

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	615	
School	Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School	
Proposal	“A statutory nursery be established at Round Tower IPS to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.”	
Minister’s Decision	Approve	
Date of Decision	19 January 2021	
Minister’s Comments	<p>“Approve DP 615 with modification that Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part nursery places with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Agree publication once school and EA informed.”</p>	
Additional notes		
Information redacted	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.	
	Key	Details
	■	redaction
	*	refers to less than five cases where data is considered sensitive
	#	means figure has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information under rules of disclosure

From: Lorraine Finlay
Area Planning Team (North Region)

Date: 19 January 2021

To: Peter Weir
Minister for Education

Copy distribution below:

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) 615
ROUND TOWER INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL (IPS), ANTRIM**

Issue: To decide on:

DP 615 – A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter

Timescale: Routine.

**Financial/Resource
Implications:**

Capital

- Refurbishment and refitting of the current accommodation currently used by a non-statutory playgroup on site, estimated to cost in the region of £38K. The EA plan to finance this expenditure via the minor works budget.

Resource

- Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) – on a full year basis, the proposed new provision is estimated to cost around £57k. Although this DP, if approved, would be an additional pressure on the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB), in terms of the overall education budget this pressure should be offset by a reduced pressure on funding needed for non-statutory provision.
- Staffing – There is a requirement for additional teaching and non-teaching staff. The cost of staff would be covered through Local Management of Schools (LMS) funding at approximately £58k per annum.

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

Statutory Duty Implications: Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 - *to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education.*

Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

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

Recommendation: It is recommended that you:

- Approve DP 615 with a modification to the implementation date (as the proposed date has now lapsed): A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) will be published on the Department's website once the school and the Education Authority have been informed of your decision.

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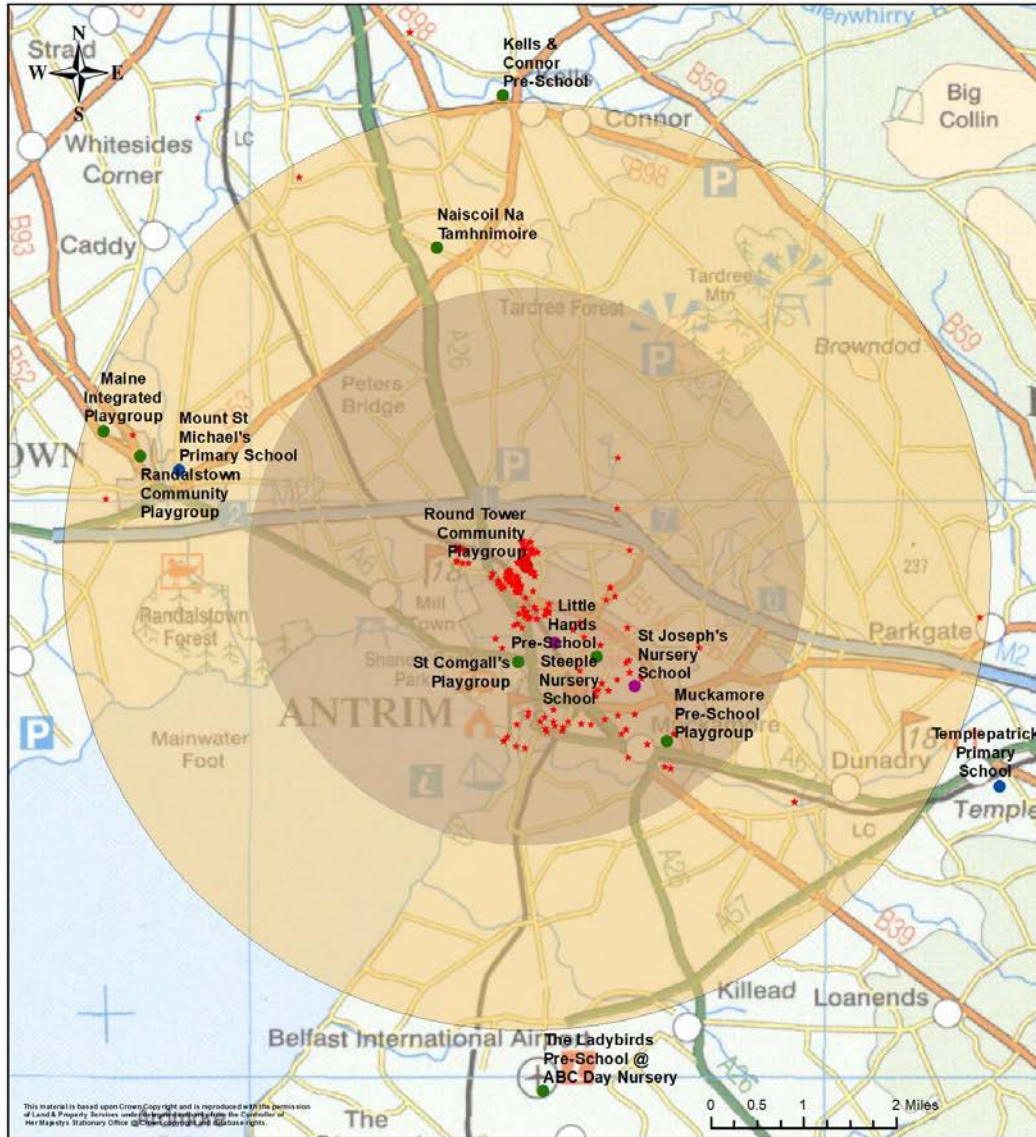
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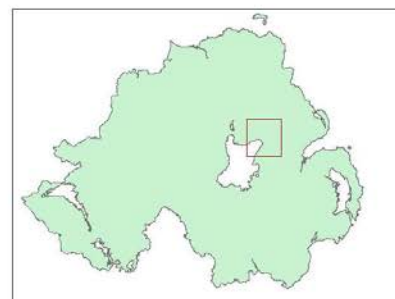
APPENDIX A	Publish Development Proposal DP 615
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APPENDIX C	DE (Policy Team) Comments
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Map 1: Round Tower Integrated Playgroup pupil catchment area

Round Tower Integrated Primary School - Alternative Nursery, Pre-school Provision & Pupil Location

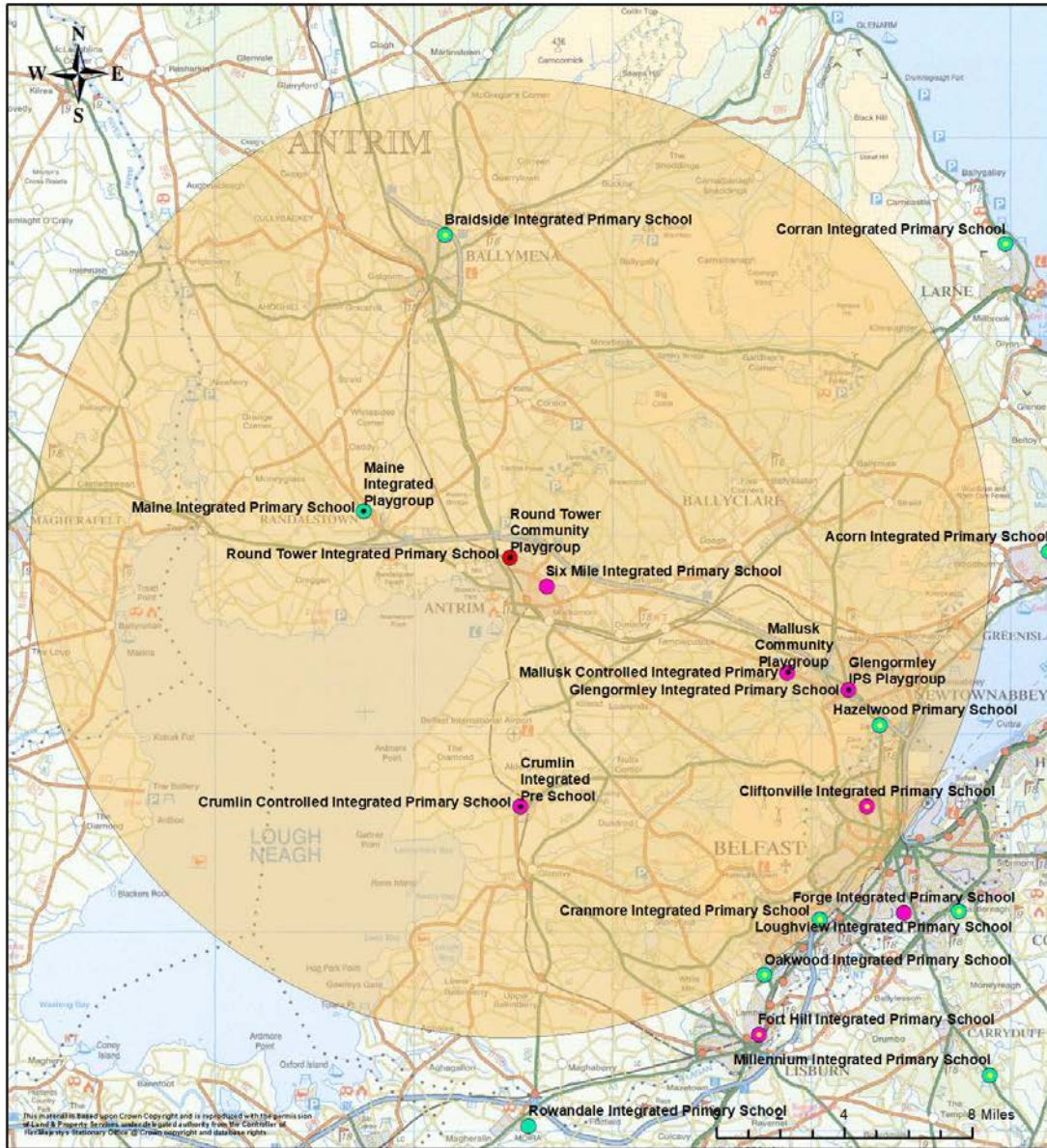


- Round Tower Integrated PS
- Nursery Schools
- ★ Pupil Locations
- 3 Mile Buffer Round Tower IPS
- Primary Schools with Nursery Units
- 5 Mile Buffer Round Tower IPS
- Pre-schools

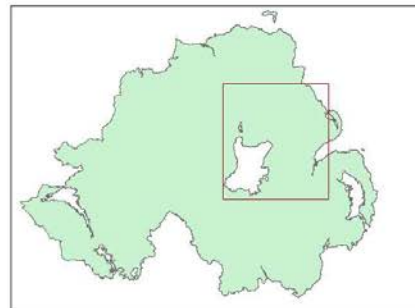


Map 2: Round Tower IPS - Integrated primary school provision within a 15 mile radius

Round Tower Integrated Primary School - Alternative Integrated Nursery & Pre-school Provision

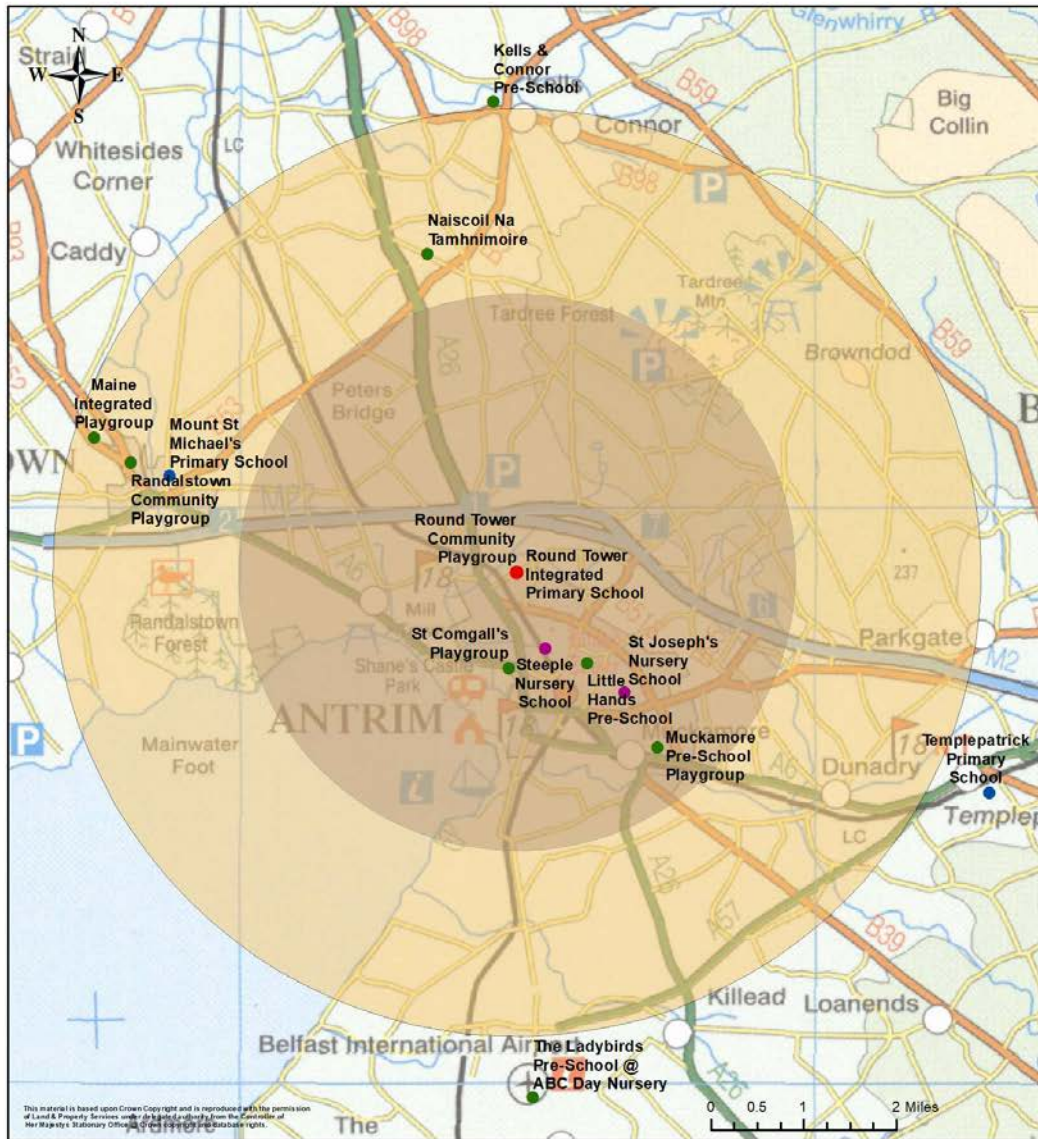


- Integrated PS with Nursery Units
- Pre-schools at Integrated PS
- Round Tower Integrated PS
- Controlled Integrated Primary
- Grant Maintained Primary
- 15 Mile Buffer Round Tower IPS

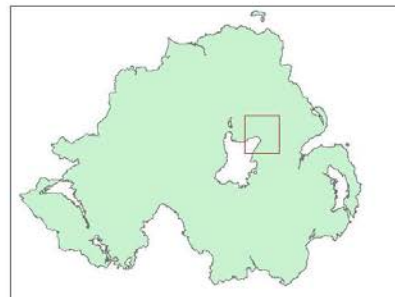


Map 3 – Round Tower Integrated Playgroup and neighbouring pre-school provision (Statutory & Voluntary/Private providers) within a five mile radius

Round Tower Integrated Primary School - Alternative Nursery & Pre-school Provision



- Round Tower Integrated PS
- Primary Schools with Nursery Units
- Pre-schools
- Nursery Schools
- 3 Mile Buffer Round Tower IPS
- 5 Mile Buffer Round Tower IPS



INTRODUCTION

1. On 25 February 2020 the Education Authority (EA), on behalf of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School (CIPS), published Development Proposal (DP) 615 proposing that a statutory nursery unit (NU) be established at Round Tower IPS to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. The statutory two month objection period was due to run from 25 February 2020 until 25 April 2020. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and the redeployment of staff involved in Area Planning to deal with the emergency arrangements, the statutory objection period was extended to 12 October 2020. A copy of the published proposal and the proposer's Case for Change (CfC) are attached at **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** respectively.
3. If approved, the DP would establish a 26 part-time statutory NU at Round Tower IPS to replace a Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) funded setting currently sited at the primary school.

