

COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Cover Note

DP No.	DP 666	
School	St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur, Omagh	
	<i>St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.</i>	
Minister's Decision	Approved – with a modification to the implementation date that: St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from <u>31 August 2024</u> or as soon as possible thereafter.	
Date of Decision	16 April 2024	
Minister's Comments		
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: Elaine Armstrong
Area Planning Policy Team (South-West Region)

(Cleared by Eamonn Broderick 27 February 2024)

Date: 29 February 2024

To: Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

Copy distribution below

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) 666 – DISCONTINUE ST EUGENE’S
PRIMARY SCHOOL (PS), TIRCUR, OMAGH**

Issue: To decide on Development Proposal (DP) 666 which proposes: -

St Eugene’s Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

You must consider the submission on DP 717 for the proposed Transformation of St Eugene’s Primary School to Controlled Integrated status in advance of making a decision on DP 666.

Timescale: **Urgent** – The school has advised that their school community and prospective parents need certainty as to whether the school will be open or not, so they can plan for their children.

**Financial /
Resource
Implications:**

Resource:

Staffing - Teaching and non-teaching staff are afforded employment protection under their respective School Re-organisation Agreements and are eligible for redeployment under transfer redundancy procedures. Staff unsuccessful in gaining redeployment or employment will be treated as supernumerary and a Centre cost.

Transport - It is anticipated that there will be increased transport costs associated with pupils who live less than two miles from St Eugene’s PS. Should the school discontinue, there may also be additional costs associated with pupils from other schools who live within two miles of St Eugene’s PS as they may become eligible for transport assistance.

Finance – A deficit held by a school will be met by Education Authority (EA) Centre funds. At 31 March 2023, St Eugene’s PS held a deficit of £73,152

FOI Implications: The content of this submission is likely to be fully disclosable.

Statutory Duty Implications: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016
Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

Shared Education Act (NI) 2016

Presentational Issues: The decision on this DP is likely to generate significant local stakeholder and media interest. Press Office will refer to this submission and liaise with officials to draw up appropriate responses to media enquiries.
(Cleared with the Press Office.)

Recommendation: It is recommended that you:

(i) **Approve DP 666 with a modification to the implementation date that:**

St Eugene’s Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter.

(ii) **Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) can be published on the Department’s website once the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Education Authority (EA) and the school have been notified of your decision.**

(iii) **In making your decision, you may wish to state that it is important that the CCMS should ensure children and their parents are supported through the transition to other sustainable schools in the area. Every effort should be made to minimise the disruption to children’s educational experiences and support, care and attention should be given to affected teaching and non-teaching staff who are impacted by this closure.**

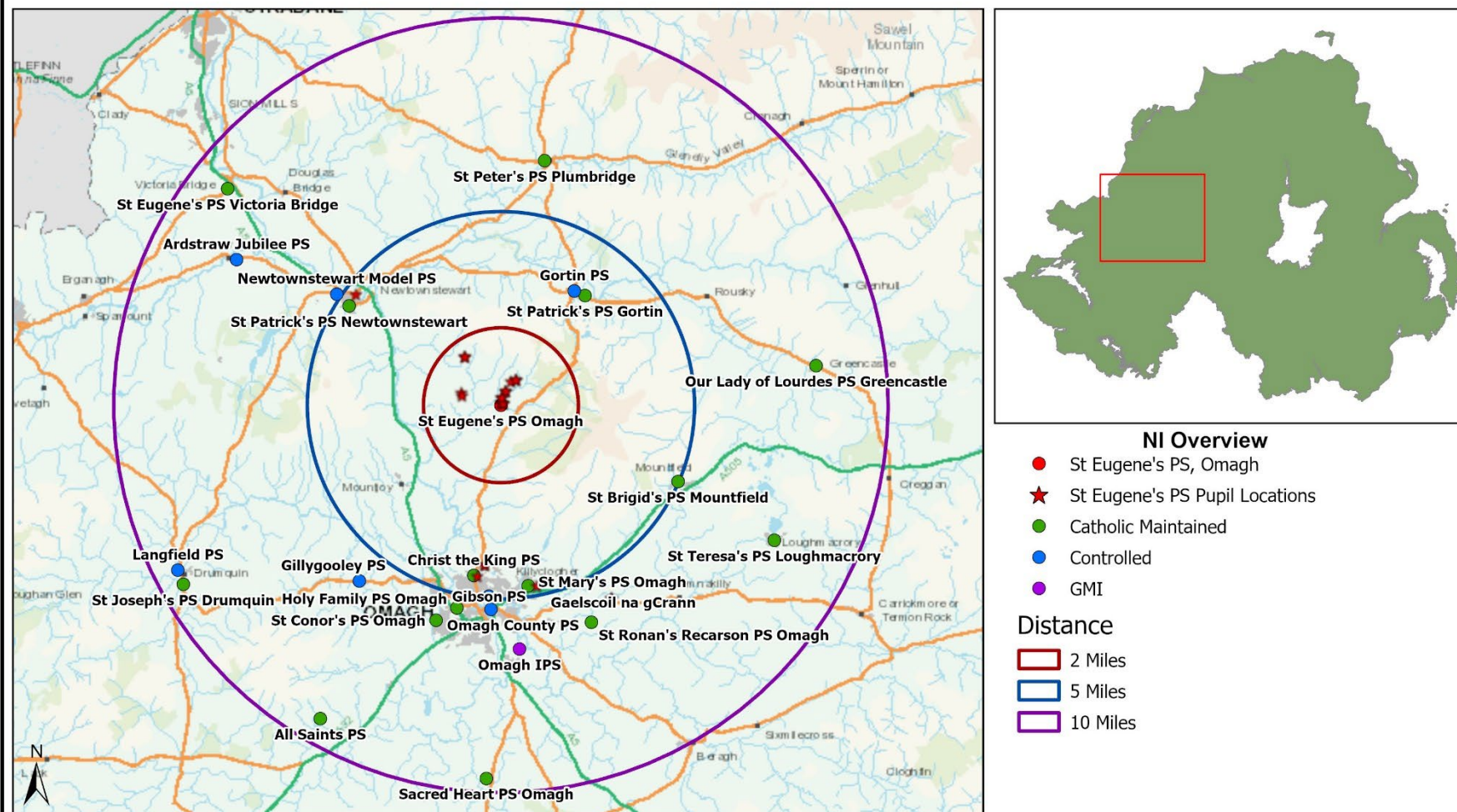
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Appendix B:	Case for Change for DP 666
Appendix C:	St Eugene's PS - Equality Screening Template for DP 666
Appendix D:	Summary of Objections received during the Two-Month Statutory Objection Period including Template Letters and Samples of Objection Letters (separate attachment)
Appendix E:	Meeting with Órfhlaith Begley MP regarding proposed school closures including St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur – 8 November 2021
Appendix F:	ETI Commentary Paper – DP 666
Appendix G:	Department of Education (DE) Policy Team Comments – DP 666

St Eugene's PS - Pupil Locations and Alternative Provision 10 Mile Radius



Supporting Information

Base mapping was derived from OSNI Fusion, NISRA/DENI School Census Datasets 22/23



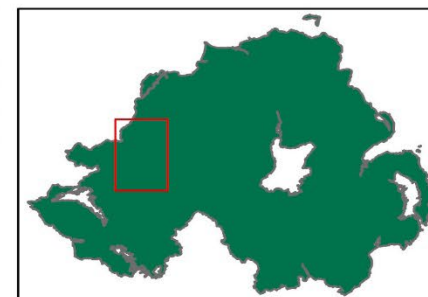
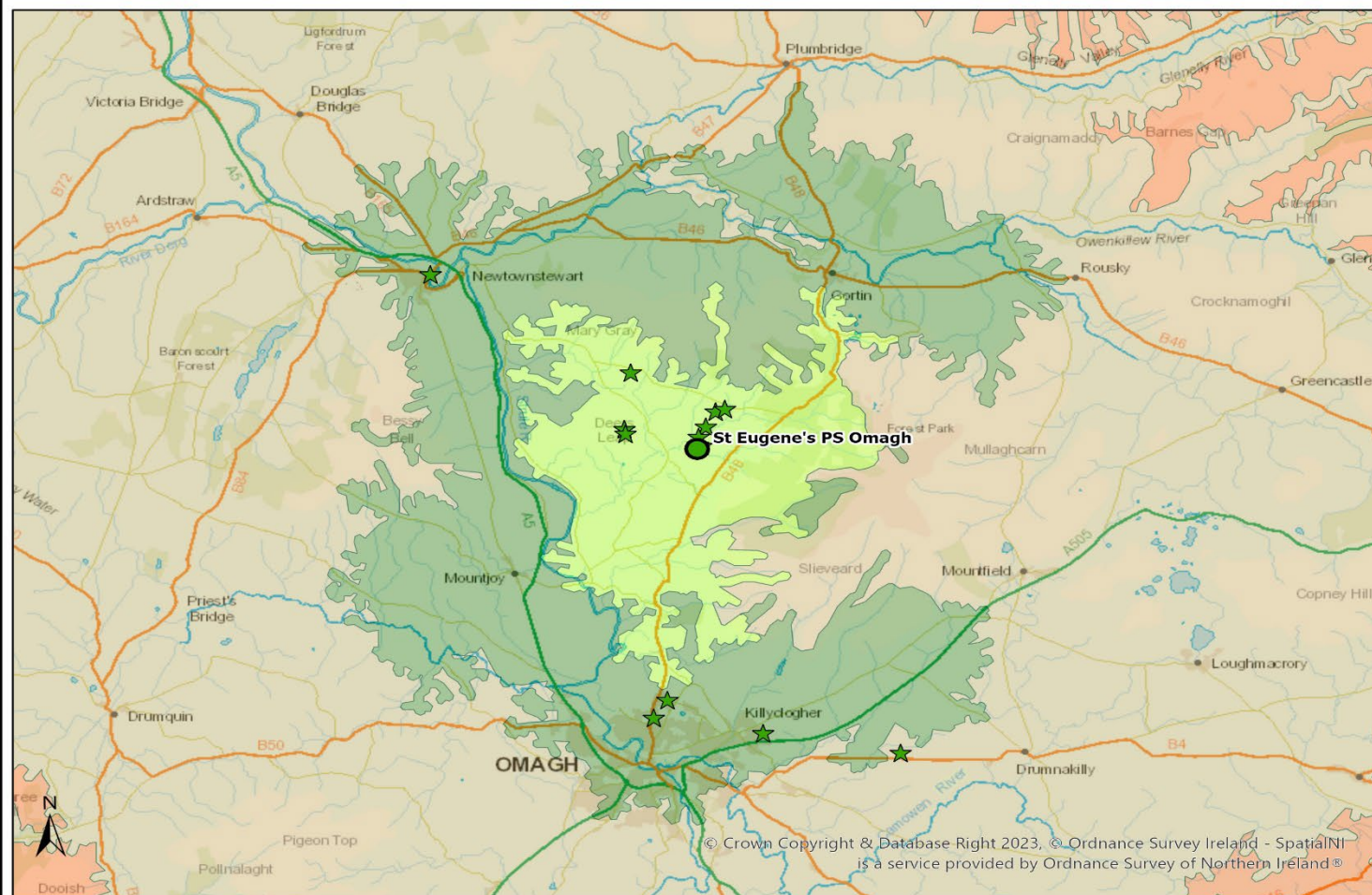
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Map 2

St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur and pupil locations with a 30 minute drive time buffer.



Legend

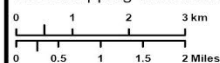
- St Eugene's
- ★ St Eugene's Pupils

Drive time buffer

- 0-5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-20 minutes
- 20-30 minutes

Supporting Information

Pupil location data was supplied by Department of Education 2023.
Base mapping was derived from OSNI Fusion.



This map shows the location of primary pupils who attend St Eugene's PS and a 30 minute drive time buffer.

The dataset used in this analysis has been derived from OSNI Fusion. Drive times are approximations estimated using Road Classification and settlement limits and do not use actual speed limits. Local variations regarding Speed Limits can exist within the terms of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 2015

Reference Number: MOU577.4



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INTRODUCTION

1. On 8 December 2021, the Education Authority (EA) published Development Proposal (DP) 666 at the request of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) proposing that:

‘St Eugene’s Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.’

2. The statutory two-month objection period for this proposal commenced on the date of publication and was due to end on 22 February 2022. However, this was extended to 31 March 2022 at the request of the school’s Board of Governors (BoG) to facilitate receipt of responses due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Omicron variant. A copy of the published DP and the supporting Case for Change (CfC) are reproduced at Appendices A and B respectively.
3. A further proposal, DP 717 which proposes to transform St Eugene’s PS to Controlled Integrated status with effect from 1 September 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, was brought forward by the school’s BoG and published by the EA on 14 September 2023. The statutory two-month objection period ended on 21 November 2023.
4. If a proposal has been brought forward under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, in this case DP 666, as well as the proposal for transformation to Controlled Integrated status, in accordance with Article 94 (4) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, *‘the Department shall consider both proposals together but shall not determine the proposal under Article 14 until it has made its determination with respect to the proposal for acquisition of controlled integrated status’*, therefore DP 717 is the subject of a separate submission which must be considered in the first instance and a decision taken in advance of a decision on DP 666.
5. DP 602 and DP 603 are associated proposals which propose to discontinue Gillygooley Primary School (PS) and Dunmullan Primary School (PS) respectively. Both are Controlled primary schools in the same area and were published on 22 September 2021, with the statutory objection period ending on 22 November 2021. The CfC states that the proposal for St Eugene’s PS is part of a suite of proposals for the Omagh area, including those for Dunmullan PS and Gillygooley PS.
6. On 25 March 2022, DP 603 was approved for the discontinuance of Dunmullan PS with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.
7. DP 693, a further associated proposal, proposing Gillygooley PS will transform to Controlled Integrated status with effect from 1 September 2023, or as soon as possible thereafter was published on 8 December 2022. A decision was taken on 18 September 2023 to not approve the proposal.

8. On 19 September 2023, DP 602 was approved with a modification to the implementation date that Gillygooley PS will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2024.

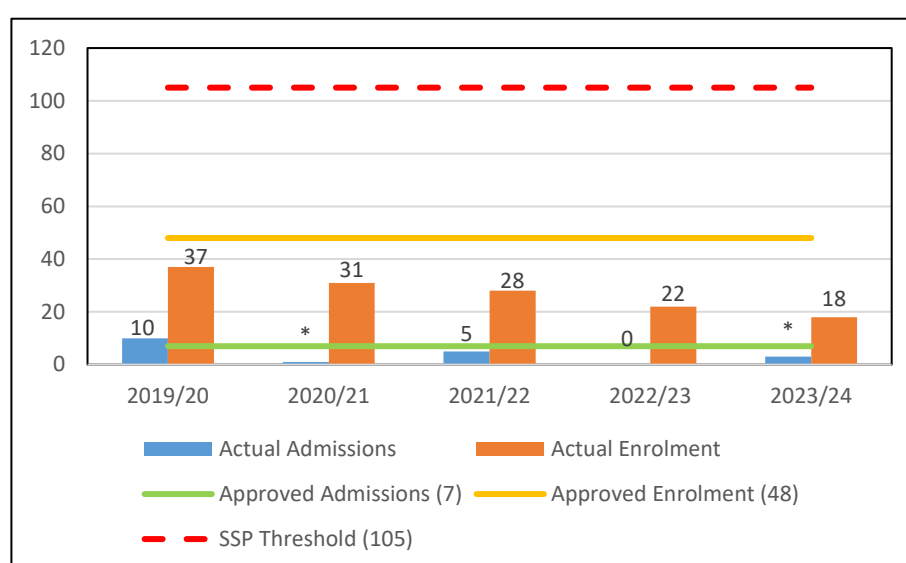
BACKGROUND

9. St Eugene's Primary School (PS), Tircur is a Catholic Maintained primary school situated approximately seven miles from Omagh Town in Co Tyrone. Map 1 illustrates the location of the school and the pupils enrolled in 2022/23.

