Education Authority would have no objection to the proposal and supports the rationale for the development proposal. The school has had a consistent total pupil enrolment number in recent years and the proposal would address the anomaly which currently exists between the school's enrolment and admissions numbers.</p>

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR **Gaelscoil na bhFál**

BACKGROUND

Brief Description of the School

Gaelscoil na bhFál, is an Irish-medium primary school, situated off the Falls Road in Ceathrú na Gaeltachta, the Gaeltacht quarter. Most of the children come from homes where English is the first/home language and therefore experience the curriculum through a programme of immersion pedagogy and practice. It is a non-denominational school that is open to all children irrespective of their religious, cultural, social or political backgrounds. It has an enrolment of over 190 pupils across the primary school and attached nursery unit. Gaelscoil na bhFál is an integral part of the Irish Language community in the area, with the adjacent Ionad Uíbh Eachach offering a range of parent and child support services. Ionad Uíbh Eachach also supports families who are considering Irish-Medium education for their children or families who currently send their children to Gaelscoil na bhFál.

Location including any relocation details

Gaelscoil na bhFál is located at 34a Iveagh Crescent, Belfast, BT12 6AW in a purpose-built permanent brick-build. This proposal does not include any need for relocation.

Supporting Statistics

School Enrolment

Table A illustrates the current and historical enrolments at Gaelscoil na bhFál. Again, it should be noted that the nursery unit which occupies space within the existing school building are not included in the overall enrolment number. To that end, the figures in italics show how the nursery unit, if included, have affected the actual enrolment and unfilled places.

With an average enrolment of 161.5 pupils (excluding nursery) over the previous four academic years, it is clear that an Approved Enrolment number of 290 is no longer appropriate for the school.

Current and Historical Enrolment at Gaelscoil na bhFál			
Year	Approved Enrolment	Actual Enrolment	Unfilled Places
2013-14	290	159 (<i>187</i>)	131 (<i>103</i>)
2014-15	290	158 (<i>185</i>)	132 (<i>105</i>)
2015-16	290	162 (<i>191</i>)	128 (<i>99</i>)
2016-17	290	167 (<i>194</i>)	123 (<i>96</i>)

Whereas, if the Approved Enrolment was 196, the number of unfilled places would have been greatly reduced, resulting in an enrolment more appropriate to potential capacity. (Table A1)

Current and Historical Enrolment at Gaelscoil na bhFál

Year	Approved Enrolment	Actual Enrolment	Unfilled Places
2013-14	196	159 (187)	37 (9)
2014-15	196	158 (185)	38 (11)
2015-16	196	162 (191)	34 (5)
2016-17	196	167 (194)	29 (1)

School Admissions

Table B illustrates admissions for Gaelscoil na bhFál over a four-year period. The table shows that no temporary variations (TV) have been required in this period. Indeed, the average actual admissions at Gaelscoil na bhFál has been 27 pupils per annum.

Table B				
Current and Historical Admissions at Gaelscoil na bhFál				
Year	Total Preferences Considered	Admitted	Approved Admission Number	Temporary Variation Approved (i.e. for one year only)
2013-14	26	26	28	No
2014-15	27	27	28	No
2015-16	24	24	41*	No
2016-17	28	28	28	No

*Admissions Number was changed by DE without consultation and subsequently reduced to previously established level by DE for current academic year of 2016/17 and again in 2017/18.

Alternative Schools

With regards to the potential impact upon the alternative IM schools in the area, the current enrolment trends at Gaelscoil na bhFál's (See Table A) clearly demonstrate Gaelscoil na bhFál's capacity to operate within an Approved Enrolment of 196 pupils excluding the nursery unit enrolment of 26. As Table C shows, the vast majority of pupils applying for places at IM Primary Schools are being catered for, with 0.94% not availing of a place in the sector.

Table C				
2016/17 Local Irish-medium Primary 1 Provision				
School Name	Approved Admission	1 st Preferences	Total Preferences	Actual Admission
Gaelscoil na bhFál	28	28	28	28
Gaelscoil an Lonnáin	20	11	11	11
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	58	53	56	56
Gaelscoil na Móna	21	14	15	15
Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh	29	31	29	29
Scoil an Droichid	21	22	22	22
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	21	35	35	28
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	20	17	20	20
Total	218	211	216	209

Current accommodation/site

Gaelscoil na bhFál is currently located in a purpose-built brick building comprising of 7 Primary classrooms, a nursery area (incorporating 2 classrooms which optimizes the quality of early immersion pedagogy and practice), a Special Educational Needs classroom, a library, a parents' room, a canteen, a P.E. hall, 3 shared spaces, an administrative area and a Principal's office.