BACKGROUND

Round Tower CIPS

4. Round Tower CIPS is a Controlled IPS and is located on the Durnish Road in the Springfarm Estate, Antrim.
5. The approved admissions and enrolment numbers for Round Tower CIPS are 39 and 276 respectively. In the 2019/20 year the school had an actual enrolment (including supernumerary places) of 278 with 37 pupils in Year 1 (Y1). There were 12 pupils who have a Statement of Educational Need (SEN); 42 (15.1%) newcomer pupils and 72 pupils, around 25.9%, were entitled to Free School Meals.
6. In relation to religious balance, approximately 92 pupils (33.1%) are from the Protestant tradition; 76 pupils (27.3%) are from the Roman Catholic tradition and 110 pupils (39.6%) are from the 'Other' tradition (or religion unknown).

Round Tower Community Playgroup

7. Round Tower Community Playgroup, a voluntary provider, has been operating for a number of years from accommodation within the Round Tower CIPS building. The playgroup has been a participant in the PSEP since 2006/07 and was allocated 24 funded pre-school education places in the 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years, with all places filled each year apart from the current 2020/21 academic year, when 23¹ places have been filled to date.
8. In relation to religious balance, approximately four pupils (16.7%) were from the Protestant tradition; eight pupils (33.3%) are from the Roman Catholic tradition and 12 pupils (50%) are from the 'Other' tradition (or religion unknown).

¹ Figure provided in 2020/21 unverified DE Census return

9. The most recent follow-up ETI report indicated that *“Round Tower Community Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.”*

AREA CONTEXT

10. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 the Springfarm 2 area is placed 247 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 being least deprived).
11. Round Tower Community Playgroup’s catchment area is illustrated by **Map 1**, showing that the majority of pupils enrolled in the Playgroup live in close proximity to the Playgroup. **Map 2** illustrates alternative integrated primary schools with nursery provision within a 15 mile radius and **Map 3** illustrates all pre-school provision within a five mile radius.

NISRA Local Birth Rates and Population Projections

12. The NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) local birth rates and population projections provide information on potential future population trends in the area.
- Birth statistics by academic year for all wards which fall at least partially within a five-mile radius of Round Tower CIPS indicate a decrease of 41 (6.6%) in the pre-school cohort between September 2018 admissions and September 2020 admissions (617 to 576).
 - Population projections for three year olds for the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Government District (LGD) predict a decrease of 180 (10%) from 1805 to 1625 between 2018 and 2041.
13. These figures suggest that demand is likely to slightly decrease in the long 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.

Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland: “Providing Pathways” for 2017-2020

14. Round Tower CIPS is situated within the Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD.
15. The Strategic Area Plan 2017–2020 identifies a number of key emerging issues from analysis of current provision in the Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD area. The issue relevant to Round Tower CIPS is the requirement to encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable Irish Medium and Integrated schools.
16. Round Tower CIPS features in the EA’s (extended) Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2019-21. The key issue for Round Tower CIPS is the ‘establishment of a nursery unit’ with an action for the ‘Managing Authority to consult on options for the future pre-school provision at Round Tower IPS by January 2020.’ This proposal is the out-working of the consultations.
17. The CfC asserts that the management committee of Round Tower Community Playgroup, has indicated that it will be stepping down. To ensure the pre-school

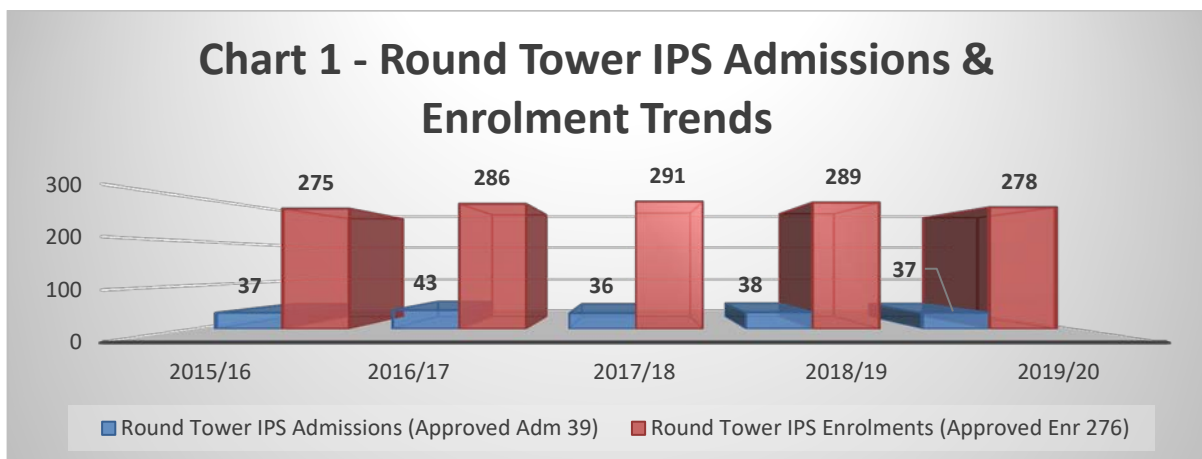
provision within the area is continued, the management committee approached the primary school to consider the provision of pre-school provision in the area. The BoGs of Round Tower IPS considered the position and made a proposal to the EA for a NU for the school.

18. The management committee have indicated that they will continue managing Round Tower Community Playgroup until such times as a DP is approved to establish a NU at Round Tower CIPS.

Admissions and Enrolment Trends

Round Tower CIPS

19. For the 2019/20 school year Round Tower CIPS's approved admissions and enrolment numbers were 39 and 276 respectively. In 2019/20 there were 278 pupils enrolled at the school including 37 Y1 pupils and 12 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The school had 10 available places that could be applied for through the competitive admissions process.
20. Chart 1 illustrates that over the past five years admissions and enrolments have remained relatively steady, exceeding the approved admissions number in one of the past five years, and exceeding the approved enrolment number in four of the past five years. The school exceeds the Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (SSP) recommended minimum enrolment of 105 pupils for a sustainable rural primary school. The total admissions and enrolment numbers included in the chart include pupils with Statements of SEN.

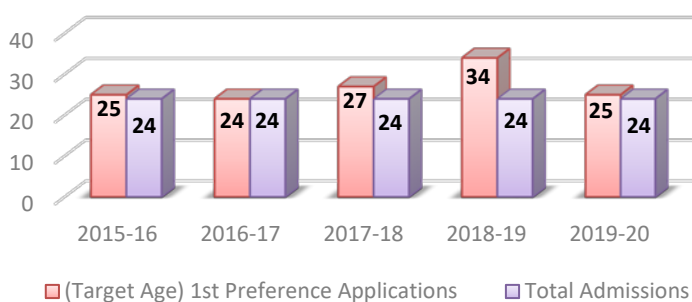


21. At the conclusion of the 2020/21 admissions process, Round Tower CIPS received a total of 35 first preference applications and accepted a total of 34 applications.

Round Tower Community Playgroup

22. Round Tower Community Playgroup, a non-statutory provider, operates within the grounds of Round Tower CIPS. The application history of the playgroup, and total number of pupils admitted is illustrated in Chart 2 below.

Chart 2 - Round Tower Community Playgroup Admission Trends



Source: EA

23. Round Tower Community Playgroup has admitted 24 (target aged) children in all of the past five years. At the conclusion of the admission process for 2020/21, Round Tower Community Playgroup received 20 first preference applications. In total they accepted a total of 23 applications. However, 2020/21 school census data has not been validated by the Department to date, and figures are subject to change.

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Alternative Integrated Pre-school provision

24. **Map 2** illustrates alternative IPSs within a 15 mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup. Tables 1 and 2 below show eight alternative integrated schools with a statutory NU or voluntary provider on site.

Alternative Statutory Integrated Pre-school provision

25. The schools listed in **Table 1** have a statutory NU onsite. It indicates that in 2019/20 there were four alternative statutory Integrated NUs within approximately a 15 mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup. However, the closest is approx. 12 miles away by road.
26. The table shows that over the past five years, the numbers remained consistent with approved admissions numbers (based on 19/20 approved numbers for comparison) with limited underage pupils admitted, with 2017/18 seemingly an irregularity based on historical data.

Table 1 – Alternative Statutory Integrated Pre-school provision

Ref No		Postcode	Distance in miles by Road	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		19/20 Approved Admissions No	
Integrated Statutory NU's															
				f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t
306-6551	Braidside IPS	BT43 7EN	12.8	0	26	0	26	0	25	0	26	0	26	0	26
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		9		0		0			
106-6531	Hazelwood IPS	BT36 7TL	15.3	52	0	52	0	51	0	52	0	53	0	52	0
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		0		0		0			
105-6483	Cliftonville IPS	BT14 6JQ	15.7	26	0	26	0	26	0	30	0	26	0	26	0
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		0		0		0			
106-6580	Cranmore IPS	BT10 0JB	17.6					0	26	0	26	0	26	0	26
	<i>Underage</i>							0		0		0			
TOTALS				78	26	78	26	77	51	82	52	79	52	78	52
TOTAL UNDERAGE				0		0		9		0		0			

Source: EA Annual Census Data

Alternative Non-statutory pre-school provision at an Integrated school site

27. **Table 2** details alternative voluntary pre-school provision associated with integrated schools that are within a 15 mile radius from Round Tower Community Playgroup.
28. The table shows that there are a total of five alternative voluntary Pre-School Education Group (PEG) funded pre-schools. It must be noted that Cranmore IPS, had a DP approved to change their status from Voluntary to Statutory during the five year time frame.
29. The table shows that the numbers of funded pupils remains broadly consistent year on year.

Table 2 - Alternative Non-statutory pre-school provision at an Integrated school site

Ref No		Postcode	Distance in miles by Road	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
Non-Statutory Pre School Provision on Integrated school sites													
				T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F
3BB-0533	Maine Integrated PG	BT41 3EH	6.2	24	24	24	24	24	24	23	23	18	18
3BB-0573	Crumlin Integrated PG	BT29 4XL	10.1	24	24	16	16	16	16	16	16	24	18
3AB-0575	Mallusk Community PG	BT36 4QF	10.8	27	16	25	18	26	20	32	19	30	18
3BB-0094	Glengormley Integrated PG	BT36 6HJ	12.2	49	49	48	42	48	42	44	41	46	43
106-6580	Cranmore IPS NU	BT10 0JB	17.6	24	24	24	24						
TOTALS				148	137	137	124	114	102	115	99	118	97

Source: EA Census Data

T = Total Pupils F= Funded Pupils

Alternative non-integrated pre-school provision

30. **Map 3** illustrates alternative pre-school provision (statutory and voluntary) within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup, with supporting information provided in **Tables 3 and 4** below.

Alternative statutory non-integrated pre-school provision

31. **Table 3** details alternative non-integrated pre-school provision at statutory Nursery Schools (NSs) and NUs within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup by road.

32. The table indicates that there are three alternative non-integrated statutory NSs and NUs within the vicinity of Round Tower Community Playgroup.

33. It shows that over the past five years, the numbers admitted have remained consistent with approved admissions numbers (based on 19/20 approved numbers for comparison) with limited underage pupils admitted.

Table 3 - Alternative statutory non-integrated pre-school provision

Ref No		Postcode	Distance (Miles)	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		19/20 Approved Admissions No	
Nursery Schools															
				f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t
311-6167	Steeple	BT41 1AF	1.4	0	168	0	156	0	156	0	156	0	156	0	156
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		4		11		8			
313-6183	St Joseph's	BT41 1JZ	2.3	28	56	26	53	26	52	26	52	26	52	26	52
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		0		0		1			
Total in Nursery Schools				28	224	26	209	26	208	26	208	26	208	26	208
Underage in Nursery Schools				0		0		4		11		9			
Ref No		Postcode	Distance (Miles)	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		19/20 Approved Admissions No	
Primary Schools with Nursery Units															
				f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t	f/t	p/t
303-0688	Mount St Michael's	BT41 2AF	5.6	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52
	<i>Underage</i>			0		0		0		0		0			
Total in Nursery Units				0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52
Underage in Nursery Units				0		0		0		0		0			
Total in Statutory Nurseries				28	276	26	261	26	260	26	260	26	260	26	260
Total Underage				0		0		4		11		9			

Source EA Annual Census Data

Alternative voluntary pre-school provision

34. **Table 4** details alternative voluntary pre-school provision within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup.
35. The table shows that the numbers of funded pupils remains broadly consistent over the past three years, with a slight dip from 2016/17 into 2017/18.

Table 4 - Alternative voluntary pre-school provision

Ref No		Postcode	Distance (Miles)	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
				T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F
	Non-Statutory Pre-School			T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F
3BB-0536	Round Tower Community PG	BT41 2TH		24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
3AB-0351	St Comgall's PG	BT41 4GJ	1.4	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
3AB-0350	Little Hands Pre-School	BT41 1AJ	1.6	24	24	23	23	14	14	14	14	14	14
3AB-0117	Muckamore Pre-School	BT41 1PH	2.8	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
3BB-0648	Naiscoil Na Tamhnimoire	BT41 2LD	5	26	17	27	12	16	8	27	12	16	7
3AB-0097	Randalstown Community PG	BT41 3AE	5.7	26	26	28	21	30	20	26	16	26	24
Total				126	117	128	106	110	92	117	92	106	95

Source: EA Annual Census Data (totals exclude Round Tower Community Playgroup)

T = Total Pupils F = Funded Pupils

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Duty to Encourage and Facilitate the Development of Integrated Education

36. There is a statutory duty on the Department under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) 1989 Order, 'to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils'.

Effective and Efficient Use of Public Funds

37. DE must be mindful of its duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) 1986 Order and under Managing Public Money to ensure effective and efficient use of public funds.

Policy Context – Early Years

38. The Department aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every target age child whose family wants it. It is also 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 but every case is considered on its merits.

39. The Department's Learning to Learn Policy (*A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning – 2013*) among its key actions, placed 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.
40. A key action in the Learning to Learn framework is the removal of reception provision. Round Tower CIPS does not have reception provision, however there are two settings within a five mile radius that provide reception places.