Admissions and Enrolment

10. St Eugene's PS currently has approved admissions and enrolment numbers of 7 and 48 respectively. In 2022/23, there were 22 pupils enrolled at the school and no intake of Year 1 pupils at school census date. There were 26 available places that children could apply for through the competitive admissions process.
11. Chart 1 below illustrates St Eugene's PS' admissions and enrolment trends over the last five years and shows that the school's actual enrolment has declined from 37 in 2019/20 to 22 in 2022/23. The school's intake has fluctuated from nought to ten pupils and admissions have not been above five pupils in four of the last five years. Provisional census data for 2023/24 (which may be subject to change) show 18 pupils enrolled and * pupils admitted to Year 1.
12. St Eugene's PS' actual admissions and enrolment numbers have been significantly below its approved admissions and enrolment numbers, although in 2019/20 the school achieved its highest admissions and enrolment number of 10 and 37 pupils respectively. However, St Eugene's PS' actual enrolment in 2022/23 remains significantly below the Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) recommended minimum enrolment of 105 for a sustainable rural primary school.

Chart 1 – St Eugene's PS – Historical Admissions and Enrolments*



*Includes Pupils with a Statement of SEN

2023/24 Provisional Census Data (which may be subject to change)

AREA CONTEXT

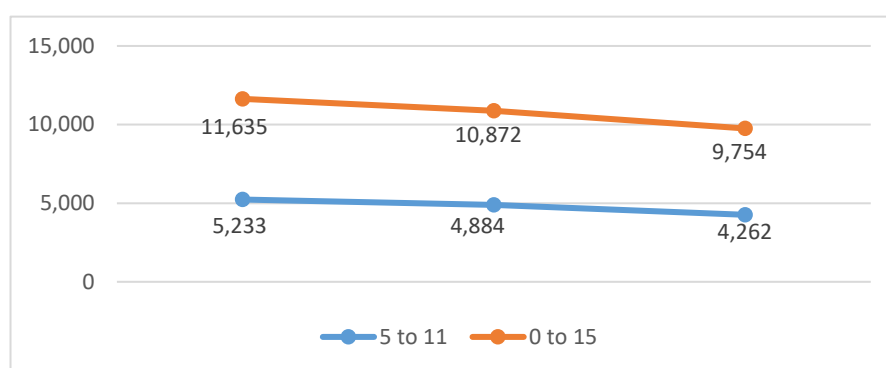
13. St Eugene's PS is located within the Fermanagh and Omagh Local Government District (LGD). On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017, the Gortin Super Output area (SOA), within which St Eugene's PS is situated, is ranked 573 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 least deprived). In 2022/2023, 13.6% of the school's enrolment (three pupils) were entitled to Free School Meals (FSM).
14. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) projections for the former Omagh Borough Council, the smallest geographical area breakdown for which projections are available in which St Eugene's PS is located, provides a more localised estimate of population numbers, as set out in Table 1 below and illustrated in Chart 2 below. The table shows the predicted increases and decreases in the school-age population for the periods 2018-2028 and 2018-2043 with the chart illustrating a downward trend.

Table 1 – 2018-Based Population Projections for the former Omagh LGD

Age Group	2018	2019	2020		2028	2043
5 to 11	5,233	5,247	5,262		4,884	4,262
0 to 15	11,635	11,734	11,733		10,872	9,754

Source: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2018-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland>

Chart 2 – 2018-Based Population Projections for the former Omagh LGD



15. Table 2 below shows percentage decreases of -6.7% in the 5 to 11 age group to 2028 and -18.6% to 2043 and an overall decrease in the 0 to 15 age group of -6.6% to 2028 and -16.2% to 2043.

Table 2 - Population Change by Age

Age Group	2018 to 2028		2018 to 2043	
	Individuals	Percentage	Individuals	Percentage
5 to 11	-349	-6.7%	-971	-18.6%
0 to 15	-763	-6.6%	-1,881	-16.2%

Source: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2018-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland>

16. St Eugene's PS did not feature by name in the EA's extended Annual Action Plan (AAP) April 2019-August 2022 however it did include a key issue for the Omagh Town and surrounding area to '*Address school provision where sustainability is an issue and ensure school places are located as required*' with an associated action for the '*Managing authorities to consult on options for future primary provision in Omagh Town and surrounding area by February 2020*'.
17. On 1 September 2022, the EA published its Operational Plan 1 2022-2024 (OP1) which includes charts for the Fermanagh and Omagh LGD of birth statistics and school phase projections. The OP1 states that the '*downward trend is projected to continue for primary and post primary age pupils*'. St Eugene's PS does not feature in OP1.

Alternative Primary Provision

18. Map 1 illustrates all alternative primary provision in the area within a five-mile mapping radius, although distances by road may exceed this, as well as locations of pupils that are enrolled at St Eugene's PS. In addition, a snapshot of total provision in the area detailing the admissions and enrolment data and the latest Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection assessment at each school, is provided below in Table 3. From September 2022, the urban/rural definitions used in the SSP reflect those used by NISRA¹, therefore each school in the snapshot has been classified as urban or rural using the NISRA definitions. The SSP recommended minimum enrolment threshold for primary schools is 140 in urban areas and 105 in rural areas.

Alternative Catholic Maintained Provision

19. Map 1 illustrates that there are five Catholic Maintained primary schools within a five-mile mapping radius of St Eugene's PS. Table 3 below shows that two of the schools, i. e. Christ the King PS (4.9 miles) – the closest alternative provision, and St Mary's PS, Killyclogher (5.7 miles) are large primary schools with enrolments that are significantly above the SSP recommended minimum enrolment for a sustainable urban primary school. However, the majority of available places in the Catholic Maintained sector is between these two schools with a combined total of 288 available places.
20. The enrolments at both St Patrick's PS, Gortin (5.1 miles) and St Brigid's Primary School, Omagh (8.8 miles), have been below the SSP enrolment threshold for a sustainable rural primary school in the last three years. In 2022/23, St Patrick's PS and St Brigid's PS, Omagh had 83 and 66 pupils enrolled respectively.
21. St Patrick's PS, Newtownstewart's actual enrolment numbers have declined from 115 in 2020/21 to 104 in 2022/23 and are now below the SSP threshold.

¹ **Urban:** schools are defined as urban if they are located in settlements with a population greater than or equal to 5,000 people (NISRA Bands A-E); and **Rural:** schools are defined as rural if they are located in settlements with less than 5,000 people (NISRA Bands F-H).

22. Table 3 below shows that for 2022/23, the Catholic Maintained sector offered 1,172 places with 755 pupils enrolled and 451 available places. At Year 1, there were 167 approved places and 115 admitted. There were 84 first preference applications received for 2023/24 at the conclusion of the primary school admissions process.
23. The quality of education provided by these primary schools, although dated, has been assessed by the ETI at Christ the King PS and St Mary's PS, Omagh as '*Outstanding*'; St Patrick's PS, Gortin as has a '*High level of capacity for sustained improvement*' and St Patrick's PS, Newtownstewart and St Brigid's PS, Omagh as '*Very Good*'.
24. Gortnagarn PS was also a Maintained primary school, previously located in this area, however, following approval of DP 268, this school closed on 31 August 2016.
25. The CfC contains an excerpt from CCMS following the closure of Gortnagarn PS, i.e. '*The onus is now on the community to demonstrate their desire and support for rural, primary school provision in the area by sending their children to St Eugene's. Only by doing this will the enrolment at St Eugene's PS, Tircur grow to a point where sustainability becomes a reality. CCMS will keep the position at St Eugene's PS under review which is required for all schools with an enrolment below 105*'.

Alternative Controlled Provision

26. There are two alternative Controlled primary schools within a five-mile mapping radius of St Eugene's PS as illustrated on Map 1. The nearest provision is at Gortin PS (4.7 miles) and the next nearest is at Gibson PS (5.8 miles). Table 3 below shows that Gibson PS is a large primary school and has actual enrolments substantially above the SSP recommended threshold for an urban primary school. However, in 2022/23, the majority of available places in the Controlled sector was at Gibson PS - 116 available places.
27. Gortin PS' actual enrolments have been below its approved enrolment number and significantly below the SSP enrolment threshold for a rural primary school in the last three years. In 2022/23, the school had 67 pupils enrolled and 41 available places.
28. In 2022/23, the Controlled sector offered 526 places with 394 pupils enrolled and 157 available places. At Year 1, there were 75 approved places between the two Controlled primary schools with 51 actual admissions and a total of 42 first preference applications received for 2023/24.
29. As evidenced in Table 3, the ETI assessed the quality of education provided by Gortin PS and Gibson PS as having a '*High level of capacity for sustained improvement*'.
30. Dunmullan PS, a Controlled school previously located in the same area, was the subject of a proposal (DP 603) to discontinue the school. The proposal was

approved on 25 March 2022. As stated above, Gillygooley PS will close on 31 August 2024.

Table 3: St Eugene's PS – Alternative Primary Provision

St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur - All Primary School Provision - 5 mile radius														
School Ref No	School & Postcode	Urban/Rural	Distance in Miles by Road - Google Maps	2022/23 & 2023/24 Approved Enrolment Number	2020/21 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2021/22 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2022/23 Actual Enrolment (Includes supernumerary pupils)	2022/23 Supernumerary	2022/23 Available Places	2022/23 Actual Y1 Admissions (includes supernumerary pupils)	2022/23 & 2023/24 Approved Admissions Number	2023/24 Total Y1 First Preference Applications	2023/24 Over/Under Subscribed at First Preference	ETI Reports Publication Date / Overall Assessment
RC Maintained														
203-2688	St Eugene's PS, Tircur, BT79 7SN	Rural		48	31	28	22	0	26	0	7		U - 4	June 2018 - ASOS May 2015 - Good
203-6449	Christ the King PS BT79 7HX	Urban	4.9	337	181	171	177	13	173	25	48	11	U - 37	February 2017 - ASOS February 2014 - Outstanding
203-2676	St Patrick's PS, Gortin, BT79 8PU	Rural	5.1	142	81	82	83		60	13	20	14	U - 6	March 2019 - ASOS February 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
203-2607	St Mary's PS, Killyclogher, BT79 7LT	Urban	5.7	406	316	306	303	12	115	47	58	38	U - 20	November 2013 - Outstanding
203-6008	St Patrick's PS, Newtownstewart BT78 4AQ	Rural	6.3	145	115	112	104		45	17	21	11	U - 10	January 2018 - ASOS - The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice. October 2011 - Very Good
203-2662	St Brigid's PS, Omagh BT79 7PT	Rural	8.8	94	52	57	66		32	13	13	7	U - 6	March 2017 - ASOS - The school is high priority for future inspection with no further notice. January 2014 - Very Good
Sub total				1172	776	756	755	34	451	115	167			
Controlled														
201-6395	Gortin PS BT79 8QB	Rural	4.7	106	61	71	67		41	8	15		U - 10	June 2019 - ASOS - The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice. June 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement.
201-6089	Gibson PS BT79 7EG	Urban	5.8	420	324	325	327	23	116	43	60	37	U - 23	February 2020 - ASOS October 2016 - High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Sub total				526	385	396	394		157	51	75			
Grand Totals				1698	1161	1152	1149	59	608	166	242			

ASOS - Action short of Strike

Actual enrolments and admissions include supernumerary pupils and exclude reception pupils (as per annual Census information).

1st Pref. applications exclude reception & statemented pupils. Total of 1st prefs. at the start of the Primary School Admissions process for the 2023/24 school year, provided by the EA 6.2.2023.

Gibson PS is included in the DE Resetting Exercise for the 2022/23 School Year - its approved numbers reduced from 436/60 to 420/60 from September 2022.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

31. 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'). 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 applied to public authorities from 1 June 2018.
32. St Eugene's PS is located north of Omagh Town in County Tyrone and under the NISRA definitions, as now used in the SSP, the school is situated in the Gortin SOA and is still classified as rural.

Effective and Efficient Use of Public Funds

33. The Department of Education (the Department) must also be mindful of its duty under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 and under Managing Public Money to ensure effective and efficient use of public funds.
34. Further commentary on this is included at paras 128-133 below.

Shared Education

35. The Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 makes legislative provision in relation to Shared Education. It provides a definition of Shared Education and confers a duty on the Department of Education to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education and a power on relevant arms-length bodies to encourage and facilitate Shared Education.
36. Shared Education is not a type of school; rather it encourages all types of schools to collaborate with other schools to provide opportunities for pupils from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds to be educated together. Schools retain their individual ethos collaborating together in partnership for the benefit of their pupils.
37. While any Shared Education programme must initially meet the Shared Education definition² set out in the Shared Education (NI) Act 2016, each programme is unique to the needs of the partner schools. Hence Shared Education provision in partnerships in a local geographical area can differ across partnerships.

² The education together of (a) those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons and (b) those experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not.

38. St Eugene's PS had a shared education partnership with its neighbouring Controlled school, Dunmullan PS and pupils engaged in shared curricular/extracurricular activities until Dunmullan PS closed in August 2022. The CfC states that these activities do not provide the basis for sustainable provision across the two schools.
39. The CfC states that should the proposal for closure of either or both schools be approved, it will impact upon the current shared education partnership and *'CCMS would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and EA officers would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area'*.

CASE FOR CHANGE (CfC)

40. The CfC sets out the rationale for the proposed closure of St Eugene's PS and the key points are set out below:-
- The school operates four year groups in a single classroom and a further three year groups in a second classroom.
 - St Eugene's PS has experienced a low enrolment number in previous years. Over the last seven years the highest enrolment was 37 pupils. The current enrolment is 31 pupils [2020/21], which is below the SSP threshold of 105 for a rural school. If all pupils, for whom the school is the nearest suitable school, attended St Eugene's PS, there is no evidence that the school would reach 105 pupils.
 - St Eugene's PS' Three Year Plan is projecting a deficit of 100.3% / **£93,914** by the end of the financial year 2023-24.
41. The CfC states that the proposal to discontinue St Eugene's PS recognises that continuing with the status quo will perpetuate the challenges recently experienced by the school. It is evident that as a Catholic Maintained primary school it will continue to have challenges meeting the following sustainability criteria: quality of the educational experience (due to low enrolments); sound financial position and the minimum threshold for a rural school.

Alternative Options

42. The CfC for St Eugene's PS details the following alternative options that CCMS explored during pre-publication consultation:-
- Do Nothing;
 - Shared and Integrated Options;
 - Jointly Managed School;
 - Integrated School;
 - Amalgamation;
 - Federation; and
 - Discontinuation of St Eugene's PS.

43. CCMS states that in considering the future of St Eugene's PS, there is no evidence that any alternative option considered could provide sustainable provision for the area. CCMS recognises the commitment of the BoG and staff but states that the current challenging circumstances do not provide for a sustainable school. It is recognised that despite the school's best efforts, it continues to face sustainability challenges.
44. CCMS believes that the proposal to discontinue provision at St Eugene's PS would not impact significantly on other schools. Given the capacity in the area, any displacement of pupils can be managed within existing provision based on current parental preference.
45. The CfC for DP 666 is reproduced in full at Appendix B.

STATUTORY DP PROCESSES

Pre-publication Consultation

46. The CfC confirms that the original pre-publication consultation for the discontinuance of St Eugene's PS with effect from 31 August 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter, was undertaken from 18 November 2019 to 16 December 2019 with the Board of Governors (BoG), staff and parents/guardians. A stakeholder consultation evening took place on 2 December 2019. Upon request from consultees, the consultation closure date was extended to 20 January 2020.
47. The CfC states that responses, and further communication received from the BoG, were given due consideration at the CCMS Education Provision Committee (EPC) meeting on 9 March 2020. CCMS determined that the proposal was appropriate, taking into account all responses received.
48. The CfC advises that the proposal was subsequently amended to a proposal for the discontinuance of St Eugene's PS with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.
49. On 6 May 2021, CCMS undertook a re-refresh of the pre-publication consultation to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to submit additional information, which had not been raised in the initial pre-publication consultation. It also provided an opportunity for parents/guardians, and other stakeholders who had not taken part in the original consultation, to make comment on the proposal.
50. Responses received during the statutory two-month consultation period state that *'CCMS refused to engage directly with all stakeholders at a meeting organised at St Eugene's PS, as part of the pre-consultation refresh and has therefore failed to engage with such stakeholders in a meaningful way as part of that refresh. CCMS' failure to follow due legal process in this respect has denied stakeholders the opportunity to fully engage with the process in a meaningful way.'*
51. The BoG presented feedback to CCMS in relation to the CfC document, which had been issued to the stakeholders. An updated document was issued to

stakeholders. In light of the school holiday period, the refresh opportunity was extended to 29 September 2021.