Current Capital Proposals/Minor Works Applications

None

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

Compliance with 'SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE: A POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS'

Quality Educational Experience

At the time of the last inspection (2011) ETI reported 'In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision.' It was also stated that the school 'had the capacity to address' any further improvements in provision.

Stable Enrolment Trends

The Nursery Unit in the school has 26 full-time nursery places which it consistently fills. With few exceptions, the cohort of nursery children progress on to Primary One in the school. The average admissions at Primary One over the past 4 years has been 27 pupils and the total enrolment, at 167 (Primary 1 – 7) sits comfortably above the urban threshold of 140. The enrolment remains steady and has grown from 159 in 2013/14 with an anticipated enrolment of 187 pupils in 2020/21(See Table E).

Sound Financial Position

Budget Spending for Gaelscoil na bhFál					Table D
Year	Total Resources (including previous year's carryover)	Total Net Expenditure	Carryover	% Carryover of Total Resources	
2015-16	£830,437	£699,045	£131,392	15%	
2016-17	£782,927	£691,750	£91,177	11%	

The school has had an underspend over a number of years. A combination of factors contributes to this but, most specifically, because of the experience profile within the school consisting of a significant number of teachers in the early years of their professional careers. Obviously, as teachers gain experience, the pattern of expenditure changes. It is estimated that the school's surplus will be at the recommended 5+% within the next financial year.

Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principals

The Board of Governors operate under the terms of the Education Authority's Scheme of Management. The Board of Governors is the Employing Authority for all teaching staff in the school. The Board of Governors also have responsibility for the Nursery Unit within the school. The current Principal was appointed in June 2017, after assuming the role of Acting

Principal in September 2016. The Principal had previously fulfilled the role of Vice-Principal of the school for 5 years.

Whilst the school was founded in 1987, funding did not come from DENI until 1992. The previous Principal was in place a few years after the school was founded and led the school very successfully until 2016.

There are Senior and Middle Leadership Teams in place and they meet regularly to monitor, evaluate and review the standards of learning and teaching in the school. There is a strong sense of leadership at all levels with each teacher having responsibility for curriculum leadership in specific areas.

The Board of Governors provide both support and challenge to ensure that the Principal and staff are discharging their duties appropriately, that the standards of learning and teaching remain high and that the school's ethos permeates the school in every way.

Accessibility

The school is readily accessible to families in West Belfast, specifically to those in the Iveagh, Lower Springfield Rd., St. James', Falls Rd. areas – where the vast majority of pupils come from.

Strong Links with the Community

As previously stated, there are very strong links established with Ionad Uíbh Eachach. Ionad Uíbh Eachach offering a range of parent and child support services. Ionad Uíbh Eachach also supports families who are considering Irish-Medium education for their children or families who currently send their children to Gaelscoil na bhFál. They also run Irish classes for parents and members of the community.

The school organises activities for parents and children within the local community for example breakfast mornings in An Cultúrlann, Corn Liam Uí Mhuirí (a Gaelic football tournament for Irish-mediums schools in memory of the son of the school's last Vice-Principal), Féile Scoildramaíochta (a drama festival which is part of an All-Ireland competition.)

The school works with Belfast City Council on events such as at Outdoor Education initiative in the Falls Park. The children use the 3G pitch at Willowbank Park on a regular basis and also run a school garden on land that is owned by the Council.

The school works regularly with other schools including Coláiste Feirste. The Principal is a member of the ALNC and works closely with other Principals with the support of the West Belfast Partnership Board. The school is also part of the Greater Falls Extended Schools cluster.

The Board of Governors has developed a vision for the continued promotion and development of the IME in the area and promotes Irish language activities in the area. There is a local Irish-medium youth club frequented by Keystage 2 pupils from the school.

AREA PLANNING IMPACT

The enrolment has remained steady over recent years and if enrolments are maintained, the school's enrolment should grow steadily to around 190) – notwithstanding any additional growth. **It should be noted that this figure does not include the additional 26 nursery children.** This figure lies below the current Approved Enrolment figure of 290. Gaelscoil na bhFál are seeking to readdress the mismatch between the approved admissions (including the established trend of applications) and the enrolment figure. In doing so, this will contribute to reducing the number of perceived surplus places across IM schools in Belfast and therefore give a more realistic perspective on the reality of surplus places in IM schools in Belfast.

