

## COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION – DP 559

### Cover Note

<b>DP No.</b>	DP 559
<b>School</b>	Gaelscoil na mBeann
<b>Proposal</b>	<i>'A statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter'</i>
<b>Department's Decision</b>	Not approved
<b>Date of Decision</b>	18 June 2019
<b>Permanent Secretary's Comments</b>	<p><i>"I refer to [the] submission to me dated 10 June 2019 and the associated papers about the above Development Proposal. I am grateful for the analysis which has been carried out to assist decision-making on this proposal. I am satisfied that this is an issue on which it is appropriate for me to take a decision in the context of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018.</i></p> <p><i>I note that in November 2016 a Minister of Education did not approve a previous proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann but that consideration of the current proposal reflects changes and updated information since the time of the previous proposal.</i></p> <p><i>As the submission points out, there are finely balanced arguments in this case. I am very conscious of the statutory duty placed on the Department to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education. Nevertheless, the case is not based on the need to effect any change to support the Pre-School Education Programme generally, or to meet unmet demand for Irish-medium pre-school provision specifically. The analysis demonstrates that at present the existing Irish-medium pre-school provision is adequate to meet demand and indeed allows scope for expansion. The focus is on changing the management type of pre-school provision because of the perceived benefits of statutory status. That said, the Department's policy is clear that both statutory and voluntary pre-school management types are equally valued and follow common curriculum guidelines.</i></p> <p><i>I am persuaded by the arguments that the proposal to increase levels of Irish-medium pre-school provision by establishing a statutory 26 place nursery unit is not supported by demonstrated levels of demand; that the existing provision has capacity to meet any increased demand that emerges; and that increasing provision to 26 places carries a risk that some of these places may be offered to underage children at a time when the education budget is under severe financial pressures. Therefore I accept the recommendation set out at paragraph 116 of your submission not to approve the Development Proposal"</i></p>

<b>Additional Notes</b>	-
<b>Information redacted</b>	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.
	<b>Key</b>   <b>Details</b>
	■   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: BILL STEVENSON  
Area Planning Policy Team

HPRM Ref: ED1/18/173444

Date: 10 June 2019

To: Derek Baker  
Permanent Secretary

Copy distribution below

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) 559 – ESTABLISHMENT OF A  
STATUTORY IRISH-MEDIUM NURSERY UNIT AT GAELSCOIL NA  
mBEANN (KILKEEL)**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>To decide on Development Proposal (DP) 559:</b>  <i>A statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter</i>
<b>Timescale:</b>	<b>Routine.</b>
<b>Financial / Resource Implications:</b>	<b><u>Capital</u></b> <b>None.</b>  <b><u>Resource</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In-year cost of c.£32k, charged against the Department's 'New Schools and Units' fund for new provision; and</li><li>- An annual cost of c.£55k, charged against the Aggregated Schools Budget.</li></ul> <b>A nursery teacher and assistant would also be required at an estimated cost of £30k, with costs to be met from the school's delegated budget.</b>
<b>FOI Implications:</b>	<b>The content of this submission is likely to be fully disclosable.</b>
<b>Statutory Duty Implications:</b>	<b>Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998</b>  <b>Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) 1986 Order</b>  <b>The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</b>
<b>Presentational Issues:</b>	<b>It is likely that there will be local media interest in your decision. If any queries arise Press Office can</b>

	<b>refer to this submission and liaise with officials as necessary.</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>It is recommended that you:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>(i) Do not approve DP 559 – “A statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.”</b></li><li><b>(ii) Agree that this submission (with any appropriate redactions) can be published on the Department’s website once the school, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and the Education Authority (EA) have been informed of your decision.</b></li></ul>

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### **Appendices**

**Appendix A - Copy of Development Proposal 559**

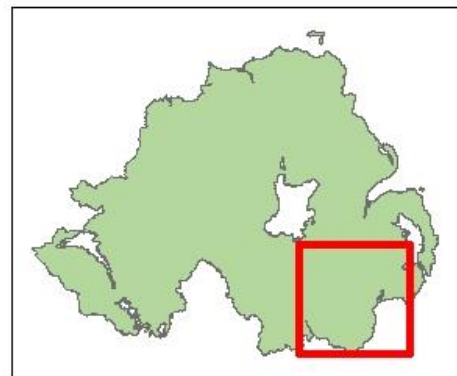
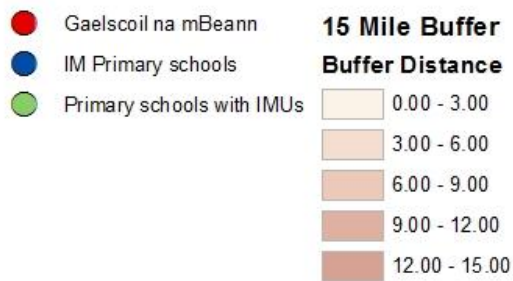
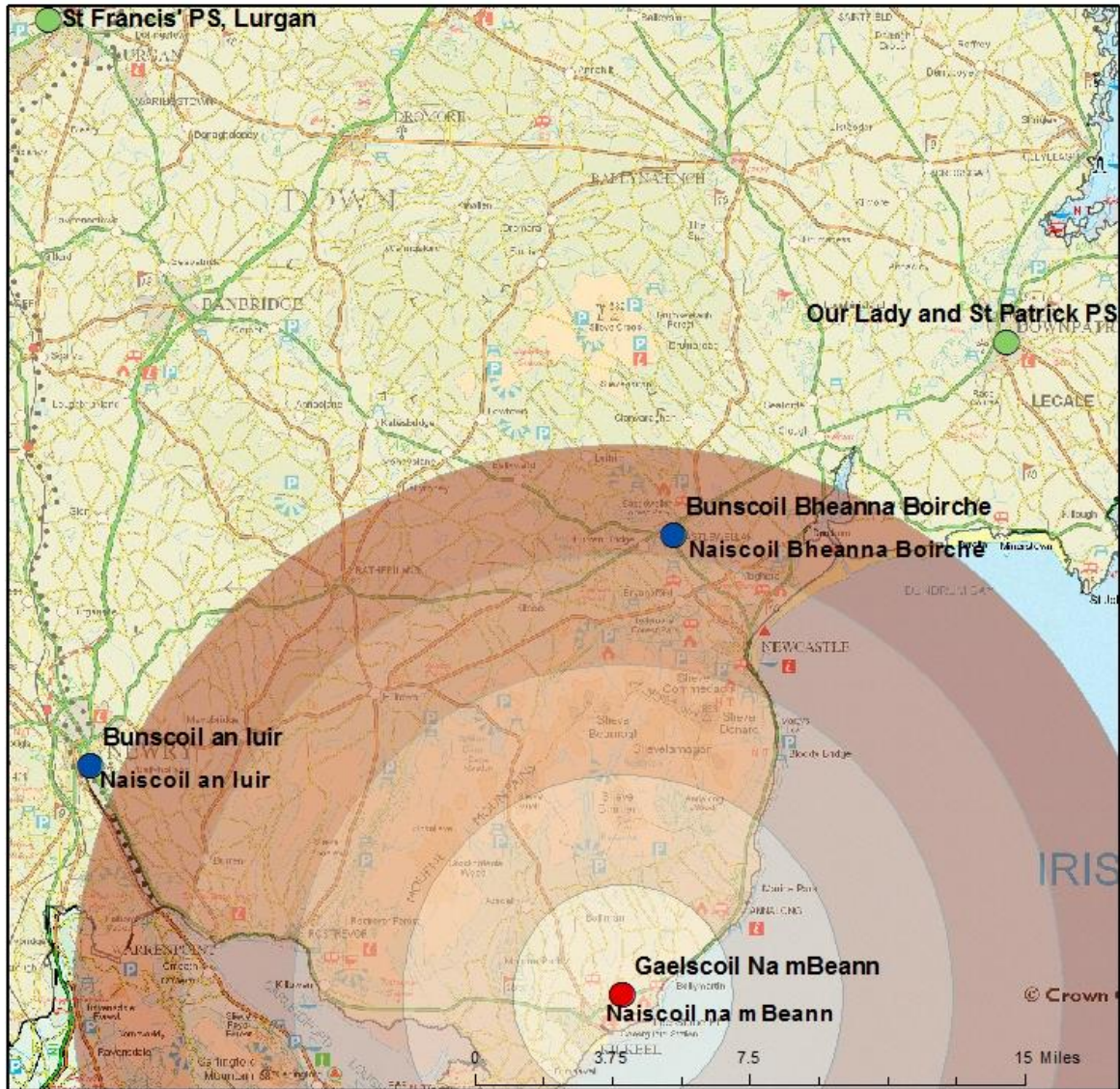
**Appendix B - Case for Change**

**Appendix C – ETI Comments**

**Appendix D - DE (Policy Team) Comments**

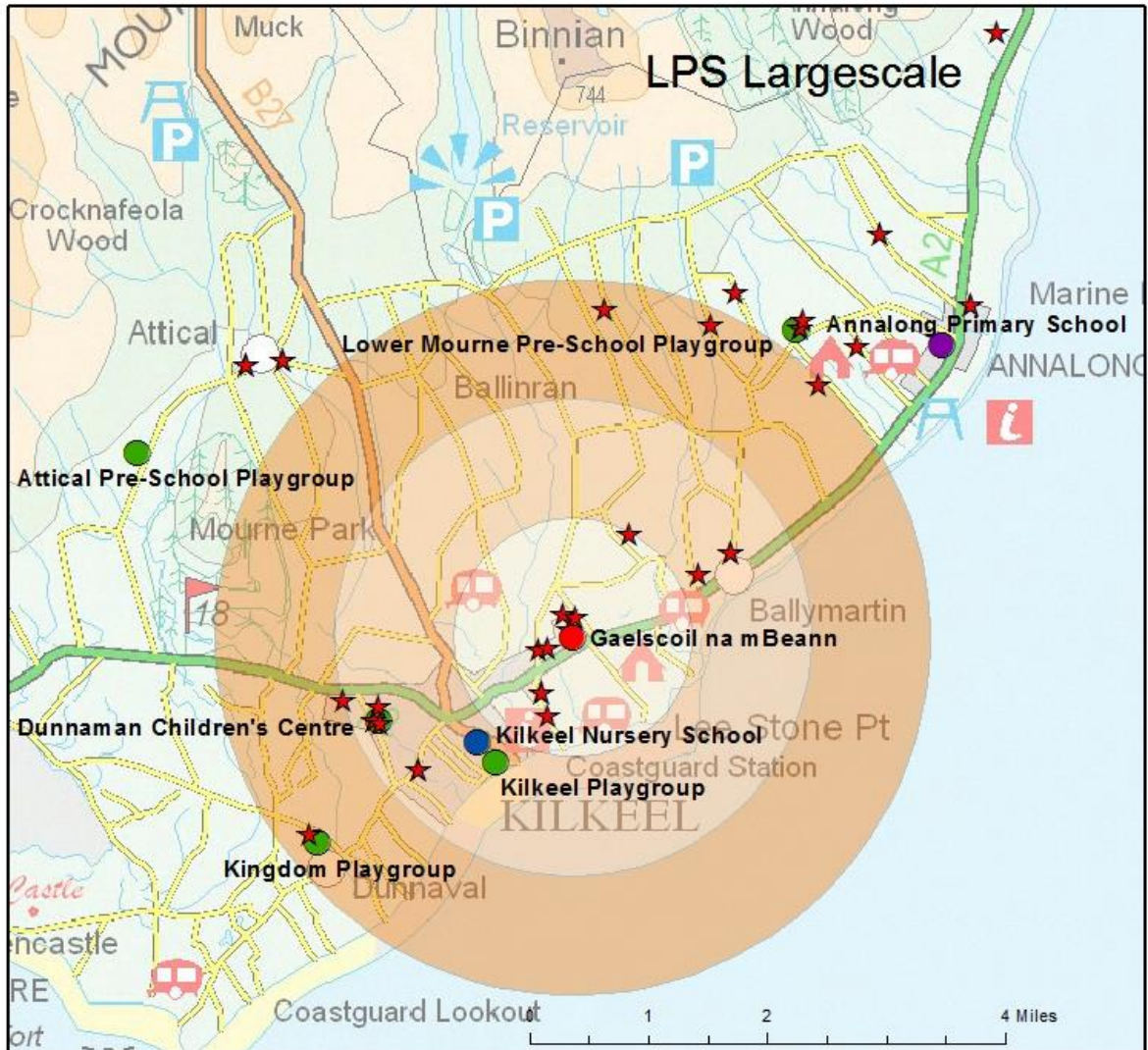
MAP 1

Gaelscoil na mBeann - Other IM Provision



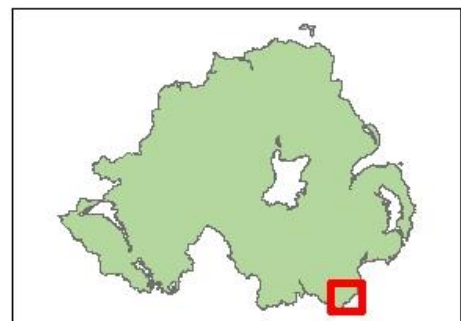
MAP 2

Gaelscoil na mBeann - Alternative Provision



Legend

- Gaelscoil na mBeann
  - ★ Gaelscoil na mBeann Pupil Location
  - Nursery schools
  - Nursery units
  - Pre-schools
- | 3 Mile Buffer   |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Buffer Distance |             |
|                 | 0.00 - 1.00 |
|                 | 1.00 - 2.00 |
|                 | 2.00 - 3.00 |



## INTRODUCTION

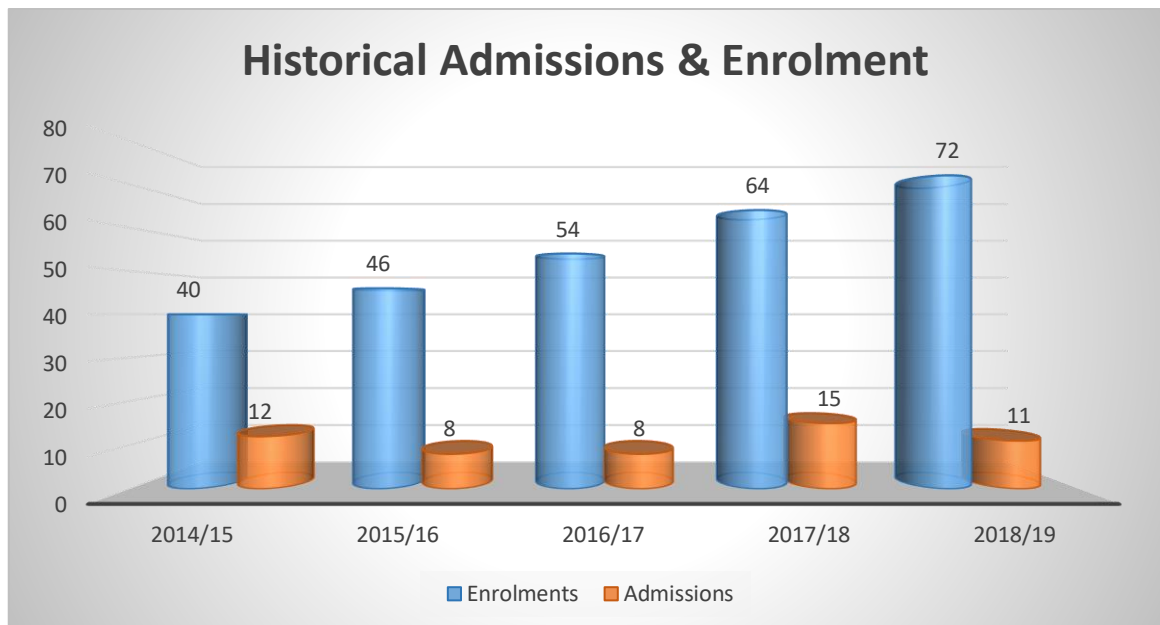
1. A Development Proposal (DP) is the statutory mechanism to bring about a change to a school, including the establishment of a nursery unit. On 29 August 2018 the Education Authority (EA), on behalf of the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann, published DP 559 to establish a statutory 26 part-time place nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. The statutory two month objection period ended on 29 October 2018. Copies of the published DP and the proposer's Case for Change are attached at Appendices A and B respectively.