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

41. 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 and when designing and delivering public services. It came into operation for Government Departments and District Councils on 1 June 2017 and applies to public authorities from 1 June 2018. Round Tower CIPS is located in Antrim, and is defined as rural under the SSP.

CASE FOR CHANGE

42. The supporting CfC is reproduced in full at **Appendix B** with some key assertions highlighted below.
 - Round Tower Community Playgroup remains a popular pre-school provider and is an essential component of the local community;
 - The closure of the playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision in the Springfarm 2 ward area;
 - Removal of provision within this ward would result in local families being severely disadvantaged;
 - The inclusion of a 26 part-time nursery unit will strengthen the controlled integrated primary school and assist in the long-term sustainability of the school;
 - There will be minimal impact on other pre-school providers in the area. In 2018/19, 19 pre-school pupils transferred to Y1 in Round Tower CIPS with the remaining pupils transferring to a number of other primary school settings; and
 - To ensure no displacement within the proposal for the establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower CIPS, the Principal and Board of Governors will work within the local cluster of primary schools to ensure the continuation of patterns of a small number of pupils transferring to Y1 other primary school providers in the area.

STATUTORY DP PROCESSES

Pre-publication consultation

43. The CfC confirms that the EA as the proposer for this DP, carried out a consultation exercise with parents, staff and Governors. It is reported that 29 out of the 31 stakeholders who responded to the questionnaires expressed support for the proposal.
44. The EA has provided details of statutory consultation with 17 schools considered most likely to be affected by DP 615. Two responses were received from local schools who were not in support of the proposal Steeple NS and St Joseph's NS. Common themes are detailed below asserting that:-
- Two additional places added at Round Tower CIPS could affect sustainability at other nursery schools;
 - There could be an increase in under-aged children being offered pre-school places in local pre-school provision in order to fill places;
 - The link with Round Tower CIPS may weaken as a result of the proposal being approved due to the tradition of pupils transitioning from other local pre-school providers to Round Tower CIPS;
 - There are further concerns of the possibility of an expansion of the NU, if the proposal is granted at Round Tower CIPS from a part-time morning session to the provision of a dual day nursery provision; and
 - The birth rates for Northern Ireland are declining notably over the next few years highlighting no requirement for additional pre-school places.
45. A breakdown of pre-consultation comments is provided at **Appendix B** as part of the CfC.

Two month statutory objection period

46. During the extended two month objection period from 25 February 2020 until 12 October 2020. There were no letters of objection received and **two** letters of support were received from:-

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)
The Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC)

A summary of key assertions received from NICIE:-

- There has been a close relationship between the management committee of the playgroup and the governing body of the school;
- The potential closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup will have a detrimental effect on pre-school provision in the Springfarm area of Antrim;
- This proposal represents an opportunity to support a sustainable school into the future, a school which serves children from the two major communities in an area which experiences notable educational and transport deprivation;
- A NU will not only improve the outcomes for the local children but also enable the school to cater for and plan for its intake in a more effective manner;

- Round Tower CIPS has a significant number of children on the SEN register. Access to assessment and support has been much more difficult to obtain in a playgroup setting, than in an established nursery;
- The NISRA population statistics for the ward in which Round Tower CIPS is located are showing a significant population growth. This is supported by the birth rate statistics for the Ward Cluster in the CfC, which against the trend across Northern Ireland, do not indicate any significant decrease;
- The committee at Round Tower Community Playgroup has stated their intention to resign, and therefore suggest that a newly established nursery under the management of the school will provide more stability and support children's development in what is quite an educationally deprived area of Antrim, as well as helping to raise educational attainment;
- Parents and children will enjoy a more seamless approach to education with an easier transition to primary education; and
- This proposal would assist the DE in fulfilling its duty 'to encourage and facilitate the growth of integrated education' at a low cost as the building is already in place and the number of additional places required is only two.

EPPNI Research

47. NICIE, in its commentary on DP 615 states that *"the outcomes for children within NUs have been shown to be a higher quality than those within playgroups (EPPNI). The Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2018 states 'In the pre-school sector as a whole, most children make a good start, but there continues to be too much variability in the quality of provision and outcomes across the statutory and private / voluntary sector In particular, a small number of voluntary and private settings do not have the capacity to identify or sustain improvement; the quality of their provision and consequent outcomes are not good enough.'"*

A full commentary of NICIE comments are included at **Appendix E**.

A summary of key assertions received from the CSSC:-

- The establishment of a NU is not additional provision but is a replacement for Round Tower Community Playgroup;
- CSSC notes that concerns have been raised within the Nursery sector, during pre-consultation, in the context of declining births and the potential for increasing numbers of penultimate age children to be admitted to settings;
- The CfC highlights that within three miles of Round Tower there were 324 funded places available with a total of 317 first preference applications received;
- The Pre-School Education Group (PEG) analysis for 2019/20 confirms that should provision at Round Tower Community Playgroup be discontinued there would be insufficient capacity in the area to absorb the 24 places provided at Round Tower Playgroup; and
- Consideration of the impact of this proposal suggests to the Council that the proposal will sustain delivery of pre-school education in the Springfarm area where there is a demonstrated need for this provision.

A full commentary of CSSC comments are included at **Appendix E**.

Pre-School Education Group (PEG) Comments

48. The PEG states that it has considered the DP from Round Tower for comment in line with the guidance provided by DE regarding pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Integrated education.
49. The PEG has offered support for this proposal on the basis of demonstrated parental demand as evidenced by the current funded playgroup on the school grounds. Round Tower has a consistent number of first preferences every year and can fill the 24 funded places. PEG comments are reproduced in full as part of the CfC at Appendix B.

EA Comments

50. The EA as proposer of this DP, has offered support for this proposal, making the following assertions:
 - The proposal is in effect a change in management from a voluntary provider to a statutory provider resulting in no change in provision within the area; and
 - The establishment of a NU at Round Tower CIPS would ensure continuity of pre-school provision in the area, and fulfil the statutory duty on the EA to encourage and facilitate integrated education by striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education at grant-maintained, and controlled integrated primary schools.

EA comments are reproduced in full within the CfC at **Appendix B**.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

51. The SSP does not apply to pre-school provision. However, it is important when considering the establishment of statutory pre-school provision that the host school is assessed.
52. The Department's SSP sets out six criteria which provide the framework for considering a school's long-term sustainability. The primary objective of this policy is to ensure that all children and young people receive a high quality education in schools that are educationally and financially viable in the longer term.
53. An assessment of Round Tower CIPS against the six SSP criteria and their associated indicators is set out below.

Criterion 1: Quality Education Experience

54. The ETI carried out a Sustaining Improvement Inspection of the school in February 2018, however this inspection was impacted by ASOS. However, the previous ETI report (January 2015) indicated that at that time *"In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is 'good'. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address."* It

focused on: the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable; the quality of provision in the school; and the quality of leadership and management.

55. In the areas inspected, the ETI assessed the quality of education provided by the school is 'good'. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. However, the inspection identified two areas for improvement which the school demonstrated the capacity to address. They concluded that there is a need to raise further the children's standards in literacy and numeracy; and improve further the quality of the learning and teaching to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all of the children.
56. In its evidence the ETI commented that "*Approval of this DP will re-establish the pre-school provision on the primary school site.*" Full commentary from the ETI is provided at **Appendix D**.

Special Educational Needs

57. In 2019/20 Round Tower CIPS had 12 pupils enrolled with Statements of SEN. The 2015 ETI report states that "*The staff provide learning support for the children identified with additional learning needs through withdrawal sessions and in-class support.*"

Pastoral Care

58. The 2015 ETI stated that at that time "*The very good pastoral care within the school is characterised by a caring and inclusive ethos. The children are polite and very well behaved; they respond well to the range of positive behaviour strategies within the school.*"
59. The 2018 ETI report stated that "*the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.*"

Composite Classes / Teaching Staff

60. In 2019/20 Round Tower CIPS had 11 classes including four composite classes (Y1/2; Y3/4; Y4/5; and Y6/7) and a teaching complement of 11 full-time equivalent teachers.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

61. Round Tower CIPS has an approved admissions and enrolment number of 39/276 respectively. **Table 5** shows actual admissions and enrolment trends over the past five years. It highlights that the school has been generally operating at or above capacity. The school's enrolment is well in excess of the SSP's recommended minimum enrolment for a sustainable rural primary school. In 2019/20 Round Tower CIPS admitted 37 pupils and had a total enrolment (including SEN places) of 278.

TABLE 5 – Round Tower IPS Enrolment Trends**(Approved Admissions Number = 39, Approved Enrolment Number = 276)**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number of pupils in Y1	37	43	36	38	37
Number of pupils in Y2	40	38	43	36	38
Number of pupils in Y3	38	39	39	42	34
Number of pupils in Y4	48	40	42	41	42
Number of pupils in Y5	43	48	41	43	37
Number of pupils in Y6	35	44	48	42	47
Number of pupils in Y7	34	34	42	47	43
Total pupils (incl. SEN pupils) (Y1 to Y7)	275	286	291	289	278
SEN Pupils	7	5	6	9	12
Total pupils (excl. SEN pupils) (Y1 to Y7)	268	281	285	280	266

Temporary Variations (TVs)

62. If a school receives more applications than it has places available it can request a TV to its admissions and/or enrolment number from School Admissions Team (SAT). The table below shows the TVs granted to Round Tower CIPS in the last five school years.

Table 6 – Temporary Variations

Table 6	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Temporary Variations approved (to a total of)*	
			Total Admissions	Total Enrolment
2016/17	39	276	43	283
2017/18	39	276		281
2018/19	39	276		281
2019/20	39	276		
2020/21	39	276		

63. Should part-time nursery places be established they will not be included in the schools approved admission and enrolment numbers.

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

64. The school's Provisional Deficit position as at 31 March 2020 was **-£30,967**. The school's Surplus position as at 31 March 2019 was £1,029.
65. The school received a total delegated budget of £836,584 in the 2020/21 financial year for 278² FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £3,009. The average for all primary schools is £3,213.

² The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2019 census data was used to determine the 2020/21 CFF allocation). **The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year.** In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

66. The school received £5,250 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 11.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary/Post-primary funding stream.
67. 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 part-time NU is likely to create a funding need of around £35k – 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. £57k (for new provision, not previously funded).

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

68. The ETI's inspection report (2015) stated that at that time *"The principal has led a review of the strategic leadership within the school. A clearly defined leadership structure is in place which provides successful distributed leadership among the staff."*
69. The most recent Sustaining Improvement Inspection (SII) (2018) references that part of the inspection focused on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school development planning. The outcome reported was *"The school development plan, action-planning and staff development have prioritised improvements in the standards of the mathematics provision. In the most effective practice, the teachers' planning outlines appropriately personalised learning and teaching strategies; the differentiation is implemented during the lessons. The school's internal data indicates that the outcomes in mathematics have improved further, during the last three years, so that almost all of the children make progress as expected."*

Criterion 5: Accessibility

70. **Map 1** illustrates the proximity of pupil locations to Round Tower CIPS. It shows that most pupils live within a two mile radius. The CfC supporting this DP states that the school is located in an area which can be accessed by foot, private car and bus. The majority of the pupils live within close proximity to the school and playgroup.
71. The map also illustrates that there are pupils bypassing other pre-school provision to attend Round Tower Community Playgroup on the school site.

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

72. The CfC states that Round Tower CIPS has been located in its current setting for a number of years and has strong links with the local community and other local schools. The parents are an active part of the school and contribute to the overall school community. Round Tower Integrated Primary is in partnership with Parkhall Primary School as part of the Shared Education Signature Project and are now entering their third year of the partnership. The school is involved with the Moving Forward Together group, has links with Young Enterprise, is part of the Extended Schools Cluster for the Antrim area and has a supportive PTA who organise the summer schemes held in the school building and other fundraising activities.

Sustainability Summary

73. The overall assessment against the six criteria confirms that Round Tower CIPS is a popular, viable and sustainable school, providing an excellent quality education to its pupils; the steady total enrolment figure which is constantly at or near capacity suggests that there is parental demand for this school; there are no budgetary concerns; there are no concerns regarding the quality of leadership and management; there are no accessibility issues identified; and there is evidence of strong engagement with the local community.
74. In conclusion, Round Tower CIPS is meeting the criteria of the SSP in full, therefore there are no concerns about its capacity to manage the proposed new NU.

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Statutory Duties

Integrated Education

75. The Department has written to the statutory planning authorities³ reminding them of the need to support DE in the fulfilment of the duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated education, highlighting the role that the PEG should play in striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education at Integrated primary schools.
76. The Department's letter of 31 October 2017 stressed the importance of supporting the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty '*by striving to meet demonstrated parental demand for pre-school education at GMI and controlled integrated primary schools*'. It specified that it is essential that the Department '*does not inadvertently constrain the development of integrated education*'.
77. Further clarification was set out in the Department's letter of 15 January 2018 that Justice Treacy concluded that the statutory duty applies only to Integrated education as a standalone concept as defined in Part V1 of the 1989 Education Reform Order rather than religiously mixed provision more generally. It further states that '*we should encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated (and Irish-medium) education in ways we need not for other education provision by taking positive steps, or removing obstacles which inhibit the statutory duty*'. However, the letter also states that '*the implications of these statutory duties must be considered on a case by case basis, analysed and balanced alongside other relevant statutory and policy requirements to reach a reasoned conclusion*'.
78. There is demonstrated parental demand (illustrated in **Chart 2**) through the level of first preference applications and admissions to the current playgroup year on year.
79. NICIE have indicated in their response at **Appendix E**, that supporting this proposal would assist the DE in fulfilling its duty 'to encourage and facilitate the growth of

³The Department's letter of 31 October was further clarified in the Department's letter of 15 January 2018 to the EA that the Department and its NDPBs should ensure that the duty to encourage and facilitate has been thoroughly and explicitly addressed in all aspects of the decision making process.

integrated education' at a low cost as the building is already in place and the number of additional places required is only two.

Effective and Efficient use of Public Funds

80. 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 three years and two months (underage children) in statutory settings. In determining the need for pre-school provision, the Department generally assumes a level of provision at 95% of target aged children. The level of provision within the two mile radius of Round Tower Pre-school is currently 105%. Statutory pre-school settings are legally obliged to admit pupils up to their published approved number.
81. Statistics show that there have been a total of 24 underage children admitted to pre-school provision, within a two mile radius of Round Tower Pre-school, from 2017/18 to 2019/20. In 2019/20, nine underage children were in statutory nursery places. 2020/21 unverified figures indicate that there are 22 underage children accessing statutory provision across a five mile radius.

Policy Context - Early Years

82. 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 in schools with a particular management type, including an integrated management type. The CfC focuses on parental preference for pre-school places with an Integrated management type, rather than unmet demand for pre-school provision generally.
83. There is no other integrated nursery provision within the local area. There are two IPSs within a five mile radius of Round Tower CIPS - Six Mile CIPS (approx. two miles) and Maine IPS (approx. six miles). While Six Mile CIPS provides some Reception provision, neither of these schools have a statutory NU. However, Maine IPS has a PEG funded pre-school on site which provides 24 funded pre-school education places in the current 2020/21 academic year. If DP 613 was approved, it is not expected that it would have an impact on the provision at this setting.
84. The closest integrated school with a statutory NU is Braidside IPS, which provides 26 part-time pre-school education places and is located approximately 12 miles away. All of the pre-school places at Braidside IPS were filled by target age children in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years.