Table E illustrates the projected admissions and enrolment at Gaelscoil na bhFál (based on the average intake of a four-year period). It should once again be noted that this does not include nursery children.

Table E								
Historic, Current and Projected Enrolment at Gaelscoil na bhFál								
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2013/14	26	23	22	20	24	19	25	159
2014/15	27	26	23	21	19	23	19	158
2015/16	25	26	25	23	21	19	23	162
2016/17	29	24	26	25	23	21	19	167
2017/18	27	29	24	26	25	23	21	175
2018/19	27	27	29	24	26	25	23	181
2019/20	27	27	27	29	24	26	25	185
2020/21	27	27	27	27	29	24	26	187

RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

Reason for Change

It is the aim of this proposal to ensure the future-proofing of the Gaelscoil as a 7 class-base school which, as stated in the Sustainable Schools Policy (Para. 4.4.), is the ideal size for a primary school.

Nursery Unit Department

This proposal does not include changes to the Nursery Unit. However, the Nursery Unit plays a critical role in terms of preparedness of children for IM primary education within Gaelscoil na bhFál, our children achievements within the Primary department classes from P1 to P7, the effectiveness of staff within the Primary department in building on and optimising the learning experiences of children, the number of application and admissions number to P1, as well as the implications for space within the school building.

The admission number for the Nursery Unit is 26. Applications for the nursery unit demonstrate a clear and consistent trend. Applications with little or no exceptions come from parents who wish to avail of IM education for their children and whose children already attend pre-preschool facilities in the adjacent Ionad Uibh Eachach. The trend carries forward to P1 applications where the same cohort of interested parents take the next step in their children's pathway through IM education.

It must be noted that the non-alignment of the admissions number of 26 at nursery level with the admission number of 28 at P1 is somewhat problematic. However temporary variations at nursery level are sometimes implemented. This is done to accommodate children who:

- (a) did not attend an IM pre-preschool project but whose parents are interested in IM,
- (b) did attend an IM pre-preschool project (but whose applications were pipped at the post by applications from parents who were not seeking IM education for their children but who were turned down for their first preference and are seeking a convenient nursery location for the year and fulfilled the essential admissions criteria).

On occasion, the school can also get applications at P1 level for children who attended another IM preschool.

The early years in IM education play a significant role in terms of children's future achievements in Gaelscoil na bhFál. With few exceptions, most children come from homes where English is the home language. IM early years' education provides children with the initial vital experiences in developing competence and fluency in Irish. The early years act as the foundation stone for the consolidation and enhancement of language skills over each succeeding year in the Primary School Department. Increasing competence from a secure, robust base is an important if not essential factor in facilitating and supporting children to engage positively and productively with their broad curricular experiences as they move upwards through the keystages.

Primary School Department

Quality learning, high pupil achievement and educational excellence and an impetus to maintain and build on existing quality lie at the heart of the proposal to align the school's admissions number with the enrolment number. The admissions number has been established over many years and has resulted in a single stream admission each year. Within any Primary School context, the organisation of children within single age group class units provides the optimum conditions for effective teaching and learning. Teacher curricular planning, classroom management, approaches to group and individual pupil differentiation, SEN, are more easily accommodated within single age group class units. The pupil developmental/ ability spectrum is relatively constrained, while the curriculum breadth has a single year reach. Within an Irish-medium context the pupils' exposure to Irish is of similar duration and there is a commonality regarding issues of language competence and linguistic accuracy.

The current non-alignment between admissions figure at P1 and enrolment figure is problematic for a number of reasons. The actual P1 admissions remains steady at between 26 and 28 pupils. Considering the nursery unit department, the school's maximum enrolment potential based on the current admissions numbers (at nursery and P1) stands at 222 pupils - a gap of 68 pupils in the context of the current enrolment number of 290.

It is, of course, possible to bring about alignment by raising the P1 admission number. Firstly, such an approach would fly in the face of the current and historical reality. Should the reality change because of an increased admissions number, it would firstly, trigger a number of logistical problems. Secondly, it would generate challenges to educational excellence and pupil achievement, as the larger cohort made its way through the Primary School Department.