## BACKGROUND

### Gaelscoil na mBeann

3. Gaelscoil na mBeann began as an independent school in 2010, was awarded grant-aided status in 2012 and capital funding in September 2015. It is situated in the heart of Kilkeel.
4. The historical admissions and enrolments for Gaelscoil na mBeann are set out in Chart 1 below. Having attained grant-aided status in 2012 the school is still developing, and its approved enrolment number is being phased upwards incrementally by the Department. For 2018/19 this was increased from 75 to 87 with an admissions number of 15. In 2018/19 a total of 72 pupils were enrolled, with 11 admissions.

Chart 1: Gaelscoil na mBeann – Historical Admissions and Enrolments



### Naíscoil na mBeann

5. Naíscoil na mBeann is a non-statutory pre-school located in a modular building close to Gaelscoil na mBeann, registered to admit 24 pupils. In 2018/19 the



naíscoil had a total of 19 children enrolled, all Pre-School Education Group (PEG) funded places. Historical enrolments at the naíscoil are set out in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Naíscoil na mBeann - Historical Enrolments**

2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall
15	16	11	14	20	27	18	20	19	19

- Figures for 2019/20 indicate a total of 24 first preference applications for placement in September 2019.

### **Area Profile**

- On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 the Binnian area, in which Gaelscoil na mBeann is situated, is placed 335 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 least deprived). In 2017/18 a total of 26 pupils (approximately 41%) of the school's pupils were entitled to Free School Meals.
- The EA's Area Plan covering 2017-2020 was published on 28 April 2017 and includes population projections provided by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) for population in the age range 0-15 in the Newry, Mourne and Down Local Government District (LGD) area. By 2024 the population in the age range 0-15 is projected to increase by 5.4%. These figures are an indicator of future population and do not fully take into account population migration or other factors. They are not therefore an exact prediction of demand.
- The EA Action Plan for April 2018 to March 2019 identifies the proposed actions to be taken to address the key strategic themes and priorities within the current planning year. The Action Plan states an intent for the "*Board of Governors to consult on options for the future pre-school provision at Gaelscoil na mBeann by March 2019*".

### **Alternative Irish Medium (IM) Primary Provison**

- Map 1 provides details of local IM provision in the area with alternative English-medium pre-school provision detailed on Map 2. There is no alternative IM provider within a 12 mile radius, with the two closest alternative IM primary schools being Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche (in Castlewellan) and Bunscoil an Iúir (in Newry) located approximately 16 and 19.8 miles away respectively. While IM provision is also available via an IM unit at Our Lady and St Patrick's Primary School in Downpatrick, this is over 25 miles away.
- Table 2 below shows that the current enrolments at Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche and Bunscoil an Iúir do not meet the recommended minimum enrolment for a sustainable rural primary school (105), as defined by the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP). Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche falls narrowly short of this threshold after meeting it in 2017/18. The overall enrolment at both schools has dropped slightly after a sustained period of year-on-year growth.

**Table 2: Enrolments at alternative IM providers**

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	85	86	98	105	102
Bunscoil an Iúir	78	87	89	97	95

**Alternative IM Pre-school Provision**

12. Aside from the voluntary pre-school provision at Nailscoil na mBeann, there are no other IM pre-school education settings within the immediate locale. Both Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche (approximately 16 miles away) and Bunscoil an Iúir (approximately 19.8 miles) have associated pre-schools.

**Naíscoil Bheanna Boirche**

13. A recent DP (DP 515) was published on 15 November 2017 proposing that a statutory nursery unit be established at Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche to replace the Naíscoil Bheanna Boirche pre-school, and provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2018. The DP was approved by the Department on 29 March 2018.
14. At the conclusion of the pre-school admissions process for 2018/19, in its first year of operation as a statutory setting, the nursery had accepted 26 pupils. For comparative purposes the historical enrolments of the non-statutory pre-school are available at Table 3.

**Table 3: Naíscoil Bheanna Boirche – Pre-school Enrolments**

2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18*		2018/19*	
Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall
24	31	32	-	31	47	27	35	26	-

\* statutory IM Nursery established from September 2018

**Naíscoil an Iúir**

15. The current non-statutory IM pre-school is located on the same site as Bunscoil an Iúir. Historical enrolments at Naíscoil an Iúir are set out in Table 4, below.

**Table 4: Naíscoil an Iúir – Pre-school Enrolments**

2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall
16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	15	15

16. On 22 March 2016 the EA published DP 455 to establish a statutory 26 part-time IM nursery unit at Bunscoil an Iúir with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.
17. On 17 August 2016 the former Minister took the decision to turn down DP 455. In coming to this decision the Minister took account of all the information provided, including all statutory obligations, which led him to conclude that the evidence did not currently support the establishment of a statutory part-time IM nursery at Bunscoil an Iúir.

### **Alternative English-medium Pre-school Provision**

18. In addition to the IM providers, three alternative English-medium pre-schools are located either within or on the periphery of a three mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann, with further provision also available at approximately four miles from the school. Alternative pre-school provision is illustrated by Map 2.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education**

19. The Department has a statutory duty under Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 to '*encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education*'.

### **Effective and Efficient use of Public Funds**

20. The statutory duty to '*encourage and facilitate*' IM education does not equate to a duty to grant every proposal brought forward on behalf of an IM school. The Department must be mindful of its statutory duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 and under Managing Public Money to ensure effective and efficient use of public funds.

### **Early Years**

21. The Department aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it. The policy position to date is set out in *Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning*, published on 7 October 2013. Among its key actions is placing a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it.
22. In light of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM education, and in recognition of the benefits of an immersion experience at pre-school for those pupils wishing to access IM primary provision, the Department considers the need for IM pre-school provision in the context of Recommendation 2 of the IM Review (2009): to allow registered IM providers with sufficient children to enter the existing funding programme, even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area.
23. It is the Department's practice, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. This includes not ceasing funding for an existing Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) funded playgroup and establishing statutory nursery provision as an alternative, although all cases are assessed on their own merit.

### **Rural Considerations**

24. Rural proofing has been a requirement for all Government Departments in Northern Ireland since 2002 and has been an integral part of the policy development process. In 2016 the commitment to rural proofing was strengthened with the introduction of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. The Act

places a duty on Government Departments to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans when designing and delivering public services. It came into operation for Government Departments and District Councils on 1 June 2017 and applied to public authorities from 1 June 2018. Gaelscoil na mBeann is defined as rural under the SSP.

## **CASE FOR CHANGE**

25. The Case for Change in support of DP 559 is reproduced in full at Appendix C. It states that the proposal for the establishment of a statutory IM nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann is to improve the educational experience and outcomes for pupils, and to contribute to the longer-term sustainability of IM provision in the local and wider area. The CfC asserts that the DP is consistent with:

- i Recommendation 2 from the Review of Irish-medium Education Report (2008);
- ii Obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; and
- iii The statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education (Article 89 Education (NI) Order 1998).

26. The CfC also asserts a number of benefits that statutory status provides, namely:

- To strengthen the long-term relationship between the levels of provision and strengthen the future development of the Gaelscoil by ensuring that the naiscoil and gaescoil remain on the same site;
- To ensure greater cohesion between pre-school and foundation stage education and an enhanced level of continuity for children transferring from nursery to primary;
- To further enhance the pre-school provision and continue to build upon the good educational and linguistic standards set by the current voluntary provision;
- Under statutory provision the nursery unit would be able to avail of additional support services from the Education Authority (EA);
- The most tangible benefit relates to the employment of a qualified teacher which would afford the pupils the best opportunities for their linguistic development and improve the ability of the provision to identify and cater for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- The longer hours afforded to statutory provision would allow children a greater amount of exposure to the target language;
- The change in status of Naíscoil na mBeann would strengthen the link between it and Gaelscoil na mBeann which would result in even greater

enrolment, *'This will not only enable the school to reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow and thus, realise the aims of the Schools for the Future policy'*.

- The long-term benefit would be recognised across three levels of provision. The improved nursery provision would increase the enrolment in the primary provision and the strength of the primary provision is essential in maintaining the viability and increasing the capacity of the IM post-primary provision available at St Malachy's HS, Castlewellan.

## **STATUTORY DP PROCESSES**

### Pre-publication consultation

27. The Case for Change confirms that consultation was carried out with the Board of Governors, staff and parents of pupils at the school. The EA indicates that all of the opinions and views collated during this period revealed strong support for the proposal.
28. The EA has provided additional evidence of consultation with schools likely to be affected by DP 559, with a total of 24 schools forwarded the draft proposal by the EA for commentary. Two responses were received, one from CnaG in support of the proposal; and one from the Board of Governors at Kilkeel Primary School opposing the proposal, citing the additional impact on an already stretched budget and the need to improve existing educational provision.

### Two month statutory objection period

29. The EA published DP 599 on 29 August 2018. The statutory two month objection period ended on 29 October 2019. The Department received no expressions of support or objection during this time.

### Education Authority Comments

30. The EA has commented as follows:
- If DP 559 is approved, staff may be at risk as three staff are required within the existing playgroup setting for 24 children (a 1:8 staff/child ratio), whereas two staff are required within a statutory nursery setting (a 1:13 staff/child ratio).
  - While a number of existing non-statutory providers had spare capacity within their allocation of funded places at September 2018, there are no other IM providers in the area.
31. In conclusion, the EA's view is that it supports the proposal in keeping with its duty to assist the Department's statutory requirement to encourage and facilitate IM education. The full EA commentary is included within the supporting information for the Case for Change, and is available at Appendix B.

## Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) Comments

32. The ETI states that there would be positive educational and practical benefits of bringing both primary and nursery provision under a single management.
33. The ETI recognises the positive impact of staff employed within the statutory nursery sector being qualified teachers with a high standard of Irish language; considers that a single Board of Governors for the naíscoil and the gaelscoil would provide a more consistent, strategic and holistic leadership for the schools; and highlights the benefit of a statutory setting in helping to ensure a strong immersion platform to build on the continuous provision from nursery through to primary. The full ETI commentary is reproduced at Appendix C.

## **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

34. The SSP does not apply to pre-school provision. However, it is important when considering proposals in relation to pre-school that the host school is assessed as being sustainable. An assessment of Gaelscoil na mBeann against the SSP criteria and their associated indicators follows:

### **(i) Quality Education Experience**

35. Gaelscoil na mBeann was last inspected in April 2018, however this inspection was impacted by staff at the school taking action short of strike. The ETI has indicated that the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.
36. A previous ETI inspection of May 2015 (a follow-up inspection to a November 2012 visit) reported that the quality of education provided by the school was considered 'good'. It listed important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision, though identified the need to '*continue to develop further monitoring and evaluating at all levels in order to inform better future planning to meet the needs of all children*' as an area for improvement which the school had demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI also indicated in the May report that it would continue to monitor the school's improvement in this area.
37. While the school operates with three composite classes there are no composite classes with more than two year groups. Composite classes are grouped on the basis of P2/3, P4/5, and P6/7 and there is a staffing complement of 4.4 full-time equivalent teachers.

### **(ii) Stable Enrolment Trends**

38. Gaelscoil na mBeann had approved admissions and enrolment numbers of 15 and 75 respectively for 2017/18, although it is noted that the approved enrolment

number has been incrementally increased to 87 for 2018/19 in line with a long-term enrolment strategy which would place the school in the five-class base range of between 116-145 pupils.

39. The number of admissions to Gaelscoil na mBeann has been inconsistent across the last five years with 12 pupils admitted in 2014/15, before dropping to 8 in 2015/16 and 2016/17. 2017/18 represents the only year that admissions have met the recommended intake (of 15 pupils) for a sustainable rural school.
40. In 2019/20 a total of 13 first preference applications have been received. Given that the associated náiscoil enrolment for 2018/19 equates to 19 funded places, this indicates that approximately two-thirds of the pre-school children cohort transfers from Náiscoil na mBeann to the gaelscoil.

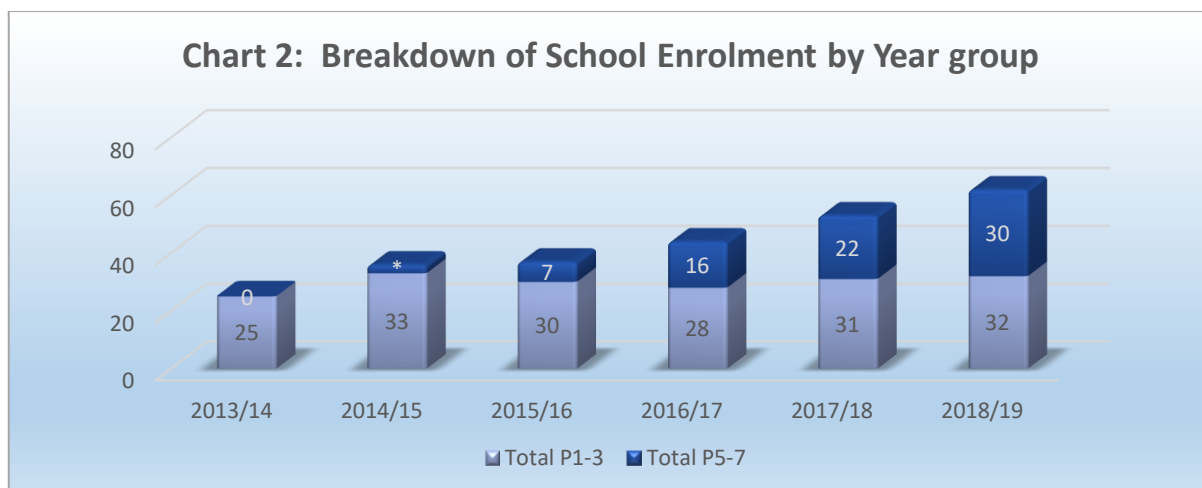
**Table 5: Gaelscoil na mBeann - Historical Intakes and Enrolments against SSP Requirements**

School Year	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Actual Admissions	Actual Enrolment
2014/15	15	43	12	40
2015/16	15	58	8	46
2016/17	15	70	8	54
2017/18	15	75	15	64
2018/19	15	87	12	72

**Table 6: Gaelscoil na mBeann – Enrolment by Year Group 2018/19**

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
11	15	6	10	11	9	10	72

41. Overall enrolment at the school increased to 72 in 2018/19. While this is still significantly below the SSP's minimum recommended enrolment of 105 for a sustainable rural primary school, the school has shown a year-on-year pattern of growth and is still in the process of building its enrolment. The approved enrolment will continue to be phased up on an annual basis by the Department.
42. Based on the information above, the gaelscoil has an evidenced growth in enrolment over the past five years. Typically, evidence of an increasing primary population can be seen from a comparison between the first three years of primary education and the final three years. Chart 2 (overleaf) illustrates that the P1-P3 population has remained relatively steady over the last five years, and the current makeup of the school is evenly balanced.