Displacement

85. 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.
86. Round Tower CIPS currently has a PEG funded playgroup on site, so if the proposal to establish a statutory NU on site to replace this voluntary setting would not risk displacement elsewhere. During the statutory objection period, some respondents highlighted that there could be an increase in underage children being offered pre-school places in local pre-school provision in order to fill places, with further concerns regarding of the possibility of an expansion of the NU, if the proposal is granted at Round Tower CIPS from a part-time morning session to the provision of a dual day nursery provision. However, DP 615 is for a part-time session only with no mention in the CfC for any future expansion plans, indicating that those who have highlighted concerns of dual provision are doing so without any evidentiary evidence.
87. The CfC asserts that there will be minimal impact on other pre-school providers in the area, a claim that is backed up by the Department's Early Year's Team in Appendix C. The CfC further indicates that in 2018/19, 19 pre-school pupils transferred to Y1 in Round Tower CIPS with the remaining pupils transferring to a number of other primary school settings. To ensure no displacement within the proposal for the establishment of a NU at Round Tower CIPS, the Principal and BoGs will work within the local cluster of primary schools to ensure the continuation of patterns of a small number of pupils transferring to Y1 other primary school providers in the area.

Rural Considerations

88. The Department's SSP policy was assessed at the time against the Rural Development Council's 'Striking the Balance' report and rural proofing checklist and no adverse impact was identified. The needs of rural communities are reflected in the SSP through 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 (which also recognises the central place a school has for many communities (rural and urban)).
89. 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".
90. The EA's CfC confirms that equality screening of these proposals was carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.
91. This proposal seeks to establish a 26 part-time statutory NU at Round Tower CIPS in order to facilitate parental preference for pre-school provision at an integrated

setting. This proposal, if approved, will replace a voluntary provider currently onsite at Round Tower CIPS, and if approved would continue the availability of pre-school provision in this rural area which is already at levels commensurate with demand.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Levels of Pre-school Provision

92. 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.
93. 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.

Provision in the Area

94. **Map 3** shows a total of nine alternative statutory and voluntary pre-school providers within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup: St Comgall's Playgroup; Steeple NS; Little Hands Pre-School; St Joseph's NS, Muckamore Playgroup; Randalstown Community Playgroup; Mount St Michael's PS NU; Maine Integrated Playgroup; and Naiscoil Na Tamhnimoire.
95. The numbers of pre-school education places and associated percentages are measured against the Y1 enrolments for the 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21 (provisional data) academic years using school census data see **Table 7**.
96. As the existing non-statutory provision at Round Tower CIPS is PSEP funded provision, it is included in the analysis below. The statistical information available in relation to the level of funded pre-school education provision is as follows:

Level of pre-school education provision – two-mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School

Table 7 – Level of pre-school education provision within a two-mile radius

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
2017/18	234	62	12	308	314	98.1%	4
2018/19	234	62	10	306	335	91.3%	11
2019/20	234	62	18	314	299	105%	9
2020/21*	234	58	20	312	322	96.9%	22
Proposed	260	35	20	315	322	97.8%	-

Source: EA

*2020/21 unverified provisional data

97. The level of provision within the two-mile radius is currently slightly higher than the planning figure of 95%.
98. If the proposed statutory provision was approved this would result in a small increase from 96.9% to 97.8% based on the 2020/21 figures. Underage children have been placed in funded pre-school education places in each of the last four years. Overall, the figures suggest that pre-school education provision in the immediate area is broadly sufficient to meet demand.
99. If the proposal is not approved and the existing voluntary playgroup closes, the level of pre-school provision in the area would fall to 89.7% which is below our target figure.

Level of pre-school education provision – five-mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School

Table 8 – Level of pre-school provision within a five-mile radius

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
2017/18	286	140	19	445	434	102.5%	4
2018/19	286	139	22	447	454	98.5%	11
2019/20	286	137	26	449	439	102.3%	9
2020/21*	286	123	27	436	435	100.2%	22
Proposed	312	100	27	439	435	100.9%	-

Source: EA

*2020/21 unverified provisional data

100. The level of provision within the five-mile radius has been above the planning figure of 95% in each of the last four years. If approved, the additional statutory provision would result in a slight increase in the current level of pre-school education provision in the area from 100.2% to 100.9%. If the proposal is not approved and the existing voluntary playgroup closes the level of pre-school provision in the five mile radius would fall to 94.9%.
101. As the proposal is to establish statutory provision providing a similar number of places as the existing non-statutory provision which is closing whether the proposal is approved or not, it is unlikely to result in displacement of existing funded places at other voluntary/private pre-school education settings.
102. A list of the providers in the two and five mile radii is attached at Annex A as part of the Youth, Early Years and Childcare Directorate input within **Appendix C**.

Temporary Flexibility

103. Temporary Flexibility requests are approved at statutory settings to address unmet need in an area. There were no TF requests in 2017/18, 2018/19 or 2019/20 from any settings within either the two or five mile radii of Round Tower Community Playgroup.

Demand

Demand for Integrated Pre-School Provision in the Area

104. It is important that the Department strives to meet demonstrated parental preference in an area for pre-school education at Grant-Maintained and Controlled IPSs⁴.
105. Additionally, **Tables 1 and 2** (alternative integrated provision) indicate that there are a total of eight alternative integrated pre-schools within a 15 mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup (Statutory and Voluntary).
106. The table below summarises the number of pupils enrolled in integrated pre-schools. It highlights that enrolment numbers have remained relatively consistent, with limited underage pupils admitted. However, it also shows that the number of pupils in statutory settings has generally remained in a static position over the past three years, but there has been a modest decline in the number of funded pupils in voluntary settings over the past five years.

Table 9 – Demand for Integrated pre-school provision

Table 9			2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
			78 26	78 26	77 51	82 52	79 52
STATUTORY NU TOTALS			104	104	128	134	131
FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL TOTALS			137	124	102	99	97
INTEGRATED TOTALS			241	228	230	233	228
TOTAL UNDERAGE			0	0	9	0	0
TARGET AGED PUPILS ADMITTED			241	228	221	233	228

Source: EA Annual Census Data

Demand for non-integrated Pre-School Provision in the Area

107. **Tables 3 and 4** (alternative non-integrated provision) indicate that there are a total of eight alternative non-Integrated pre-schools within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup (Statutory and Voluntary).
108. The table below summarises the number of pupils enrolled in non-integrated pre-schools. It highlights that enrolment numbers have fluctuated over the past five years, with the introduction of underage pupils admitted from 2017/18 (however limited numbers admitted and 2018/19 showing a vast increase but 2019/20 showing a decline). The table also shows that the number of pupils accessing statutory NUs have remained consistent over the past four years, but the area has seen a decline in the number of funded pupils accessing voluntary pre-school settings. However there was a slight increase accessing this in 2019/20.

⁴ This is an extract from the Department's letter of 31 October 2017 referred to previously, and it was also repeated in the letter of 15 January 2018.

Table 10 – Demand for non-statutory pre-school provision

Table 10		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
STATUTORY NU TOTALS		304	287	286	286	286
FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL TOTALS		117	106	92	92	95
TOTALS		421	393	378	378	381
TOTAL UNDERAGE		0	0	4	11	9
TARGET AGED PUPILS ADMITTED		421	393	374	367	372

109. Combining the statutory settings in the area (integrated and non-integrated), there has been an increase in the number of children accessing this provision over the past five years rising from 408 in 2015/16 to 417 in 2019/20. Additionally, the information in the tables indicate that there has been a decrease in pupils accessing voluntary funded settings over the same timeframe – 254 in 2015/16 to 192 in 2019/20. However, this will have been impacted by voluntary settings closing and new statutory settings being established. The PSEP is set up to react to situations where there are fluctuations to the number of children accessing funded voluntary settings.

Demand for Places at Round Tower Community Playgroup

110. **Table 11** below sets out application and enrolment data for each of the last six academic years for Round Tower Community Playgroup which currently provides non-statutory funded pre-school places through the PSEP.

Table 11 – Round Tower application history

Year	Total No of Applications	Total First Preference Applications	Total Admitted
2015/16	38	25	24
2016/17	26	24	24
2017/18	29	27	24
2018/19	38	34	24
2019/20	30	25	24
2020/21*	23	20	23*

Source: EA

*Unverified census data provided by the EA

111. This data would suggest that there is a demand for pre-school education places in the vicinity of Round Tower CIPS and that if approved, a new statutory NU could be sustainable following the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup.

112. The Y1 enrolment at Round Tower CIPS is consistently above 26 pupils (i.e. the proposed NU intake) as their approved admissions number is 39. Therefore, this is also an indication that a statutory NU at the school may be sustainable.

113. The CfC asserts that the inclusion of a 26 place part-time NU may strengthen the CIPS and assist in the long-term sustainability of the primary school.

Reception Provision

114. A reception class is currently defined in legislation as suitable to the requirements of children aged four. Children who have reached their fourth birthday after the cut off point for compulsory school starting age may be able to join a reception class if available. Reception pupils are taught by qualified teachers, this is often in composite classes with Y1 pupils, and can also include pupils from other year groups. An aim of the PSEP was the replacement of existing reception provision with suitable alternative provision. Reception classes do not always provide an appropriate pre-school environment for children, and the Department has not approved new reception provision since 1998/99.
115. There are two primary schools within a five mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup that provided reception places in the 2020/21 academic year. These are Six Mile CIPS (20 pupils) and Randalstown Central Primary School (seven pupils).
116. If this proposal was not approved, it could result in more children applying for reception places at these settings, which would be contrary to the key action in the Learning-to-Learn framework to remove reception provision.

Underage Admissions

117. **Tables 9 & 10** show that there have been a relatively small number of underage children accessing funded pre-school education places over the last five years. The maximum number of underage children recorded in this time was in 2017/18, with 13 underage pupils accessing a funded pre-school place across seven statutory settings. However, unverified data for 2020/21 suggest that there are a total of 22 underage children accessing a funded pre-school education setting in the area.

Impact

118. In considering DPs for statutory provision, careful consideration is given to the impact of any new statutory provision on existing good quality voluntary/private pre-school education providers. The PSEP is a partnership between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school education providers and both sectors are valued equally for their contribution to the education of pre-school pupils.
119. The CfC asserts that *“The closure of the playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision in the Springfarm 2 ward area. Removal of provision within this ward would result in local families being severely disadvantaged.....There will be minimal impact on other pre-school providers in the area.”*
120. The evidence provided in this submission (Tables 7 and 8) shows that the proposed 26 part-time statutory pre-school education places would increase the levels of provision within the two mile and five mile radii to 97.8% (from 96.9%) and 100.9% (from 100.2%) respectively, which is minimal. However, if the proposal is not approved, the level of pre-school provision would fall over both the two and five mile radii to 89.7%, and 94.9% respectively which is below the planning figure of 95%.

121. The EA has advised that other existing pre-school providers within the area would not have the capacity to accommodate the 24 pre-school places that would be lost through the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup.
122. As the proposal is to establish statutory provision providing a similar number of places as the existing non-statutory provision which is closing, it is unlikely to result in displacement of existing funded places at other voluntary/private pre-school education settings. Overall, the figures suggest that pre-school education provision in the immediate area is broadly sufficient to meet demand.

Shared Education

123. The EA has stated that Roundtower PS is involved in a Shared Education Partnership with Parkhall PS. However, no evidence is provided that suggests this proposal would have either a beneficial or detrimental impact on Shared Education within the area.

RESOURCES

Accommodation

124. The CfC states that if DP 615 is approved, it is intended for the proposed new NU to make use of the accommodation vacated by the playgroup. This building is held under the ownership of the EA and would require some minor refurbishment works to include the provision of a sink in the playroom and upgrade of existing toilets which would be funded through the EA's minor works budget. It is estimated to cost in the region of £38K.

Finance

125. The Department's Financial Monitoring Team advises that any new provision (including new NUs) opening during the year is likely to create a funding need of around £35k based on past costs for such units opening during the financial year from opening to the end of that financial year. On a full year basis, the proposed new provision is estimated to cost around £57k.

Staffing

126. The CfC identifies a requirement for additional teaching and non-teaching staff via a recruitment process undertaken by the BoG. The cost of staff would be covered through the Local Management of Schools (LMS) funding and would cost an approximate £58k per annum.

CONCLUSION

127. The PSEP is a partnership between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school 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.

128. It is established DE practice not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision at an alternative setting. This consideration must be balanced against the Department's duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education. The distinct nature of pre-school provision at integrated settings has been recognised in guidance issued by the Department, informed by legal advice.
129. Planning for pre-school provision is on the basis of providing places equivalent to 95% of target age children across Northern Ireland. The current levels of provision within both the two mile and five mile radii are currently 96.9% and 100.2% respectively. However, these figures would only marginally increase if the proposal is approved. Therefore, the proposal is unlikely to have an impact on existing good quality pre-school education provision in the area.
130. The proposed change would retain the existing level of provision in the area, helping to maintain the stability of the PSEP as a whole. As this is effectively replacement of existing provision, the proposed change is considered unlikely to have a detrimental impact (in terms of displacement) on any alternative provider in the immediate area, a view that is supported by an absence of objections received during the statutory two month objection period relating to displacement concerns.
131. The EA have indicated that if the proposal is not approved, the alternative existing pre-school providers within the area would not have the capacity to accommodate the 24 pre-school places that would be lost through the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup. This could potentially result in a risk that target age children in the area may not be able to access a funded pre-school education place.
132. However, there is a modest downward trend in the target age population in the local area, aligning with NISRA birth rate and population projections which suggest a slight decline in the pre-school cohort over time. Albeit, the evidence indicates that there is sufficient demand to sustain a 26 place NU at Round Tower CIPS.
133. The enrolment in Y1 at Round Tower CIPS has been consistently higher than the proposed NU size of 26 part-time places, suggesting that a statutory pre-school unit could be sustainable.
134. Both the EA and EA PEG supports the proposal stating that there remains a need for pre-school provision in the area and the establishment of a NU at Round Tower CIPS would ensure continuity of provision.
135. The current proposal indicates that a statutory NU will be established at Round Tower CIPS with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter, however, due to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, schools in Northern Ireland were closed (except for the vulnerable children and the children of key workers) from March 2020, re-opening under the Education Restart programme in August 2020. The proposed implementation date for DP 615 has lapsed, thereby requiring a modification if approved. It is proposed that the implementation date for DP 615 is modified to 1 September 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter. The pre-school admissions process for September 2020 has concluded and the revised date would facilitate the admissions process for September 2021. Implementing an approval

decision at any other date risks in-year disruption to other pre-school settings and more importantly to pupils whose pre-school education only lasts for one year.

136. Colleagues in the Department's Irish Medium and Integrated Education Team have advised that the Department has a statutory duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated education. To ensure this duty is discharged effectively it is important that key consideration is given to the availability, or otherwise, of alternative Integrated places. Approving this DP is consistent with the effective discharge of this duty.

RECOMMENDATION

137. It is recommended that you:

- Approve DP 615 with a modification to the implementation date (as the proposed date has now lapsed): A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) will be published on DE's website once the proposer and the EA have been informed of your decision.