52. On 28 October 2021, CCMS' EPC, in considering all the responses received and in reviewing the information submitted by stakeholders during the refresh pre-publication consultation, decided to progress the proposal (DP 666) to public objection stage.
53. In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, the EA has confirmed that a copy of the proposal was sent on 6 May 2021 to 26 schools which, in the opinion of the EA, might be affected by the proposal. Comments were invited from BoG and Trustees, to be returned to the EA by 1 July 2021.
54. The CfC confirms that no responses were received from affected schools.

EA's Comments

55. The EA supports the CCMS in taking forward DP 666 to discontinue St Eugene's PS and provided the following comments:
56. *'Within the Annual Action Plan 2019-22, the Education Authority and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools planned to bring all three proposals forward as an Omagh area plan. This proposal is part of a suite of proposals for the Omagh area with Development Proposals for the discontinuance of Dunmullan Primary School and Gillygooley Primary School published on 22 September 2021.'*
57. The EA's comments are reproduced in full at Appendix B.

Two-Month Statutory Objection Period

58. The EA published DP 666 on 8 December 2021 with the two-month statutory objection extended to 31 March 2022 at the request of the BoG to facilitate responses due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
59. The Department received a significant number of objections during the extended period, with 187 responses received in total. Most of the responses received were in the form of two types of template letters containing similar comments on key themes as set out below:-
 - Impact of this DP on the rural community.
 - CCMS failure to engage with stakeholders in a meaningful way as part of the pre-publication consultation refresh and failure to follow due legal process as described in Article 14.
 - CfC document does not reflect the significant improvement over the previous year's budget shown in the School Financial Plan 2021-2024.
 - Statutory responsibilities of CCMS and EA to explore the options in relation to potential cross-community education provision in this area.
 - Health and welfare of our children during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

- Quality of educational experience.
 - Quality of Life for the Child.
60. The Chair and members of the BoG of St Eugene's PS provided their comments by means of Template 1 and the Principal of St Eugene's PS by means of Template 2.
 61. A number of elected representatives responded in objection to DP 666 and included Órfhlaith Begley MP, Tom Buchanan MLA, Daniel McCrossan MLA, Nicola Brogan MLA and Councillor Stephen Donnelly from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.
 62. Past pupils, a past teacher and others provided comments in objection to the proposal and 19 emails were received which state either '*I strongly object/strongly disagree/object to the proposal to close St Eugene's Primary School*'.
 63. Two emails were received outside of the statutory objection period.
 64. A summary of responses received, including copies of letters reproduced from elected representatives and copies of Templates 1 and 2, are contained in a separate document at Appendix D.

Meeting with Órfhlaith Begley, MP

65. Ms Begley wrote on 4 October 2021 to request a meeting to discuss school closures including St Eugene's PS, Tircur and the DPs for Gillygooley PS and Dunmullan PS and to consider any proposals which could enable the schools to continue, such as adopting a joint faith model.
66. Ms Begley states in her correspondence that '*these schools provide a sense of identity to their community and have formed part of the fabric of the local area for decades*'.
67. The former Minister, Michelle McIlveen, MLA attended the meeting on 8 November 2021 which included Nicola Brogan, MLA and representatives of St Eugene's PS, Tircur.
68. Ms Begley stated at the meeting that the DP for St Eugene's PS had been ongoing for some time but not in isolation, there are proposals for Dunmullan PS and Gillygooley PS. These proposals would have huge ramifications for this rural area. People are not going to stay in rural areas if the schools aren't there. She stated that there had been communication with other schools about a joint faith or shared faith model. She was concerned about what can be done for the rural community (INV-0408-2021 refers).
69. The agreed notes of the meeting are reproduced at Appendix E.

Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (DC)

70. Ms Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive of Fermanagh and Omagh DC, wrote on behalf of the Council on 11 February 2022 to request a deferral of the consultation on DP 666. She asserted that *'Members believe that a deferral of the consultation would allow school representatives appropriate time to carry out engagement with the local community which has been delayed due to restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic'*. (CORR-0176-2022 refers.)
71. In a response dated 23 February 2022, the former Minister advised that a response had issued to the school granting an extension to the statutory objection period to 31 March 2022. The response also advised that she was aware that the BoG had approached the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and *'Should a successful ballot for Transformation take place and a proposal for Transformation to Integrated status be brought forward by the BoG of St Eugene's PS in a reasonable timeframe, the Department may consider it appropriate to await the submission and publication of the Transformation DP, in order to make a fully informed decision on DP 666.'*
72. As stated above, a proposal for the Transformation of St Eugene's PS to Controlled Integrated status was published on 14 September 2023.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

73. The Department's SSP sets out six criteria supported by quantitative and qualitative indicators which provide the framework for consideration of a school's longer-term sustainability. The primary objective of the 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. The following is an assessment of St Eugene's PS against the six sustainability criteria and their associated indicators.

Criterion 1: Quality Educational Experience

74. The ETI carried out an inspection of St Eugene's PS in May 2015 and although this evidence is now very dated, the quality of education provided by the school was assessed as 'Good'. The ETI identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address, i.e. *'Improve the quality of planning at all levels to ensure the needs of all of the children are met effectively'*. The report however also stated that *'It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff'*.
75. In June 2018, the ETI attempted to carry out a Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Eugene's PS but this was hampered by industrial action. The ETI reported that they were unable to assure parents/carers, the wider community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children.

Composite Classes

76. The October 2022 census statistics confirm that in 2022/23, St Eugene's PS was operating with two composite classes, one incorporating P2-P4 i.e three year groups and one for P6 and P7. No pupils were enrolled in P1 or P5. Table 4 below shows that there are only 13 pupils in P1-P4 and 9 pupils in P5-P7.

Table 4 – St Eugene's PS – Composite Classes in 2022/23

Year Group	P1	P2	P3	P4		P5	P6	P7
Pupils	0	*	*	7		0	*	*
Total	13					9		

77. The SSP states that there should be no more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level.

Teaching Staff

78. Statistics confirm that in 2022/23 the school employed 3.2 full-time equivalent teaching staff which is below the minimum of four teachers at primary school level as recommended in the SSP.

Special Educational Needs

79. In 2022/23 there were no pupils enrolled at St Eugene's PS with a Statement of Special Education Needs.

Extra-Curricular Activities

80. The ETI Inspection Report of May 2015 states that *'The wide range of extra-curricular activities available is tailored to meet the children's interests thereby encouraging them to adopt healthy lifestyles'*.
81. The ETI Sustaining Improvement Report of June 2018 states that the group of children from Years 5 and 6 reported that they enjoy the extra-curricular events organised through the school and the local community. They have opportunities to take on leadership roles through their involvement in the 'Princess Diana Award'.
82. St Eugene's PS' prospectus details extra-curricular activities including music lessons and Gaelic skills.

Pastoral Care

83. The ETI Inspection Report of May 2015 reported that *'the arrangements for pastoral care in the school are highly effective. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos, with all members of the school community showing a strong commitment to the welfare of the children and the staff. The school is highly responsive to the pastoral needs of the children, with the individual needs of the*

children being addressed well through an appropriate range of in-school and external support services’.

84. The ETI Report concludes that the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision.

Physical Environment

85. The CfC states that St Eugene’s PS was constructed in 1960 and comprises two permanent classrooms, a temporary classroom and a modular unit used as a PE/dining hall. It also states that *the school is constructed on a site of 10132 sqm, has a Limit of Internal Accommodation (LIA) of 412.74 sqm’.*
86. The CfC’s Schedule of Accommodation indicates that the permanent classrooms are 36 sqm.

Criterion 2: Stable Enrolment Trends

87. St Eugene’s PS currently has an approved enrolment number of 48. Chart 1 and Table 5 below sets out the school’s total enrolment for the last five years. It shows that historically the school has been undersubscribed. Enrolments have been declining from 37 pupils in 2019/20 to 18 pupils in 2023/24. The school’s enrolment is significantly below the recommended minimum enrolment of 105 for a sustainable rural primary school, as set out in the SSP.
88. Table 5 below shows that St Eugene’s PS’ P1 intake from 2019/20 to 2023/24 has been significantly below the school’s approved admissions number of seven in four of the last five years with no pupils admitted in 2022/23. Provisional data for 2023/24 shows the school admitted * pupils to Year 1.

Table 5: St Eugene’s PS – Historical Enrolments*

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24**
Enrolment	37	31	28	22	18
Admissions	10	*	5	0	*

*Includes Pupils with a Statement of SEN

**2023/24 Provisional Census Data (which may be subject to change)

89. Table 6 below sets out the First and Total preference applications for St Eugene’s PS and shows that historically the school has received a low level of applications apart from 2019/20 when it received ten first preference applications.

Table 6: St Eugene’s PS – First and Total Preferences

	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
1st preference	10	1	5	0	3
Total preferences	10	1	5	0	3

90. EA data at the commencement of the primary admissions process for 2024/25 show that the school has only received one first preference application.

Temporary Variations (TV)

91. In 2019/20, St Eugene's PS was granted a TV of three to its approved admissions number.

Criterion 3: Sound Financial Position

92. St Eugene's PS' deficit position as at 31 March 2023 was (£73,152). The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2022 was (£52,973).
93. The school received a total Common Funding Formula budget of £157,935 in the 2023/24 financial year for 22² FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £7,179. The average for all primary schools is £3,403.
94. The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is 3³ pupils, which represents 13.64% of the total FTE, which places the school in Band 1 for funding purposes.
95. The school received £51,829 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents 100% of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.
96. The school also received £16,420 in respect of Primary Principals' Release Time.
97. The CfC states that St Eugene's PS' Three Year Plan is projecting a deficit of 100.3% / -£93,914 by the end of the financial year 2023-2024 but it should be noted that this was projected.

Criterion 4: Strong Leadership and Management

98. The ETI Inspection Report of May 2015, although very dated, assessed the quality of leadership and management as 'Good'. The Report states that *'In the short period that the Acting Principal has been in post, she has led effectively the review of key policies and practices, such as the child protection arrangements and the promotion of positive behaviour policy, which has led to significant improvements in the provision for the children. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision by staff at all levels is effective and collegial'*.
99. The ETI Report states that *'The current school development plan and the associated action plans do not guide sufficiently the improvement work of the school. It is important that the senior leadership now focus on the development*

³ The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2020 +census data was used to determine the 2021-22 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).

and effective outworking of appropriate action plans to ensure the actions taken bring about the intended improvement’.

100. The ETI’s evaluation, based on the evidence present at the time of the inspection, is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The Report further adds that there are aspects of governance to review, namely to put in place more effective arrangements to monitor and evaluate the outworking of the school development plan and its associated action plans in order to support more fully the school’s improvement work.

Criterion 5: Accessibility

101. The CfC states that St Eugene’s PS is accessible to pupils attending the school. Map 1 illustrates that the majority of pupils live within a two-mile radius and all are within a five-mile radius of the school. Map 2 illustrates the drive times of pupils attending the school and shows that all pupils live within 20 minutes of the school, with almost all being within ten minutes. St Eugene’s PS is therefore accessible to its pupils within the 30 minutes travel time as stipulated in the SSP.
102. Map 1 illustrates that there are five alternative Catholic Maintained primary schools within a five-mile mapping radius of St Eugene’s PS. The map also shows that some pupils bypass their nearest primary school and are prepared to travel further to attend St Eugene’s PS.

Criterion 6: Strong Links with the Community

103. The CfC states that St Eugene’s PS *‘gives high priority to maintaining a wide range of productive links with the parents and the local community. The children’s learning experiences have been enhanced through a cross-community partnership and collaborative links with a number of local community organisations’.*
104. The ETI inspection report of May 2015 states that the school has excellent links with the parents and the local community. Collaborative links with a number of local community organisations have been developed to provide useful resources for the school and the local community.
105. The ETI Report also states that the governors are involved actively in the life and work of the school and are committed to securing strong, collaborative links with the parents and the wider community that the school serves.
106. Responses received during the statutory objection period confirm that St Eugene’s PS has strong links with the local community and a proactive Parents Association. The school facilities are used for several cross-community activities including parent and toddler group; Pilates classes; Yoga class; Defibrillator training; neighbourhood watch meetings and a venue for cross-community fun runs.
107. Responses state that St Eugene’s PS is the heart of the local community and its closure will mean the loss of a social amenity for the rural area.

Sustainability Summary

108. The quality of education at St Eugene's PS was assessed as 'Good' by the ETI in May 2015 (however, this is over eight years ago) although the school operates two composite classes for all its year groups. The number of teachers employed is below the recommended four teachers for a primary school.
109. The school's enrolment is significantly below the SSP's recommended minimum threshold of 105 for a sustainable rural primary school with enrolment numbers declining from 37 in 2019/20 to 18 in 2023/24. For 2024/25, only one application has been received.
110. St Eugene PS is operating in a financial deficit position (£73,152) which is significantly in excess of the +/- 5% range for budget surpluses/deficits stipulated by the Department. The CfC predicts a deficit of £93,914 (100.3%) by the end of the financial year 2023-2024.
111. Leadership and management at the school has been assessed as good and the ETI confirms that the school has excellent links with the community. The school is accessible to its pupils, however, there are other alternative primary schools within a five-mile mapping radius with circa 600 available places that the pupils at St Eugene's PS could attend if DP 666 is approved.
112. In conclusion, the available evidence demonstrates that St Eugene's PS is unable to meet the criteria and indicators of the SSP in relation to Quality Educational Experience (in relation to composite classes and the number of teachers), Stable Enrolment Trends and Sound Financial Position.
113. In the May 2015 Inspection report, the ETI comments that *'it will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff'*.

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

114. The Rural Development Council's (RDC) '*Striking the Balance*' report highlights the importance of rural proofing so that regard is given to the impact of a particular policy on rural populations (in comparison to those living in urban areas) and to help identify adjustments which might be made to reflect rural needs and ensure that services are accessible to rural communities on a fair basis. A central concern is the quality of education provided to pupils.
115. The SSP policy was assessed against the RDC rural proofing checklist (*Striking the Balance*, Annex 1) and no adverse impact was identified. The SSP recognises the needs of rural communities and this is reflected in the lower enrolment threshold for rural primary schools, the accessibility criterion which provides guidance on home-to-school travel times and the criterion strong links

with the community also recognises the central place a school has for many communities (urban and rural).

116. 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*".
117. Responses during the statutory objection period state that '*Urban schools are classified as those within the Belfast City Council and Derry City Council areas. This means that schools in large towns such as Omagh or Coleraine are classified as rural schools and have the same threshold for enrolment as schools in a true rural location such as St Eugene's*'.
118. The former Minister, now Lord Peter Weir, gave approval to redefine the SSP urban and rural definitions from 1 September 2022 by adopting the NISRA default definition of urban and rural settlement sizes. Under the revised definition, St Eugene's PS is still defined as a rural school.
119. In the former Minister Michelle McIlveen's Written Statement to the NI Assembly on 9 August 2021, she commissioned officials to develop a programme to support sustainable education provision in rural areas. The statement highlighted that she did not regard the SSP as a policy for closure of schools and viewed collaboration within and across sectors as a means of delivering a quality educational experience for all our children and young people in sustainable settings.
120. Responses received during the statutory objection period state that neither the Integrated or Joint Faith options were adequately explored, instead the onus was solely put on the BoG to look for alternative options.
121. The CfC asserts that CCMS considered other options for the future of this school, however, determined that no other option produced a sustainable solution.
122. The SSP states that '*strong, sustainable schools providing quality education and access to the full curriculum are central to the achievement of the educational vision*'. One of the objectives of the SSP is to ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural settings.
123. The CfC advises that the areas from which St Eugene's PS attracts pupils are defined as rural according to the Inter-Departmental Definition Group and stakeholders highlighted that it has the potential to impact local business in the area. However, CCMS states the intention of this proposal is to advance the aspirations, aims and objectives of the SSP.