The nursery unit admissions number of 26 is unlikely to be changed even if the BOG considered it desirable and processed a proposal to that effect. The increase in admissions could therefore have an immediate impact at P1 with an additional 9 pupils, who would not have had IM preschool experiences. A class of this size could not be accommodated within a single class unit. Additionally, there would be a major challenge in relation to the lack of Irish language skills of these pupils in comparison to their peers and it is likely that compensatory language approaches would have to be implemented, alongside an increased staff allocation. Additionally, a composite class at Foundation Stage would be considered undesirable for strong educational reasons, even without the additional pedagogical challenges of an immersion approach.

As the larger cohort makes its way through the school composite classes would become a characteristic feature of provision. The organisation of children in composite classes involves the strong possibility of composite class membership to reflect the avoidance of composite classes in P1 and P2 or to reflect the departure of P7 children from a P6/7 class does not offer optimum conditions for effective teaching and learning. It causes challenges for teacher curricular planning, classroom management, approaches to group and individual pupil differentiation when there are 2 year groups and the range of SEN children in differing year groups. Furthermore, within an Irish-medium context, the pupils' exposure to Irish will no longer be of similar duration as the difference of a year in exposure to Irish will create significantly disparate groups.

The option to align in this direction is an option which does not reflect the reality of applications and admission trends and compromises the quality of teaching and learning and children's achievements. Additionally, this option would increase the school's expenditure for both teaching and support staff. Furthermore, there would need to be a reorganisation of the internal structure of the school. There would be large budgetary implications to ensure that the space is organised in a way that would facilitate independent, investigative and exploratory learning that is a requirement of the current curriculum. There may also be a need to build a new Nursery unit on the school grounds as the nursery unit is currently housed in the school building.

On the other hand, if the enrolment number is reduced, the enrolment number will reflect current trends in applications and actual admissions and it will ensure that the continuation of the current trend of single age class groups, which provides the optimum conditions for effective teaching and learning. There will be no implications for the school budget and there will be no need to either build a nursery unit or to reorganise the internal space which means that all the children continue to be afforded opportunities for independent, investigative and exploratory learning that is a requirement of the current curriculum

The decrease in admissions and enrolment numbers will have no detrimental impact upon the education of the pupils. Conversely, the reduction in admissions will ensure a single stream entry to the school and as a result, prevent any future composite classes. As well as that, the reduction in potential intake will enable the Gaelscoil to plan more accurately for the future and assist in the long-term management of the school's budget.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Outline all actions required to deliver the proposal if approved.

If the proposal is approved, there would be no significant actions required.

Outline how the Proposal will affect the management of the school

This proposal will have no impact upon the management of the school.

How will the school/BOG ensure that the education of the children is protected during the proposed change?

If the proposal is approved, there would be no detrimental effect to the children within the school. Indeed, the long-term effects of the proposal will enhance the ability of the Board of Governors to plan for the future.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Finance – Budget Position, Impact upon budget, Cost of Proposal

As the proposal deals with an adjustment to the school's Approved Enrolment and Admissions, there would be minimal impact upon the Aggregated Schools' Budget.

Staffing

Not Applicable.

Transport

There are no additional transport concerns.

Accommodation

Not Applicable.

1. PRE-PUBLICATION CONSULTATION

Before the submission of this Case for Change, the following groups of people were consulted:

The Board of Governors (Appendix A)

The staff of Gaelscoil na bhFál (Appendix B)

The School Community- parents and guardians (Appendix C)

Local Schools (Appendix D)

APPENDIX A

The following are taken from minutes from Board of Governor meetings.

Meeting 21/02/17

9. Moladh Forbartha/Development Proposal

- It was agreed by all voting members that the school would submit a development proposal to the Education Authority to reduce the school's overall Enrolment number so that it would reflect the school's Admission number.

Meeting 25/04/17

8. Moladh Forbartha/Development Proposal

- It was decided that the Development Proposal would be submitted early in the new academic year. This was proposed by Maureen O'Hare and seconded by Pól Ó Braonáin.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for the staff of Gaelscoil na bhFál

A chairde,

As you will be aware, the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na bhFál is submitting a Development Proposal to the Department of Education, to reduce the Approved Enrolment of the school from 290 to 196 to fall in to line with the Admissions number of 28.