LORRAINE FINLAY

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DE SPaD

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 615

ROUND TOWER CONTROLLED INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Notice is hereby given that a Proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 has been submitted by the Education Authority to the effect that:

A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places, with effect from 1 September 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

A copy of the Proposal and Case for Change may be inspected at the offices of the Education Authority, 17 Lough Road, Antrim, BT41 4DH between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm and www.eani.org.uk/school-management/area-planning.

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

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

Sara Long
Chief Executive

CASE for CHANGE – Supporting Information

SUMMARY/OVERVIEW

AREA PLANNING DISTRICT	Antrim and Newtownabbey
DP NUMBER	DP 615
PROPOSER	Kim Scott Acting Director of Education Education Authority
SCHOOL(S) NAME	Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School Durnish Road Springfarm Estate ANTRIM BT41 2TH
SCHOOL REFERENCE	305 6248
TYPE	Primary
MANAGEMENT	Controlled Integrated
DP PUBLICATION DATE	Week commencing 24 February 2020
PROPOSAL	A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter

STATUTORY CONSULTATION

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

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

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<p>PROPOSER</p> <p>Provide detail of consultation with the BOGs, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils.</p> <p>Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before publication of the DP?</p>	<p>The Education Authority undertook consultation through a consultation questionnaire with:</p> <p>Staff: Letter and Questionnaire: 22 October 2019 Board of Governors: Letter and Questionnaire: 22 October 2019 Parents/Guardians: Letter and Questionnaire: 22 October 2019 Local Schools (17): Letter and Questionnaire: 23 October 2019</p> <p>A pre-publication consultation questionnaire was distributed and available on the Education Authority’s website for the period 22 October 2019–8 January 2020. In total 30 responses were received.</p> <p>In total 31 responses were received. The information below provides a summary/emerging themes of the responses received.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Agree</th> <th>Disagree</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Board of Governors</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Governor</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staff</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parents/Guardians</td> <td>22</td> <td></td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other – Local Schools</td> <td></td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other – Not Specified</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other – Grandparent</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other - Controlled Schools’ Support Council</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Responses Received</td> <td>29</td> <td>2</td> <td>31</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower IPS covers the requirement of the EA to promote its Good Relations Duty. • Provision of nursery education enhances the reach of the integrated ethos with positive effect on all categories. • Bringing the playgroup in as a nursery unit will strengthen the ethos of the school. • The establishment of a nursery unit will fulfil a need in the area. • Will promote and develop the integrated ethos. • Acknowledgement was made to the importance of maintaining high quality pre-school education provision for the area and that the proposal would not have an impact on alternative pre-school education providers. • The quality of the education provided in Round Tower IPS was regarded as being excellent. Praise for the commitment of the staff to delivering high quality education to all children was noted adding how beneficial this would be to begin with the nursery age 		Agree	Disagree	Total	Board of Governors	1		1	Governor	1		1	Staff	2		2	Parents/Guardians	22		22	Other – Local Schools		2	2	Other – Not Specified	1		1	Other – Grandparent	1		1	Other - Controlled Schools’ Support Council	1		1	Total Responses Received	29	2	31
	Agree	Disagree	Total																																						
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Other - Controlled Schools’ Support Council	1		1																																						
Total Responses Received	29	2	31																																						


	<p>children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Tower IPS is highly regarded within the local community and led by a strong, positive and forward thinking management team. The proposed nursery would thrive under this leadership. • Round Tower IPS has an incredibly positive ethos regarding equality and it was felt that it would be a particularly positive move for the nursery to also have integrated status. • Integrated education is an important option for some families who attend Round Tower IPS and having this option available from nursery age was welcomed. • The existing playgroup has a waiting list for places due to the demand for places therefore additional places are encouraged. • A suggestion was made to run two nursery sessions to ensure places would be available for all who wish to send their children there. • Round Tower IPS was praised for its inclusion of everyone and for the help, time and advice offered to parents. • Having the playgroup become a nursery unit will increase cohesion between the two groups and provide an excellent standard of care for all children regardless of beliefs or background. • The playgroup is already deemed to be part of the school structure, it would make sense for this to be made official. • Will retain existing pre-school provision in the area but not increase the overall provision in the wider area.
<p>CONFIRMATION BY THE PROPOSER</p>	<p>I confirm that the BOGs, Staff and Parents of pupils of Round Tower Integrated Primary School were consulted on 22 October 19 – 8 January 2020 and Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.</p> <p>NAME: Kim Scott OFFICE HELD: Acting Director of Education</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Kim Scott</i></p> <p>SIGNED: DATE: 20 February 2020</p>


ASSOCIATED PROPOSALS

<p>DP XXX Published DD//MM/YY</p>	<p>None</p>
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The following is to be completed and signed off by the EA.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<p>THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY</p>	<p>I confirm that the schools which the EA consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 23 October 2019 to 6 January 2020.</p> <p>NAME: Kim Scott OFFICE HELD: Acting Director of Education</p>  <p>SIGNED: DATE: 20 February 2020</p>
<p>Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA’s opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.</p> <p>Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).</p> <hr/> <p>Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p> <hr/> <p>Dates of EA meetings e.g. Education Committee/ Board etc.</p> <p><u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u></p>	<p>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 a copy of the proposal was sent, on 23 October 2019, to schools which might be affected by the proposal. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors to be returned to the Education Authority by 8 January 2020.</p> <p>A total of 17 schools were forwarded the draft proposal for their comments.</p> <p>Two responses from local schools were received.</p> <p>Steeple Nursery School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sustainability of Steeple Nursery School if the proposal was to be approved with 2 additional places being granted. • An increase in under-aged children being offered pre-school places in Steeple Nursery in order to fill places. • The link with Round Tower IPS may weaken as a result of the proposal being approved due to the tradition of pupils transitioning from Steeple Nursery as a consistent feeder to Round Tower IPS. • The possibility of expansion to a dual nursery unit at Round Tower IPS in the future if the current proposal was approved. • Steeple Nursery School is an inclusive pre-school setting providing education to children from diverse religious denominations. The opening of an integrated nursery unit may have a negative impact on the richness of diversity within the school. • The birth rates for Northern Ireland are declining notably over the next few years highlighting no requirement for additional pre-school places.

	<p>St Joseph's Nursery School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closure of Round Tower Playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision within the Springfarm 2 ward area. • By introducing an additional nursery school unit in the Antrim area would have a detrimental impact on our admissions ultimately resulting in an increase of penultimate funded places in our school. • A further concern of the Board of Governors is the possibility of an expansion of the nursery unit, if the proposal is granted at Round Tower Integrated Primary School from a part-time morning session to the provision of a dual day nursery provision. <p>This development proposal was discussed by the EA's Education Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2020.</p>
<p>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS</p> <p>In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?</p> <p>NAME: Kim Scott</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: Acting Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 20 February 2020</p>	<p>The Education Authority, as the proposer, supports Development Proposal No 615 to establish a 26 part-time nursery unit at Round Tower Integrated Primary School with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>The proposal is in effect a change in management from a voluntary provider to a statutory provider resulting in no change in provision within the area. The establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower Integrated Primary School would ensure continuity of pre-school provision in the area and fulfil the statutory duty on the Education Authority to encourage and facilitate integrated education by striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education at grant-maintained and controlled integrated primary schools.</p> <p>This proposal is supported by the Pre-School Education Group (PEG) as detailed in the Case for Change.</p>

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY
PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NURSERY UNIT FOR 26 PART-TIME PUPILS AT ROUND TOWER CONTROLLED INTEGRATED PRIMARY SC FROM 1st SEPTEMBER 2020 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER
PEG Comments – PEG Meeting 22nd October 2019**

School	Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School
Address	Durnish Road, Springfarm, Antrim, BT41 2TH
Does PEG/EA support the proposal?	PEG considered the DP from Round Tower CIPS for comment in line with guidance provided by DE regarding pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Integrated and Irish-Medium education as follows: "It is important the Education Authority and the PEG support the Department in fulfilling its statutory duty by striving to meet demonstrated parental demand in an area for pre-school education at grant-maintained and controlled integrated primary schools, as well as parental demand for Irish-medium pre-school education" In this context, PEG supports the DP on the basis of demonstrated parental demand as evidenced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school currently has a funded playgroup on the school grounds.
What is the potential impact if the proposal is/ is not approved? (alternatives for meeting demand/ potential for over provision)	24 pre-school places are currently funded within Round Tower Integrated Playgroup which is located on the school grounds.
What is the PEG assessment of need for pre-school provision for the area? Is this need currently met?	For the 2019-20 academic year a total of 324 funded places are available within a 3 mile radius of Round Tower CIPS with a total of 317 1 st preference applications being received. Round Tower IPG is included within these figures with 24 1 st preference applications.
How many 1 st preference applications were received by the setting? (usually 2 years figures but this depends on the timing of the development proposal)	Round Tower IPG intake 2019 24 1 st preferences 2018 34 1 st preferences 2017 27 1 st preferences 2016 24 1 st preferences
Are there current or anticipated pressures in placing pre-school children in the area?	The projected live births for the former wards of Ballycraigy, Farranshane, Greystone, Massereene, Springfarm and Steeple where Round Tower CIPS is located are as follows:- 2018 pre-school admissions 249 2019 pre-school admissions 251 2020 pre-school admissions 248
	2021 pre-school admissions 237
Have children been unplaced at the end of the process in previous years?	BT41 postcode 2019 0 2018 0
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	Round Tower IPG has a consistent number of 1 st preferences every year and fill the 24 funded places within the setting.
Can existing voluntary/private providers expand to help meet demand? Is there potential for new providers to come on to the programme?	There are 5 other pre-school settings (3 non-statutory and 2 statutory) within the 3 mile radius but only 1 non-statutory setting would still have spare capacity and 1 statutory nursery has admitted 7 younger children in the 2019-20 academic year. However, there would not be sufficient capacity between these 2 settings to cater for 24 places should Round Tower PG not continue.
What is the potential impact on existing good quality provision (displacement)?	Round Tower IPG is already in existence with 24 funded pre-school places. EA has received correspondence from the Management Committee to advise the playgroup is to close so in order to continue with pre-school provision in the area the school has requested a nursery unit.
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	

1 BACKGROUND

Pre-school education is a non-compulsory phase of education. Whilst it is a Government commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it, there is no guarantee that a funded place will be available at a parent's preferred pre-school provider.

Research in the UK and US shows that good quality pre-school education has important benefits for individuals, families, communities and society and the economy as a whole. Children who experience good pre-school education, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs, are better prepared for school, learn more quickly and have fewer emotional or behavioural difficulties in later life. In addition, parents have greater opportunity to work, undertake study or training, or care for other dependants.

Round Tower Community Playgroup, a voluntary provider has been operating successfully for a number of years within the adjoining Round Tower Integrated Primary School building. The application history of the playgroup is detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Application History		
Year	1st Preference	Total Admissions
2013/14	33	38
2014/15	20	21
2015/16	25	24
2016/17	24	24
2017/18	27	24
2018/19	34	24
2019/20	30	24

The management committee of Round Tower Community Playgroup, which is located in the building of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School (CIPS), has indicated that it will be stepping down. To ensure the pre-school provision within the area is continued, the management committee has approached the primary school to seek if it would consider the provision of pre-school provision in the area. The Board of Governors of Round Tower CIPS considered the position and made a proposal to the Education Authority for a nursery unit for the school.

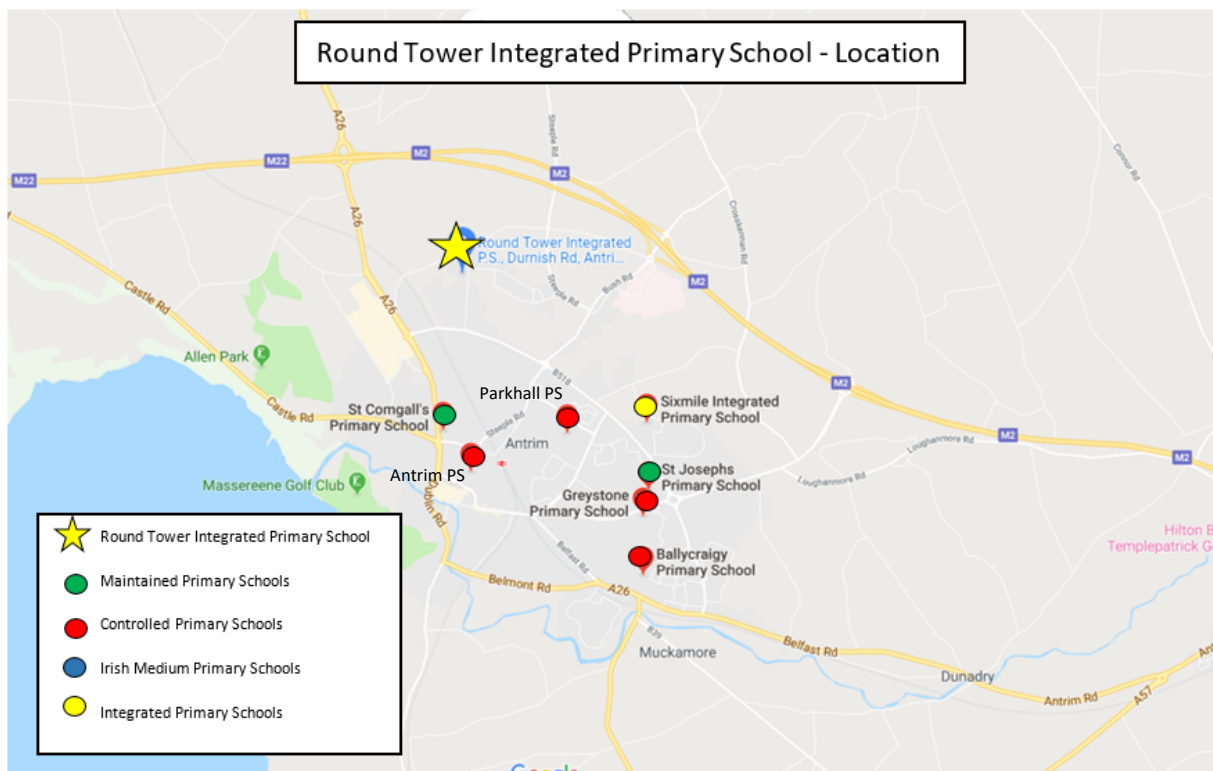
The existing management committee of Round Tower Community Playgroup has indicated that it is in favour of governors of the school pursuing a Development Proposal to close the playgroup and establish nursery provision. The management committee will continue until such times as a development proposal is approved to establish a nursery unit at Round Tower Integrated Primary School.

The alternative pre-school provision to Round Tower Community Playgroup, within 3-5 mile radius, is shown on Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Alternative Pre-School Provision		
Pre-School Providers	Ward	Places at September 2018
Little Hands Preschool	Steeple	14
Muckamore Preschool Playgroup	Aldergrove	26
St Comgall's Playgroup Antrim	Antrim Centre	24
St Joseph's Nursery School	Stiles	78
Steeple Nursery School	Springfarm	156

The pre-school settings listed above have filled their allocation of places for September 2019 and there remains a need for pre-school provision in the Springfarm ward.