124. In order to help mitigate the impact, CCMS states in the CfC that transport assistance is available for pupils that do not live within two miles of their nearest suitable school.
125. Concerns were expressed during the statutory objection period that the Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) was not finalised and completed prior to the pre-publication process and that CCMS has failed to assess the aggregated / combined rural needs impact of this proposal and the DPs relating to the proposed closure of two other rural primary schools in the same area (DP 602 – Gillygooley Primary School and DP 603 – Dunmullan Primary School).
126. CCMS has confirmed that the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered and that Equality screening of this proposal has been carried out and the *'evidence received to date suggests that there are no major impacts on the protected groups within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998'*.
127. A copy of the Equality and Human Rights Screening Template, including the Rural Needs Impact Assessment is reproduced at Appendix C.

Effective and Efficient Use of Public Funds

128. In discharging its duties, the Department must seek to avoid unreasonable public expenditure and to make the best use of resources available to it. The SSP states *'It is important that children in rural communities have access to a quality education in cost-effective provision'*.
129. The assessment of St Eugene's PS against the criteria and indicators of the SSP demonstrates that the school is unsustainable and fails to meet the Sound Financial Position criterion.
130. As a very small school with only 22 pupils enrolled in 2022/23 (and 18 in 2023/24), the school receives the maximum Small Schools Support funding (£51,829), Primary Principal's Release funding (£16,420) and a per capita allocation of £7,179 which compares to an average for all primary schools of £3,403. The CfC states that the proposal is cost effective and, if approved, there would be savings upon the closure of St Eugene's PS.
131. Comments received during the statutory objection period state that *'The School Financial Plan 2021-2024 has been issued to the school showing a significant improvement over the previous year's budget. Namely the school was in a surplus position of £18,390, which reduced its overall deficit by circa. 30%'*.
132. As indicated above, the school's provisional deficit at the end of March 2023 has risen to (£73,152) from (£52,973) at March 2022. The school's approved financial plan for 2021-2024 is included in Appendix D of the CfC. This shows an increasing projected deficit position as a result of planned expenditure exceeding the anticipated budget allocation.

133. The evidence set out above confirms that St Eugene's PS is continuing to operate in a deficit position in excess of the +/- 5% range for budget surpluses/deficits stipulated by the Department and the CfC asserts the deficit is projected to increase further year on year.

Shared Education

134. St Eugene's PS was involved in a funded SESP Transition Phase partnership with Dunmullan PS and pupils engaged in shared curricular/extra-curricular activities. The CfC states that CCMS considered a shared solution however, concluded that *'these activities do not provide the basis for sustainable provision across the two schools'*.
135. However, the approval of the proposal to discontinue Dunmullan PS will have impacted the current shared education partnership.
136. The CfC states that there are a number of alternative shared education partnerships across the Omagh area that pupils can engage in, in alternative schools. The CfC asserts that CCMS would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and the EA would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area.
137. CCMS asserts there are schools within the area, within the Catholic Maintained sector, that are currently engaged in shared education partnerships so there is scope to support alternative arrangements and for the children to engage in shared partnerships in their receiving school should this proposal progress.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Population Projections

138. St Eugene's PS' enrolment number has declined in the last three years to 18 in 2023/24 and remains below the recommended minimum threshold for a rural primary school.
139. The CfC states that during the pre-publication consultation, there was no evidence that there would be a significant increase in demand in the short, medium or long term in the area to impact the school's enrolment numbers significantly. The school's projection of enrolments in the most recent approved financial plan indicates 27 pupils in 2023/24. With an admission of * pupils in 2023/24 and with six pupils leaving P7 in August 2023, it was projected that the school's 2023/24 enrolment would be 19 pupils. (An ETI update in relation to DP 717 has confirmed that there are 18 pupils enrolled in 2023/24.)
140. As stated above, the EA's Area Plan includes population projections for the Fermanagh and Omagh LGD area which predict that the population of 0–15-year-olds is to increase by 0.3% by 2024. However, the NISRA 2018-based Population Projections for the former Omagh LGD, the smallest geographical area for which population projections are available, in which St Eugene's PS is

located, as shown in Table 2 above, project an overall decrease in the 0 to 15 age group of -6.6% to 2028 and -16.2% to 2043.

141. Natural change (births minus deaths), and net migration are taken into account when population projections are being developed.

Financial Implications

Staffing

142. CCMS states in the CfC that it is not possible to predict the number of redundancies or redeployments in advance of a decision on DP 666, therefore it is not possible to cost these accurately at this time. In the event of a closure of the school, employment/deployment opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff would be sought in alternative schools.
143. Teaching staff are afforded protection as part of the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2 for a period of two years. For non-teaching staff the JNC Collective Agreement for school reorganisations affords one year protection and is reviewed annually.

Transport

144. The CfC acknowledges that if St Eugene's PS closes, there would be increased transport costs associated with its pupils who live less than two miles from the school, as they would become entitled to transport assistance. There may be additional costs associated with pupils from other schools who live within two miles of St Eugene's PS and these pupils would become entitled to transport assistance.
145. Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated that the financial implications for the Transport budget would be offset by the savings made in closing St Eugene's Primary School.
146. Comments received during the statutory objection period state that transport to other schools would cause difficulties, particularly for pupils with SEN, medical conditions and very young children.
147. The CfC states that the EA, drawing upon medical and other advice, as required, will assess the pupil's transport needs and make appropriate arrangements.

Accommodation

148. As DP 666 relates to a closure there are no accommodation costs.

Educational Impact

149. The CfC states that if St Eugene's PS was to cease provision, the pupils would be afforded the opportunity to enrol in sustainable schools which can ensure the following benefits:

- Greater opportunities for pupils to be taught in their own age groups.
- Increased number of classes of no more than two year groups.
- Additional potential for appropriate levels of differentiation in teaching and learning.
- Increased opportunities for peer group interaction.
- Improved chances for participation in extra-curricular activities.
- Additional opportunities for specialist teaching and professional development of staff.

150. The CfC asserts that the proposal would benefit pupils as it will add to the longer-term viability of school provision and would progress the development of a network of strong viable schools to meet the educational needs of pupils and can allow for efficient use of educational resources including the redeployment of teaching and support staff. It can also provide increased opportunities for the professional development of all staff as a larger staffing complement allows for increased interaction with peers and can facilitate more opportunities for training/development.

151. The ETI update of 9 February 2022 states that larger schools will provide potentially more opportunities for the children to develop and apply further their skills and dispositions through participation in a fuller curriculum and a broader range of extra-curricular activities at a higher and more sustained level.

CONCLUSION

152. The Department's vision is that *Every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding*. All Departmental policies and processes, including Area Planning, contribute to the delivery of that vision and all have, as a central tenet, the educational well-being of children and young people.

153. A central aim of Area Planning is to achieve a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, right size, located in the right place and have a focus on raising standards. All DPs coming forward must be set in the strategic context and take account of provision and places within the wider area.

154. The SSP, implemented through Area Planning, is clear that the core issue for a school's sustainability must be the continuing provision of a high-quality education for the children. Generally, it is acknowledged that as numbers in a school decline, the challenges it must overcome in order to provide a high-quality education increase.

155. The CfC asserts that the proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education.

156. The EA supports CCMS, as the proposer of DP 666, in taking forward the proposal. A total of 187 objections were received during the two-month statutory

objection period and one of the issues raised was concern about the pre-publication process.

157. A re-fresh of the pre-publication was undertaken to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to submit additional information which had not been raised in the initial pre-publication consultation and for parents/guardians and other stakeholders who had not taken part in the original consultation to provide comments.
158. The CfC details a number of options that CCMS considered for St Eugene's PS however, these options were discounted because they would not result in a sustainable solution.
159. The SSP states that ideally a primary school should have at least seven classrooms (one for each year group), no more than two composite year groups in a single classroom and a minimum of four teachers.
160. In 2022/23, St Eugene's PS was operating with two composite classes - one incorporating three year groups and one with two year groups. No pupils were enrolled in P1 or P5. The school operated with 3.2 FTE teachers.
161. Inspection evidence shows that within a composite class of two year groups, it is possible for all children to be catered for effectively and make good progress. There is no evidence from school inspections to suggest that children taught in composite classes of two-year groups are disadvantaged in any way.
162. However, additional factors need to be considered when the composite class spans more than two-year groups. Under these circumstances ensuring adequate progression in learning and planning to meet, and meeting, the individual needs of children across a wider ability range and stage of development can be more challenging for the teacher. There are also issues relating to opportunities for the children to develop socially and emotionally with children of a similar age, gender and stage of development.
163. In 2023/24, St Eugene's PS has a total enrolment of only 18 pupils enrolled (provisional data which may be subject to change). The school's enrolment has been declining from 37 pupils in 2019/20 and only * pupils were admitted in 2023/24. At the start of the primary school's admissions process, data shows that only one application has been received for 2024/25.
164. The CfC states that if all pupils, for whom the school is the nearest suitable school attended St Eugene's PS, there is no evidence that the school would reach 105 pupils – a sustainable threshold.
165. The SSP, implemented through Area Planning, is clear that the core issue for a school's sustainability must be the continuing provision of a high-quality education for the children. Generally, it is acknowledged that as numbers in a school decline, the challenges it must overcome in order to provide a high-quality education rise.

166. The ETI in the summary of their update of 22 February 2022 states that the decreased enrolment at foundation stage and Key Stage 1 will continue to limit the school's ability to be sustainable. This proposal has the potential to address the current and future needs of the children and staff.
167. The CfC states that there will be cost savings in the recurrent costs of operating the school. The evidence set out above shows that the per capita cost of £7,179 for St Eugene's PS is significantly above the average for all primary schools at £3,403. The school is currently in a financial deficit position and declining enrolment numbers will only exacerbate the financial pressures. It would represent an inefficient use of public funds to continue sustaining a school that is assessed as unsustainable against the SSP criteria.
168. There is capacity in alternative primary schools in the area to accommodate pupils currently attending St Eugene's PS. The CfC states that given the capacity in the area, any displacement of pupils can be managed within existing provision, based on current parental preference.
169. The CfC acknowledges that *'At present, those who live within two miles of St Eugene's PS are not eligible for transport assistance to an alternative Catholic-maintained school. This has the potential to restrict their ability to attend a school with less sustainability challenges'*. However, if the proposal is approved, transport assistance is available for pupils that do not live within two miles of their nearest suitable school and this will help to mitigate the impact of the closure of St Eugene's PS.
170. Responses received during the two-month statutory objection period commented on the mental health of pupils in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and if the school were to close. CCMS states in the CfC that it would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education.
171. In the CfC, CCMS recognises the commitment of the governors and staff but states that *'the current challenging circumstances do not provide for a sustainable school. It is recognised that despite the school's best efforts, it continues to face sustainability challenges'*.
172. Though the BoG, school community and many others who have supported the school to stay open in this rural community favour small schools, they do not appear to accept that larger schools provide potentially more opportunities for the children to develop and apply further their skills and dispositions through participation in a fuller curriculum and a broader range of extra-curricular activities at a higher and more sustained level. There is also the potential for children to work educationally and engage socially with a wider group of peers. It is important that the (18) children and young people in this school community should be able to avail of such opportunities should you decide to accept the recommendation made in this submission.
173. The closure of any school is a difficult decision however, the evidence of sustainability issues impacting on St Eugene's PS is sufficiently compelling and

there is alternative good and sustainable primary provision available in the local area (with available places) which should allow for a smooth transition, aided by CCMS and the EA, in the best educational interests of the children and young people at the school.

RECOMMENDATION

174. Based on the evidence detailed above, it is recommended that you:

- (i) Approve DP 666 with a modification to the implementation date that:

St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter.'

- (ii) Agree that this submission (with any appropriate redactions) can be published on the Department's website once CCMS, the EA and the school have been notified of your decision.
- (iii) In making your decision, you may wish to state that it is important that the CCMS should ensure children and their parents are supported through the transition to other sustainable schools in the area. Every effort should be made to minimise the disruption to children's educational experiences and support, care and attention should be given to affected teaching and non-teaching staff who are impacted by this closure.

175. The following appendices are attached for your consideration:

Appendix A: Copy of Published Development Proposal (DP) 666

Appendix B: Case for Change for DP 666

Appendix C: St Eugene's PS - Equality Screening Template for DP 666

Appendix D: Summary of Objections received during the Two-Month Statutory Objection Period including Template Letters and Samples of Objection Letters (separate attachment)

Appendix E: Meeting with Órfhlaith Begley MP regarding proposed school closures including St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur – 8 November 2021

Appendix F: ETI Commentary Paper - DP 666

Appendix G: Department of Education (DE) Policy Team Comments – DP 666



ELAINE ARMSTRONG

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APPENDIX A

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 666

ST EUGENE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, TIRCUR

Notice is hereby given that a Proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 has been submitted to the Education Authority by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools on behalf of the Trustees of St Eugene's Primary School to the effect that:

St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, 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 located at 1 Hospital Road, Omagh, BT79 0AW, between the hours of 9.00 am and 4.30 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



St Eugene's Primary School

203-2688

The Case for Change

October 2021

CASE FOR CHANGE – Supporting Information

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

EA AREA	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
DP NUMBER	DP 666
PROPOSER	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28 1FJ
SCHOOL(S) NAME	St Eugene's Primary School
SCHOOL REFERENCE	203-2688
TYPE	Primary School
MANAGEMENT	Catholic Maintained
DP PUBLICATION DATE	Week commencing 6 December 2021 <i>(Note: Proof of publication should be submitted without delay)</i>
PROPOSAL	Proposal to close St Eugene's PS, (203-2688) with effect from 31 August 2022 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 the relevant parties retain this information.