NB: Year 4 cohort has been omitted from the above

43. The overall pattern remains one of increasing enrolment however. It is noted that the 2017/18 school year was the first year where the school saw the completion of a full seven-year cycle. The school has a long-term enrolment range of between 116-145 and the Department continues to review the enrolment number annually with a view to incrementally adjusting the approved numbers. It therefore remains a developing school and the Case for Change notes that the recent (ie. September 2015) qualification for capital funding will 'further boost enrolment in the school'. This has been corroborated by a 60% increase to the school's enrolment since capital viability was confirmed.

#### *Capital Viability*

44. In September 2015, Gaelscoil na mBeann was reviewed for capital viability together with other IM schools which had not met the capital viability criteria. The schools were considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision was taken to approve capital funding for Gaelscoil na mBeann. This took into account the school's increased enrolment in the last four years and that it had expanded its number of year groups. The review also took into account the quality of education provided by the school as having been assessed as good, its sound financial position and that it was the sole provider of IME in the Mourne area. The review also noted that the school did not have a permanent site which did not lend itself to supporting sustainability.

#### **(iii) Sound Financial Position**

45. At 31 March 2018, Gaelscoil na mBeann held a cumulative surplus of £18,473. This represents a decrease on the figure in the previous year (at 31 March 2017) of £34,234.
46. The school received a total delegated budget of £255,767 in the 2018-19 financial year for 64 FTE pupils. This generates a per capita of £3,996, which compares to an average for all primary schools of £2,978.
47. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 26 pupils, which represents 40.63% of the total FTE.



#### **(iv) Strong Leadership and Management**

48. An assessment of leadership and management at the gaelscoil's most recent inspection was impacted by action short of strike. Prior to this, the ETI carried out a primary inspection at the school in November 2012 where the leadership and management was assessed as *satisfactory*. This was supplemented by a follow-up inspection in May 2015 where the report acknowledged a number of permanent appointments and the introduction of co-ordinators to lead in key areas to improve the work of the school.
49. In the follow-up inspection the ETI assessment of the school as a whole had improved to 'Good'. Since the original inspection the Principal and co-ordinators had developed a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching including carrying out planned classroom observations; scrutinising children's work; and monitoring teachers' planning. They had also begun to gather and analyse internal performance data to track achievement and inform better future planning, and the ETI report a consistent focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching.

#### **(v) Accessibility**

50. Gaelscoil na mBeann is the only IM school within a 12 mile radius. The next nearest IM schools are Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche in Castlewellan (16 miles by road) and Bunscoil an Lúir in Newry (19.8 miles by road). Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School, Downpatrick, which has an IM unit, is approximately 25.4 miles away by road. Map 2 shows the location of Gaelscoil na mBeann pupils and indicates that the majority of pupils who attend Gaelscoil na mBeann live within a three mile radius.
51. The school is therefore accessible to its pupils within the 30 minutes maximum travel time as set out in the SSP.

#### **(vi) Strong Links with the Community**

52. The Case for Change states that Gaelscoil na mBeann has strong links with its current voluntary IM nursery provider, Naíscoil na mBeann. It also notes a burgeoning relationship with St Malachy's High School as the closest provider of IM post-primary provision. The Case for Change also states that the school maintains close links with Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche and Bunscoil an Lúir with staff collaboration on assessment and planning being key elements as well as joint participation in sporting and educational endeavours.
53. As stated in the Case for Change, local businesses contribute to school events and fundraising activities at Gaelscoil na mBeann. The school records an exceptionally strong relationship with Conradh na Gaeilge (a social and cultural organisation promoting the Irish language in Ireland and worldwide) and the school also engages with cultural and sporting organisations along with the local churches and primary schools as well as Newry and Mourne Council.

54. The gaelscoil also provides extra-curricular activities including gaelic games, music, swimming, drama, numeracy and literacy as well as a homework club.

### **Sustainability Summary**

55. The quality of education at Gaelscoil na mBeann has improved to 'good' in its most recent assessment by ETI. Although the school is still growing, its enrolment remains below the recommended minimum (of 105) for a sustainable recommended rural primary school. Admission numbers have reached the minimum recommended intake once in the past five years.

56. In spite of its status as a recently established school still in a period of growth, the school's financial position of a surplus of £18,473 in 2017/18 demonstrates that the school can live within its dedicated budget. The leadership and management of the school has been assessed as *satisfactory* at last full inspection, the school is accessible to its pupils and records strong links with the community.

57. In conclusion, Gaelscoil na mBeann does not currently meet all of the Sustainable Schools criteria. Although it is recognised the school is developing, is displaying a continual pattern of growth and remains in the process of building its enrolment, the numbers enrolled fall below the recommended threshold of 105 for a rural area. The ETI's most recent inspection report dated April 2018 was impacted by action short of strike, however it noted 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 staff'*.

## **ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Duty to Encourage and Facilitate IM Education**

58. The Department has received legal advice that the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM education is applicable to pre-school settings, and has written to the statutory planning authorities<sup>1</sup> reminding them of the need to support DE in the fulfilment of this duty, highlighting the role that the PEG should play in striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education at IM primary schools.

59. 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. As a consequence IM providers demonstrating evidential demand for IM pre-school places can be funded as part

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<sup>1</sup> The Department wrote to the statutory planning authorities on 31 October 2017 reminding them of the need to support DE in the fulfilment of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated and Irish-medium education, highlighting the role that the Pre-school Education Group (PEG) should play in striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education located at Irish-medium primary schools. This was further clarified in the Department's letter of 15 January 2018.

of the PSEP even if there are available English-Medium pre-school places in the area.

60. In relation to consideration of this DP, due regard has been given to the statutory duty within a framework of ensuring effective planning to meet the future educational requirements for the area, and alongside other relevant issues including:

- the sustainability of the school in question;
- the proposal's impact on other schools; and
- the achievement of area planning objectives to reduce duplication and ensure appropriate provision to meet future demand.

61. Demand for IM pre-school provision in the area is considered in detail under 'Other Considerations'.

### **Effective and Efficient Use of Public Funds**

62. In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make best use of the resources available to it. In light of this, it aims to maximise available pre-school places for target age children, avoiding over provision and the resulting enrolment of children younger than 3 years and 2 months (underage children) in statutory settings. There has only been one underage child attending a funded pre-school setting within a five mile radius of the school in the last three years.

63. For 2019/20 the existing voluntary pre-school setting has for the first time received 24 first preference applications for the 24 places its registration permits. If DP 559 is approved and the new statutory provision fails to fill the 26 places provided, this could lead to underage children accessing statutory pre-school places, which would run counter to this statutory duty.

### **Early Years**

64. The Department's aim is to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it. In commenting on the proposal the PEG states that for the 2018/19 academic year a total of 232 funded places were available in the area with a total of 216 first preference applications received. The existing naiscoil is included in these figures which would suggest that sufficient provision exists, however it is noted that this overall figure is inclusive of both IM and English-medium provision.

65. With 24 first-preference applications for the naiscoil for 2019/20, the pattern of pre-school applications would suggest that parents in the area may have a preference for pre-school education at an IM setting.

66. In accordance with Recommendation 2 of the Review of IM Education, registered IM providers with sufficient children can be funded under the Department's Pre-School Education Programme even where English-medium provision is available in the area.

67. The Department's practice is, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. The ETI conducted a dedicated pre-school inspection as recently as January 2019, and concluded that there were important areas for improvement across the majority of areas of the pre-school curriculum.
68. The Case for Change records that the committee of naíscóil na mBeann indicated strong support for the proposal during the EA's pre-consultation period. Committee minutes document that each committee member is '*fully behind the process*', and displacement of the current non-statutory playgroup is therefore not an issue.

### **Rural Considerations**

69. The Rural Development Council's (RDC) Striking the Balance report highlights the importance of rural proofing so that regard is given to the impact of a particular policy on rural populations (in comparison to those living in urban areas) and to help identify adjustments which might be made to reflect rural needs and ensure that services are accessible to rural communities on a fair basis. A central concern is the quality of education provided to pupils.
70. The SSP policy was assessed against the RDC rural proofing checklist (Striking the Balance, Annex 1) and no adverse impact was identified. The SSP recognises the needs of rural communities and this is reflected in the lower enrolment threshold for rural primary schools, the accessibility criterion which provides guidance on home to school travel times and the criterion strong links with the community also recognises the central place a school has for many communities (rural and urban).
71. The Government's commitment to rural proofing was strengthened with the introduction of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 ("The Act"). The Act requires public authorities to have 'due regard' to consciously consider the needs of people in rural areas when developing policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. It defines 'rural needs' as "the social and economic needs of rural areas".
72. This proposal relates specifically to the establishment of additional pre-school provision and as such would not be removing any educational services from the area. Should DP 559 be approved, additional pre-school places would be made available within this rural area.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### Quality of Education at Naíscoil na mBeann

73. ETI's latest inspection report on Naíscoil na mBeann in January 2019 assessed overall effectiveness of the pre-school as having *'important areas for improvement in the interests of all learners'*. The report noted that there were areas for improvement across the majority of the areas of the pre-school curriculum, and highlighted the importance of developing the action planning process to provide a greater focus on learning.
74. The outcomes for learners, however, were assessed as *'good'* and the report identified good links with parents who are kept well informed by the monthly newsletters with useful phonetic pronunciations of key Irish vocabulary and phrases for those parents who do not speak Irish. The report recognised very good links with the adjacent gaelscoil to which most of the children transfer.
75. The report states that parents and staff had the opportunity to respond to a confidential questionnaire, with the responses positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup.

### Effective Pre-school Provision NI (EPPNI) Research

76. The Case for Change states within its commentary on DP 559 that outcomes for children within nursery units have been shown to be of a higher quality than those with playgroups. It references EPPNI research from 2006, which states *"there are significant differences between preschool settings and their impact on children. Nursery schools/classes have the overall best outcomes."*

### Previous Proposal – DP 466

77. In November 2016 the former Minister did not approve a previous proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann, on the grounds that approval would have displaced quality existing pre-school provision.
78. The evidence presented at the time of the proposal indicated that the existing provider had the capacity to provide additional IM places should such a need arise. The creation of a grant-aided IM nursery unit as proposed would have resulted in a high level of over provision of IM pre-school places in the area.
79. While the current Development Proposal seeks the same statutory nursery provision as previously requested, the proposal has been considered against the current context and therefore reflects changes and updated information since the previous DP. This includes changes to the pattern of pre-school applications and overall level of provision in the area.

### Pre-school provision in the area

80. In determining the need for pre-school education provision, the Department generally assumes a level of provision at 95% of target age children, predicated on the application rate for pre-school education places, which is c. 92%; however the level of provision within local areas may be higher or lower, based on historic patterns of demand and assessment of ongoing need.

81. The current level of pre-school education provision within both a two mile and five mile radius of the school is used as an indicator of current capacity to meet need for pre-school education provision and is considered alongside other factors such as population projections to determine the likely future need for additional pre-school education provision in the area.
82. The number of pre-school education places and associated percentages are measured against the Year 1 enrolments for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years using school census data together with provisional 2018/19 data provided by the EA.
83. The analysis of provision below is based on the discontinuation of the part-time funded places currently provided in the voluntary playgroup, and the introduction of 26 part-time statutory nursery places as proposed.
84. The statistical information available in relation to the level of funded pre-school education provision is as follows:-

**Table 7: Level of Provision – two mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann**

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2016/17	78	53	0	131	129	101.6%	0
2017/18	78	57	0	135	152	88.8%	0
2018/19	78	58	0	136	171	79.5%	0
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>83.6%</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: School Census and EA

85. The level of pre-school education provision within a two mile radius has been significantly below the planning figure of 95% in two of the last three years and would increase to 83.6% after the proposed change. The PEG has also advised that four children living in the area remained unplaced at the end of the pre-school admissions process for 2017/18, suggesting that there may have been some under provision, however none of these children applied for an Irish-medium pre-school place, and Naiscoil na mBeann had capacity to accept additional children had they applied. There were no unplaced children in the area in 2016/17 or 2018/19, and PEG has indicated that several English-medium providers and Naiscoil na mBeann have capacity to increase the number of places offered, should this be required. Overall, this suggests that the level of provision is currently sufficient to meet demand for pre-school provision for both English and Irish medium pre-school education provision.
86. As the proposal is to transform the exiting voluntary PSEP funded provision to new statutory provision, and there is no other IM pre-school provision in the area, it is not expected that this would have a significant impact on other providers in the area, although it is possible that the modest increase of two places could impact on other good quality provision in the area.

**Table 8: Level of Provision – five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann.**

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2016/17	104	111	0	215	190	113.2%	0
2017/18	104	119	0	223	217	102.8%	1
2018/19	104	110	0	214	227	94.3%	0
<b>Proposed</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>97.3%</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: School Census and EA

87. The level of provision within the five mile radius has been above or very close to the planning figure in each of the last three years. There has been only one underage child attending a statutory pre-school place in the last three years. Overall, this would suggest that there is adequate pre-school provision in the area. If approved, the proposed level of pre-school education provision within the five mile radius would increase to 97.3%, slightly above the planning figure.

#### Temporary Flexibility

88. In the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years there were no additional pre-school places approved in a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann through Temporary Flexibility. In the 2018/19 academic year, Annalong PS was the only school within a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann to submit a Temporary Flexibility request. The request for four additional places was not supported by the EA because there was sufficient provision in the area to meet demand and was not approved by the Department.

89. As there is no statutory Irish-medium pre-school provision in the area, there were no requests for Temporary Flexibility for Irish-medium pre-school settings.

### **Financial Implications**

#### Accommodation

90. The existing voluntary nursery is housed within a modular building within the grounds of the St Columban's site, which is adjacent to Gaelscoil na mBeann. The Case for Change indicates that there are no capital proposals or minor works applications submitted on behalf of the school.

91. The Case for Change also states that there are no immediate changes that would be required to the housing of nursery provision.

#### Resource

92. If DP 559 is approved, the nursery unit would fall under the management remit of the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann, who would be accountable for the unit's running costs. Under Local Management of Schools (LMS) arrangements the school would receive appropriate funding for nursery unit pupils.

93. Based on current values and equivalent 26 part-time place nursery units established in primary schools, DE finance colleagues estimate that a statutory unit is likely to create an in-year funding need of c.£32k, charged against the Department's 'New Schools and Units' fund for new provision. Full year costs to the Aggregated Schools Budget are estimated at c.£55k for new provision.

#### Staffing

94. Should the DP be approved, there would be a requirement to employ a nursery teacher and an assistant, at an estimated cost of £30,000 to be met from the school's delegated budget.

### **SUMMARY**

95. Some key perspectives arising from consultation are summarised below:

- The PEG has provided support for this proposal as there is no other IM provider in the area;
- The EA offers support for the proposal in the context of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM education;
- The Department's Early Years Team considers that the proposed change could be considered reasonable, although it is not necessary to meet current or projected demand for IM pre-school education in the area;
- No support for, or opposition to, the proposal was received during the statutory two month period of post-publication consultation.