The map below shows the location of Round Tower Integrated Primary School in relation to other nearby schools in the area.



2 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

There remains a need for pre-school provision in the area currently served by Round Tower Community Playgroup. The proposal is to establish a part-time nursery unit at Round Tower CIPS and this assessment is centred on the primary school.

In assessing the school's overall sustainability, we can cite the six indicators from the Sustainable Schools Policy from the Department of Education. As outlined below, the

school seems well placed to meet each of the criteria, which, apart from indicating the overall success of the school in recent years, also would point toward a need to build on existing success.

2.1 Quality of Education

The ETI inspection of Round Tower CIPS in January 2015 noted that:

“In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.”

There is a need to:

- **raise further the children’s standards in literacy and numeracy; and**
- **improve further the quality of the learning and teaching to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all of the children.**

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school’s progress on the areas for improvement.”

2.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

Table 3, below, outlines the enrolment statistics of the Round Tower CIPS:

Table 3: Enrolment Statistics								
Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
2011/12	43	38	42	46	30	37	30	266
2012/13	48	43	36	41	46	30	36	280
2013/14	39	46	42	33	36	44	28	268
2014/15	40	39	48	41	35	33	42	278
2015/16	37	40	38	48	43	35	34	275
2016/17	43	38	39	40	48	44	34	286
2017/18	36	43	39	42	41	48	42	291
2018/19	38	36	42	41	43	42	47	289
2019/20 (Source: School)	37	39	34	43	38	46	42	279

Round Tower CIPS is a sustainable school and well above the 105/140 required for a rural/urban school as defined in the Sustainable Schools Policy. Since 2013/14, the school has experienced a steady increase in enrolment with the highest enrolment number of 291 experience in 2018/19. At September 2019 the school has an enrolment of 279. The school has a current approved enrolment number of 276 and current approved admissions number of 39.

2.3 Sound Financial Position

Round Tower CIPS has been financially stable over the past few years as indicated in the Primary School Annual Area Profile attached. However the three year financial plan submitted by the school for 2018/21 indicates a projected increasing deficit of up to £299,930 by 2022.

2.4 Strong Leadership and Management

The Round Tower CIPS's ETI report, dated January 2015, noted that:

“The principal has led a review of the strategic leadership within the school. A clearly defined leadership structure is in place which provides successful distributed leadership among the staff. The co-ordinators are effective in leading and managing their areas of responsibility; they articulate a clear strategic direction that focuses on improving the children’s attainment and learning experiences among all staff at key stage and curricular team level.”

2.5 Accessibility

The school is located in an area that can be accessed by foot, private car and bus. The majority of the pupils live close to the primary school.

2.6 Strong Links with the Community

Round Tower CIPS has been located in its current setting for a number of years and has strong links with the local community and other local schools. The parents are an active part of the school and contribute to the overall school community. Round Tower Integrated Primary is in partnership with Parkhall Primary School as part of the Shared Education Signature Project and are now entering their third year of the partnership. The school is involved with the Moving Forward Together group, has links with Young Enterprise, is part of the Extended Schools Cluster for the Antrim area and has a supportive PTA who organise the summer schemes held in the school building and other fundraising activities.

3 AREA PLANNING IMPACT

This proposal will continue to secure pre-school provision for the area and will have no impact on area planning.

As stated previously the proposed new nursery will be located within Round Tower CIPS accommodation. Round Tower CIPS is a sustainable school.

4 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

The data provided in Table 1 shows that Round Tower Community Playgroup remains a popular pre-school provider and is an essential component of the local community. The closure of the playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision in the Springfarm 2 ward area. Removal of provision within this ward would result in local families being severely disadvantaged.

The inclusion of a 26 part-time nursery unit will strengthen the controlled integrated primary school and assist in the long-term sustainability of the school.

There will be minimal impact on other pre-school providers in the area. In 2018/19, 19 pre-school pupils transferred to Year 1 in Round Tower CIPS with the remaining pupils transferring to a number of other primary school settings. To ensure no displacement within the proposal for the establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower CIPS, the Principal and Board of Governors will work within the local cluster of primary schools to ensure the continuation of patterns of a small number of pupils transferring to Year 1 other primary school providers in the area.

5 EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Continuity of pre-school provision is essential and the retention of pre-school provision for the area is an important part of the overall pre-school education programme.

6 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

The proposal is being brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The implementation date for the proposal is for 1 September 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter. The timetable, pending approval from the Education Committee, for the consultation process is:

Development Proposal Timeline	
Proposal: A statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.	Proposed Timeline
<p>Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents – (8 weeks plus an additional week for mid-term and additional two weeks for the Christmas break)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority.</p> <p>Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority’s Education Committee. A deputation from the Board of Governors may also choose to attend the Education Committee or the Board meeting.</p>	22 October 2019 – 6 January 2020
<p>Consultation with other affected Schools (8 weeks plus an additional week for mid-term and additional two weeks for the Christmas break)</p> <p>Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority</p>	22 October 2019 – 6 January 2020

Responses will be considered and a Case for Change document compiled before submission to the Education Authority's Education Committee.	
Education Committee to seek Approval To Publish Case for Change to be taken to the February 2020 Education Authority's Education Committee for consideration. If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period.	20 February 2020
Statutory Objection Period (2 months) Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education	Week commencing 24 February 2020 (2 months)
Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision	June 2020
Implementation If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 1 September 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.	

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is for the establishment of a part-time nursery unit at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School. As there are currently unfilled places within the local schools, there will be no requirement for additional accommodation to facilitate the relocation of pupils. There will be a cost saving in the recurrent costs of operating a school.

Finance The recurrent costs associated with the nursery unit will be covered through LMS funding.

Staffing Additional teaching and non-teaching staff would be required with a recruitment process undertaken by the Board of Governors. The cost of staff would be covered through LMS funding.

Transport Transport is not applicable to pre-school provision.

Accommodation It is intended for the proposed new nursery to make use of the accommodation vacated by the playgroup. This building is held under the ownership of the Education Authority and would require some minor refurbishment works to include the provision of a sink in the playroom and upgrade of existing toilets which would be funded through the EA's minor works budget.

DEPARTMENTAL INPUTS

FINANCE DIRECTORATE INPUT

305-6248 Round Tower Integrated Primary

The school's **Provisional** Deficit position as at 31 March 2020 is **-£30,967**.

The school's Surplus position as at 31 March 2019 is £1,029.

The school's Surplus in the previous year, up to 31 March 2018 was £35,656.

The school received a total delegated budget of £836,584 in the 2020-21 financial year for **278¹** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £3,009.

The average for all primary schools is £3,213.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **72⁵** pupils, which represents 25.90% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.

The school received £5,250 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 11.00% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary/Post-primary funding stream.

The school also received £1,806 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.

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 £35k** – 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. **£57k** (for new provision, not previously funded).

⁵ The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2019 census data was used to determine the 2020-21 CFF allocation). **The census data on the Schools+ database relates to an academic year, as opposed to the financial year.** In addition, differences between funded pupils and total pupils within the census count may occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, zero rated pupils, some reception pupils, and over age pupils (paragraph 7 of Annex B to the Common Funding Scheme refers).

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

Factor	2020-21 £	2019-20 £	2018-19 £
Pupil AWPU	663,025	660,010	627,960
TSN – Social Deprivation	44,179	41,111	46,020
TSN – Additional Social Deprivation	2,025	1,896	1,975
Premises Area	12,786	12,786	12,786
Premises FTE	23,488	24,352	24,412
Small Schools Support	5,250	2,482	2,033
Primary Principals Release Time	1,806	903	739
Foundation Stage	34,779	34,429	36,181
Teachers Salary Protection		10,093	5,684
Service Personnel Pupils	1,767	846	1,199
Traveller Children			2,997
Looked After Children	1,104	1,057	2,997
Newcomer Children	46,375	38,063	38,963

Total School Funding	836,584	828,028	803,946
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Pupil FTE (no.)	278.00	289.00	291.00
Per Capita	£3,009	£2,865	£2,763

AREA PLANNING, ADMISSIONS AND SHARED EDUCATION CAMPUS
DIRECTORATE – SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEAM INPUT

DP 615 – Round Tower Integrated Primary School 305-6248 - Proposal to establish 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Background

Round Tower Integrated Primary School (IPS) is a controlled integrated school with approved admissions and enrolment numbers currently set at 39 (to a maximum of 43 provided the enrolment number would not thereby be exceeded) in admissions and 276 in enrolment. DP 615 proposes that a part-time nursery unit be established with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter. Should part-time nursery places be established, they will not be included in the school's approved admissions and enrolment numbers.

Temporary Variations (TVs)

If a school receives more applications than it has places available it can request a TV to its admissions and/or enrolment number from School Admissions Team (SAT). The table below shows the TVs granted to Round Tower IPS in the last 4 school years.

	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Temporary Variations approved (to a total of)*	
			Total Admissions	Total Enrolment
2016/17	39	276	43	283
2017/18	39	276		281
2018/19	39	276		281
2019/20	39	276		

Long Term

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

INVESTMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE

Estate Operations Team Comments

Round Tower Community Playgroup, a voluntary provider has been operating for a number of years within the adjoining Round Tower IPS building.

This proposal is for the establishment of a part-time NU at Round Tower Controlled IPS. It is intended for the proposed new nursery to make use of the accommodation vacated by the playgroup. This building is held under the ownership of the EA and would require some minor refurbishment works to include the provision of a sink in the playroom and upgrade of existing toilets which could be funded through the EA's minor works budget.

INCLUSION & WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

Title: Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School – Establish a Nursery Unit

School Number: (305 6248)

Number: DP 615

Response due date: 18 March 2020

IWD Input:

Special Education Team Input

From a special educational needs (SEN) policy perspective, SET would not have any objection to this DP, particularly given that nursery provision at the school would allow easier transition of pupils (including pupils with SEN) from nursery to primary, as indicated in the case for change, e.g. same site, continuity of integrated ethos, familiar routines and procedures, opportunities for visiting P1 classroom and staff.

The Case for Change states that continuity of pre-school provision is essential and the retention of pre-school provision for the area is an important part of the overall pre-school education programme. If this DP is not approved, SET would have concerns in regard to the potential limitations on pupils' development, particularly children with SEN.

PROMOTING COLLABORATION, TACKLING DISADVANTAGE DIRECTORATE INPUT

SHARED EDUCATION, COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM

The proposer EA has stated that Roundtower PS is involved in a Shared Education Partnership with Parkhall PS.

10 of the 15 local schools (including Roundtower PS) are involved in Shared Education partnerships.

There was no mention of Shared Education in the responses to either the pre-publication or 2 month objection period. Hence no evidence is provided that this proposal would have either a beneficial or detrimental impact on Shared Education within the area

YOUTH, EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE DIRECTORATE INPUT

INPUT FROM EARLY YEARS TEAM ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL No 615

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL No 615 – A STATUTORY NURSERY UNIT WILL BE ESTABLISHED AT ROUND TOWER CONTROLLED INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL TO PROVIDE 26 PART-TIME NURSERY PLACES WITH EFFECT FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER

- 1. Introduction**
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INPUT FROM EARLY YEARS TEAM ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL No 615

A STATUTORY NURSERY UNIT WILL BE ESTABLISHED AT ROUND TOWER CONTROLLED INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL TO PROVIDE 26 PART-TIME NURSERY PLACES WITH EFFECT FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER

1. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Board of Governors of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School the Education Authority (EA) has published Development Proposal Number 615 proposing that a statutory nursery unit will be established at Round Tower Controlled IPS to provide 26 part-time nursery places with effect from 1 September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The Case for Change (CfC) states that the school does not currently have any statutory pre-school education provision. A voluntary pre-school provider (Round Tower Community Playgroup) currently providing 21 funded pre-school education places is located within the existing Round Tower Controlled IPS buildings. The Management Committee of this playgroup has advised the EA that it intends to close (page 7 CfC). The CfC proposes that a 26 place statutory nursery unit is established at Round Tower Controlled IPS.

2. BACKGROUND

Round Tower IPS is a controlled integrated primary school located on a site on the Springfarm Estate, Antrim. The current approved admissions and enrolment numbers for the school are 39 and 276 respectively.

Round Tower Community Playgroup, a voluntary provider, has been operating for a number of years from accommodation within the Round Tower IPS building. The playgroup has been a participant in the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) since 2006/07 and was allocated 24 funded pre-school education places in the 2018/19, and 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years, with all places filled each year apart from the current 2020-21 academic year, when 23⁶ places have been filled to date. The CfC advises that the Management Committee of Round Tower Community Playgroup has indicated that they will be stepping down and the playgroup will close, however, they will continue until such times as a development proposal is considered to establish a statutory nursery unit at Round Tower IPS (page 7 CfC). If the proposal is not approved,

⁶ Figure provided in 2020 DE Census return

the closure of the playgroup would reduce the number of pre-school education places available in the area by 24.

The CfC advises that there remains a need for pre-school provision in the area currently served by Round Tower Community Playgroup (page 9 CfC). It adds that the inclusion of a 26 part-time nursery unit will strengthen the controlled integrated primary school and assist in the long-term sustainability of the school.

The main policy considerations relevant to this proposal are:

<p>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</p>	<p>The CfC focuses on the planned closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup and the need to provide sufficient pre-school provision in the area.</p> <p>Information provided by the EA (page 6 CfC) highlights that the enrolment and application history for the current pre-school provider demonstrates a continuing demand for places.</p> <p>This is considered in more detail below.</p>
<p>Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education</p>	<p>Under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 (integrated education), the Department of Education (DE) has a statutory duty to ‘encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils’. This duty is considered in more detail below.</p>
<p>Displacement of good quality pre-school education provision already in existence</p>	<p>It is the Department’s practice, where possible, not to displace established good quality pre-school education provision with pre-school education provision in an alternative setting but every case is considered on its merits.</p> <p>This DP proposes the establishment of new statutory pre-school provision after the planned closure of existing non-statutory provision. The potential impact of this proposal on existing provision is considered in more detail below.</p>
<p>Ensuring the best use of public resources</p>	<p>In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of the resources available. In light of this, it aims to maximise available pre-school places for target age children, avoiding</p>

	over provision and the resulting enrolment of children younger than 3 years and 2 months (underage children) in statutory settings. This is considered in more detail below.
Reception provision	A key action in the Learning to Learn framework is the removal of reception provision. Round Tower IPS does not have reception provision, however, there are 2 settings within the five mile radius that provide reception places.

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 numbers of pre-school education places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for the 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years using school census data and provisional data provided in the setting's census return for the 2020/21 academic year.

As the existing non-statutory provision at Round Tower IPS is PSEP funded provision, it is included in the analysis below. The statistical information available in relation to the level of funded pre-school education provision is as follows:

Level of pre-school education provision – two-mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School

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
2017/18	234	62	12	308	314	98.1%	4
2018/19	234	62	10	306	335	91.3%	11
2019/20	234	62	18	314	299	105%	9
2020/21	234	58	20	312	322	96.9%	22
Proposed	260	35	20	315	322	97.8%	-

The level of provision within the two-mile radius is currently slightly higher than the planning figure of 95%.