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







EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

PROPOSER Provide detail of consultation with the BOGs, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be	<p>Original proposal was for the discontinuance of St Eugene's Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>I confirm that Board of Governors, staff and parents/guardians were consulted from 18 November 2019 to 16 December 2019. A stakeholder consultation evening took place on 2 December 2019. Upon request from consultees, the consultation closure date was extended to 20 January 2020. The proposal consulted on was for the closure of the school from 31 August 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>The responses, and further communication received from the Board of Governors, were given due consideration at CCMS Education Provision</p>
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<p>consulted as well as pupils</p> <p>Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before the publication of the DP?</p>	<p>Committee meeting on 9 March 2020. CCMS determined the proposal was appropriate, taking into account all responses received. A copy of the consultation summary is contained in Appendix G.</p> <p>The proposal has subsequently been amended to a proposal for the discontinuance of St Eugene's Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>On 6 May 2021 a re-refresh of the pre-publication consultation was undertaken. This provided stakeholders with an opportunity to submit additional information, which had not been raised in the initial pre-publication consultation. It also provided an opportunity for parents/guardians, and other stakeholders who had not taken part in the original consultation, to make comment on the proposal.</p> <p>The Board of Governors presented feedback to CCMS in relation to the Case for Change document, which had been issued to the stakeholders. An updated document was issued to stakeholders. In light of the school holiday period the refresh opportunity was extended to 29 September 2021.</p> <p>On 28 October 2021, EPC reviewed the proposal and decided to proceed to the public objection stage for the development proposal (DPP 666).</p>
<p>Confirmation by the Proposer</p>	<p>I confirm that the school's Board of Governors, staff and parents/guardians were consulted 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: Edel Teague OFFICE HELD: Area Planning Programme Manager</p> <p>SIGNED:  DATE: 01 November 2021</p>

ASSOCIATED PROPOSALS

<p>DPs 603 and 602</p> <p>Published 22 September 2021</p>	<p>Proposal for the discontinuance of Dunmullan Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Proposal for the discontinuance of Gillygooley Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.</p>
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Case for Change: Statutory Consultation									
EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION									
The following is to be completed and signed off by the EA.									
The Education Authority (EA)	<p>I confirm that the schools which the Education Authority consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 6 May 2021 with a return date of 1 July 2021.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>30 November 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	30 November 2021
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	30 November 2021								
<p>Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.</p> <p>Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).</p> <p>Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p> <p>Dates of EA meetings eg Education Committee/ Board etc.</p> <p>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</p>	<p>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 6 May 2021 to schools which, in the opinion of the Education Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 26 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 1 July 2021.</p> <p>No responses were received from affected schools.</p> <p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee at its meeting on 30 November 2021.</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> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Michele Corkey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Held:</td> <td>Director of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signed:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>30 November 2021</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Michele Corkey	Office Held:	Director of Education	Signed:		Date:	30 November 2021	<p>The Education Authority supports the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in taking forward Development Proposal 666 to discontinue St Eugene's Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Within the Annual Action Plan 2019-22, the Education Authority and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools planned to bring all three proposals forward as an Omagh area plan. This proposal is part of a suite of proposals for the Omagh area with Development Proposals for the discontinuance of Dunmullan Primary School and Gillygooley Primary School published on 22 September 2021.</p> <p>The proposal to discontinue St Eugene's Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter is being taken forward as detailed in the attached Case for Change.</p> <p>In consideration of the above, and the Case for Change, the Education Authority is proposing to publish Development Proposal 666 the week beginning 6 December 2021.</p>
Name:	Michele Corkey								
Office Held:	Director of Education								
Signed:									
Date:	30 November 2021								

1. BACKGROUND

St Eugene's Primary School (PS) is situated five and a half miles north of Omagh. Figure 1, indicates the location of St Eugene's PS (centre of the circle) and the distribution of the school's 2017/18 pupil cohort within the area.

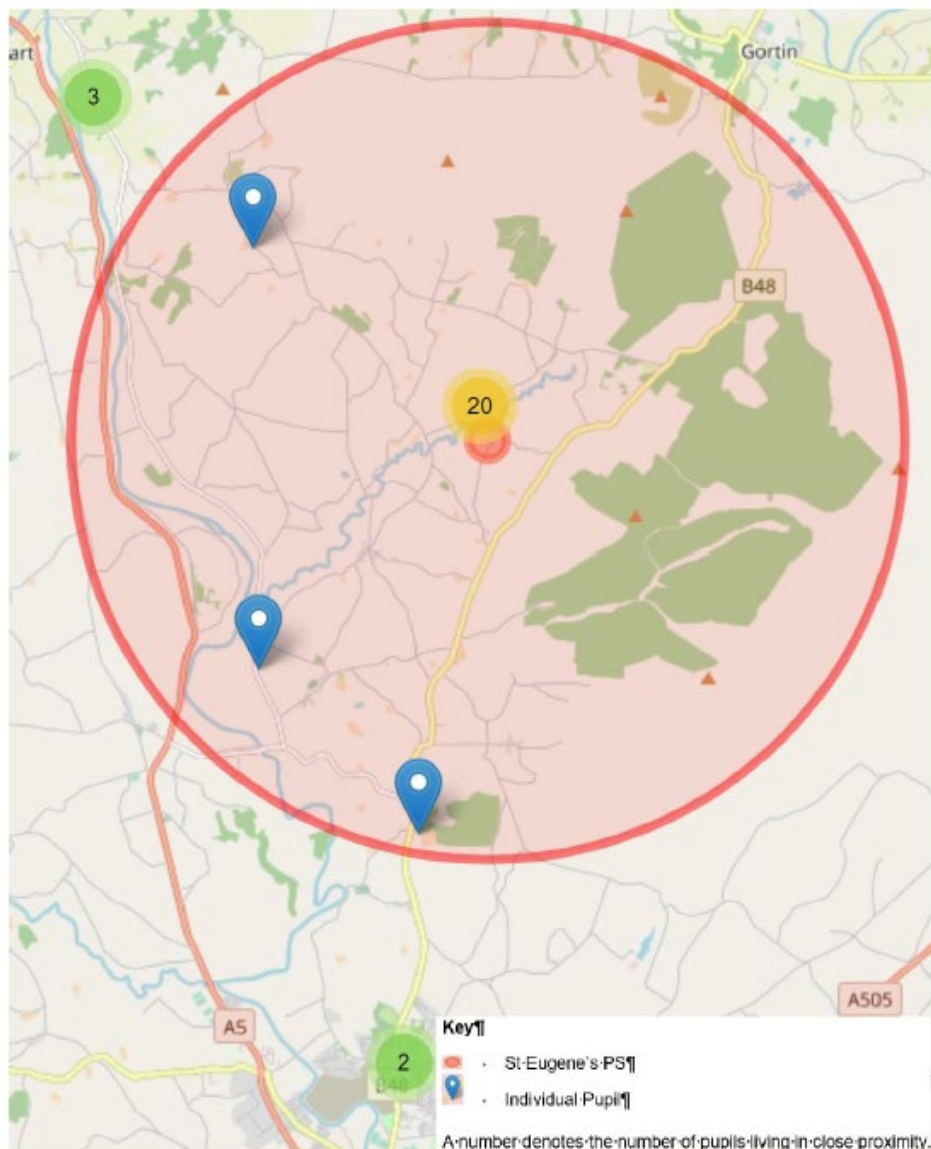


Figure 1: Pupil distribution within 3 mile radius

Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools 2009 (SSP),¹ underpins all work carried out through the area planning process. The aim of area planning is to facilitate the development of a network of viable and sustainable schools, that can deliver the Northern Ireland (NI) Curriculum effectively and provide access to education provision appropriate to the needs of pupils.²

In striving to realise this aspiration, the area planning process aims to ensure every pupil has:

- access to a broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities to realise their potential;
- an education in which the learning outcomes are appropriate to their needs;
- access to quality teaching delivered in a caring and supportive environment; and
- education delivered in modern, well-resourced facilities, suitable for the delivery of education in the twenty-first century.

CCMS is committed to excellence in the delivery of education so that every pupil can realise their potential and contribute to a caring, inclusive and progressive society.

In April 2014, CCMS consulted with Boards of Governors, staff and parents of Gortnagam PS and St Eugene's PS on the proposed closure of both schools. After due consideration of feedback from the consultation, CCMS decided to proceed with the proposal to close Gortnagam PS and withdraw the proposal to close St Eugene's PS. Below is an excerpt from the letter from CCMS to both boards at the time:

"The onus is now on the community to demonstrate their desire and support for rural, primary school provision in the area by sending their children to St Eugene's. Only by doing this will the enrolment at St Eugene's PS Tircur grow to a point where sustainability becomes a reality. CCMS will keep the position at St Eugene's PS under review which is required for all schools with an enrolment below 105."³

On 31 August 2016, Gortnagam PS closed. On 28 April 2017 the EA published *Providing Pathways Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 Annual Action Plan for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools, April 2017–March 2018* which included the following action.

Primary School/Area	Key Issue	Action
Omagh Town and surrounding area	Address school provision where sustainability is an issue and ensure school places are located as required	Managing authorities to consult on options for future primary provision in Omagh Town and surrounding area by March 2018

Table 1: Fermanagh and Omagh Government District Council (Extract)⁴

At the January 2018 meeting of CCMS' Education Provision Committee (EPC), it was agreed to consult on the future provision of St Eugene's PS.

CCMS officers met representatives of the school to assess the school's sustainability and identify any sustainable options available in the area. This Case For Change document provides a summary of the sustainability assessment and any options identified.

2. SUPPORTING STATISTICS TO OUTLINE THE EVIDENCE OF NEED FOR CHANGE

2.1 Historic Enrolments

¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/area-planning-frequently-asked-questions>

² <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/northern-ireland-curriculum-primary>

³ Excerpt from letter to Board of Governors, staff and parents of St Eugene's PS, 24 September 2014.

⁴ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/area-planning/annual-action-plans>.

The approved enrolment number for St Eugene's PS is 48 and its approved admissions number is 7. As Table 2 indicates, the pupil enrolment in the school was 37 in 2010/11 and is 28 in 2021/22. Between 2010/11 and 2020/21 the enrolment has fluctuated between 20 and 37. There is no indication the enrolment in St Eugene's PS will increase substantially so as to reach the threshold of 105 pupils required by the Department of Education's (DE's) SSP, 2009.⁵

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
2010/11	2	6	5	4	11	5	4	37
2011/12	2	2	6	5	4	11	5	35
2012/13	2	1	2	6	5	5	12	33
2013/14	2	2	1	2	4	5	4	20
2014/15	6	2	2	1	2	4	5	22
2015/16	3	6	3	2	0	2	4	20
2016/17	8	5	10	4	2	0	2	31
2017/18	4	6	5	9	2	2	0	28
2018/19	0	4	6	5	8	2	2	27
2019/20	10	1	4	5	5	10	2	37
2020/21	1	9	0	4	5	5	7	31
2021/22	5	1	8	0	3	6	5	28

Table 2: Enrolment statistics⁶ (*Information provided by St Eugene's PS)

Four or fewer pupils in St Eugene's PS are entitled to free school meals; no pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) Stage 5; and four or fewer pupils were identified as being on SEN Stages 1 to 4.⁷

2.2 Population Change 0-15 Year Olds

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) indicate a projected population reduction of children aged 0-15 years of 5.8% between mid-2018 and mid-2028 within the Fermanagh and Omagh Local Government District (LGD) area. In addition, they predict the population of 4-11 year olds, in the Fermanagh and Omagh LGD, will decrease by 7.5% (mid-2018 to mid-2028).⁸ NISRA indicate a projected population reduction of children aged 0-15 years, within the Omagh area (Omagh LGD, of 7% between mid-2018 and mid-2028).⁹

Table 3 below shows the birth rates (per academic year) for the Gortin Ward (95YY12) over the 10 years 2009-2018.¹⁰ The number of live births has fluctuated, with the current 5 year average birth-rate at 34.2 per annum.

Births by Ward	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	5 Year average
	41	38	40	36	34	40	23	47	25	36	34.2

Table 3: Gortin Ward – live birth statistics (Ward Code 95YY12)

⁵ Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools 2009 p24.

⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolment-school-level-data-201920>.

⁷ <http://apps.education-ni.gov.uk/appinstitutes/showstatistics.aspx>.

⁸ <https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/InteractiveMaps/Population/PopulationProjections/atlas.html>.

⁹ <https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=74&themeName=Population>.

¹⁰ <https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/PivotGrid.aspx?ds=10023&lh=73&yn=2001-2018&sk=130&sn=Children+Education+and+Skills&yearfilter=>

The data above (enrolment trends, live birth statistics and population projections) are not an exact predictor of the actual number of children likely to enrol in a school. Some children may leave the area before reaching primary school age, some born outside the area may take up residence in the area and some may enrol in a primary school outside the area. However, consideration of variations in such data is helpful in predicting likely trends in future enrolments in a primary school.

2.3 Quality Of Accommodation

St Eugene's PS was constructed in 1960 and comprises of 2 permanent classrooms, a temporary classroom and a modular unit used as a PE/dining hall. Minor improvements to the school include the redesign of the toilet area in 2005/06 and the installation of a controlled access system in 2012/13. A list of minor works is included in Appendix B.

3. SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The SSP sets out six sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.¹¹ Information about St Eugene's PS is noted below for each of the criteria.

3.1 Quality Educational Experience

3.1.1 Composite Classrooms and number of teachers

The SSP indicates the following criteria for a sustainable school:

"No more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level.
A minimum of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers."¹²

Table 4 indicates how classes are managed by St Eugene's PS, showing neither indicator is met.

	Key Stage	Year group	No. of pupils	Class Arrangements / Staffing complement
Classroom 1	Foundation Stage	Year 1	5	Foundation Stage /Key Stage 1. 1 teacher. 1 Classroom Assistant.
		Year 2	1	
	Key Stage 1	Year 3	8	
		Year 4	0	
Classroom 2	Key Stage 2	Year 5	3	Key Stage 2. Teaching Principal. Principal Release Teacher (1 day per week).
		Year 6	6	
		Year 7	5	

Table 4: Composite classes for 21/22 (Source: St Eugene's PS)

3.1.2 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school

An Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Sustaining Improvement Inspection for St Eugene's PS took place on 7 June 2018.¹³ Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) had declared industrial action including non-co-operation with the ETI at the time of the inspection. Prior to the planned inspection, the school informed the ETI that the teachers would not be co-operating fully with the inspectors. As a result the inspection proceeded based on the evidence made available at the time.

Key findings of ETI Inspection 2018

The group of children from years 5 and 6 reported that they enjoy the extra-curricular events organised through the school and the local community. They have opportunities to take on leadership roles through their involvement in the 'Princess Diana Award'. The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the line of inquiry; and the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms. It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues relating to the sustainability of the school provision and the school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.¹⁴

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/schools-future-policy-sustainable-schools>.

¹² Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools (DENI 2009) p47.

¹³ Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2018.

¹⁴ Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2018 p2.

¹⁵ Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2018 p2.

Key findings of ETI Inspection 2015 ¹⁶

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

Achievements and Standards

The children have excellent attitudes and dispositions to learning; they are conscientious and attentive in class. They can solve problems and challenges and, as they progress through the school, develop well their creative, critical and reflective thinking. They demonstrate high levels of respect and empathy for their teachers and each other. The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children make good progress in English in line with their ability or above expectation. All of the children make good progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.

The children achieve very good standards in literacy. They demonstrate confidence in their interactions with adults and their peers and are very competent in talking about their learning. By year 7, the most able children read fluently and discuss knowledgeably and with enthusiasm their favourite authors. Throughout the school, the children write well for a range of purposes and audiences across other areas of learning. The small number of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress. They interact well with others and, with the help of the teacher, can assess their own work. The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. They have many opportunities to present their work using a range of programmes and applications, to explore new topics using ICT and to exchange information with children from other schools. The children have excellent attitudes and dispositions to learning; they are conscientious and attentive in class. They can solve problems and challenges and, as they progress through the school, develop well their creative, critical and reflective thinking. They demonstrate high levels of respect and empathy for their teachers and each other.¹⁷

Provision

The teaching was effective at promoting successful learning in all of the lessons observed. In the most effective practice, which was in most of the lessons observed: lessons were well paced and the level of challenge was appropriate to meet the range of ages and abilities within each of the composite classes; teachers used creatively a range of stimulus material to engage the children and took ongoing account of the children's needs and responses; and, the children assessed their own work and the work of others, using clearly defined success criteria. The children's work is marked regularly and supportively, and identifies clearly their strengths.

The long-term and medium-term planning does not inform the teaching sufficiently and needs to be developed further. The school has identified appropriately the need to improve the planning in order to provide a more coherent and balanced curriculum across all areas of learning and to promote steady progression in the children's learning.

The needs of the small number of children identified as requiring additional support with their learning are met effectively through early identification and appropriate intervention. The individual education plans are informed well by the teachers' knowledge of the children's needs, interests and abilities; however, the targets identified for the children need to be more specific and short-term to enable the children to experience success more regularly. The classroom assistants work alongside the teaching staff to provide effective support in class and through withdrawal sessions. The children's progress in the withdrawal sessions is monitored closely and evaluated regularly. There is effective liaison and appropriate sharing of information between school staff and outside agencies to support the children's learning.

The school's programme for language and literacy is balanced across the areas of talking and listening, reading and writing and takes due cognisance of the children's interests. By the end of the foundation stage, the children's phonological awareness is well developed and they are confident in attempting to express their ideas in simple sentences. As the children move through the key stages, they use spelling, punctuation

¹⁶ Report of an Inspection in May 2015

¹⁷ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p2

and grammar with increasing accuracy and write well for a range of audiences. A key strength in the provision is the steady development of the children's talking and listening skills across all areas of the curriculum. The teachers make very effective use of ICT as a tool for learning and to set the work in interesting, contemporary contexts.