96. In arriving at a decision the Department must balance a number of relevant statutory duties in relation to IM education, rurality, and the effective and efficient use of public funds.

97. Considerations that might support each of the two possible decisions are set out below.

#### Considerations that do lend support to an approval decision

98. A pattern of growth in enrolments suggests that the host school is capable of meeting the required minimum enrolment to become a sustainable rural primary school of 105.

99. The Case for Change asserts that the symbiotic nature of the relationship between pre-school and primary provision is key to achieving sustainability. It considers that the proposed change in status of Naíscoil na mBeann would strengthen the link between it and Gaelscoil na mBeann which would ultimately result in even greater enrolment, stating *'this will not only enable the school to reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow and thus, realise the aims of the Schools for the Future policy'*.

100. The Case for Change states that Gaelscoil na mBeann is the sole provider of IM education in the area and as such this change of status would not impact on any other IM provision. The two nearest alternative IM primary schools (Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche in Castlewellan and Bunscoil an Iúir in Newry) are



over 16 miles away by road. Although both these schools have existing pre-school provision, the distance involved provides certainty that approval of this DP would not have a detrimental effect on alternative IM settings, and there is no evidence to indicate any adverse impact on non-IM pre-school provision.

101. It is asserted that this DP is about a change of status rather than displacement of existing provision, with PEG/EA comment broadly supportive, recognising the duty to encourage and facilitate growth of IM education. No objections were received during post-publication consultation.

Considerations that do not lend support to an approval decision

102. The pattern of applications to the naíscoil provides evidence that the current level of demand for IM provision is already catered for, with capacity to increase the number of places offered should they be required in future.

103. In 2018/19 all children in the area whose parents wanted an IM pre-school place were offered an IM pre-school place, and the difference in capacity between the existing provision (24 places) and the proposed provision (26 places) is minimal. IM places have remained available at the end of the admissions process in each of the last three years. If DP 559 is approved, it is possible that underage pupils may be admitted, running counter to the Article 44 duty.

104. The Case for Change does not seek to demonstrate that the proposed change is necessary to support the Pre-School Education Programme or meet demand for IM pre-school provision in the area. Instead, the focus is on a change of management type from voluntary to statutory, in order to allow the setting to avail of perceived benefits associated with statutory pre-school settings.

105. Many of the benefits cited for DP 559 relate to the primary school, rather than the actual provision of pre-school education. The main consideration relating to the provision of pre-school education is an assertion that the quality of education provision would increase as the result of the proposed change. However, the Case for Change does not explain why the proposer considers provision within the existing voluntary setting to be less effective than the proposed statutory provision.

106. The CfC refers to 'slightly longer hours' in statutory pre-school provision. It is not clear what this refers to, as the proposal is for part-time provision, which is defined in the same way for both statutory and non-statutory pre-school provision. Both voluntary and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued by the Department for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and both subject to the same education inspection standards.

107. It is the Department's practice, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting or management type, although all cases are assessed on their own merit. In its 2019 inspection, the ETI did identify some areas that require improvement, but assessed the current outcomes for learners as 'good'.

108. The host school at which a grant-aided nursery unit is to be established is expected to be viable and sustainable. As evidenced by the sustainability assessment, Gaelscoil na mBeann does not meet all six criteria of the SSP, with enrolment numbers significantly below the minimum recommended enrolment for a sustainable rural primary school under the SSP.

## CONCLUSION

109. It is evident that additional IM pre-school provision is not currently required in this area. Firstly, a proportion of children who attend the existing naiscoil do not routinely transfer to the gaelscoil. For example, in 2018/19 there were 19 funded pre-school places, but only 13 first preference applications were received for 2019/20 places at the gaelscoil. Secondly, admissions to the gaelscoil have consistently been at a level significantly below the proposed number of statutory pre-school places (26), peaking at 15 in 2017/18, dropping to 12 in 2018/19.

110. A proposal to increase levels of IM pre-school provision appears premature, with the existing 24 registered places allowing room for further expansion, and outcomes for learners recently assessed by ETI as 'good'. If DP 559 is approved, there is a risk of underage pupils being admitted, running counter to the Article 44 duty. If DP 559 is not approved, it is considered that the Department would not be obstructing growth of the sector.

111. The decision must also take account of considerations that relate to the proposed transition from voluntary to statutory provision. The Case for Change asserts a number of benefits that would arise from approval of DP 559, including the following:

- While it is possible for a voluntary provider to employ a qualified teacher, and the naiscoil does so presently, it is not considered financially viable for these temporary arrangements to continue, part subsidised by the gaelscoil and a local Irish Language group.
- It is asserted that the permanent employment of a qualified teacher would deliver educational benefits for children, citing as an example the ability to identify and cater for children with special educational needs, including access to support services (e.g. Educational Psychology) that would otherwise not be available to a voluntary setting.
- Transition from voluntary to statutory status has historically promoted an increase in admissions and enrolments across the sector.
- There is uncertainty over the gaelscoil's longer-term location, and the status quo risks future physical separation of pre-school and primary IM provision in the area. This risk would be removed if provision is brought under a single management authority.

112. Although these are pertinent points, most could be applied equally to other forms of non-statutory pre-school provision.

113. The distinctiveness of IM pre-school provision is however recognised in DE guidance, and 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.
114. It is considered that either decision could be supported by the application of statutory duties to the evidence available. If DP 559 is approved, that could be viewed as a positive step that recognises the asserted educational and other benefits. If DP 559 is not approved, sectoral growth will not be inhibited in the immediate future because there is no demonstrated need for additional IM pre-school provision in the area, and there is room for growth within the existing non-statutory provision. The latter decision would also ensure no underage admissions to the pre-school setting, removing any risk of unnecessary public expenditure.
115. Colleagues in the Department's Irish-medium and Integrated Education Team have advised that they are content that the Department's duties under Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) 1998 Order to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education have been considered within this submission, and supported that view with the following comments – "Essentially this DP seeks to replace voluntary IM pre-school provision with a statutory setting. As is pointed out in the Case for Change, the DP does not seek to demonstrate that the proposed change is necessary to support the Pre-School Education Programme, nor meet demand for IM pre-school provision in the area. Rather, the focus is on a change of management type from voluntary to statutory, in order to allow the setting to avail of perceived benefits associated with statutory pre-school settings. In light of DE's policy position that both voluntary and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and both subject to the same education inspection standards; and together with the evidence and information presented in the draft submission, I concur with the recommendation not to approve this DP."

## **RECOMMENDATION**

116. It is recommended that you:
- (i) Do not approve DP 559 – "A statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter."
  - (ii) Agree that this submission (with any appropriate redactions) will be published on the Department's website once the school, CnaG and the EA have been informed of your decision.
117. The following appendices are attached for your consideration:-

### **Appendix A: Copy of Development Proposal 559**

- Appendix B: Case for Change**
- Appendix C: ETI Comments**
- Appendix D: DE (Policy Team) Comments**



**BILL STEVENSON**  
**Area Planning Policy Team**  
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Lorraine Finlay  
APPT correspondence  
Press Office

### EDUCATION AUTHORITY

#### DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL No 559

##### Gaelscoil na mBeann

Notice is hereby given that a proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 has been submitted by the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann to the effect that:

**A statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.**

A copy of the Proposal and Case for Change may be inspected at offices of the Education Authority, Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 2HS between the hours of 9.00 am and 4.30 pm and [www.eani.org.uk](http://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](mailto: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

## APPENDIX B

### CASE FOR CHANGE – Supporting Information

#### SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

AREA PLANNING DISTRICT	Newry, Mourne and Down
DP NUMBER	DP 559
PROPOSER	Board of Governors, Gaelscoil na mBeann Eamonn Rodgers (Chairperson)
SCHOOL(S) NAME	Gaelscoil na mBeann
SCHOOL REFERENCE	504-6692
TYPE	Primary
MANAGEMENT	Irish-medium
DP PUBLICATION DATE	27 August 2018
PROPOSAL	The Board of Governors of GAELSCOIL NA mBEANN proposes the establishment of a STATUTORY PART-TIME IRISH-MEDIUM NURSERY UNIT to take effect from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.

#### STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<b>PROPOSER</b>  The Proposer is Eamonn Rodgers, Chairperson of the Board of Governors Gaelscoil na mBeann.	Internal Consultation:  Gaelscoil na mBeann's BOG 19 Nov 2017(Appendix A)  Gaelscoil na mBeann's Staff 18 October 2017(Appendix B)  Parents of Gaelscoil na mBeann 11 September 2017(Appendix D)  External Consultation:  Naíscoil na mBeann Committee 18 October 2017(Appendix C)  Alternate Local IM Provision 7 & 14 December 2017(Appendix E)  All of the opinions and views collated during the internal consultation indicated strong support for the proposal. Governors, teachers, and parents alike, all feel that this is a necessary step forward for Irish-medium education in Killeel and
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<p>Summary and Assessment of Views Received:</p>	<p>that this particular step will bring further long-term stability to the IM provision in the local area</p> <p>SIGNED: <u>Eamonn Rodgers</u>      DATE: 6/2/18</p>
<p>CONFIRMATION BY THE PROPOSER</p>	<p>I confirm that the school's Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of Pupils were consulted on the dates recorded above and Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out.</p> <p>NAME: Eamonn Rodgers      OFFICE HELD: Chair BOG</p> <p>SIGNED: <u>Eamonn Rodgers</u>      DATE: 6/2/18</p>

**ASSOCIATED PROPOSALS**


Not Applicable.

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

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<p><b>THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY</b></p>	<p>I confirm that the schools which the EA consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 27 April 2018 with their comments to be returned by the 1 June 2018:</p> <p>NAME: John Collings</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 14 June 2018</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>	<p>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 a copy of the proposal was sent, on 27 April 2018, to schools which might be affected by the proposal. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, staff and parents of pupils to be returned to the Education Authority by 1 June 2018.</p>
<p>Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p>	<p>A total of 24 schools were forwarded the draft proposal for their comments.</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><b>Responses</b></p> <p>There were two responses to this proposal.</p> <p>Comhairle na Gaelscolaiochta Kilkeel Primary School</p> <p><u>Comhairle na Gaelscolaiochta</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comhairle na Gaelscolaiochta supports this proposal.</li> <li>• The educational benefits and practical benefits of bringing both provisions under a single management are clearly articulated within the DP.</li> </ul> <p><u>Kilkeel Primary School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Governors of Kilkeel Primary School wish to object to the development proposal.</li> <li>• Due to the draconian funding cuts in education, any extra money should be used to sustain,</li> </ul>



	<p>improve and develop current educational provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By implementing this draft proposal, even more funding will be taken from the already floundering education budget and will no doubt reduce the AWPU rate.</li> </ul> <p><u>Education Authority Response</u> See below</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 prepublication 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: 14 June 2018</p>	<p>In keeping with the Education Authority's duty to assist the Department of Education's statutory requirement to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education the Authority supports Development Proposal 559 – the establishment of a nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann to cater for 26 pupils on a part time basis.</p> <p>In addition PEG has provided comments to the Education Authority which supports the proposal as there are no other Irish medium pre-school provision in the immediate area.</p> <p>The PEG comments are detailed overleaf.</p>

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

**PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2018-19**

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NURSERY UNIT FOR 26 PART-TIME PUPILS AT GAELSCOIL NA mBEANN FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER**

**PEG Comments**

<b>School</b>	<b>Gaelscoil Na mBeann</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>139a Newcastle Road, Kilkeel, BT34 4NL</b>
Does PEG support the proposal?	PEG is in support of this proposal
What is the potential impact if the proposal is/ is not approved? (alternatives for meeting demand/ potential for over provision)	18 pre-school places are currently funded within Naiscoil Na mBeann out of a registration of 24– if approved, staff may be at risk as 3 staff are required within a playgroup setting for 24 children (1:8 staff child ratio) and 2 staff are required within a nursery setting (1:13 staff child ratio).
What is the PEG assessment of need for pre-school provision for the area? Is this need currently met?	For the 2018-19 academic year a total of 232 funded places are available in the Annalong & Binnian and Kilkeel Central, Kilkeel South, Lisnacree ward/cluster areas with a total of 216 1st preference applications being received. The Naiscoil is included within these figures with 19 1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications.
How many 1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications were received by the setting? (usually 2 years figures but this depends on the timing of the development proposal)	2018 19 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences 2017 15 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences (funded for 18) 2016 13 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences (funded for 20)
Are there current or anticipated pressures in placing pre-school children in the area?	The projected live births for the former ward/cluster areas of Annalong & Binnian and Kilkeel Central, Kilkeel South, Lisnacree are as follows:- 2017 admissions 230 (225 1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications) 2018 admissions 219 (216 1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications) 2019 admissions 242
Have children been unplaced at the end of the process in previous years?	2017-18 4 children 2016-17 0 children
Has demand been increasing over time but the number of places has not? Is the level of need or provision changing significantly? Eg new housing development, provider leaving PSEP	Projected live births statistics suggest a slight increase for pre-school in September 2019, however, a number of non-statutory providers are not operating to full capacity and funded places can be increased, if necessary, to meet demand. TF is also available for the statutory setting.

Can existing voluntary/private providers expand to help meet demand? Is there potential for new providers to come on to the programme?	There is no other Irish Medium provision within the area. A number of existing English medium non-statutory providers still have spare capacity with their allocation of funded places for September 2018.
What is the potential impact on existing good quality provision (displacement)?	This Naiscoil is already in existence with 18 funded pre-school places and can accept up to 24 funded places in a session.
If there are other development proposals in the area, how might they impact? (eg if proposal A were to be approved, would B still be required?)	None that PEG is aware of
Other comments	

- **BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Brief Description of the School**

Gaelscoil na mBeann is a multi-denominational Irish-medium primary school which was established in 2010 by a group of local people and parents who wanted Irish-medium education for their children. The founders had a clear vision for the education they wanted and the whole school community has worked tirelessly to make their vision a reality. In 2012, Gaelscoil na mBeann gained recognition and funding from the Department of Education. The school is situated in the heart of Kilkeel, beside the feeder pre-school Naíscoil na mBeann and not only attracts pupils from Kilkeel but also from the surrounding areas, including Annalong, Ballymartin, Glasdrumman, Longstone, and Attical. There is a caring friendly ethos in Gaelscoil na mBeann where each child is valued and difference is celebrated. The school acknowledges the children's successes in school assemblies, local and national competitions, on social media and in the local press. Parents are very much involved in the wider life of the school and the parent's association, Cairde na mBeann play an active role in fundraising and raising the profile of the school. There is a whole school approach to the development of the children and all members of the school community put the pupils first. All staff are trained in the Procedures for Child Protection and are familiar with the Pastoral Care Policy which has been agreed with the Board of Governors. 8% of children attending Gaelscoil na mBeann are newcomers. The school ensures that it is a welcoming place for newcomer children and their families with a translated prospectus and multilingual signs as well as availing of the EA translation services and newcomer advices. 16% of children attending Gaelscoil na mBeann are on the Code of Practice for SEN. The school takes a focused approach for developing children with an additional need and liaise closely with Educational Psychology Services and SEN section of EA. 44% of children attending Gaelscoil na mBeann are entitled to free school meals.