If the proposed statutory provision was approved this would result in a small increase from 96.9% to 97.8% based on the 2020/21 figures. Underage children have been placed in funded pre-school education places in each of the last four years. Overall, the figures suggest that pre-school education provision in the immediate area is broadly sufficient to meet demand.

If the proposal is not approved and the existing voluntary playgroup closes, the level of pre-school provision in the area would fall to 89.7% which is below our target figure.

Level of pre-school education provision – five-mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School

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
2017/18	286	140	19	445	434	102.5%	4
2018/19	286	139	22	447	454	98.5%	11
2019/20	286	137	26	449	439	102.3%	9
2020/21	286	123	27	436	435	100.2%	22
Proposed	312	100	27	439	435	100.9%	-

The level of provision within the five-mile radius has been above the planning figure of 95% in each of the last four years. If approved, the additional statutory provision would result in a slight increase in the current level of pre-school education provision in the area from 100.2% to 100.9%. If the proposal is not approved and the existing voluntary playgroup closes the level of pre-school provision in the five mile radius would fall to 94.9%.

As the proposal is to establish statutory provision providing a similar number of places as the existing non-statutory provision which is closing whether the proposal is approved or not, it is unlikely to result in displacement of existing funded places at other voluntary/private pre-school education settings.

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

Table 3 below sets out application and enrolment data for each of the last six academic years for Round Tower Community Playgroup which currently provides non-statutory funded pre-school places through the PSEP at Round Tower IPS.

Table 3

Year	Total No of Applications	Total First Preference Applications	Total Admitted
2015/16	38	25	24
2016/17	26	24	24
2017/18	29	27	24
2018/19	38	34	24
2019/20	30	25	24
2020/21	23	20	23*

Source: EA

* Source DE census (provisional)

This data would suggest that there is a demand for pre-school education places in the vicinity of Round Tower IPS and that if approved, a new statutory nursery unit could be sustainable following the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup.

The rationale for the proposal as set out in the CfC (page 11) states that Round Tower Community Playgroup remains a popular pre-school provider. It adds that the closure of the playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision in the Springfarm

2 ward area and claims that removal of provision within this ward would result in families being severely disadvantaged.

The CfC also advises that the inclusion of a 26 place part-time nursery unit may strengthen the controlled integrated primary school and assist in the long-term sustainability of the primary school.

4. INTEGRATED EDUCATION

Under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, the Department has a statutory duty to 'encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education'. The duty under the 1989 Order must be considered alongside the duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. It is important that the Department strives to meet demonstrated parental preference in an area for pre-school education at grant-maintained and controlled integrated primary schools. In discharging these duties it is essential that the Department does not inadvertently constrain the development of integrated 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 in schools with a particular management type, including an integrated management type, and this is taken into account in the Early Years Team (EYT) advice.

There are two alternative primary schools with an integrated management type within a five mile radius of Round Tower IPS. These are Six Mile Controlled Integrated Primary School (approx. 1-2 miles) and Maine Integrated Primary School (approx. 4-5 miles). While Six Mile IPS provides some Reception provision, neither of these schools have a statutory nursery unit.

There is, however, a voluntary pre-school setting (Maine Integrated Playgroup) situated on the same site as Maine Integrated Primary School which provides 24 funded pre-school education places in the 2020/21 academic year. If this proposal was approved it is not expected that it would have an impact on the provision at this setting.

Table 4 below considers the number of statutory places at integrated schools and non-statutory places located on an integrated school's site within a five mile radius of Round Tower IPS (includes Round Tower Community Playgroup).

Pre-school education provision at integrated schools and voluntary/private providers located on an integrated school's site – five-mile radius of Round Tower Integrated Primary School

Table 4

Year	Statutory places	Non-statutory places (located on an integrated school's site)	Reception places	Total pre-school provision	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2017/18	0	48	12	60	77	77.9%	0
2018/19	0	47	10	57	91	62.6%	0
2019/20	0	42	18	60	82	73.2%	0
2020/21	0	47	20	67	69	97.1%	0
Proposed	26	24	20	70	69	101.4%	--

5. RECENT CHANGES IN PROVISION

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

6. TEMPORARY FLEXIBILITY

There have been no Temporary Flexibility requests in 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 or 2020/21 from any settings within either the 2 or 5 mile radii of Round Tower Integrated Primary School.

7. RECEPTION PROVISION

There are two primary schools within a five mile radius of Round Tower IPS that are providing reception places in the 2020/1 academic year. These are Six Mile IPS (20) and Randalstown Central Primary School (7).

If this proposal was not approved it could result in more children applying for reception places at these settings, which would be contrary to the key action in the Learning to Learn framework to remove reception provision.

8. IMPACT ON VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS

The Pre-School Education Programme (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.

Round Tower Community Playgroup filled the 24 funded pre-school places allocated to the setting in each of the last three academic years prior to 2020, and has filled all but one place in the current academic year. The admissions to Year One at Round Tower IPS have also been consistently above the proposed nursery unit size of 26 part-time places as shown in Table 5 below. This would also suggest that the proposed statutory pre-school provision at Round Tower IPS could be sustainable

Table 5

Year	Primary One Enrolment
2017/18	36
2018/19	38
2019/20	37
2020/21	34

Source: ASU and EA

The EA has indicated that there would not be sufficient capacity at other settings in the area to cater for 24 places should Round Tower Community Playgroup close (page 6 CfC). It adds that the establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower IPS would ensure continuity of pre-school provision in the area (page 5 CfC). As the proposal for Round Tower IPS is to replace the existing voluntary provision, with only a small increase in the current pre-school education places (23 to 26), if approved, it is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on other pre-school provision in the area and would be unlikely to have an adverse impact on the stability of the PSEP as a whole.

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. In light of this, it aims to maximise available pre-school education 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.

As the proposal would only result in a very small increase to the provision levels in the area, it would be unlikely to displace other existing provision or increase the number of underage children enrolled in statutory pre-school education places.

10. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The CfC states that the parents, staff and Governors of Round Tower IPS were consulted during the period 23 October 2019 to 8 January 2020. The CfC advised that a total of 29 responses were received, all of which indicated support for the proposal (page 2 CfC).

A pre-publication statutory consultation was also carried out between 23 October 2019 and 8 January 2020 when a copy of the draft proposal was forwarded to 17 local schools for their comments. A total of two responses were received both of which were reported by the EA as objecting to the proposal. The main reasons for the objections were a potential detrimental impact on existing provision in the area and concern regarding a possible future expansion of the nursery unit at Round Tower IPS (page 4 CfC).

11. EA COMMENTS

The EA has advised that it supports the proposal to establish a 26 place part-time nursery unit at Round Tower IPS. It adds that the proposal is a change in management from a voluntary provider to a statutory provider resulting in no overall change in provision within the area. It further adds that the establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower IPS would ensure continuity of pre-school provision in the area and fulfil the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education by striving to meet demonstrated parental demand (page 5 CfC).

The EA PEG has advised that it supports this proposal on the basis of demonstrated parental demand as evidenced by the school currently having a funded playgroup on the

school grounds. It advises that it has received correspondence from the Management Committee of Round Tower Community Playgroup to advise that the playgroup is to close. EA PEG adds that there would not be sufficient capacity at alternative settings in the area to cater for 24 places should Round Tower Community Playgroup not continue (page 6 CfC).

12. SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The current levels of provision within both the two mile and five mile radii are currently 96.9% and 100.2% respectively. These figures would increase very marginally if the proposal is approved;
- If approved, the proposal is unlikely to have an impact on existing good quality pre-school education provision in the area;
- The proposal is to replace existing non-statutory pre-school education provision with a new statutory nursery unit at Round Tower IPS;
- There is a modest downward trend in the target age population in the local area, aligning with NISRA birth rate and population projections which suggest a slight decline in the pre-school cohort over time;
- The EA has advised that other existing pre-school providers within the area would not have the capacity to accommodate the 24 pre-school places that would be lost through the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup;
- There have been no Temporary Flexibility (TF) requests in the last four years from any settings within the five -mile radius of Round Tower IPS;
- Under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, DE has a statutory duty to 'encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education'. This duty relates to education provision in a school with an integrated management type and should be considered alongside the duty under Article 44 of the 1986 Order;

- Both the EA and EA PEG supports the proposal stating that there remains a need for pre-school provision in the area and the establishment of a nursery unit at Round Tower IPS would ensure continuity of provision;
- The enrolment in Year One at Round Tower IPS has been consistently higher than the proposed nursery unit size of 26 part-time places, suggesting that a statutory pre-school unit could be sustainable.

13. CONCLUSION

It is noted that the overall level of provision within a five mile radius of Round Tower IPS is above the Department's target figure. However, if the proposal is approved it would only very marginally increase provision in the area (3 places). If the proposal were not to be approved the level of provision would drop to around 89.8% and 94.9% within both the two mile and five mile radii respectively. The EA has advised that, should this be the outcome, the alternative existing pre-school providers within the area would not have the capacity to accommodate the 24 pre-school places that would be lost through the closure of Round Tower Community Playgroup. This could potentially result in a risk that target age children in the area may not be able to access a funded pre-school education place.

Having considered all the evidence available, including comments provided by the EA and the consistently high level of applications and enrolments to the existing pre-school provider over a number of years, EYT has concluded that the requested statutory nursery unit would be unlikely to have a detrimental impact on other pre-school education provision in the area.

The proposed change would retain almost the same level of existing provision in the area, and would help to maintain the stability of the PSEP as a whole. The EYT has taken into account all of the inputs made, including from the EA PEG which make it clear that there is a need to continue pre-school education provision in the area at existing levels. EYT considers therefore that this proposal is about continuation of existing levels of provision rather than displacement. On balance therefore, EYT considers that the proposal to establish a 26 place part-time statutory nursery unit at Round Tower IPS is reasonable.

The team notes that at the time of writing the pre-school admissions process for the 2020/21 academic year has recently concluded and figures for the current academic year may be subject to slight change as census figures have not yet been finalised. .

Due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the team acknowledges that the proposal may require modification and is willing to provide further updated advice in due course, if required.

Early Years (Pre-School) Team

October 2020

LIST OF PROVIDERS

2 MILE

Nursery Schools

3116167 Steeple Nursery School
 3136183 St Joseph's Nursery School

Vol/Priv

3AB0350 Little Hands Pre-School
 3BB0536 Round Tower Community Playgroup
 3AB0351 St Comgall's Playgroup

**Primary with No
NU**

3010741 Creavery Primary School
 3010829 Antrim Primary School
 3013331 Ballycraigy Primary School
 3016058 Parkhall Primary School
 3030832 St Comgall's Primary School
 3036050 St Joseph's Primary School
 3056231 Six Mile Integrated Primary School
 3056248 Round Tower Integrated Primary School

Primary with NU

None

5 MILE

Nursery Schools

None

Vol/Priv

3BB0533 Maine Integrated Playgroup
 3AB0117 Muckamore Pre-School Playgroup
 3BB0648 Naiscoil Na Tamhnimoire
 3AB0097 Randalstown Community Playgroup

**Primary with no
NU**

3010816 Randalstown Central Primary
 3016037 Greystone Primary School
 3030848 St MacNissi's Primary School
 3066652 Maine Integrated Primary School

Primary with NU

3030688 Mount St Michael's Primary School

Wards which fall at least partially within a five mile radius of Round Tower IPS

Aldergrove

Antrim Centre

Cranfield

Fountain Hill

Greystone (Antrim and Newtownabbey)

Kells

Parkgate

Randalstown

Shilvodan

Springfarm

Steeple

Stiles

Templepatrick

NISRA local birth rates and population predictions

EYT have considered NISRA local birth rates and population predictions to identify potential future population trends in the area.

- Birth statistics by academic year for all wards which fall at least partially within a five-mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School indicate a decrease of 41 (6.6%) in the pre-school cohort between September 2018 admissions and September 2020 admissions (617 to 576).

A list of the wards is attached at Annex B.

- Population projections for 3 year olds for the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Government District predict a decrease of 180 (10%) from 1805 to 1625 between 2018 and 2041.

These figures suggest that demand is likely to slightly decrease in the long 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.

Temporary Flexibility

There have been no Temporary Flexibility requests in 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 or 2020/21 from any settings within either the 2 or 5 mile radii of Round Tower Integrated Primary School.

ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper

DP 615

Date of last ETI report:

Round Tower Integrated Primary School, Antrim. A Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in February 2018

Web link:

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/asos-sustaining-improvement-inspection-round-tower-integrated-primary-school-antrim-305-6248.pdf>

Date⁷: February 2018

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

A sustaining improvement inspection in February 2018 was impacted by industrial action; however, the leadership co-operated with the inspection.

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

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

The establishment of the nursery unit may impact on the enrolments of the pre-school providers that are geographically closest to Round Tower Integrated Primary School:

- Little Hands Preschool, Springfarm, Antrim;
- Muckamore Preschool Playgroup;
- St Comgall's Playgroup Antrim;
- St Joseph's Nursery School; and,
- Steeple Nursery School.

However, all of the regional nursery schools filled their allocated places in September 2019 and there remains a need for pre-school provision in the area.

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

The proposed school nursery unit intends to utilise existing accommodation vacated by a playgroup some time ago, along with minor refurbishment work.

⁷ This commentary paper is based on the information and evidence available to ETI on this date. Please check the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk for any new inspection reports that may have published after this date.

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

Sustainable Schools Criterion	Indicator	Meets criterion		
		Yes	No (reason(s))	Information not available
Quality Educational Experience	1.1 Attainment levels of pupils, Key Stage tests pending development of new indicators for Primary Schools, GCSE results for Post-Primary Schools.		This information was not made available, due to the school teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike, at the last inspection in Feb 2018.	
	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.	Yes	There are whole year-group classes already in Round Tower Integrated Primary School and no composite classes.	
	1.3 A <u>minimum</u> of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers.	Yes	Not applicable	
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.		This information was not made available, due to the school teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	1.5 The ability at post-primary level to be able to provide suitable access to the entitlement framework including, where appropriate, linkages with other schools, the FE sector or other providers.		Not applicable	
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	1.8 The quality of the <u>physical</u> environment for learning and teaching i.e. the condition, energy and water efficiency and suitability of the buildings.		The proposed school nursery unit intends to utilise existing accommodation vacated by the playgroup some time ago, along with minor refurbishment work to toilets etc.	
	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.		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
Strong	4.1 Governors' views on		This information was not made	

Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	the school based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.		available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	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).		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
Strong links with the Community	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).		This information was not made available by the school – due to the teachers taking part in industrial action short of strike.	
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.	Yes	There had been a playgroup located on the same site of the main school building which had closed, the school will re-ignite the pre-school provision on the primary school site.	

6. Summary of impact of the proposal

Approval of this DP will re-establish the pre-school provision on the Primary School site.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE TWO MONTH STATUTORY OBJECTION PERIOD

NICIE COMMENTS



Area Planning Policy Team

DE, Rathgael House

27 April 2020

NICIE Commentary on Development Proposal No 615 – Round Tower Integrated Primary School – To establish a 26 part-time place nursery unit with effect from 1st September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter

N.B. this Commentary has been prepared during the Covid-19 crisis to meet the consultation deadline of 27 April 2020. NICIE would welcome the opportunity to further update this response if any extension is later granted to the consultation period.