The arrangements for pastoral care in the school are highly effective. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos, with all members of the school community showing a strong commitment to the welfare of the children and the staff. The school is highly responsive to the pastoral needs of the children, with the individual needs of the children being addressed well through an appropriate range of in-school and external support services.

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the healthy breaks initiative and the taught programme. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available is tailored to meet the children's interests thereby encouraging them to adopt healthy lifestyles.¹⁸

Within its conclusion, the report commented: "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."¹⁹ The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is to improve the quality of planning at all levels to ensure the needs of all of the children are met effectively.²⁰

3.1.3 The quality of the physical environment for learning and teaching

The school is constructed on a site of 10132 sqm, has a Limit of Internal Accommodation (LIA) of 412.74sqm (Appendix A). As per the schedule of accommodation there are 3 classrooms. The minor works report can be viewed in Appendix B.

3.1.4 The quality of, and arrangements for, pastoral care

The report of an inspection in May 2015 noted:

"The arrangements for pastoral care in the school are highly effective. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos, with all members of the school community showing a strong commitment to the welfare of the children and the staff. The school is highly responsive to the pastoral needs of the children, with the individual needs of the children being addressed well through an appropriate range of in-school and external support services.

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the healthy breaks initiative and the taught programme. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available is tailored to meet the children's interest thereby encouraging them to adopt health lifestyles."²¹

The report of another inspection in June 2018 noted:

"During inspection, the school provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued from the Department of Education (DE). The Child Protection policy and safeguarding team's roles and responsibilities are being updated and reviewed by the board of governors to reflect the DE guidance; the revisions are to be shared with the parents. A group of children from years 5 and 6 reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school."²²

¹⁸ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p3.

¹⁹ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p5.

²⁰ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p5.

²¹ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p3.

²² Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2018 p2.

3.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

3.2.1 The enrolment trends in the school and projected demand in the area.

Table 2 demonstrates that the enrolment figures remain consistently below the 105 enrolment threshold contained within the SSP, ranging from 37 in 2010/11 to 28 in 2021/22. During the pre-publication consultation, there was no evidence that there would be a significant increase in demand in the short, medium or long term in the area to impact the school's enrolment numbers significantly.

The school's projection of enrolments in the most recent approved financial plan indicates the school's expectation is 27 pupils in 2023/24. This remains below the minimum threshold of 105 pupils as detailed in the SSP.

3.3 Sound Financial Position

3.3.1 The school's annual finances indicate whether it can live within its delegated budget.

All schools receive delegated budgets and have the authority to determine expenditure from these budgets. Guidance for controlled and maintained schools requires that they should not accumulate surpluses or deficits in excess of 5% of their delegated budget or £75,000, whichever is the lesser.

A copy of the Annual Area Profile 2020 for St Eugene's PS is attached at Appendix C. It shows the school's current financial position and enrolment history.

Table 5 provides information from St Eugene's PS's 3 year financial plan 2021-24. The school's financial deficit of £56,411 at the end of the 2021/22 financial year is projected to increase to £93,914 by the end of 2023/24.

Pupil enrolments are projected to be 30 in October 2021, 29 in October 2022 and 27 in October 2023 (Year 1– Year 7).

The approved financial plan 2021-2024 is in Appendix D.

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Anticipated Enrolment	30	29	27
Planned Teaching Complement	2.20	2.20	2.20
Total Budget (£)	171,593	168,946	166,300
Opening Cumulative Surplus/deficit (£)	-44,595	-56,411	-72,631
Total Expenditure (£)	183,409	185,166	187,582
Closing Balance (£)	-56,411	-72,631	-93,914
% Deficit/surplus	-44.4	-64.5	-100.3
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	13.64	13.18	12.27

Table 5: Financial position 2021-2024²³ (Source: Approved Financial Plan 2021/22– 2023/24 provided by St Eugene's PS)

²³ St Eugene's PS Financial Plan 2021/22– 2023/24

The report of the ETI Sustaining Improvement Inspection in June 2018 included the comment. "It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff."²⁴

3.4 Strong leadership and management by boards of governors and principal

3.4.1 ETI Inspection Report May 2015

Leadership and management: The ETI inspection Report May 2015 noted the following.

The senior leadership team, including the governors, has high expectations for the children and has a sound knowledge of, and a clearly articulated vision for, the school. In the short period that the acting principal has been in post, she has led effectively the review of key policies and practices, such as the child protection arrangements and the promotion of positive behaviour policy, which has led to significant improvements in the provision for the children. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision by staff at all levels is effective and collegial.

The current school development plan (SDP) and the associated action plans do not guide sufficiently the improvement work of the school. As part of the review of the school development plan, and in preparation for the next academic year, the acting principal has undertaken appropriate consultation with parents and staff to help develop more rigorous self-evaluation processes and to ensure that targets identified for future development are appropriate and agreed by all. She has also analysed well the school's performance data to help inform this process. It is important that the senior leadership now focus on the development and effective outworking of appropriate action plans to ensure the actions taken bring about the intended improvement.

The school has excellent links with the parents and the local community. The parents receive regular and detailed information on the progress of their child. The expertise, talents and entrepreneurship of parents are harnessed well to support and enrich the children's learning experiences. Collaborative links with a number of local community organisations have been developed to provide useful resources for the school and the local community.

Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are involved actively in the life and work of the school and are committed to securing strong, collaborative links with the parents and the wider community that the school serves.

They have a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the school. There are aspects of governance to review, namely to put in place more effective arrangements to monitor and evaluate the outworking of the school development plan and its associated action plans in order to support more fully the school's improvement work.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In the discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.²⁵

3.4.2 Composition of Board of Governors – skills and experience of Board members and number of vacancies.

The Board of Governors benefits from a wide range of skills and includes representation from parents, teachers, Trustees, school principal and the Department of Education.

²⁴ Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2018 p2

²⁵ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p5.

3.5 Accessibility

The school is accessible to the pupils in the local area. There are also a number of other accessible suitable schools in the area.

3.5.1 Distance to another suitable primary school and capacity in nearest schools

Table 6 below demonstrates some of the schools closest to St Eugene's PS, Tircur. Currently, there is capacity within local schools.

	Distance (miles) from St Eugene's PS ***	Sector	Enrolment 2020/21*	Approved Enrolment Number 2020/21	Available Places ** 2020/21
Dunmullan PS	1.8	Controlled	15	78	63
Christ The King PS, Omagh	4.7	Maintained	181	337	168
St Patrick's PS, Gortin	5	Maintained	81	142	!
St Mary's PS, Omagh	5.5	Maintained	316	406	98
Holy Family PS	6.2	Maintained	382	380	9
St Patrick's PS, Newtownstewart	6.4	Maintained	115	145	39
St Conor's PS	6.7	Maintained	391	408	37
St Ronan's PS, Recarson	7.7	Maintained	104	131	!
St Brigid's PS, Mountfield	9.0	Maintained	52	94	48
Gortin PS	4.7	Controlled	61	106	!
Gibson PS	5.6	Controlled	324	436	124
Omagh County PS	6	Controlled	292	393	117
Newtownstewart PS	6.8	Controlled	66	145	!
Gaelscoil Na gCrann	6.4	Irish Medium	158	185	!
Omagh Integrated PS	7.2	Integrated	265	385	127

Table 6: Local schools ²⁶

* Enrolment figures for Years 1-7. The enrolment figure includes supernumerary pupils (pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs).

! Denotes figures to avoid possible identification of individuals.

** When calculating available places, this figure does not take account of supernumerary pupils.

*** Mileage calculated from AA Route Finder.

²⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/statistics>.

3.6 Strong Links with the community

3.6.1 Multi-functional use of buildings outside formal education, for example, for sport, voluntary and community use.

The Education & Training Inspectorate, noted in May 2015:

"The school has excellent links with the parents and the local community. The parents receive regular and detailed information on the progress of their child. The expertise, talents and entrepreneurship of parents are harnessed well to support and enrich the children's learning experiences. Collaborative links with a number of local community organisations have been developed to provide useful resources for the school and the local community."²⁷

Appendix E contains additional information provided by the school, including community links.

²⁷ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p4.

4. AREA PLANNING IMPACT

4.1 Outline the Area Planning context and how this proposal will contribute to the delivery of education provision within the area. How does the proposal align with the current Area Plan, its key strategic themes and actions outlined in the Annual Action Plan?

The DE's vision in the Sustainable Schools Policy 2009 is for an educationally sustainable schools estate planned on an area basis, with a focus on sharing and collaboration.²⁸ The annual action planning process provides a framework for early consideration of emerging problems and possible remedial action to address questions of sustainability. The primary objective of the SSP policy is to ensure that all pupils get a first class education in fit for purpose facilities, regardless of background or where they live. It focuses on the long-term viability of educational provision making best use of the resources available for education. This policy drives the area planning process to ensure there is a network of strong viable schools to meet the educational needs of pupils.

In October 2016, with the publication of the draft Education Authority's *Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School provision 2017-2020*, the then Minister for Education made a statement that included the following.

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

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

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

However there are still a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. This is particularly evident in the primary sector and, despite the best effort of teachers, it becomes harder to deliver a high quality education if pupils are taught in composite classes. We have too many small primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class."²⁹

CCMS has a statutory duty to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with Trustees, the planning of Catholic maintained schools. CCMS, in taking forward the *Action Plan for Primary, Post-primary and Special Schools April 2019 – March 2021*, identified a sustainability issue in the Omagh area with the managing authorities (CCMS/EA) to consult on options for future provision in the Omagh Town and surrounding area by February 2020.³⁰

4.2 Specify links to other proposals. Provide detail on other DPs (including those in planning and not yet published) that could impact on education provision in the area, affecting consideration of this proposal and outline any reason for not bringing them forward together.

²⁸ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/sustainable-schools>.

²⁹ Ministerial Statement on Draft Area Plan - 17 October 2016.

³⁰ Action Plan for Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools April 2019 – March 2021 p28.

This proposal is linked, and is being run in parallel, with EA proposals to discontinue Dunmullan PS and Gillygooley PS from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter. St Eugene's PS and Dunmullan PS explored an integrated option and a jointly-managed school option as noted below.

4.3 What other options/size were explored and why was this the most appropriate area solution?

The alternative options explored at the consultation stage are listed below.

4.3.1 Do nothing - maintain the status quo

This option would result in no change to the current provision. It would provide continued pressure on staff to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, to mixed-age classes. In addition an increasing budget deficit would lead to pressure on available resources. Hence to do nothing is not a sustainable option.

4.3.2 Shared and integrated options

St Eugene's PS is in a shared education partnership with its neighbouring controlled school, Dunmullan PS and pupils engage in shared curricular/extra-curricular activities. However, these activities do not provide the basis for sustainable provision across the two schools.

DE are currently operating a shared campus capital project which allows schools to be built on a new shared campus, whilst retaining their own individual identity, structure and governance. Guidance from DE specifically notes that schools must be sustainable in order to participate in the Shared Campus Programme.³¹ Other cross-sectoral education models are the jointly-managed faith school model and the integrated model, both of which are explored below.

4.3.2.1 Jointly-managed school

A jointly-managed faith school is where a school is established by two or more faith groups. After the pre-publication consultation meeting (Dec 2019), CCMS received communication from the Board of Governors of St Eugene's PS, regarding the potential for either integrated education or a joint faith school between Dunmullan PS and St Eugene's PS.

In February 2020, the Board of Governors for St Eugene's PS, formally requested CCMS extend the proposed date of closure from 31st August 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter, to at least 31st August 2022. This was to allow sufficient time to explore other options for sustainable provision. In March 2020 a request was received by CCMS from the Bishop of Derry and the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC, to consider pausing the consultation process for 12 months in order to allow for an in-depth exploration of the possibility of a Jointly Managed School.

The TRC, Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS), Controlled Schools' Support Council, CCMS and EA met 26 August 2020 to discuss the jointly-managed school option. It was agreed that the CSTS, the TRC and the Controlled Schools' Support Council would meet with St Eugene's PS and Dunmullan PS respectively to support the schools investigating the demand for a jointly-managed school.

It was agreed this scoping work would not require a delay in the consultation process currently underway regarding the future of the schools. It was noted the consultation process underway would allow adequate time for the parallel investigation of a potential jointly-managed school option. Following an investigation of this option with the schools, CSTS and TRC determined that the proposal to establish a jointly-managed school would not offer a sustainable area planning solution and could not be progressed.

³¹ DE Shared Education Campuses Programme Third Call Application Guidance p8.

4.3.2.2 Integrated school

Integrated education “brings pupils and staff from Catholic and Protestant traditions, as well as those of other beliefs, cultures and communities, together in one school.”³² This option was raised as part of the pre-publication consultation process. In December 2019, the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) was contacted by representatives from St Eugene’s PS, Tircur and Dunmullan PS. IEF commissioned University of Ulster (UU) researchers to:

“bring together the Boards of Governors of the two schools to ascertain if there is sufficient support and demand from the two schools and their wider communities for an integrated school in the locality, and to facilitate a conversation between the two Boards of Governors to consider how this could best work in practice going forward.”³³

The following actions were agreed as part of the meeting.

“The Chairs of both Boards of Governors would write a common email to CCMS, EA and NICIE to place on record their commitment to working together to develop an Integrated school locally and to seek a date for a meeting to present their argument (supported by evidence against all of the six sustainability criteria).”³⁴

The BoG for St Eugene’s PS wrote to CCMS on 6 February 2020 requesting the following:

“In order to allow sufficient time to explore other options, we formally request that CCMS extend the proposed date of closure (31st August 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter) to at least 31st August 2022.”

The Chair of the BoG for St Eugene’s PS Tircur advised by email, 21 February 2020.

“I have been in touch with [REDACTED] (Chairperson) of Dunmullan BoG this evening and she has confirmed that we will only explore the jointly managed schools option and not the integrated option.”

The request to extend the proposed closure date was presented to CCMS’s EPC on 9 March 2020. EPC approved progression of the development proposal to the affected schools stage. EPC agreed that if, at any stage, the school presented an alternative proposal or option which met area planning requirements, this would be reviewed. As any such option would be independent of the CCMS proposal, the school community has time to develop a jointly managed or integrated education proposal in parallel, prior to a decision being made by the Minister for Education.

There remains no evidence of a feasible option for transformation to integrated education to address the sustainability challenges of the school. In 2020/21 there were 127 unfilled places in Omagh Integrated Primary School, 6.5 miles from St Eugene’s PS.

4.3.2.3 Summary of shared cross-sectoral options

CCMS’s proposal does not pose a risk to the progress of any potential joint or integrated option. CCMS encouraged the Board of Governors to initiate discussions and investigations on potential alternative options in advance of the consultation. CCMS has also provided any information available in support of any investigation into other education models. CCMS will assist DE in supporting the provision of integrated education, in line with the statutory duty. CCMS will continue to liaise with EA, DE, the school and NICIE, as required.

The proposal to discontinue St Eugene’s PS from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter, will not interfere with the rights of stakeholders to proceed with establishing a proposal in regard to

³² Options for Sharing and Integrating: A Short Guide.

³³ Finding the best way forward: A Community Conversation about local primary school provision in the Dunmullan / Tircur area. p1.

³⁴ Finding the best way forward: A Community Conversation about local primary school provision in the Dunmullan / Tircur area. p8.

joint or integrated education. A jointly-managed school option has been ruled out by the trustees of the school. There is no evidence of the potential integrated option being explored further than the initial considerations. There remains no evidence that either option could have progressed a sustainable school. Table 6 demonstrates that if the demand for integrated school places increases, there is sufficient capacity in the area.

4.3.3 Amalgamation

Amalgamation is the process whereby two or more schools, from the same sector (generally of a similar size), come together to create a sustainable school. An amalgamation must be capable of delivering a school of at least 105 pupils, which will retain this number into the future. An amalgamation is a complex process with both schools closing and a new management structure being created. It is not evident which schools in proximity to St Eugene's could come together to create an amalgamation.