### **1.2 Location**

The Gaelscoil is located at 127a Newcastle Road, Kilkeel, BT34 4NL. The school board of governors have recently requested that DE make contact with CCMS on their behalf regarding the permanent purchase of the land on which the school, and nursery, is currently situated. The schools hold a lease at present.

### **1.3 Date of Implementation**

It is proposed that a 26-place Nursery Unit is opened on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 or the earliest date possible, thereafter.

### **1.4 Existing Capital Proposals/Minor Works Applications**

There are no existing capital proposals.

### **1.5 Compliance with 'SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE: A POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS'**

#### **1.51 Quality Educational Experience**

Gaelscoil na mBeann was inspected by ETI in November 2012, with a Follow-up Inspection in May 2015. The November 2012 Inspection highlighted the strengths in:

*“the children’s behaviour and disposition to learning; the children’s understanding of Irish; the system in place for recording observations and assessment of the children’s learning; and the support provided*

*to the teachers by the Board of Governors. The overall quality of the school was evaluated as satisfactory at the time of the original inspection.”*

The Follow-up Inspection, conducted in May 2015, noted that many improvements had been made in the intervening period. The most important improvements were noted as:

- *“the standards of the children’s work and the quality of the teaching observed continue to improve; during the follow-up inspection the quality of learning and teaching observed was always good or better;*
- *the principal and co-ordinators have developed a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching, including: carrying out planned classroom observations; scrutinising children’s work; and monitoring teachers’ planning;*
- *the principal and co-ordinators have begun to gather and analyse internal performance data to track achievement and inform better future planning; and*
- *there is a consistent focus in staff meetings and in staff development on improving further the quality of learning and teaching”*

The Follow-up Inspection concluded by stating that the quality of education provided by the school is now good, that the school has important strengths in most of its education and pastoral provision, and that the *“inspection has identified an area of improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.”*

The Board of Governors and Staff have continued to improve upon these standards and their contributions are noted in both the November and May inspections, underpinning the good leadership and management within the school.

With regards to extra-curricular provision, there are many activities catered for by the Gaelscoil. Amongst these are Gaelic Games, Music, Swimming, Drama, Numeracy, Literacy and of course, a Homework Club. Many of these clubs are funded through the Extended Schools Programme. A strong emphasis is placed on sport and physical activity, with children having the opportunity to work with specialist games teachers who visit the school.

### **1.52 Stable Enrolment Trends**

The enrolment has increased from 8 pupils in 2011/12 to 64 pupils in the current academic year of 2017/18 – this represents over 800% growth in the school. This is not surprising as the school is just completed its first seven-year cycle. However, the SELB Primary Area Plan (2014) stated that Gaelscoil na mBeann is *“considered to be sustainable within the local area context in relation to enrolment”* and that it is a *“developing school with a pattern of increasing enrolment.”* As well as this, Gaelscoil na mBeann has now qualified for capital funding which will further bolster the enrolment at the school.

### **1.53 Sound Financial Position**

As a newly established school, there is an understanding within LMS that the new school will have an under-spend under the Common Fund Scheme for the initial period of the school’s life. In this particular case, the Board of Governors are actively searching for a permanent school site upon which to build the long term future of the school. The under-spend in the budget is, in part, part of this process in

planning for the future. However, it should be noted that the SELB Primary Area Plan (2014) stated that “the school is currently considered to be sustainable within the local area context in relation to enrolment and financial viability.”

<b>Table A</b>				
<b>Budget Spending for Gaelscoil na mBeann</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Resources (incl previous years carryover)</b>	<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>Carryover</b>	<b>% Carryover of Total Resources</b>
2017/18	£263,209	£253,708	£9501	3.61
2018/19*	£260,974	£265,592	0	0

\*Projected expenditure

#### **1.5.4 Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principal**

The Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann have clearly proven their ability to lead the school effectively and deliver high quality provision and this was noted in the November 2012 ETI Inspection which included the “*support provided to the teachers by the Board of Governors*” as one of the main strengths identified by the inspection. The Principal was appointed in the period between the November 2012 Inspection and the Follow-up Inspection, May 2015, and as the Follow-up Inspection states “*the standards of the children’s work and the quality of the teaching observed continue to improve; during the follow-up inspection the quality of learning and teaching observed was always good or better.*” The Follow-up Inspection also found that amongst the most important improvements made since the November 2012 Inspection:

- “*the principal and co-ordinators have developed a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching, including: carrying out planned classroom observations; scrutinising children’s work; and monitoring teachers’ planning;*
- *the principal and co-ordinators have begun to gather and analyse internal performance data to track achievement and inform better future planning; and*
- *there is a consistent focus in staff meetings and in staff development on improving further the quality of learning and teaching”*

The strong leadership and management of the school by both the Board of Governors and Principal has been noted in the Inspection reports and as a result of their leadership, good work and the increasing enrolment trends within the school, the Minister of Education was able to award Capital Viability status to the school in September 2015.

#### **1.54 Accessibility**

The school is readily accessible to the wider Kilkeel area and most pupils live within 5km of the school. The pupils come from Kilkeel and the surrounding areas of Ballymartin, Annalong, Glasdrumman, Longstone and Attical.

#### **1.55 Strong Links with the Community**

Gaelscoil na mBeann has strong links with a host of local organisations. Due to the symbiotic nature of their relationship, there are strong links with the current voluntary Irish-medium nursery provision (Naíscoil na mBeann). There is a burgeoning relationship with Irish-medium post-primary provision in St. Malachy’s High School, with a collective approach to promoting and strengthening the Irish-medium provision in the wider South Down area. Gaelscoil na mBeann also has close links with Bunscoil

Bheanna Boirche and Bunscoil an Lúir with staff collaboration on assessment and planning being key elements as well as joint participation in sporting and educational endeavours. The school has a great relationship with local businesses and many contribute to school events and fundraising activities. There is an exceptionally strong relationship with the Conradh na Gaeilge branch which is based in nearby Annalong. Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar have supported the school strongly since its inception and continue to provide vital support as regards to the promotion of Irish-medium education on a local level. The school provides a breakfast club and an afterschool's programme five days a week and as well as daily transport to and from school to facilitate working families. Gaelscoil na mBeann benefits greatly from collaborating with Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta regarding its financial position as a growing school and its pursuit of a permanent site. Also, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta work closely with the school staff, parents group and management in recruitment for enrolment to both Naíscoil an Gaelscoil and also in assisting in matters of policy, HR and school development.

The school participates in many local sporting, cultural and educational events regularly visiting the local leisure centre, library, The Nautilus Centre and local churches. The other groups with whom the school engages, are:

- *Grúpa Tuistí is Tachráin – a parent and toddler's Irish language group*
- *Cairde na mBeann – joint nursery and primary parent's association*
- *Comhaltas – Cultural group which promotes Irish music and culture*
- *Local GAA clubs and Down GAA*
- *Local Churches*
- *Newry Mourne and Down District Council*
- *Local Primary Schools (both Irish-medium and English-medium)*
- *Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta*
- *Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta*
- *Lower Mourne Gaelic League*
- **RATIONALE FOR CHANGE**

### **2.1 Reason for Change**

The reason for the submission of this proposal is primarily to improve the educational experience and outcomes for those attending Irish-medium pre-school provision in Kilkeel and also, to contribute towards the long-term sustainability of Irish-medium primary provision in the local and wider area.

The desired outcome of the proposal is to transform the current voluntary playgroup into a statutory nursery unit within Gaelscoil na mBeann in order to provide parents and their children with the optimum start to their education. Through the Department of Education's *Pre-school Expansion Programme*, the Department aims to ensure that at least one year of preschool education is available to every family that wants it. Registered Irish-medium providers can enter the programme even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area, providing that sufficient demand for the provision is evidenced. This development proposal also falls in line with:

- Recommendation No. 2 from the Review of Irish-medium Education Report (2008),
- The obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and,

- The statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education (Article 89, Education (NI) Order 1998)

There were two options considered; for Naíscoil na mBeann to remain as a voluntary nursery or to apply to become a statutory nursery. The reason for applying for a statutory nursery is that there are many added benefits associated with the statutory status that the voluntary provision does not provide. The option to transform the voluntary provision to statutory has been chosen as the way forward. Not only has the committee of Naíscoil na mBeann requested that the Board of Governors submit a development proposal to that end (as evidenced in Appendix C) but there are, also, several added benefits associated with a statutory nursery unit that the voluntary provision does not provide, genuine area-planning interests and an urgency attached to accommodation and site concerns. With Gaelscoil na mBeann's long-term location uncertain, there is a real danger that the preschool and primary Irish-medium provisions will be located in separate sites in the town, undermining the relationship between the two levels of provision and the future growth and development of the Gaelscoil. If the current conditions are maintained, the voluntary naíscoil committee would be responsible for relocation along with the Gaelscoil which would place upon it a financial burden that would undoubtedly impact negatively upon the education of the children.

As past experience and research has shown, the symbiotic nature of the relationship between preschool and primary provision is essential in maintaining the sustainability of the provision. As a result of this, the strengthening of this relationship has both short-term and long-term benefits for the sustainability of IME provision in the locality. The proposal to bring both levels of provision under a single management authority would ensure greater cohesion between preschool and foundation stage education and an enhanced continuity for the children. In a study entitled *An Traein: ag aistriú ón Naíonra go dtí an Bhunscoil* (The Train: transferring from Nursery to Primary), conducted in the south of Ireland, found that *"staff in preschool settings on the same site as the primary school felt they were advantaged when managing transitions"* (Mhic Mathúna, 2011). As well as the ease of transition for pupils, historical enrolments have shown that the transformation of voluntary preschool settings to statutory has led to strong increases in enrolments and admissions in the IME sector (more information under Area Planning Impact).

At the heart of the proposal, is the desire to further enhance the preschool provision and continue to build upon the good educational and linguistic standards set by the current voluntary provision. Research commissioned by both the Stormont Assembly and the Department of Education have identified several benefits and higher educational outcomes as a result of children attending nursery schools/classes. The *Effective Preschool Provision in Northern Ireland, or EPPNI, (DENI, 2010)* research indicates when considering different types of preschool provision, or none, that:

*"...there is a significant beneficial effect of attending a nursery school/class for Key Stage 2 English attainment, with the nursery school/class group being over 3 times more likely to attain level 5 as the no preschool group. Also playgroup children are about twice as likely to attain level 4 as the no preschool group. There is a significant beneficial effect of attending a nursery school/class or playgroup for attainment in Key Stage 2 mathematics, with the nursery school/class group being almost 3 times as likely to attain level 5, while the playgroup children are over twice as likely to attain level 5, as the no preschool group."*

Whilst the crux of this point was to identify the benefits of attending preschool (as opposed to non-attendance), it nonetheless highlights the increased educational outcomes produced by a statutory nursery experience (as opposed to those produced by either a playgroup or none). This was previously highlighted by the EPPNI research from 2006 which notes that *"there are significant differences between*



*preschool settings and their impact on children. Nursery schools/classes have the overall best outcomes*". As well as the enhanced educational outcomes, there are several practical reasons for endorsing the proposal including, access to additional services not afforded to voluntary groups and of course, the positive implications that the proposal would have for the sustainability, viability and future development of Irish-medium education in the wider Kilkeel area.

- **Area Planning Impact**

In the Department's response to Development Proposal 466, it was suggested that overprovision may be the intended outcome of the DP. As has been addressed previously, the raising of educational experience and outcomes is the intended outcome of this proposal. The long-term strengthening of the IM primary provision in Kilkeel is the other intended outcome of the proposal.

As a newly established school, enrolment in the school shows an upward trend – from 8 pupils in 2011/12 to 64 pupils for the 2017/18 academic year. The 2014 SELB Primary Area Plan indicates that while Gaelscoil na mBeann is a newly opened school and sits below the rural threshold of 105 pupils, it is a *"developing school with increasing enrolment"*. Should this proposal be approved, it is logical that this greater link between Naíscóil and Gaelscoil will result in even greater enrolment and that long-term benefits of this proposal would be recognised across three levels of provision. An analysis of enrolment trends prior to and directly after the introduction of statutory nursery units in Irish-medium schools in the north clearly demonstrates the positive effect that this change has upon enrolment and admissions (See Appendix F).

On average, pre-school admissions have increased by over 50% in the three-year period prior to and following transition to statutory provision, with that figure rising to nearly a 70% increase when comparing admissions in the five-year period prior to and following transition. With regards to the effect upon primary admissions, the pre- and post-transition change lies at over 20% increase in the three-year period and higher still, at 25%, for the five-year period.

As demonstrated, the increased preschool enrolment will further strengthen the enrolment in the primary provision (Gaelscoil na mBeann); the strength of the primary provision is essential in maintaining the viability and increasing the capacity of the IM post-primary provision at Ardscoil Naomh Maolmhaodhóg (St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan). It is envisaged that the long-term outcome of this proposal will contribute to ensuring the long-term viability of the post-primary provision. This will not only enable the school to reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow and thus, realise the aims of the Schools for the Future policy.

The increased enrolment is vital in supporting the local post-primary IM provider. In his response to the Advisory Group Report on the Strategic Development of Irish-medium Post-Primary Education, the Minister of Education acknowledged that,

*"there has been a gap in the strategic development of post-primary provision."*

*(Minister of Education, John O'Dowd, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014)*

It is envisaged that the long-term outcome of this proposal will contribute in closing that gap. This proposal is not linked to any other current Development Proposal. As the voluntary nursery is currently located within the school grounds, there will be minimal, if any, work required on the building.

- **EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

As previously stated, the core purpose of this Development Proposal is to further enhance the educational experience offered to the families who chose to avail of Irish-medium education in Killeel. As the overall policy aim of the *Learning to Learn (DENI, 2012)* strategy states, all children should “*have opportunities to achieve their potential through high quality early years education and learning experiences.*” We believe that the transformation of the voluntary pre-school to statutory unit will further raise the standard of education and the educational outcomes for IM preschool education in Killeel. This is affirmed by the Effective Preschool Provision in Northern Ireland study (DENI, 2006), which states that “*at the start of primary school, children from nursery school/classes showed the most benefit for cognitive development*”.

The most tangible benefit is the permanent employment of a qualified teacher. As noted in the April 2013 NI Assembly Research paper, *Early Years Provision*, Perry states that there is “*strong correlation between higher staff qualification and better outcomes for children. Staff that have undergone more specialised education and training are found to be associated with stable and stimulating interactions in early years settings.*” For two years now (since Sept. 2016), a qualified teacher has been employed as the Naíscoil leader and this has seen a marked improvement in the quality of provision and parental satisfaction. This is reflected in the Sept 2017 Primary 1 admissions of 15 – the highest admission number since Gaelscoil na mBeann opened its doors. However, the gap in wage is being funded through Gaelscoil na mBeann and a local Irish Language group and this is unsustainable in the long-term.

Moreover, language acquisition and age are very strongly linked. As such, it is vital that future cohorts are afforded the best opportunities at the earliest stage and in this regard, a nursery setting which is led by a qualified teacher is the strongest option for the children and their future linguistic development.