As part of the internal consultation process, it is important that the thoughts of the staff are taken into consideration. We would be grateful if you could read the relevant information attached and answer the questions below.

1	Are you in favour of the Development Proposal? (Please provide reason)
2	Would you make any amendments to the Development Proposal?
3	Any other comments?

*Staff were provided with a copy of the rationale for change and Area impact.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire for the Parents of Gaelscoil na bhFál

A chairde,

The Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na bhFál is submitting a Development Proposal to the Department of Education, to reduce the Approved Enrolment of the school from 290 to 196 to fall in to line with the Admissions number of 28.

Quality learning, high pupil achievement and educational excellence and an impetus to maintain and build on existing quality lie at the heart of the proposal to align the school's admissions number with the enrolment number. This will ensure that we will only ever have one class of each year group, therefore significantly reducing the risk of having composite classes and ensuring that we have the optimum conditions for an Irish-Medium immersion programme

As part of the internal consultation process, it is important that the thoughts of the parents are taken into consideration. We would be grateful if you could read the relevant information attached and answer the questions below and return to school by Wednesday 27th September.

1	Are you in favour of the Development Proposal? (Please provide reason)
2	Would you make any amendments to the Development Proposal?
3	Any other comments?

*Parents were provided with a copy of the rationale for change and Area impact.

APPENDIX D

A Phríomhoide/Dear Principal,

The Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na bhFál will be submitting a Development Proposal in relation to a change of enrolment number at Gaelscoil na bhFál.

To that end, we are consulting the other local schools to ascertain your views on the implications in relation to your school.

For example, would the change impact on your catchment-area? Would it impact on your enrolment numbers? Would it impact on your school in a negative way that is not obvious to us?

This case for change is based on reducing the total Approved Enrolment of Gaelscoil na bhFál to 196 (currently at 290) in order to bring it into line with the Approved Admissions number of 28 and to ensure that we are single-stream admission school.

We would welcome your thoughts, concerns or otherwise on the matter as soon as possible as they will form a crucial part of the evidence for the consultation process for inclusion in the development proposal.

Chuige sin, bheimis fíor-bhuíoch díbh ach bhur gcuid smaointe a chur in iúl as Béarla / I would be grateful if you could respond with your views on this matter in English.

Is mise le meas

Orla Flanagan

DE (POLICY TEAM) COMMENTS**SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEAM****SAT input to Development Proposals (DP) No 538 – Gaelscoil na bhFál****1.0 Development Proposal**

- 1.1 DP 538 proposes to decrease the approved admissions and enrolment numbers of Gaelscoil na bhFál from 41 to 28 and 290 to 196 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.

2.0 Rationale for the DP

- 2.1 Page 9 of the Case for Change (CfC) states that it is the aim of this proposal to ensure the future-proofing of the Gaelscoil as a 7 class-base school which, as stated in the Sustainable Schools Policy (Para. 4.4.), is the ideal size for a primary school.

3.0 Current Approved Enrolment and Admissions Numbers

- 3.1 For the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years the approved admissions and enrolment numbers for Gaelscoil na bhFál have been set at 28 and 290 respectively. The admissions number was historically 41 (and therefore in alignment with the enrolment number of 290 i.e. one seventh), however, this was reduced to 28 at the school's request from the 2008/09 school year. The admissions number of 28 then remained for a number of years until 2016/17 when SAT restored the admissions number to 41 (with the enrolment number remaining at 290). The restoration of the admissions number to 41 was implemented as the previous reduction had been agreed without an approved DP to that effect. The CfC states at Table B that this increase was implemented without consultation. The Department, however, did consult with the school on the increase, although the school advised that it did not receive the consultation letter.
- 3.2 Following further correspondence from the school (and as indicated above in para 3.1) SAT agreed a reduced admissions number of 28 for the 2017/18 school year and then rolled the same figure forward for the 2018/19 school year given that a forthcoming DP was imminent. Should the DP be unsuccessful, it would be SAT's intention to consult on the increased admissions number of 41 for future years.

4.0 School Admissions/Temporary Variations

- 4.1 If a school receives more applications for admission than it has places available it can request a Temporary Variation (TV) of its admissions and/or enrolment number from the Department. The Department may approve TVs to a school's numbers to respond to particular demographic pressures in an area in a particular year.