4.3.4 Federation

A federation, in the Northern Ireland context provides for a single governing body with common goals and while each school would receive individual budgets, these can be used to pool budgets across participating schools.³⁵ Each individual school must demonstrate sustainability. In considering a federation, it is not evident how a federated school within this local area would provide for a sustainable provision or improve the financial position of the school.

4.3.5 Discontinuation of St Eugene's PS

In considering the future of St Eugene's PS, there is no evidence that any other option considered could provide sustainable provision for the area. CCMS recognises the commitment of the governors and staff but the current challenging circumstances do not provide for a sustainable school. It is recognised that despite the school's best efforts, it continues to face sustainability challenges.

CCMS believes that the proposal to discontinue provision at St Eugene's PS would not impact significantly on other schools. Given the capacity in the area, any displacement of pupils can be managed within existing provision, based on current parental preference. Following consideration of the options available, CCMS proposes that St Eugene's PS discontinues with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

4.3.6 Conclusion

Pre-publication consultation commenced at St Eugene's PS with the issue of a consultation booklet, 18 October 2019. A presentation was made to stakeholders 2 December 2019. The purpose of the pre-publication consultation was to inform stakeholders of the challenges faced by the school and to facilitate a meaningful discussion on CCMS' recommended proposal. It provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to present their views and contribute evidence to be considered as part of the process, including providing any alternative sustainable options. Following feedback from stakeholders, CCMS made some amendments to the pre-publication consultation document and re-issued it 19 December 2019.

Having given due consideration to feedback received, CCMS's EPC approved the progression of a development proposal for the closure of St Eugene's PS with effect from 31 August 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter. EPC agreed CCMS would continue to support, as appropriate, St Eugene's PS in its aspiration to develop a joint sustainable model in the area with Dunmullan PS. Should such a model be brought forward, it will still require the closure of the current school.

After the EPC decision, area planning activities were placed on hold until November 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. This meant that consultation with affected schools was deferred until May 2021.

³⁵ The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, Schedule 2, Article 11.

Due consideration was given to the timescales involved in progressing through consultation with affected schools given the subsequent public objection period and the time for the Minister of Education to reach a decision on the matter. It was noted that due to the delay caused by the suspension of area planning processes, and the challenges being managed by schools at this time due to the pandemic, the public objection period would complete towards the end of the academic year 20/21 or beginning of academic year 21/22. As a result the proposed closure of St Eugene's PS is amended from 31 August 2021 to 31 August 2022.

On 6 May 2021 a re-fresh update of the pre-publication consultation was undertaken. This provided stakeholders with an opportunity to submit any additional information which had not been raised in the initial pre-publication consultation. It also allowed an opportunity for parents/guardians, and other stakeholders, who had not taken part in the original consultation, to make comment on the proposal, this included any families who did not have children in the school during the pre-publication consultation from November 2019 to January 2020.

The Board of Governors presented feedback to CCMS in relation to the Case for Change document, which had been issued to the stakeholders. As a result of this feedback, CCMS amended aspects of the document and re-issued to the BoG on 30 July 2021. In light of the summer holiday period the consultation period was extended to 29 September 2021.

The summary of responses received during consultation meetings and through the consultation and refresh periods are recorded in Appendix G. CCMS' Education Provision Committee 28 October 2021 considered all the responses received, and reviewed the information submitted by stakeholders during the refresh period. The Committee approved the progression of the proposal to public objection period, with the proposed closure date as 31 August 2022.

4.4 What is the potential impact on other schools, what account has been taken of this?

It is anticipated there will not be significant impacts on other schools in the area either maintained, controlled, integrated or Irish medium given the low enrolment numbers in the school. If a development proposal is approved there are sufficient places available in other schools in the Omagh area to facilitate pupils from St Eugene's PS. A CCMS Education Adviser would liaise with St Eugene's PS and schools to which the pupils would transfer and assist the pastoral aspect of the move. The receiving schools would facilitate parental visits, to ensure parents have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with alternative provision. There would be meetings with Special Educational Needs (SEN) co-ordinators, where appropriate, to facilitate SEN pupil transfers. Administration of admissions documentation would be required, including common transfer files.

St Eugene's PS is in a shared education partnership with its neighbouring controlled school, Dunmullan PS and pupils engage in shared curricular/extra-curricular activities. A proposal for the discontinuance of Dunmullan Primary School, with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter, has been published by the EA. Should the proposal for closure of either or both schools be approved, it will impact upon the current shared education partnership. CCMS would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and EA officers would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area.

There are schools within the area, within the Catholic Maintained sector, that are currently engaged in shared education partnerships, so there is scope to support alternative arrangements and for the children to engage in shared partnerships in their receiving school should this proposal progress.

5.0 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

5.1 Explain the objectives of the proposal and the desired outcomes if approved – for example to reduce number of available places or to increase enrolment to meet demand. Detail how this aligns to Departmental policies and consideration given to Statutory Duties.

The *Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 (Area Plan)* addresses the objectives of the SSP and in particular it “aims to ensure all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education.”³⁶ This proposal addresses the sustainability issues at St Eugene’s PS, as determined by the Departmental SSP policy. The key sustainability criteria are addressed in Section 3 (p 9-15). The following conclusions can be drawn from the assessments made.

Quality educational experience

St Eugene’s PS operates four year groups in a single composite class and a further three year groups in the second classroom.

Stable enrolment trends

St Eugene’s PS has experienced a low enrolment in the previous years (Table 2). Over the last 7 years the highest enrolment was 37 pupils. The current enrolment is 31 pupils, which is below the SSP threshold of 105 for a rural school. If all pupils, for whom the school is the nearest suitable school, attended St Eugene’s PS, there is no evidence that the school would reach 105 pupils.

Sound financial position

St Eugene’s PS’s Three Year Plan (Table 5) is projecting a deficit of 100.3%/ -£93,914 by the end of the financial year 2023-2024.

Strong leadership and management by Boards of Governors and Principal

The ETI Report of 2015 noted the following about the school’s leadership and management.

“The senior leadership team, including the governors, has high expectations for the children and has a sound knowledge of, and a clearly articulated vision for, the school. In the short period that the acting principal has been in post, she has led effectively the review of key policies and practices, such as the child protection arrangements and the promotion of positive behaviour policy, which has led to significant improvements in the provision for the children. The monitoring and evaluation of the provision by staff at all levels is effective and collegial.”³⁷

Accessibility

St Eugene’s PS is accessible for those who send their children there. An analysis of the home locations of the 2017/18 (Figure 1) pupil cohort indicates that a majority of the school’s pupils lived within a three mile radius of the school. As Table 6 indicates there are also a number of alternative primary schools accessible to pupils currently attending St Eugene’s PS. An analysis of the home locations of the 2017/18 pupil cohort indicates a proportion of pupils, for whom St Eugene’s PS is their nearest school, attend alternative schools.³⁸

³⁶ The Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 p6.

³⁷ Report of an Inspection in May 2015 p4.

³⁸ EA Profiler 2017-18.

Strong links with the community

The school gives high priority to maintaining a wide range of productive links with the parents and the local community.³⁹ The children's learning experiences have been enhanced through a cross-community partnership and collaborative links with a number of local community organisations.

Summary

The proposal to discontinue St Eugene's PS recognises continuing with the status quo will perpetuate the challenges recently experienced by the school. It is evident that as a Catholic-maintained primary school it will continue to have challenges meeting the following sustainability criteria: quality of the educational experience (due to low enrolments); sound financial position and the minimum threshold for a rural school (105 pupils).

5.2 Equality Duty

Equality screening of this proposal has been carried out. *Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities* advises:

"The first duty is the Equality of Opportunity duty, which requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without."⁴⁰

The evidence received to date suggests that there are no major impacts on the protected groups within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The final screening document will be available when the proposal reaches the public objection period stage. It will be available on request from CCMS.

5.3 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 12 (1) of the UNCRC:

"Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her views the right to express those views freely on all matters affecting the child, the views of the child given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."⁴¹

CCMS's practice in regard to consultation with primary school pupils is to request the professional staff in the school to conduct the consultations. This is because they have both the appropriate mechanisms and relationships for consulting young children on subjects that are sensitive. CCMS explained to St Eugene's PS its practice in regard to consultation with pupils.

5.4 Rural Needs Act 2016

Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 ('the Act') requires public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or reviewing a policy, strategy or plan and when designing or delivering a public service.⁴²

The areas from which St Eugene's PS attract pupils are defined as rural, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group *A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised) April 2018*.⁴³ Therefore CCMS must take "due regard" to the Act.

³⁹ Further information provided in Appendix E.

⁴⁰ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities p7.

⁴¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child p5.

⁴² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/rural-needs-act-ni-2016-questions-and-answers>.

⁴³ Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group (A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised) April 2018 p16.

A number of options were suggested as potential sustainable solutions for the school. These included: joint-management, integration, federation, amalgamation and maintaining the status quo. There is no evidence any of these options could provide sustainable education provision. The options were presented as part of the engagement and consultation with staff, the Board of Governors and parents/guardians of St Eugene's PS. This ensured information was received from the affected stakeholders on all matters, including rural needs.

Stakeholders highlighted that the proposal to discontinue St Eugene's PS has the potential to impact local business in the area.

In determining whether to proceed with this proposal, due consideration was given to the balance between the challenge the school faces meeting the enrolment, educational and financial requirements of the SSP and removing provision. There is no evidence the enrolment, educational (in relation to composite classes) and financial aspects of the school can be satisfactorily addressed, should St Eugene's PS remain as a Catholic-maintained primary school.

At present, those who live within two miles of St Eugene's PS are not eligible for transport assistance to an alternative Catholic-maintained school. This has the potential to restrict their ability to attend a school with less sustainability challenges. Alternative suitable provision is located as near as 4.7 miles from St Eugene's PS. If the proposal proceeds, there is transport assistance available for pupils that do not live within two miles of their nearest suitable school. This mitigates the impact of the closure of the school.

The intention of this proposal is to advance the aspirations, aims and objectives of the SSP: "It is important that children in rural communities have access to a quality education in cost effective provision."⁴⁴

Feedback from the consultation notes St Eugene's PS is a social hub for the local community. If the proposal was accepted, the school building and its premises will revert back to the trustees who will be able to decide whether the building would remain accessible to the local community. CCMS would support the trustees as appropriate. The potential for St Eugene's PS to progress with a joint or integrated option would require a separate development proposal.

⁴⁴Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools (DENI 2009) p27.

6. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

6.1 What are the educational benefits of this proposal?

In a sustainable school pupils benefit educationally because they are more likely to be:

- taught in single year group classes;
- able to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities; and
- able to benefit from a wider range of specialist teachers.

6.2 Provision of high quality education should be the desired outcome of all proposals - outline how this proposal aims to achieve this outcome.

If St Eugene's PS was to cease provision, the pupils would be afforded the opportunity to enrol in sustainable schools which can ensure the following benefits.

- Greater opportunities for pupils to be taught in their own age groups.
- Increased number of classes of no more than two year groups.
- Additional potential for appropriate levels of differentiation in teaching and learning.
- Increased opportunities for peer group interaction.
- Improved chances for participation in extra-curricular activities.
- Additional opportunities for specialist teaching and professional development of staff.

A sustainable school can allow for efficient use of educational resources including the deployment of teaching and support staff. It can also provide increased opportunities for the professional development of all staff as a larger staffing complement allows for increased interaction with peers, and can facilitate more opportunities for training/development.

6.3 Outline how the proposal will benefit children and young people in the school(s) and in the area overall.

This proposal would benefit pupils as it will add to the longer-term viability of school provision. The SSP's primary objective is to ensure that all children get a first class education in fit for purpose facilities, regardless of background or where they live.⁴⁵ This proposal would progress the development of a network of strong viable schools to meet the educational needs of pupils.

6.4 Provide details of how the specific requirements of pupils with SEN will be catered for under the new arrangements.

If this proposal is approved, CCMS, in liaison with the EA and the schools involved, would ensure the following steps are taken.

- Continued support for SEN pupils following the closure.
- Assistance for pupils, as required, in managing the transition to a new setting.
- Continued appropriate placement for pupils with a statement of special educational needs, and assistance for these pupils in managing the transition to a new setting.
- Early and confidential transfer of statements and Personal Education Plans (PEP) to the new school.
- Consideration, as necessary, of the facilities and equipment required to support pupils with SEN.
- Consideration, as necessary, of Learning Support Centre provision where appropriate.
- Consideration, as necessary, of transport arrangements.

Current policy means where a pupil lives beyond two miles of their nearest "suitable" school, they are entitled to transport assistance to any suitable school. Special transport needs may arise if a pupil has a level of impaired mobility, which necessitates the use of a wheelchair, or a pupil has a medical condition/severe learning difficulty. The EA determines what special transport arrangements must be

⁴⁵ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/sustainable-schools>.

made. When pupils have special transport needs, officers of the EA, drawing upon medical and other advice as required, will assess the pupil's transport needs and make appropriate arrangements.

7. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED)

Note: The timeline should be considered in advance of DP publication, this will impact on when the DP should be published to allow sufficient time from decision to implementation.

7.1 Outline all actions required to deliver the proposal if approved. Does the implementation date reflect this, is it deliverable? If phasing is being proposed explain why it is necessary?

The implementation date of 31 August 2022 has been chosen and ensures appropriate time for implementation following approval, including the actions outlined below. No phasing is being proposed.

If a development proposal is approved, the following steps would be taken.

- CCMS adviser/s would liaise with St Eugene's PS and schools where the pupils would transfer to, assisting (when requested) with the pastoral aspect of the move.
- Parents would have the opportunity to visit alternative schools.
- Meetings with SEN co-ordinators would be organised to facilitate the efficient and effective transfer of SEN pupils.
- Administration of admissions documentation would be organised.
- There would be sufficient time for the school to liaise with the EA regarding the transfer of their assets to other schools and secure storage of documents which need to be held.

7.2 Depending on type of proposal, this could include arrangements for pupils transferring to other school(s), maintaining continuity for examination classes, applications for additional accommodation and timeframe for delivery which takes account of time needed to secure all the necessary approvals to allow accommodation to be provided.

Pupils transferring to post-primary will adhere to the same policies and procedures for transferring to a post-primary school, as per current policies and guidelines.

7.3 Details of any arrangements for Shared Education Partnerships and how they would be impacted should be included in this section.

St Eugene's PS is linked with Dunmullan PS through a shared education initiative. The proposed closure of both St Eugene's PS and Dunmullan PS would result in the end of this particular partnership. There are a number of alternative shared education partnerships across the Omagh area that pupils can engage in in alternative schools.

7.4 Will there be composite classes or will they be removed, will the school operate a double entry?

This proposal means the pupils would have a greater opportunity to attend schools which do not have more than two year groups in one class.

7.5 How will the School/EA ensure that the education of the children is protected during/after the proposed change?

Measures will be put in place to protect the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils during the transfer to another school. Once the receiving schools know the particular nature of the pupils' needs, they can be proactive and prepare to offer the required support for the pupils.

The staff in the receiving schools would have expertise in catering for pupils with special educational needs and they would ensure that there is no diminution in the level of care currently in place. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) would set out the nature of support pupils require. PEPs will transfer across to the new school with the pupils and would remain in place.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Detail finance/resource implications (both capital and recurrent) of the proposal and approximate costs where available.

8.1 Is the proposal cost effective?

Finance – Budget position, impact on budget, cost of proposal.

This proposal is cost effective and will strengthen provision in the area as the other nearby schools would benefit from the additional pupils. If approved, there would be savings made upon closure of St Eugene's PS. Savings would accrue from the following main sources: reduction of building maintenance costs; removal of small school support funding; and removal of principal release funding.

8.2 Staffing – Additional teaching staff required, cost/redeployment, redundancy cost

The school's staff cohort is commensurate with the current and anticipated enrolment. Any redeployment/redundancy costs will be in line with current guidelines. It is not possible to predict the number of redundancies or redeployments in advance of a decision in regard to the development proposal. Therefore, it is not possible to cost these accurately at this time. In the event of a closure of the school, employment/deployment opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff would be sought in alternative schools,

8.3 Transport – any additional cost

If St Eugene's PS closes, there would be increased transport costs associated with its pupils who live less than two miles from the school, as they would become entitled to transport assistance. There may also be an additional costs associated with pupils from other schools who live within two miles from St Eugene's PS. Currently they are not entitled to transport assistance due to their proximity to St Eugene's PS. However should St Eugene's PS close, these pupils would become entitled to transport assistance.