In response to past developments proposals, the Department has pointed out that voluntary groups can also employ a qualified teacher, however, this is simply not possible on a financial basis over a sustained period of time. A starting salary for a teacher at the most basic point, M1, is around £22,000. This employment, plus the statutory employer pension contributions, would amount to over 50% of the monies allocated to a 24-place (physical capacity of the current naíscoil) PEAG-funded pre-school – before accounting for additional staffing costs, running costs etc.

The slightly longer hours which can be afforded to statutory provision allows the child greater exposure to the target language. The connection between age and linguistic acquisition are strongly linked together and the additional facet of Irish-medium education, when compared to English-medium, is the introduction of the Irish Language. In research report commissioned in the Republic of Ireland by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2012), Ó Duibhir and Cummins found that “*the more exposure the learners have to the L2 (Irish) the more they will learn and the faster they will learn it*”, (Towards an Integrated Language Curriculum in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-12 years)).

As such, it is essential that language acquisition is sufficiently catered for by a teacher-led nursery unit which presents the pupils with the best opportunity through which to develop their linguistic skills. Historically, the majority of pupils entering into the Irish-medium sector do not come from Irish speaking families and therefore, language acquisition at the earliest stages gains an even greater importance. As noted by Ó Laoire and Harris in *Language and Literacy in Irish-medium Primary Schools* (NCCA, 2006), “*the more exposure to the language as in immersion/submersion CLIL programmes and the more opportunities to use the language in a meaningful way, the better the chances of acquisition.*”

The permanent employment of a teacher also improves the ability of the provision to identify and cater for children with Special Education Needs (SEN). As noted in the Special Education Teams' comments in response to Development Proposal 449 (to establish a statutory nursery unit at Gaelscoil Éanna):

*“this DP should have beneficial effects on SEN provision as a result of the employment of a qualified teacher which will help improve the educational and linguistic standards and pupil attainment both in the preschool and the primary school; and in terms of Educational Psychology input which will ensure that the specific needs of particular children are identified and met.”*

Through ensuring that the specific needs of particular children are identified and met, at the earliest stage, and through the access of outreach supports, which are not currently facilitated under the current voluntary status of Naíscoil na mBeann, the effects of certain SENs can be contained and minimised, as far as is possible.

- **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

***School Enrolment***

The enrolment in the school (See Table B) shows an upward trend – 8 pupils in 2011/12 to 64 pupils in 2017/18, and there has been a 60% increase in enrolment over the last 3 years. Indeed, the 2014 SELB Primary Area Plan indicates that while Gaelscoil na mBeann is a newly opened school and sits below the rural threshold, it is a “*developing school with increasing enrolment*”. There are more pupils within the classes Primary 1- 3, representing 31 pupils, than in classes Primary 5 – 7 (22 pupils). This imbalance is clear evidence of the school’s increasing enrolment.

Should this proposal be approved, and as has been addressed previously, the Nursery and Primary admissions are expected to grow further. This will not only enable the school to reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow and thus, realise the aims of the Schools for the Future policy.

<b>Table B</b>			
<b>Current and Historical Enrolment at Gaelscoil na mBeann</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Approved Enrolment</b>	<b>Actual Enrolment</b>	<b>Unfilled Places</b>
2013/14	29	28	1
2014/15	29	40	-11
2015/16	58	46	12
2016/17	61	54	7
2017/18	76	64	12

## School Admissions

The following table (Table C) illustrates admissions for Gaelscoil na mBeann over a five-year period. The numbers have been steady over the last four years – with the exception of the current academic year. Uncertainty surrounding the future of the school site had a major impact upon recruitment; however, with the Minister’s decision in September 2015, this issue has now been resolved. The decision of the Minister to grant Capital Viability status has alleviated those fears and the future of the school is now being seen to be more secure in the eyes of prospective parents. In the interim period, the Gaelscoil has worked hard to build enrolment and this work, coupled with the influence of the current Naíscóil leader, has resulted in the highest enrolment to date.

<b>Table C</b>				
<b>Current and Historical Admissions at Gaelscoil na mBeann</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications for P1: 1<sup>st</sup> Preferences</b>	<b>Total Preferences Considered</b>	<b>Admitted</b>	<b>Approved Admission Number</b>
2013/14	11	11	11	15
2014/15	12	12	12	15
2015/16	8	8	8	15
2016/17	8	8	8	15
2017/18	15	15	15	15
2018/19*	12	12	12	15

\*applications received

The following table (Table D) illustrates admissions for Naíscóil na mBeann over the last 4 years. The level of admissions clearly demonstrates that the demand exists for the provision. These figures, along with the approval of Capital Viability status, bode well for the future of Irish-medium education in the wider Kilkeel area and the future enrolment at Gaelscoil na mBeann. Recent uncertainty regarding the future of the Gaelscoil and Naíscóil has had an impact upon enrolment but this has been resolved as a result of the Minister’s decision to grant Capital Viability status to the school and both Pre-School and Primary intake are expected to return and, then, surpass their previous levels.

<b>Table D</b>			
<b>Current and Historical Enrolment at Naíscóil na mBeann</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Preferences Considered</b>	<b>Admitted</b>	<b>Approved Admission Number</b>
2013/14	17	15	19
2014/15	16	15	17
2015/16	11	11	15
2016/17	20	20	20
2017/18	18	18	18

2018/19*	20	20	18
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\*applications received

### **Alternative Schools**

This is the only Irish-medium preschool provision in the area, with nearest equivalent provision located nearly 13 miles away in Castlewellan.

2017/18 Local Irish-medium Pre-School and Primary 1 Provision						Table E
REF	School Name	Distance (M)	Nursery Places	Voluntary	Total	P1
5BB0562	Naíscoil na mBeann	-	-	18	18	-
5046692	Gaelscoil na mBeann	-	-	-	-	15
4AB0163	Naíscoil Bheanna Boirche	12.8	-	27	27	-
4046648	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	12.8	-	-	-	20

- **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

***Outline all actions required to deliver the proposal if approved.***

If the proposal is approved, the posts of Nursery Teacher and Assistant would need to be drawn up, advertised and interviews conducted. This process should take no longer than 8 weeks. This is clearly realistic within the timescale and with the intention of opening the new provision in September 2018.

***Outline how the Proposal will affect the management of the school***

The inclusion of the statutory provision within the primary school would not immediately effect the enrolment of the school. It is envisioned, however, that the statutory provision would further strengthen future Primary 1 enrolment and enable Gaelscoil na mBeann to reach and surpass the rural enrolment threshold. The Board of Governors will assume responsibility for the management of the naíscoil as an integral part of the school which will provide a continuity and consistency of approach – something which can be absent, on occasion, from the setting under the voluntary management committee.

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

If the proposal is accepted as proposed, the statutory nursery provision would come into effect from the beginning of the school year. As such, it would have no impact upon the education of the children within the nursery, nor would it impact upon the pupils in the primary school itself.

- **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

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

The change from voluntary to statutory provision would mean funding would transfer from Early Years to AWPU. As such, the cost of the nursery class would be £47,573 for 26 part-time nursery places, according

to LMS Common Funding Scheme 2016/17. In real terms, the additional cost-per-pupil is around £200. This cost may be reduced with any reduction in the AWPU value.

## BUDGET POSITION FOR 5 YEARS

Table F				
<b>Budget Spending for Gaelscoil na mBeann</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Resources (incl previous years carryover)</b>	<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>Carryover</b>	<b>% Carryover of Total Resources</b>
2012/13	£78,000	£65,149	£12,851	16.48%
2013/14	£156,929	£151,758	£5,171	3.30%
2014/15	£199,177	£160,507	£38,670	19.41%
2015/16	£218,671	£196,634	£22,037	10.08%
2016/17	£235,791	£198,690	£37,101	15.73%

### ***Staffing***

A Nursery teacher and an assistant would need to be employed at a cost of approximately £30,000 and this would come from the school's allocated budget.

### ***Transport***

There are no additional transport concerns.

### ***Accommodation***

The voluntary nursery is housed in a modular building within the grounds of the St. Columban's site, which is adjacent to Gaelscoil na mBeann. There are currently no capital proposals/minor works applications submitted on behalf of the school. There are no immediate changes that would be required to the housing of the nursery provision.

Minutes from Board of Governors Meeting Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017

1. Present [REDACTED]
2. Apologies – [REDACTED]
3. Ratification of previous minutes
4. Matters Arising
  - Principal, after discussion and general agreement, to pursue funding for 'In Year Growth', both EA and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to be contacted.
  - Adjustments to processes for monitoring of/communicating about attendance – [REDACTED] suggested letters to parents when child's attendance falls below 95%/90%/85%. Class attendance to be rewarded.
5. Principal's Report
  - PRSD – staff targets have been agreed and will be monitored through class observation, book looks, monitoring of planners. Reporting to governors will take place at end of term 3 meeting.
  - SEN – 12 children on SEN register. 3 at Stage 5 of Code of Practice. 2 children being referred following initial Educational Psychology Consultation meeting.
  - 1 child on SEN Register is now back in Gaelscoil na mBeann full time following a part time placement in Learning Support Unit.
  - Child Protection – Social Services are currently involved with 4 children. None of the referrals came from school.
  - Report on Sept '17 enrolments and predicted Sept '18 enrolments; 15 children enrolled this year. 15 predicted next September. Principal to meet with 3 or 4 parents who have children in Naíscoil who aren't sending them on to Gaelscoil. [REDACTED] noted that a Teaching Point for

Literacy and PR has been previously discussed and should be on next meeting's agenda.

- Naiscoil na mBeann Development Proposal – it was unanimously agreed to support this proposal.
- Car Park issues – a number of parents have raised concerns about the safety of the car park, as well as its capacity to deal with increased traffic caused by increased numbers. Governors noted that this is a concerning issue. Principal reported that he monitors the car park in the morning when possible and that two parents are on a rota to help out also. Furthermore, numerous communications have been sent by Newsletter, letter, social media and increased visible signage to urge parents to behave safely and respectfully in the car park. [REDACTED] advised that EA be contacted and requested to visit and evaluate.

#### 6. School Development Plan

- Educational Subcommittee to meet in December (date TBC) to monitor and evaluate and then report back to governors.
- Principal invited all governors to visit school and observe lessons
- [REDACTED] Child Protection to visit and take part in a whole school assembly, as part of her fulfilling of this role.

#### 7. Budget

- 3 Year Budget Plan was ratified.

#### 8. Chair's Report

- School Site/development – chair reported that he and Principal have been in regular contact with EA/DE/CCMS/InaG regarding the future site/location/plans for Gaelscoil na mBeann, however, in summary it was noted that until a definitive decision is made on the future of St. Columban's, no further information has been forthcoming.
- Chair reported that [REDACTED] has resigned from the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann. It was decided that the governors would contribute to a gift for her to mark her great work and efforts, particularly in the early years of the school be founded.

#### 9. AOB – None



Clár

1. Measúnú Chun Foghlaim
2. Suíomh na Scoile – Mícheál – Déardaoin 19ú
3. Earcaíocht – Facebook/nuachtlitr/nuachtáin srl
4. Tionól – Rang 1 – 27ú Deireadh Fómhair
5. Plé faoi Moladh Forbartha Gaelscoil na mBeann
6. Dátaí atá ag teacht
7. Cruinnithe EC le plé a oscailt faoin mhata, litearthacht, caighdeán na hoibre, iompair, cúrsaí ranga
8. Oíche Churaclaim
  - Lámhleabhar – Staff ---Lámhleabhar 2017,18
  - Spriocanna srl
  - Bag Pack

Attendees

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Apologies

[REDACTED]

\*Niall opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending

\*Minutes of previous meeting read and agreed. In relation to the matter of parent rep; Niall proposed [REDACTED] as a possible candidate. Mary Burns seconded this proposal. [REDACTED] (rel, to) Siobhan agreed to remain a committee member.

- In relation to payment of staff wages being spread across 12months; Mary did process this with the Accountant and whilst this system is now in place for two staff members it is yet to be finalised for Grainne....ongoing.

[REDACTED] Report.

[REDACTED] advised of one pupil who is currently going through the ASD assessment process and indicated there may be the need for additional staff. [REDACTED] highlighted that in the interim [REDACTED] (who has been vetted) could maybe support Naiscoil until the formal assessment process is completed.

Naiscoil were granted £1,200 from the Blackburn Trust. Equipment has been selected however if we pay VAT then we may need approx £200 extra to cover all. Mary advised there would be money in the float to cover this and with the committee's agreement she would write a cheque to cover this asap. Committee supported this.

[REDACTED] did indicate there are other funding bodies that Naiscoil could apply to for additional equipment however we agreed to postpone this until all new equipment was installed and in place to see what room we had left.

[REDACTED] did speak to Social Services re the possibility of running an afternoon session however there are currently too many obstacles to facilitate this at present. (e.g. [REDACTED] herself would not be able to run it, we would need a second leader and currently our waiting numbers are not high enough). If our waiting lists increase significantly we could re-visit this idea.

#### **Chair's Report**

In relation to the Action Plan, which all committee members were given site off, Niall and Grainne are continuing to work to address all requirements. Once completed [REDACTED] is to email all committee members a copy of this, upon receipt all committee members are granted ONE WEEK to respond should there be any discrepancies. If Niall/Grainne receive no contact from any committee member within that timeframe then the Plan will be signed off as complete.

In relation to the Development plan, [REDACTED] has continued to work alongside Comhairle in relation to Naiscoil being granted statutory status. The committee are fully behind this process and each Committee Member confirmed being in favour of Naiscoil moving to statutory recognition.

Regarding the roles and responsibilities of each committee member, [REDACTED] has been liaising with Social Worker [REDACTED] and will finalise we have and what we should have etc. over the coming weeks.

#### **Bursars Report**

[REDACTED] provided an overview of current financials; no current issues. [REDACTED] to attach this overview to minutes for filing

#### **A.O.B**

[REDACTED] confirmed receipt of her clearance from police checks etc.

*NEXT MEETING 29/11/2017 AT 5.30PM*

Cairde na mBeann Minutes

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Meeting Commenced at 7.00pm

In Attendance:

[REDACTED]

Apologies:

[REDACTED]

The following was discussed:

[REDACTED] Voted in as Vice Secretary.

[REDACTED] last meeting as she is leaving next week. Thanked the parents for her time working with the school.

Explained the role of Cairde na mBeann being a network of support for the school and the nursery and how any comments and suggestions should go directly to them, but if there are any complaint to go to Niall at the school.

Talked about funding: The Naiscoil have gained £9000 funding. With the help of Cairde who put in £990 to apply for funding. Parents agreed this was ok. A 10% fee for filling out the forms. This money will be used to complete an outdoor play area for the Naiscoil Rang 1 & 2 will also benefit from this. This can be moved and taken should the school relocate. Still equipment needed as they would like to get an outside Matt.

Naiscoil development proposal was explained and supported.

[REDACTED] suggested making up a template of parents names along with a list of their skills eg Painter, Joiner etc who may be able to offer their skills and time for free or at a discounted rate.

Went through accounts, bit of debate as to who can/can't view details. Some felt there was not enough detail and it's unclear as to what the money is being spent on. [REDACTED] had explained that some of the figures are still with the account. [REDACTED] offered to look over the accounts see if he could bring them up to date? A copy of available Accounts were given out to each attending parent.

Funding was not applied for because Audited accounts were not available only these and an application form needed to be submitted to apply for funding but the accountant didn't have them ready.

It was suggested that the accounts be attached to the minutes or posted on notice board at the school so whoever wanted could view.