4.2 The Department will generally approve a TV to a school's numbers for children who otherwise do not have a primary school of the same type, with places, available to them within a reasonable travelling distance of the child's home address. For primary schools the Department defines 'reasonable travelling distance' as a distance of two miles walking distance.

4.3 For the previous five years Gaelscoil na bhFál has not requested any TVs.

5.0 Other issues

5.1 Gaelscoil na bhFál's admissions criteria prioritises children who have attended its nursery. Its first three admissions criteria (for September 2018 entry) state the following:

- 1. Children of compulsory school age who have spent their pre-school year in the school's nursery class.*
- 2. Children of compulsory school age who have spent their pre-school year in an Irish-medium preschool facility other than the school's nursery class, on a full time basis.*
- 3. Children of compulsory school age who have spent their pre-school year in an Irish-medium preschool facility other than the school's nursery class, on a part time basis.*

In the 'Open Enrolment in Primary Schools' Circular Number 2016/17 (as revised) DE strongly recommends that primary schools do not use admissions criteria related to attendance at a specified nursery/pre-school setting. This guidance is also mirrored consistently in DE's 'Irish-medium Primary School Admissions Criteria' Circular Number 2014/16 where it is stated that 'This practice [i.e. prioritising nursery attendance] is not considered appropriate, as pre-school is a non-compulsory phase of education.'

CURRICULUM, QUALIFICATIONS & STANDARDS DIRECTORATE

DP 538 - Gaelscoil na bhFál - Decrease in admissions and enrolment numbers

The development proposal Case for Change states that the reduction in the enrolment number "will reflect current trends in applications and actual admissions" and makes reference within the proposal about class sizes and specifically composite classes. While there is no evidence to suggest that pupils are disadvantaged in terms of educational outcomes if they are taught in a composite class the proposal to reduce admission/enrolment numbers will help prevent the need for composite classes which can only be viewed as positive in terms of teaching pupils in the IM.

No issues/concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of the development proposal by any of the CQSD policy teams.

EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

NIL Return - EWD has reviewed the Case for Change (CfC) and is content that there is no impact on the policies which fall within EWD area of responsibility.

CfC advises that there are no staffing implications. Area Planning Policy and Shared Education Campuses Team (APPSECT) have confirmed with the school that there will be no redundancies as a result of the development proposal. The school has 10 teachers made up as follows:

- 7 class teachers
- 1 Special Needs teacher
- 1 nursery teacher
- 1 principal

FINANCE

We have no comments on this DP as a reduced approved enrolment for this school has no impact on the funding arrangements and as the DP outlines the school has not come close to its current approved enrolment.

The CFF allocation for Gaelscoil na BhFál in 2016/17 was £630,881 & £621,004 in 2017/18.

At 31 March 2017, Gaelscoil na BhFál held a cumulative closing surplus of £91,177, as the EA's 2016-17 accounts have not been finalised this figure is subject to change.

INCLUSION & WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

From a special educational needs (SEN) policy perspective, SET would not have any objection to this DP subject to assurances being sought that any impact on pupils with SEN will be considered and managed effectively.

Please note nil return from PST

YOUTH, EARLY YEARS & CHILDCARE - EARLY YEARS TEAM

Gaelscoil na bhFál (DE Ref 104-6571) is an Irish medium primary school with a statutory nursery unit. The Gaelscoil nursery unit has 26 full-time places and in the 2016/17 academic year it had Temporary Flexibility requests approved for 2 children.

The nursery unit consistently fills all of the 26 pre-school places available, although there are two underage pupils within the nursery unit's complement for this year. It is not considered that there would be any impact on the enrolment numbers for the nursery unit as a result of the proposed decrease in the admissions and enrolment number for the primary school.

If temporary flexibility was approved on request for up to 4 additional nursery places in a year, the reduction in admission to 28 pupils may impact on the school's ability to enrol all nursery pupils in the primary school without an approved temporary variation.

Pre-School Provision Gaelscoil na bhFál				
Academic Year	Statutory Places Available	Temp Flexibility	Underage Pupils	P1 Total Intake
2015/2016	26	0	0	25
2016/2017	26	2	0	29
2017/2018	26	0	2	27

Source -15/16 & 16/17 figures School Census data
 -2017/18 figures from the EA.

ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

Date of last ETI report: 6 November 2017

Web link: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/primary-inspection-involving-action-short-strike-gaelscoil-na-bhfal-beal-feirstebelfast>

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

None.