Introduction and background

Springfarm Primary School transformed to Round Tower Integrated Primary School in September 2003. Round Tower Community Playgroup is a voluntary provider which has operated in the community wing of the school building for many years. There has been a close relationship between the management committee of the playgroup and the governing body of the school.

The management committee of the playgroup has indicated, as stated in the Case for Change from EA, that the committee wishes to resign. The management committee has approached the school to ask if it would consider the provision of a preschool setting in the area.

Therefore, NICIE fully support that integrated pre-school nursery provision be established at Round Tower IPS. When the then Springfarm PS transformed in 2003, it had 120 pupils and since then it has developed and fully embraced the integrated ethos and has grown to 289 pupils against an approved enrolment of 276. Therefore, it would seem appropriate to ensure the pre-school provision is retained at the school as part of the established integrated school which can provide for the needs of the entire

community. It would be important in supporting children living in the area to have a smooth transition to primary school.

The potential closure of Round Tower Community Years Playgroup will have a detrimental effect on pre-school provision in the Springfarm area of Antrim. NICIE would suggest the establishment of 26 part time places in a cross community, integrated setting would best meet the needs of the community.

Rationale for nursery status

Characteristics of the Area and School Enrolment at Round Tower IPS

Characteristics of the area

The **council area** in which the school is located is **Antrim and Newtownabbey**.

The school is located in the **Springfarm ward** which in the 2011 census the religious makeup of the resident population consisted of:

41.95% belong to or were brought up in the Catholic religion and 44.86% belong to or were brought up in a 'Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)' religion.

Additionally, 20.00% of households did not have access to a car or van.

The **Super Output Area (SOA)** for the school is **Springfarm 2** which in the 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measures has a Deprivation is ranked 247 out of 830 SOAs. The Education, skills and training Deprivation Domain is ranked at 89 which is in the bottom 10% of the 890 SOAs.

On Census Day 27th March 2011, in the **Springfarm ward**, considering the population aged 16 years old and over:

25.14% had a degree or higher qualification; while

35.24% had no or low (Level 1*) qualifications.

This is compared to the Northern Ireland figures in 2018, of those persons aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland, 34.9% were qualified to Degree level or above, whilst 14.7% had 'no qualifications'. The NI average for those with no or low qualifications in the working age population is 35.6% (source NISRA).

When the **Antrim District Electoral Area (DEA)** is looked at the figures become quite concerning:

On **Census Day 27th March 2011**, considering the population aged 16 years old and over:

19.08% had a degree or higher qualification; while

43.75% had no or low (Level 1*) qualifications.

*Level 1 is 1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSE (any grades) or equivalent.

Given that the **Programme for Government (PfG) Outcome 12** is targeting this area, it would seem that 'getting a good start' through high quality preschool would be particularly important. Outcome 12 aims to improve the quality of education as well as improving educational attainment. NICIE would assert that approval of this proposal would be supportive of these aims.

It is important to note the huge level of increase in the population that has occurred in the **Springfarm ward** between 2007 and 2017 of 42.7% compared with an increase of only 6.2% in the total NI population (source NISRA). The growth is almost seven times the rate of NI as a whole.

Figure 2: Population Trend, 2002 - 2017 (non-zero axis)

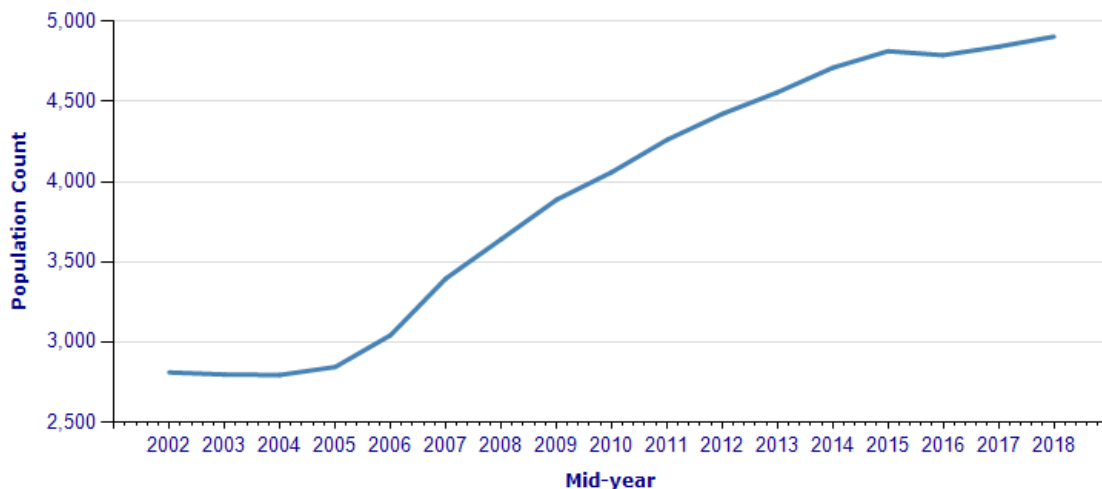


Figure 2 Population trend in Springfarm ward source NISRA

'The estimated population of **Springfarm Ward** at 30 June 2017 was 4,843, of which 2,339 (48.3%) were male and 2,504 (51.7%) were female.

This was made up of:

- 1,297 children aged 0-15 years;
- 1,746 people aged 16-39 years;
- 1,291 people aged 40-64 years; and
- 508 people 65 years and older.

Between 2007 and 2017 the population of **Springfarm Ward** increased by 1,448 people or 42.7%. Source NISRA.'

This may be reflective of the growth in, mainly private, housing in the area.

These figures may go some way to allaying the concerns expressed by Steeple Nursery, St Joseph's and the EA Board members, expressed in the final case for Change.

Characteristics of the school

Round Tower IPS has a significant number of children on the SEN Register; in 2018/19 there were more than 24% of children enrolled at the school with Stages 1-5 SEN.

(Source: DE 2018/19 School Level Data). Access to assessment and support has been much more difficult to obtain in a playgroup setting than in an established nursery, therefore establishment of a statutory nursery unit would be supportive of children with SEN.

The current level of Free School Meals (FSM) at Round Tower IPS is 23.2%. Round Tower IPS has achieved a religious balance of 32.9% Protestant, 28.7% Catholic and 38.4% Other, which is strong balance in a transformed school and is indicative of the community support that the school enjoys.

The issue of the rise of those designating themselves as other is becoming more recognised.

It was noted in the NI Census 2011 (see Table 7 below extracted from NI Assembly paper), that an increasing number of people are not designating as one of main two traditions or as another religion. NICIE has asked the Department to consider the addition of ‘mixed religion’ to the religious designations as is used by the NIHE to help to establish Shared Housing areas. NICIE is conscious that we are now almost a decade away from the previous census and our experience within schools and with parent groups, is showing that an increasing percentage of families does not want to designate as one or other of the main traditions. NICIE is working with schools to help them understand that religion in terms of data capture is not necessarily about observance but more about perceived community background. NICIE would respectfully request that the Department looks at this situation favourably as ‘Other’ may be being used to mask mixed-religion family backgrounds. A modified data capture form would be very useful to reflect the changing society within Northern Ireland. It could look at mixed Christian families and mixed other faith families.

Table extracted from NI Assembly from

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2013/general/rossell3013.pdf> (accessed 20th April 2020)

Table 7: Religion (or religion brought up in): a comparison between 2001 and 2011

Religion (or religion brought up in)	Census 2001		Census 2011		Percent Change
	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	
Protestant and Other Christian	895,377	53.1	875,717	48.4	-2.2
Catholic	737,412	43.8	817,385	45.1	10.8
Other religions	6,569	0.4	16,592	0.9	152.6
None	45,909	2.7	101,169	5.6	120.4

Source: NISRA, Table KS07b (2003); KS212 (2012)

The outcomes for children within nursery units have been shown to be a higher quality than those within playgroups (EPPNI). The Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2018 states 'In the pre-school sector as a whole, most children make a good start, but there continues to be too much variability in the quality of provision and outcomes across the statutory and private / voluntary sector. In particular, a small number of voluntary and private settings do not have the capacity to identify or sustain improvement; the quality of their provision and consequent outcomes are not good enough.'

The importance of a sustainable pre-school service has been highlighted by the Chief Inspector's Report in 2012-2014. Round Tower Community Playgroup has struggled recently and the committee has stated their intention to resign. NICIE would suggest that a newly established nursery under the management of the school will provide more stability and support children's development in what is quite an educationally deprived DEA of Antrim as well as helping to raise educational attainment.

The Chief Inspector's Report of 2012-2014 highlighted at paragraph 133, "The lack of coherent area-based planning for pre-school provision across Northern Ireland can lead to settings being established with small numbers of funded children, thus limiting the children's opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. In addition, fluctuations in enrolments result in a small number of private and voluntary settings becoming unviable. To ensure the needs of all children are met effectively, the employing authorities and the Pre-school Education Advisory Group should consider how best to provide a high-quality service that is sustainable and effective within an area-based model. To effect this improvement, there needs to be more coherent strategic planning and co-operation between government departments and across sectors to ensure that all children receive a good quality pre-school education."

Additional reasons to approve this proposal include:

- The Round Tower Case for Change notes that 'It is intended for the proposed new nursery to make use of the accommodation vacated by the playgroup.' The building will require some minor refurbishment works which can be addressed through the EA's minor works budget which would reduce the capital costs involved.
- NICIE is very mindful of the equal value equated to pre-school provision in both nursery units and playgroups and the excellent provision available in both types of settings throughout Northern Ireland. PEG has long operated the criterion of not displacing quality provision but in this case the existing playgroup struggled with quality over several years, (as is seen in Inspection reports from 2012 onwards), until some recent management changes. However, it is still experiencing difficulties in maintaining a management structure as the committee now wish to step down. EA has noted on the Case for Change that 'the inclusion of a 26 part-time nursery unit will strengthen the controlled integrated primary school and assist in the long-term sustainability of the school' NICIE would be supportive of this comment as a nursery unit will not only improve the outcomes for the local children but also enable the school to cater for and plan for its intake in a more effective manner.

- From a management perspective NICIE supports Round Tower IPS in making this request and asks that careful consideration is given to allow the school to establish a nursery to help ensure children get the opportunity to avail of a pre-school place in their own local area. NISRA statistics show that 20% of households in the Springfarm Ward and 27.73% of households in the Antrim DEA did not have access to a car or van. The Northern Ireland total for household is 22.70%, thus the figure for the Antrim DEA is more than 5 percentage points higher. Therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that many children would have to be walked or taken by public transport to the next nearest pre-school setting.
- If the proposal is not approved, it would create a shortfall in the area if the Round Tower Community playgroup were not to continue. The Case for Change notes that ‘the closure of the playgroup would have a detrimental impact on pre-school provision in the Springfarm 2 ward area. Removal of provision within this ward would result in local families being severely disadvantaged.’ NICIE would agree with this comment.

The establishment of a new nursery unit at Round Tower IPS would support the school in continuing to provide a sustainable integrated school going into the future.

From a parent and child point of view, approval would mean that:

Parents and children will enjoy a more seamless approach to education with an easier transition to primary education. The Chief Inspector’s Report 2012-2014 highlighted the importance of transition by stating “the need for a reliable form of assessment that is rigorously and externally moderated and linked closely with the statements of what the child knows, understands and can do.” Children with special needs and their families would benefit from simpler and timelier access to the systems for assessment and support. Children in playgroups still do not have access to assessment for SEN, except through medical referrals.

Impact on other settings

The Case for Change notes that there are five alternative settings within a 3-5 mile radius of Round Tower Community Playgroup and that they filled their allocation of places in September 2019 and there remains a need for pre-school provision in the Springfarm ward. It is also important to recall that the net gain of places in transferring from a playgroup to nursery unit is just two extra places. The PEG comments in the Case for Change shows that the playgroup has been over-subscribed at first preference in two of the last four years.

For all these reasons NICIE would thus assert that therefore the impact on other settings, if the Development Proposal is approved, is likely to be minimal.

Impact on other integrated settings

The table below shows the distance to the nearest alternative integrated provision. likely to be no impact on any other integrated settings as the nearest provision is situated at Maine Integrated Playgroup, in Randalstown at 6.2 miles. Crumlin and Glengormley

Playgroups and Braidside and Hazelwood Nursery units are all located at over 10 miles from Round Tower IPS. In addition, many of these settings have been consistently oversubscribed. NICIE would contest that a nursery unit situated at Round Tower IPS would provide a welcome opportunity to ensure that cross-community pre-school provision is available for Antrim town and the surrounding area.

Table: Distance from Round Tower IPS to nearest Alternative Integrated Provision

Integrated provision	Distance from Round Tower IPS
Maine Integrated Playgroup	6.2 miles
Crumlin Integrated Playgroup	10.2 miles
Glengormley Integrated Playgroup	12.2 miles
Braidside Integrated Nursey unit	12.8 miles
Hazelwood Integrated Nursey unit	15.6 miles

Concluding Remarks

NICIE would ask the Minister to support this proposal as it represents an opportunity to support a sustainable school into the future, a school which serves children from the two major communities in an area which experiences notable educational and transport deprivation. In addition, approval of this proposal would be supportive of the aims of Outcome 12 in the Programme for Government particularly since educational attainment is low in this District Electoral Area (DEA).

The NISRA populations statistics for the ward in which Round Tower Integrated PS is located are showing a significant population growth. This is supported by the birth rate statistics for the Ward Cluster in the Case for Change, which against the trend across Northern Ireland, do not indicate any significant decrease.

One of the objectives of the Strategic Area Plan is to “sustain strong, successful and viable schools.” This plan also references the potential for integrated school development and encouraging and facilitating sustainable integrated schools.

In addition, supporting this proposal would assist the DE in fulfilling its duty ‘to encourage and facilitate the growth of integrated education’ at a low cost as the building is already in place and the number of additional places required is only two.

Lorna McAlpine
Senior Development Officer
 27th April 2020

CSSC COMMENTS



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E info@csscni.org.uk

20 March 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Development proposal 615 Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) has consulted with Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary school and other controlled schools in the area and welcomes the opportunity to make representation on behalf of the sector.

CSSC acknowledges the importance of maintaining high quality pre-school education provision and supports the proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit to provide 26 part-time nursery places at Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School with effect from 1 September 2020. It is noted that the establishment of a nursery unit is not additional provision but is a replacement for Round Tower Community Playgroup.

CSSC notes that within the nursery sector concerns have been raised during the pre-publication consultation in the context of declining live births and the potential for increasing numbers of penultimate age children to be admitted to settings. The Pre-school Education Group (PEG) analysis for 2019/20 confirms that should provision at Round Tower Community Playgroup be discontinued there would be insufficient capacity in the area to absorb the 24 places provided at Round Tower Community Playgroup. The case for change highlights that within a 3 mile radius of Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School there were a total of 324 funded places available with a total of 317 first preference applications received (2019/20).

An analysis of the case for change and consideration of the impact of this proposal suggests to Council that the proposal will sustain delivery of pre-school education in the Springfarm area where there is a demonstrated need for this provision.

Yours faithfully

Barry Mulholland
Chief Executive