Meeting came to an end with very little fundraising talked about. Few idea threw in and to be discussed at next meeting:

- Pub Quiz

- Disco
- Cake Sale at Christmas
- Parade at Halloween

Meeting finished with proposal for next one to take place the first week in November. A list of emails were collected from attending parents.



07/12/17

A chara,

20/1/17

Statutory Irish medium nursery provision as part of Gaelscoil na mBeann would not impact on the enrolment in Naíscóil or Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche.

Ie meas,

*Aingéal Nic an tSábhaisigh*

(Príomhoide / principal)

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*Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, Dún Droinne, Caisleán Vidhílán BT31 9EB  
028 437 71356, [www.bunscoilbb.com](http://www.bunscoilbb.com)*

# Naiscoil Bheanna Boirche

Bunkers Hill  
Caisleán Uidhíllín  
Co an Duin. BT31 9ED  
Ph: 028 4377 8618  
naiscoilbaetharfire1@hotmail.co.uk

14<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Mr Niall Loughran  
(Príomhoide / principal)  
Gaelscoil Na mBeann  
Kilkeel  
Co Down  
Email: nloughran595@c2kni.net

A, Chara

We, the committee of Naiscoil Bheanna Boirche confirm that the Statutory Irish medium nursery provision as part of Gaelscoil na mBeann would not impact on the enrolment of our Naiscoil. Should you need to contact any of the committee please do so on the following email [anne.mccartan@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:anne.mccartan@tiscali.co.uk).

Le meas



### EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE RESPONSE TO DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) 599

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

Steady increase in enrolment to the school which is standing currently at 72 children.

The school was inspected by ETI on the 18 April 2018 in which the staff took action-short-of -strike. During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.

The ETI inspection report in May 2015 reported that the 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.

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

A new maintained primary school, has been established in the area, St Columban's PS Kilkeel, following the closure of three small primary schools St Mary's Glassdrumman, St Joseph's Ballymartin and Moneydarragh PS. The school provides education for children through the medium of English and will not therefore impact on the Irish-medium provision.

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

The benefit for the children will be to enhance further the pre-school provision and continue to build upon the good educational and linguistic standards set by the current voluntary provision. The transformation of the voluntary pre-school to statutory unit should raise further the standard of education and the educational outcomes for Irish-medium pre-school education in Kilkeel.

The principal and board of governors have the capacity to manage effectively the creation of a nursery unit based on the evaluation within the 2015 ETI inspection report.

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

No concerns.



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 (include 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.	N/A		
	1.2 No more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level.	Yes		
	1.3 A minimum 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 entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.	N/A		N/A
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.	Yes	Quality by the school of the education provided is good the school has the capacity to identify and bring about improvement	
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.	Yes	A very good range of extra -curricular activities is offered by the school.	
	1.8 The quality of the physical environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.	Yes		
	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		
<b>Strong links with the Community</b>	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.	Yes		

## 6. Overall conclusion of impact of the proposal

There would be positive educational and practical benefits of bringing both provisions under a single management.

The proposal would have a positive impact, as staff employed in the statutory nursery sector will be qualified teachers with a high standard of Irish language. In recent years, the school reports improved standards and an increase in children transitioning from the naíscoil to the gaelscoil. The leadership and management of the gaelscoil demonstrates a commitment to ensure high standards in the naíscoil.

A Board of Governors would have responsibility for the governance of the nursery school and would replace the management committee which would provide more consistent strategic, holistic leadership for the schools. At present, the principal of the gaelscoil is chair of the naíscoil committee and the chairperson of the gaelscoil's board of governors is also on the committee. The Irish-medium provision provides continuous provision from naíscoil through to gaelscoil. A statutory nursery unit would build on this provision.

The ETI recognise the Department of Education's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the availability of Irish-medium education opportunities to children and their parents; thereby, the development of the 26 part-time nursery unit places would enhance the Irish-medium provision in the Kilkeel area.

## **INCLUSION & WELLBEING DIRECTORATE**

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As outlined in the 'Educational Impact' section of the supporting information, the establishment of a statutory nursery unit should have beneficial effects on SEN provision as a result of the permanent employment of a qualified teacher, which should help improve the ability to identify and cater for children with SEN, and through easier access to outreach supports which may not be readily available under the current voluntary status of the Naíscoil. In addition, the proposal will consolidate the nursery and primary provision under a single management authority on the same site which should ease the transition process between the two phases for any children with SEN.

## **PROMOTING COLLABORATION TACKLING DISADVANTAGE**

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The proposer, the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann, makes no reference to Shared Education in the Case for Change.

None of the local pre-school providers are engaged in Shared Education. There were no responses during the statutory two-month consultation period. Hence no evidence has been presented to indicate that the proposal would be either beneficial or detrimental to progressing Shared Education.

## **FINANCIAL MONITORING TEAM**

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The school's carry-forward as at 31 March 2018 is £18,473. The figure in the previous year, up to 31 March 2017 was £34,234.

The school received a total delegated budget of £255,767 in the 2018-19 financial year for 64 FTE pupils. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 26 pupils, which represents 40.63% of the total FTE.

This generates a per capita of £3,996, which compares to an average for all primary schools of £2,978.

All schools receive a delegated budget for the financial year (Apr18 to Mar19) on the basis of verified enrolments as at the October Census prior to the financial year (October 17).

Any new provision (including new Nursery units) opening during the year are a pressure for the Department's "New Schools & Units" fund.

A new 26 P/T Nursery Unit is likely to create a funding need of around £32k – based on past costs for such units opening during the financial year – for the period from Opening to the end of that financial year. Full year costs to the Aggregated Schools Budget are likely to be c. £55k (for new provision, not previously funded).

## CURRICULUM, QUALIFICATIONS & STANDARDS

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The case for change refers to the FUI when the overall effectiveness conclusion was “good” More recently (April 2018) there was a Sustaining Improvement Inspection involving action short of strike (link below) which noted 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”.

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/asos-sustaining-improvement-inspection-gaelscoil-na-mbeann-kilkeel-county-down-504-6692.pdf>

Bringing forward the DP may indicate that the school is addressing the sustainability issue by establishing the nursery unit, however further evidence to support this assumption may be required regarding the numbers of children in the Naíscoil who currently transfer to Gaelscoil na MBeann.

Other than the comment above, no issues/concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of the development proposal by any of the CQSD policy teams.

# Youth, Early Years & Childcare

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1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Level of need for pre-school education provision
4. Irish Medium education
5. Recent changes in provision
6. Temporary flexibility
7. Reception Provision
8. Impact on voluntary and private sector providers
9. Ensuring the best use of public resources
10. Consultation responses
11. EA comments
12. Summary of key points
13. Conclusion

## ***“ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATUTORY 26 PLACE PART-TIME IRISH MEDIUM NURSERY UNIT AT GAELSCOIL NA mBEANN WITH EFFECT FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER”***

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

At the request of the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na mBeann, the Education Authority (EA) has published Development Proposal Number 559, proposing that a statutory 26 place part-time Irish Medium Nursery Unit be established from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Gaelscoil na mBeann is a multi-denominational Irish Medium primary school which was established in 2010. It is located at Newcastle Road, Killeel, Co Down and attracts pupils from the town of Killeel and the surrounding areas.

Naiscoil na mBeann is a voluntary (non-statutory) PSEP funded playgroup which is located on the same site as Gaelscoil na mBeann. The playgroup is registered for 24 children<sup>2</sup> and has been allocated 19 funded pre-school education places for the 2018/19 academic year. The CfC states that the proposal is to transform the current voluntary playgroup into a 26 part-time place statutory nursery unit within Gaelscoil na mBeann.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Familysupportni

## 2. BACKGROUND

A previous Development Proposal (DP No 466) requesting statutory nursery provision at Gaelscoil na mBeann was not approved in 2016. The CfC for the current Development Proposal seeks the same statutory nursery provision as previously requested, that is 26 part time Irish Medium pre-school education places. The current proposal has been considered against the current context, and so reflects changes and updated information since the previous DP, including changes to the pattern of pre-school applications and the overall level of provision in the area.

The CfC for DP No 559 advises that the reason for the proposal is primarily to improve the educational experience and outcomes for those attending Irish Medium pre-school provision in Killeel and also to contribute towards the long-term sustainability of Irish Medium primary provision, including helping Gaelscoil na mBeann reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils.

The CfC claims that there are many added benefits associated with statutory status that the current voluntary provision does not provide. Many of the perceived benefits cited in the CfC relate to the primary school, rather than the provision of pre-school education, and so are outside the remit of EYT. The main factor relating to the provision of pre-school education is the assertion in the CfC that the quality of education provision would increase as a result of the employment of a qualified teacher.

The CfC for the previous DP 466 also referred to the employment of a qualified teacher as a perceived benefit of the proposed change. At that time, DE commented that a voluntary playgroup can employ a qualified teacher. The CfC for 559 advises that a qualified teacher is now employed in the playgroup, but claims that this is unsustainable, as the cost is partially funded by Gaelscoil na mBeann and a local Irish language group.

As was the case in the CfC for DP 466, the CfC does not explain why the Board of Governors appear to consider provision at the voluntary setting, which was given a 'good' rating during its most recent ETI inspection (the same grade given to the statutory primary school provision at Gaelscoil na mBeann), to be less effective than teacher led statutory provision. Both the voluntary and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued by the Department for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and subject to the same education inspection standards.

The CfC refers to the slightly longer hours which can be afforded to statutory provision. It is not clear what this refers to, as the proposal is for part-time provision, which is defined in the same way for both statutory and non-statutory pre-school provision.

The CfC also points to the increase in the number of applications and admissions to the existing voluntary playgroup over the last three years as evidence of increased parental preference for Irish Medium pre-school provision in the Killeel area.

As the existing voluntary playgroup is currently located within the school grounds, the CfC advises that there will be minimal, if any, work required on the building at this time, although it also notes (page 3) that the Board of Governors is "actively searching for a permanent site" for the Primary School.

## Relevant Policies, Practices and Duties

The main policies, practices and duties relevant to this proposal are:

The aim of the Pre-school Education Programme is to provide a funded pre-school education place for every target age child whose family want it.	The CfC focuses on the associated benefits of providing statutory pre-school provision and on a parental preference for Irish medium pre-school places, rather than unmet demand for pre-school education provision generally. The EA has also advised that sufficient provision exists to meet current demand for pre-school places in the area.  This is considered in more detail below.
Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning	Published on 7 October 2013, among its key actions is a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it. This proposal is in line with the current moratorium.
Encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium education	Under Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 the Department has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium Education. Registered Irish-medium providers with sufficient children can be funded under the Department's Pre-School Education Programme even where English-medium provision is available in the area. This duty is considered in more detail below.
Displacement of good quality pre-school education provision already in existence	It is the Department's practice, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school education provision already in existence with pre-school education provision in an alternative setting, although all cases are assessed on their own merit. As this DP is for pre-school provision at an Irish Medium primary school, it is considered in the context of DE's statutory duty. The potential impact of this proposal on existing provision is considered in more detail below.
Ensuring the best use of public resources	In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of the resources available to it. In light of this, it aims to fill available pre-school education provision as far as possible with target age children, avoiding over provision and the resulting enrolment of children under 3 years and 2 months (underage children) in statutory settings. This is considered in more detail below.
Reception provision	A key action under the Learning to Learning framework is the removal of reception provision. Gaelscoil na mBeann does not have reception provision. In 2018/19 there are no settings within the five mile radius that provide reception places. This is considered in more detail below.

### 3. LEVEL OF NEED FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROVISION

In determining the need for pre-school education provision, the Department generally assumes a level of provision at 95% of target age children, predicated on the application rate for pre-school education places, which is c.92%; however the level of provision within local areas may be higher or lower, based on historic patterns of demand and assessment of ongoing need.

The current level of pre-school education provision within both a two-mile and five-mile radius of the school is used as an indicator of current capacity to meet need for pre-school education provision and is considered alongside other factors such as population projections to determine the likely future need for additional pre-school education provision in the area.

The number of pre-school education places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years using school census data together with provisional 2018/19 data provided by the EA.

The analysis of provision below is based on the discontinuation of the part-time funded places currently provided in the voluntary playgroup, and the introduction of 26 part-time statutory nursery places as proposed.

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

**Level of Provision – two mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann.**

**Table 1**

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2016/17	78	53	0	131	129	101.6%	0
2017/18	78	57	0	135	152	88.8%	0
2018/19	78	58	0	136	171	79.5%	0
Proposed	104	39	0	143	171	83.6%	-

Source: School Census and EA

The level of pre-school education provision within a two mile radius has been significantly below the planning figure of 95% in two of the last three years and would increase to 83.6% provision after the proposed change. The EA PEG has also advised that four children living in the area remained unplaced at the end of the pre-school admissions process for 2017/18, suggesting that there may have been some under provision, however none of these children applied for an Irish-medium pre-school place, and Naiscoil na mBeann had capacity to accept additional children had they applied. There were no unplaced children in the area in 2016/17 or 2018/19, and PEG has indicated that several English-medium providers and Naiscoil na mBeann have capacity to increase the number of places offered, should this be required. Overall, this suggests that the level of provision is currently sufficient to meet demand for pre-school provision for both English and Irish medium pre-school education provision.

**Level of Provision – five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann.**

**Table 2**

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2016/17	104	111	0	215	190	113.2%	0
2017/18	104	119	0	223	217	102.8%	*
2018/19	104	110	0	214	227	94.3%	0
Proposed	130	91	-	221	227	97.3%	-

Source: School Census and EA



The level of provision within the five mile radius has been above or very close to the planning figure in each of the last three years. There has been only one underage child attending a statutory pre-school place in the last three years. Overall, this would suggest that there is adequate pre-school provision in the area.

The decrease in pre-school provision during the 2018/19 year may in part be explained by the opening of a newly amalgamated primary school in September 2018, which increased the number of primary one places in the area. If approved, the proposed level of pre-school education provision within the five mile radius would increase to 97.3%, which is slightly above the planning figure.

A list of the providers in the two and five mile radii is attached at Annex A.

#### **4. IRISH MEDIUM EDUCATION**

##### **Context**

Under Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998, the Department has a statutory duty to 'encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium Education'. The duty under the 1998 Order must be considered alongside the duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 (the Department and boards shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents). It is important that the Department strives to meet demonstrated parental preference in an area for pre-school education at grant-maintained and controlled Irish Medium primary schools. In discharging these duties it is essential that the Department does not inadvertently constrain the development of Irish Medium education.

All funded pre-school education settings regardless of location and management type are accessible to children from all backgrounds and are subject to the same inspection standards. All pre-school education settings follow the same curricular guidance the broad framework of which ensures equality of opportunity, pointing to staff acknowledging and respecting the culture, beliefs and lifestyles of the families of all children. However, it is acknowledged that parents state preferences for pre-school education provision taking into account a wide range of factors, and in some cases parents may have a preference for pre-school education delivered through the medium of the Irish language, and this is taken into account in the Early Years Team (EYT) advice. Registered Irish-medium providers with sufficient children can be funded under the Department's Pre-School Education Programme even where English-medium provision is available in the area.

##### **Irish Medium Education in the area**

Apart from the voluntary pre-school provision at Nailscoil na mBeann, there are no other Irish-medium pre-school education settings within the local area and there are no other Irish Medium primary schools within a 10 mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann.