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

The nearest IM Primary school is Gaelscoil an Lonnáin which is currently in the follow-up process, with the outcome of the first follow-up inspection in March 2017 identifying that the school continues to have important areas for improvement in the areas of self-evaluation leading to improvement and play-based learning.

The next nearest IM Primary school is Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh which was inspected in February 2016 and was evaluated as having a high capacity for sustained improvement.

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

The approval of this development proposal would address the anomaly between the substantially higher approved admissions and enrolment numbers and the actual admissions and enrolment numbers of the school, both historically and as projected. As such, the proposal does not make claims of specific educational benefits except the reduction in the likelihood of the potential need for composite classes which bring a recognised added complexity in IM schools.

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

No concerns identified.

5. The **SSP Criteria** indicators requiring ETI input (if known and/or for which information is available).²

² For nursery units, ETI input around the SSP criteria is required to inform a sustainability assessment of the associated primary school i.e. not just enrolment numbers.

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (include reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils ³ , Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.	Y		
	1.2 No more than <u>two</u> composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level.	Y		
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers ⁴ at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.	Y		
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.	Y		
	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.	N/A		
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.	Y		
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.	Y		
	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.	Y		
	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.	Y	With the recent inspection in November 2017 identifying the need for some improvement work in the area of the preventative curriculum.	

³ Given the importance of factors such as the background of the children, the socio-economic conditions in the community and levels of parental support in pupils' attainment levels, the Department is working towards a contextualised 'value-added' approach.

⁴ Where a small school is retained the teaching principal post will remain.

Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.	Y		
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.	Y	With the recent inspection in November 2017 identifying the need for SDP targets to focus more specifically on the children's experiences and outcomes.	
	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).	Y		
Strong links with the Community	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).	Y		
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).	Y		
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit ⁵ .	Y	Associated nursery unit has a stable enrolment of 26, with almost all progressing to Year One in the Primary school.	

6. Overall conclusion of impact of the proposal

The ETI does not identify a potential negative impact on the quality of the educational experiences if this development proposal is approved.

⁵ Including reception, IME/LSC/ASC unit, etc.

COMHAIRLE NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA COMMENTS

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports Development Proposal (DP) 538 to ‘*decrease the Approved Enrolment number from 290 to 196*’ at Gaelscoil na bhFál, in line with the Gaelscoil’s Admissions Number of 28. The Development Proposal is consistent with the Strategic Development Plan of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to ensure the sustainability of the sector.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports this proposal for the following reasons:

- This proposal aims only to change the school’s approved enrolment number, and not its Year 1 admissions number.
- The proposed reduction in Approved Enrolment number is in line with Approved Admissions (28) and consistent with the historic P1 – P7 enrolment over the last 5 years.
- DP 538 is part of a wider sectoral response to address the issue of unfilled places, as highlighted in the former BELB Primary Area Plan (2014). The approval of DP 538 would see a 30% reduction in unfilled places in the Primary IM cluster (West Belfast - currently 296 unfilled places in the 5 schools identified in the aforementioned plan).

It is for these reasons that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports DP 538. We believe that the approval of the proposal will enhance the school’s ability to plan ahead and consolidate the quality of education it provides.

APPENDIX F

Primary School Annual Area Profile 2017

DE Ref No:	School Name:	Status:	Council Area:
1046571	Gaelscoil Na Bhfal	Other Maintained	BELFAST

Annual Census Information			
Year	Total pupils Y1-Y7	IMU	FSME %
2013/14	159	0	55.3
2014/15	158	0	53.2
2015/16	162	0	48.1
2016/17	167	0	43.7%
Approved Reception – Year 7 enrolment number			290
Approved Reception – Year 7 admissions number			41
Year 1 Pupils 2016/17			29
First Preferences Applications 2016/17			28

Formal Intervention	
In formal intervention any period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017	

Budgets			
Year	Available Delegated Resources £	Surplus/Deficit £	Surplus/Deficit %
2013/14	882,535	220,990	25.04%
2014/15	876,741	173,733	19.82%
2015/16	830,437	131,392	15.82%

KEY TO SYMBOLS & TEXT USED IN DATA ABOVE	
Symbol / Text	Definition
*	Relates to fewer than 5 cases.
#	Means that a figure greater than or equal to 5 had been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere
-	School not open in the relevant academic year
n/a	No year 7 pupils