The closest statutory Irish Medium pre-school education providers are Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche and Naiscoil an luir which are approximately 13 and 15 miles away respectively. If this proposal were approved, it is not expected that this would have any impact on provision at these settings.

The CfC sets out that the number of admissions to the pre-school provision at Naiscoil na mBeann has been between 18-20 in each of the last three years (CfC Table D). This is an increase since DP 466 was submitted, when the Naiscoil had admitted between 11-15 children in the previous three years. This suggests that parents in the area may have a preference for Irish medium pre-school education provision, and that demand may be increasing. The table below shows that the number of first preference applications to the setting has increased over the last three years (although the overall number of children admitted has stayed quite level), and every child whose parents wanted an Irish-medium pre-school place for them was offered an Irish-medium pre-school place each year.

**Table 3 – 1<sup>st</sup> Preference Application Rates for Naiscoil na mBeann**

Year	Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> Preference Applications at End of Admissions Process	Total Number of Target Age Children Admitted to Funded Place
2016/17	13	20 *
2017/18	15	18 *
2018/19	19	19

Source: School Census & Education Authority

\*the EA has advised that additional children applied for a funded place at Naiscoil na mBeann between the end of the admissions process and the commencement of the academic year. These included children who were new to the area.

**Table 4 - Level of Irish-medium pre-school education provision – five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann**

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

**Table 4**

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places in IM settings	Reception places	Total pre-school provision (ex reception)	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2016/17	0	20	0	20	8	250%	0
2017/18	0	18	0	18	15	120%	0
2018/19	0	19	0	19	12	158%	0
As Proposed	26	0	0	26	12	216%	-

Source: School Census Data

The proposed level of Irish Medium provision is significantly higher than the target figure of 95% in each of the last three years, which suggests there is over provision in the area, which would increase further if the proposal were approved. This is supported by the fact that every child whose parents wanted an Irish-medium pre-school place for them in each of the last three years was offered an Irish-medium place, and the Naiscoil had capacity to increase provision in each year, had it been needed. However, as there is no other Irish medium provision within a five mile radius, this limits the usefulness of these statistics somewhat.

## 5. RECENT CHANGES IN PROVISION

There have been no significant changes to funded pre-school provision in this area in recent years.

## **6. TEMPORARY FLEXIBILITY**

In the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years there were no additional pre-school places approved in a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann through Temporary Flexibility.

In the 2018/19 academic year, Annalong PS was the only school within a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann to submit a Temporary Flexibility request. The request for four additional places was not supported by the EA because there was sufficient provision in the area to meet demand and was not approved by the Department.

As there is no statutory Irish-medium pre-school provision in the area, there were no requests for Temporary Flexibility for Irish-medium pre-school settings.

A list of Temporary Flexibility requests in the area is attached at Annex D.

## **7. RECEPTION PROVISION**

Gaelscoil na mBeann does not provide reception places, nor do any other schools within the five mile radius.

## **8. IMPACT ON VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS**

The PSEP is a partnership between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school education providers and both sectors are equally valued for their contribution to the education of pre-school children. Both sectors adhere to the same curricular guidelines and are inspected to the same educational standards. In considering DPs for statutory provision, careful consideration is given to the impact of any new provision on existing good quality voluntary/private providers in PSEP.

The CfC sets out that admissions to Naiscoil na mBeann have been consistent in recent years, with the setting admitting between 18 and 20 children in each of the last three years. The EA has advised that every child who has applied for a place at the setting in each year received the offer of a place, and capacity remained in each year to offer further places, had they been required. This suggests that statutory pre-school education provision at the setting could be sustainable, although the historical enrolments to the voluntary playgroup could suggest that the setting may not fill all the proposed additional places with target age children.

As the proposal is to transform the existing voluntary PSEP funded provision to new statutory provision, and there is no other Irish-medium pre-school provision in the area, it is not expected that this would have a significant impact on other providers in the area, although it is possible that the modest increase in the number of pre-school places proposed (two) could displace some existing good quality provision in the area.

## **9. ENSURING THE BEST USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES**

In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of the resources available to it. In light of this, it aims to maximise available pre-school places for target age children, avoiding over provision and the resulting enrolment of children younger than 3 years and 2 months (underage children) in statutory settings. There has only been one underage child attended a funded pre-school setting within the five mile radius in the last three years.

As this proposal is to convert the existing non-statutory pre-school provision to statutory provision, it would appear that part of the potential impact of the establishment of a nursery class at the school could be partially mitigated, however as the voluntary pre-school setting has never received sufficient applications to fill its registration of 24 places, this suggests that the proposed increase in pre-school education places in the area may lead to a number of underage children accessing statutory pre-school places in the area.

EYT notes that the CfC suggests that converting the existing non-statutory pre-school provision to a statutory nursery class could assist the Gaelscoil reach the rural threshold of 105 pupils. EYT notes that the enrolment trends of the Naiscoil and Gaelscoil to date demonstrate that many children who attend the Irish-medium pre-school provision do not go on to attend the Irish-medium primary school. The CfC shows that the approved admissions number is lower than the registration number of the playgroup, and lower than the size of the proposed pre-school class. The CfC (pg 7) makes reference to an analysis that it claims shows the effect of a transition to statutory Irish medium pre-school provision increases enrolments in both the pre-school and primary provision; however the Annex referred to in the CfC was not included in the CfC and when DE requested it, it was informed that “reference in the passage to the appendix was made in error and should be ignored”. As such, the EYT cannot consider the claim in regard to the potential impact on future admissions.

## **10. CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

The CfC states that the school’s Board of Governors, staff and parents were consulted during September to November 2017 together with the Committee of Naiscoil na mBeann. The views are reported in the CfC to have indicated strong support for the proposal. Samples of consultation responses are contained within the CfC.

A pre-publication statutory consultation exercise was also carried out with schools that may be impacted by the proposal in April 2018. There were two responses received to this consultation, one from Killeel PS who objected to the proposal on the grounds that funds should be used to sustain, improve and develop existing provision. The other was from Comhairle na Gaelscolaichta who supported the proposal, due to the perceived benefits of a single management model as set out in the CfC.

## **11. EA COMMENTS**

The EA has advised that, in keeping with its duty to assist the Department’s statutory requirement to encourage and facilitate Irish Medium education it supports Development Proposal 559.

The EA PEG also considered the DP in line with guidance provided by DE regarding pre-school education and the statutory duties to encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish-Medium education and advised that it supports the proposal as there is no other Irish Medium pre-school provision in the area.

The EA PEG did, however, note the following:

- If approved, staff may be at risk as 3 staff are required within a playgroup setting for 24 children (1:8 staff child ratio) and 2 staff are required within a nursery setting (1:13 staff child ratio); and

- A number of existing English medium non-statutory providers still have spare capacity with their allocation of funded places for September 2018.

The EA has confirmed that this remains the case at November 2018, with 3 , English medium settings, as well as Naiscoil na mBeann itself still having spare capacity within their registration number to offer additional pre-school places if they were required.

## 12. SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The following summarises the key points taken into consideration

- The current level of provision within both the two mile and five mile radii are currently lower than the planning figures (79.5% at two miles and 94.3% at five miles). If approved, the level of provision will increase to 83.6% and 97.3% respectively;
- The proposal is to replace existing non-statutory pre-school education provision with a new statutory part-time nursery unit at Gaelscoil na mBeann;
- The level of provision in both the two and five mile radii indicates that there is sufficient pre-school provision within the Irish-Medium sector.
- All children in the area, whose parents wanted an IM pre-school place and remained in the admissions process to the end, were offered an IM pre-school place.
- There is no evidence that the additional pre-school places requested are required to meet current demand for Irish-Medium provision in the area. IM places have remained available at the end of the admissions process in each of the last three years.
- If additional pre-school places were required, the existing IM pre-school provider has capacity to increase provision.
- The evidence available suggests that the additional provision requested could be sustainable, although it could also lead to an increase in the number of underage children accessing statutory pre-school places;
- The current provision is capped at its registration number of 24 children. Transformation to statutory status would facilitate the provision of 26 pre-school places, and up to 30 if temporary flexibility were needed and approved;
- NISRA population projections suggest a small decline in the pre-school cohort between 2018 and 2041;
- Under Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998, the Department has a statutory duty to 'encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium education'. This duty should be considered alongside the duty under Article 44 of the 1986 Order;
- Pre-school is accessible to all, but the number of applications for Naiscoil na mBeann have increased in recent years which suggests a parental preference in the area for pre-school education delivered through the medium of Irish;
- There is no other Irish Medium pre-school education provision within 10 miles;
- EA PEG supports the proposal in the context of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium education and the fact there is no other Irish Medium pre-school provision in the area.

### **13. CONCLUSION**

It is the Department's practice, where possible, not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting or management type. The current voluntary provider has been assessed by ETI as 'good'.

The pattern of applications to the Naiscoil demonstrates that the current level of demand for Irish medium provision is fully catered for by the existing provision, which has capacity to increase the number of places offered, should they be required in future. The difference between the capacity of the existing provision (24 places) and the proposed provision (26 places) is minimal, and it is not suggested by the CfC that a need for additional capacity is the reason for the proposed change, rather, it is suggested that the reason is to effect a change of management type, from voluntary to statutory, in order to enable the setting to avail of a variety of perceived benefits that are available to statutory pre-school settings.

Whilst the EYT is not satisfied that the case has been made that the proposed change is necessary to meet the requirements of the Pre-School Education Programme, or to meet demand for Irish medium pre-school provision in the area, it recognises the support of others including the EA, which suggest that this proposal is about transformation rather than displacement.

Having considered all the information available, including the enrolments over a number of years, the EYT has concluded that it is unlikely that a statutory unit would significantly impact on other good quality provision in the area. It is likely that the provision would be sustainable, although some places, if the provision were approved, may be filled by underage children.

Many of the perceived benefits cited in the CfC relate to the primary school, rather than the provision of pre-school education, and so are outside the remit of EYT. The main factor relating to the provision of pre-school education is the assertion in the CfC that the quality of education provision would increase as a result of transformation. As was the case in the CfC for DP 466, the CfC does not explain why the Board of Governors consider provision at the voluntary setting, which was given a 'good' rating during its most recent ETI inspection (the same grade given to the statutory primary school provision at Gaelscoil na mBeann), to be less effective than statutory provision. Both the voluntary and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued by the Department for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and subject to the same education inspection standards.

Based on all the information available, and taking into account the statutory duties placed upon the Department, the Early Years Team considers that the proposed change could be considered to be reasonable, although it is not necessary to meet current or projected demand for Irish medium pre-school education in the area.

The team notes that, at the time of writing, both stage one and stage two of the pre-school admissions process for the 2018/19 academic year have concluded and the new academic year has begun. Applications for the 2019/20 academic year will commence on 2 January 2019.

**Early Years (Pre-School) Team  
December 2018**

**List of the providers in the two and five mile radii of Gaelscoil na mBeann**

**Two mile radius**

**Nursery School**

5116197 Kilkeel NS

**Vol/Priv**

5AB0400 Kilkeel Playgroup

5AB0404 Dunnaman Children's Centre

5BB0562 Naiscoil na mBeann

**Primary School No Nursery Unit**

5011649 Kilkeel PS

5016098 Brackenagh West PS

5031325 St Joseph's PS\*

5036545 St Colman's PS

5046692 Gaelscoil na mBeann

5036706 St Columban's PS\*\*

**Five mile radius**

**Primary School Nursery Units**

5011684 Annalong PS

**Vol/Priv**

5AB0211 Lower Mourne Pre-School Plygroup

5AB0231 Kingdom Playgroup

5AB0232 Attical Pre-School Playgroup

**Primary School No Nursery Unit**

5031516 Moneydarragh PS\*

5031589 Grange PS

5031694 Holy Cross PS

\* Closed end of 2017/18

\*\* New school opened 2018/19

**Wards which fall at least partially within a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann**

Annalong  
Binnian  
Kilkeel  
Lisnacree

**EYT's - Annex C**

**Population statistics and projections**

EYT has considered the NISRA birth rates and population predictions to identify potential future trends.

- Birth statistics by academic year for all wards which fall at least partially within a five mile radius of Gaelscoil na mBeann indicate a decrease of 7 (2.7%) in the pre-school cohort between September 2017 admissions and September 2019 admissions (256 to 249).

A list of the wards considered is attached at Annex B.

- Population projections for three year olds for Newry, Mourne and Down Local Government District predict an overall decrease of 83 (3.2%) from 2,568 to 2,485 between 2018 and 2041.

These figures suggest that demand is likely to slightly decrease in the longer term; however they cannot fully take into account population migration and other factors, so can only be indicators of the future pre-school population and not an exact prediction of demand.

**EYT's - Annex D**

**Temporary Flexibility**

Annalong PS requested four additional places in 2018/19. The EA PEG recommended that these were not approved as additional pre-school places were not required to meet a shortfall in the area. The request was not approved.

No Temporary Flexibility requests were submitted from any schools in the five mile radius for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years.



# Investment & Infrastructure Directorate

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## Current Position

The Case for Change states that a voluntary nursery is housed in a modular building within the grounds of the St. Columban's site, which is adjacent to the Gaelscoil na mBeann school site. The site is leased by the Trustees of Gaelscoil na mBeann for a 5 year period to December 2020. The land the Naiscoil is occupying forms part of the leased area so there should be no impact in this regard if the DP to establish a statutory nursery unit is approved.

## Additional Accommodation Requirements

There would be no additional accommodation requirement should the Development Proposal be approved and therefore no capital expenditure is required by DE.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year
Requirements	Nil		
Cost	Nil		

## Costs and Timescales

Not applicable – the school have advised that they do not require additional accommodation should the DP be approved.

# School Admissions Team

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## 1.0 Development Proposal

1.1 Development Proposal (DP) 559 proposes that a statutory nursery unit will be established at Gaelscoil na mBeann to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## 2.0 Rationale for the DP

2.1 The reason for the submission of this proposal is primarily to improve the educational experience and outcomes for those attending Irish-medium pre-school provision in Kilkeel and also, to contribute towards the long-term sustainability of Irish-medium primary provision in the local and wider area.

2.2 The desired outcome of the proposal is to transform the current voluntary playgroup into a statutory nursery unit within Gaelscoil na mBeann in order to provide parents and their children with the optimum start to their education.

## 3.0 History

3.1 DP 268 was approved on 13 June 2012 for the establishment of a grant-aided Irish-medium primary school from September 2012. LTE: 116-145.

3.2 In November 2016 the then Minister did not approve DP466 which was also for a proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit. The reason being that it would displace good pre-existing pre-school provision within the sector.

#### 4.0 Approved Admissions/Enrolment Numbers and Actual Admissions/Enrolment numbers

The approved enrolment and admissions numbers at Gaelscoil na mBeann are **87** and **15** respectively. In accordance with the LTE of 116-145 SAT continue to review the actual enrolment of the school with a view to adjusting the approved numbers. Details of the numbers at the school are shown in the table below;

School Year	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Actual Admissions Number	Actual Enrolment Number
2013/14	15	29 (TV 30)	11	28
2014/15	15	43	12	40
2015/16	15	58	8	46
2016/17	15	70	8	54
2017/18	15	75	15	64
2018/19	15	87	12	73

#### 5.0 Departmental Guidance

5.1 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.