8.4 Accommodation – brief description of current accommodation / site, any capital proposals or minor works applications. Immediate day one minimum capital requirements should the DP be approved, site suitability to support changes, estimated cost and timescales for delivery of changes. Note: Approval of a DP does not automatically attract additional funding or accommodation and that these issues will be dealt with separately by the DE.

It is not anticipated that there will be any accommodation costs associated with the closure of St Eugene's PS.

8.5 Other issues requiring resources

N/A

APPENDIX A – Schedule of Accommodation

St Eugene's Primary School: 203-2688

School opened: 1950

Accommodation Breakdown:

Permanent Classrooms: 2 @ 36sqm

Other Accommodation:

1 @ 2sqm – Staff tea room

1 @ 4sqm – Caretaker's room

Toilets:

1@ 4sqm – Staff

1@ 5sqm – Girls

1@ 5sqm – Boys

Staff – 1WC

Girls – 2WCs

Boys – 2WCs

Grounds:

1@ 8960sqm - Usable grass play areas

1@ 760sqm - Hard surface play areas

Alterations/Improvements:

1999 - 6B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a new heating system and fencing around the gas tank £8,500

2002 - 8B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of alterations to school dining facilities, storage and staff toilet refurbishment £25,609

2004 - 10B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of special needs adaptations (provision of ramp) – an estimated £1,400

2004 - 13B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of a temporary classroom and toilets £54,816

2005 - 11B - Approval to expenditure for the provision of car parking facilities – an estimated £47,000 – Ongoing

2006 - 12B - Redesign / extension of the toilet area £56,151

APPENDIX B – Minor Works Report

Minor Work Details - Standard School Report

RefNo	203-2688	DIOCESE	Derry	Enrolment	27	
School	St Eugene's Primary School	PARISH	Killyclogher	FORMULA/APPROVED	48	48
ELB	EA WR	EDUCATION ADVISER	Mrs Bronagh Maguire	SCHOOL TEL:	028 8164 8407	
Principal	Mrs Margaret Donaghy	TRUSTEE	Rev K McElhannon Admin			
Scheme	Year	Description	Status	Budget	To DE:	
16B	15-16	Removal and Instalment of Outdoor Play Equipment	Embargoed - No Money	£0.00	07/10/2016	
			Annual Expenditure:	£0.00		
2013-01	12-13	Extend Telephone System	Initial Stage - Submission of Application	£0.00	25/02/2014	
15B	12-13	Controlled Access	Pending Approval - Approved in Principle	£12,800.00	25/02/2014	
			Annual Expenditure:	£12,800.00		
12B	05-06	Redesign Extension Of Toilet Area	Completed - Final Accounts	£56,151.45	14/08/2006	
			Annual Expenditure:	£56,151.45		
13B	04-05	Provision of Temporary Classroom and Toilets	Completed - Practical Completion	£54,816.00		
			Annual Expenditure:	£54,816.00		
08B	01-02	Conversion of existing resource store to staffroom and extension to provide storage/conversion of kitchen area to provide storage/upgrading of pupil toilets/provision of mobile for school meals, PE facility and group room.	Tender Approved - Construction Stage	£28,059.00	26/03/2001	
			Annual Expenditure:	£28,059.00		
Total Minor Works Expenditure:				£151,826.45		

APPENDIX C – Annual Area Profile 2020

Primary School Annual Area Profile 2020

DE Ref No	School Name	Status	Council Area
2032688	St Eugene's Primary School, Lislap	Catholic Maintained	FERMANAGH AND OMAGH

Annual Census Information			
Year	Total pupils Y1-Y7	IMU	FSME % ¹
2016/17	31	0	22.6%
2017/18	28	0	17.9%
2018/19	27	0	18.5%
2019/20	37	0	16.2%
Approved Reception-Year 7 enrolment number			48
Approved Reception-Year 7 admissions number			7
Year 1 Pupils 2019/20			10
First Preferences Applications 2019/20			10


Formal Intervention	
In formal intervention any period 1 April 2019-31 March 2020	

Budgets			
Year	Available Delegated Resources £	Surplus/Deficit £	Surplus/Deficit %
2016/17	93,170	-63,853	-68.53%
2017/18	89,993	-62,512	-69.46%
2018/19	93,386	-62,082	-66.48%

KEY TO SYMBOLS & TEXT USED IN DATA ABOVE	
Symbol/Text	Definition
*	Relates to fewer than 5 cases
**	Includes IMU
#	Means that a figure greater than or equal to 5 had been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere
-	School not open in the relevant academic year
na	Not applicable
1	Includes pupils in year 1-year 7 classes only

APPENDIX D – Approved Financial Plan 2021-2024

Provided by St Eugene's PS September 2021

SCHOOL FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2024						
		School: St Eugene's Primary, Tyrceur		Cost Centre: 21171		
		EA Locality: South West				
Only complete cells in yellow						
A Pupils and Teachers		YEAR 1 (2021-2022)	YEAR 2 (2022-2023)	YEAR 3 (2023-2024)		
		October 2021	October 2022	October 2023		
1	Full Time Equivalent Enrolment (excluding Spec Unit pupils)	31	30	27		
2	Planned Teaching Complement (after amendment to Variables as below)	2.20	2.20	2.20		
3	Planned Pupil/Teacher Ratio (September)	14.09	13.64	12.27		
B Changes in Teaching Staff		YEAR 1 Change in Staff	Year 2 Change in Staff	Year 3 Change in Staff		
4	Increase in Teachers					
5	Decrease in Teachers (enter as positive figure)					
C Planned Expenditure		YEAR 1 (2021-2022)	YEAR 2* (2022-2023)	YEAR 3* (2023-2024)		
Expenditure Summary		£ %	£ %	£ %		
Staff Costs						
6	- Teaching	141,487 77.1%	142,590 77.0%	144,346 77.0%		
7	- Non Teaching	28,560 15.6%	28,847 15.6%	29,132 15.5%		
8	- Other Costs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
9	Premises, Fixed Plant and Grounds	5,284 2.9%	5,390 2.9%	5,498 2.9%		
10	Operating Costs	13,078 7.1%	13,340 7.2%	13,606 7.3%		
11	Non Capital Purchases	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
12	Capital Expenditure	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
13	Less Income (enter as negative figure)	-5,000 -	-5,000 -	-5,000 -		
14	Total Planned Expenditure	183,409	185,166	187,582		
Estimated Savings (enter as a negative figure)						
Reduction in Teaching Staff (as per Variables)						
16	Please specify					
17	Please specify					
Estimated Additional Expenditure (enter as a positive figure)						
Increase in Teaching Staff (as per Variables)						
19	Please specify					
20	Please specify					
21	Total Planned Expenditure after Savings and Additional Expenditure	183,409	185,166	187,582		
* Planning assumptions include Cost of Living Pay Award Estimate at 1% each year and estimated rate of inflation for Other Costs as 2% each year						
D Budget						
22	Common Formula Funding (CFF)	171,593	168,946	166,300		
23	Other funding - (Please specify)					
24	Other funding - (Please specify)					
25	Other funding - (Please specify)					
26	Total Budget	171,593	168,946	166,300		
E In Year Movement						
27	In Year Underspend / (Overspend)	-11,816	-16,220	-21,283		
Cumulative Surplus / Deficit						
28	Carry-over from previous year	-44,595	-56,411	-72,631		
29	In Year Underspend / (Overspend) of delegated resources	-11,816	-16,220	-21,283		
30	Closing Cumulative Surplus/(Deficit) 31 March	-56,411	-72,631	-93,914		
31	% Carry Over	-44.4%	-64.5%	-100.3%		

APPENDIX E – Additional Information Provided by St Eugene's PS

Provision

From 2-3pm daily the Foundation Stage/ Key Stage 1 teacher delivers focused Literacy and Numeracy lessons to nine Year 3 and 4 pupils facilitating small group and individual work.

SEN support – the school provides in class support for SEN pupils. This work is supported by early identification of need and referral to outside agencies.

Transition – the principal facilitates a transition programme from pre-school settings to Year 1 and transition events to post-primary schools.

The school funds Gaelic football lessons for Y1-7 pupils from a specialist instructor.

Mandarin lessons are provided from Y1-7 facilitated by South West Confucius Hub, The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provide transport funding to support this work.

Pupils in Y1-7 participate in tin whistle and singing tuition weekly. This work was recognised in the 2018 West Tyrone Feis 'Best Small School Choir' award.

Key Stage 2 children benefit from swimming lessons which generally run from January to June. Children from P5 to P7 benefit from these lessons each year. Transport has been shared with Dunmullan PS to these lessons.

After school extra-curricular daily activities include Film Club, Hip Hop, Netball and Art clubs. A breakfast club is facilitated daily.

Shared Education

St. Eugene's PS is in a Shared Education partnership with Dunmullan P.S. The shared focus in 2019-2020 is The World Around Us and Problem Solving in Numeracy. The school participates in six shared lessons per term. Collaboration for teaching staff includes planning and assessment time, shared expertise and access to Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) training programmes.

In addition the school is involved in a Shared Education cluster whereby additional funding and expertise can be accessed. Currently St. Eugene's avails of additional expertise and funding from the shared education cluster, within the current cluster focus of developing a 'Dyslexia Friendly School'.

Expertise and funding includes:

- Identifying and assessing pupil need
- Delivering training to teachers and teaching assistants
- Sharing resources
- Delivering Special Educational and Disability Needs (SEND) training

Staff training on IZAK 9 numeracy strategies is also accessed through the shared education cluster.

The shared partnership also facilitates pupil engagement events e.g. Educational and seasonal trips with St. Eugene's and Dunmullan PS.

Links to the Community

The school facilities and supports weekly cross community meetings of the 'Knockmoyle Nippers' Mother and Toddler Group within the school canteen.

The annual Christmas show is held in Knockmoyle Parish Hall and is open to the parish community.

The school operates a school website on which can be found important school information on staffing, curriculum, policy, events etc. The school has a very active Facebook page which is very popular with parents and the wider community and offers a flavour of life at St Eugene's PS, highlighting fun and educational events.

Through parental involvement, the school has recently acquired funding for a defibrillator and heated storage unit. This is now installed at the school and can be accessed by anyone in the community who needs it by entering a pin code into a key pad outside the gates.

St. Eugene's P.S. promotes the use of the school premises by outside agencies including:

- Adult Irish language classes
- Cross Community weekly Pilates Class
- Cross Community Yoga class
- Cross Community weekly Mother and Toddler group (Knockmoyle Nippers)
- Defibrillator training (cross community)
- Neighbourhood watch meetings (cross community)

The school participates in annual fundraising activities e.g. Trocaire, Marie Curie Cancer Care

Strong links with Cappagh GAA club.

The school holds an annual 'Catholic Schools' Week' event on Grandparents Day where the whole community is invited to attend.

An annual fun walk is held in Gortin Glens with the community of St. Eugene's and Dunmullan Primary Schools.

Annual participation in the Credit union Quiz.

Annual participation in Cappagh parish Gaelic blitzes as well as other Gaelic tournaments e.g. Beragh cup, St Enda's blitz, Donnelly Cup.

Annual participation in West Tyrone Feis (Children take part in art, singing and poetry competitions).

The school has very close connections with Cappagh Parish including the P4 Do This In Memory programme for First Holy Communion and the Confirmation programme.

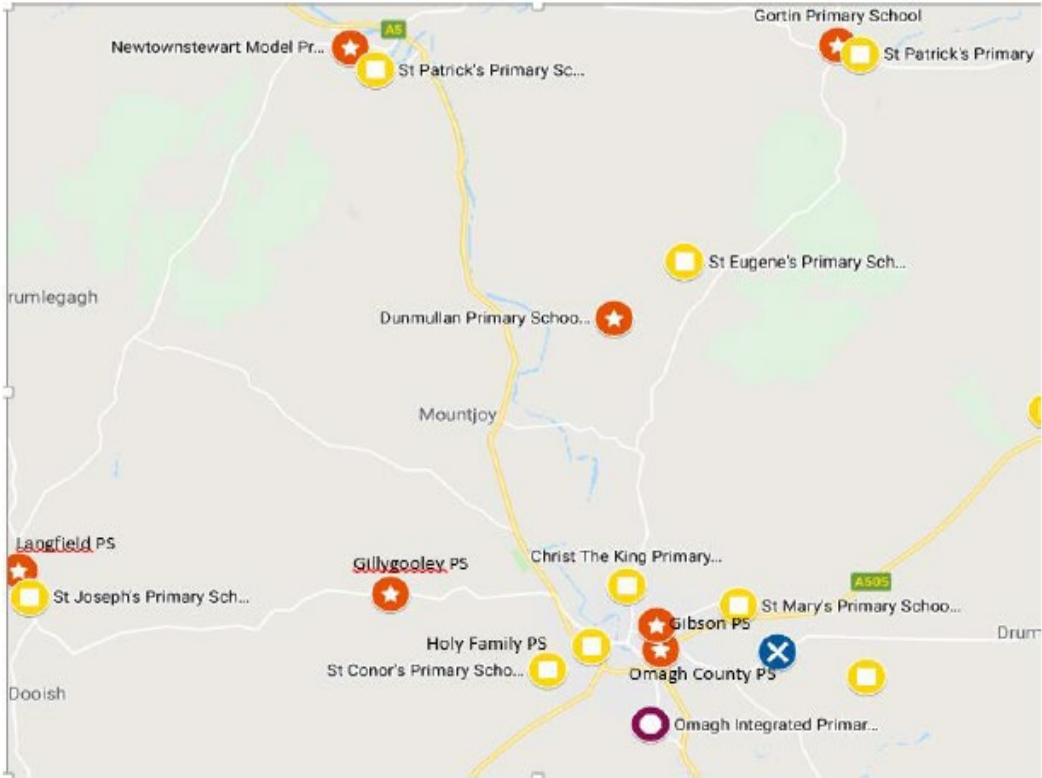
The school invites the local community to school events e.g. Start of Year Mass, End of Year Mass and Prize giving, St. Brigid's Day, Grandparents day, Easter raffle/cake sale etc

The school successfully achieved 'Awards for All' Lottery funding to develop the school grounds. In order to achieve this funding the school demonstrated positive collaboration with the local community.

The school has a very active PTA which supports the work of the school through fundraising activities, examples include community raffles, bazaars and cross community events e.g. 5k/ 10K race and sponsored walks. The PTA have in the last year funded play equipment, painting of the school mobile classroom, staffroom and office, the purchase of ipads and a special mat for the Foundation Stage children.

APPENDIX F – Location of Neighbouring Schools

Nearest schools:



APPENDIX G – Consultation Summary



SCHOOL NAME: St Eugene's Primary School

SCHOOL REF: 203-2688

PROPOSAL

**The discontinuance of St Eugene's Primary School with
effect from**

31 August 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Summary of the responses to the original pre-publication consultation (November 2019) in regard to the proposal to discontinue St Eugene's Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter. The summary of responses during the refresh opportunity commences at p51.

This summary contains a resume of the key issues raised at the stakeholder consultation meetings and through written comments subsequently received. The following table notes the key issues, who raised the issues and how they were addressed. Any issue requiring further action from the written responses or the meeting is noted.

Three consultation meetings were held as below.

The staff consultation was held on 2 December 2019, 7 staff were in attendance.

The governors' consultation was held on 2 December 2019, 7 governors were in attendance.

The parents' consultation was held on 2 December 2019, 24 parents and the Principal were in attendance.

The atmosphere at the consultation meetings was generally respectful, professional and well-ordered. Cormac Quinn (CQ) (APA CCMS) and Shirley McKenna (SMcK) (SEA CCMS) delivered the presentations. Before each presentation, the presenters highlighted the SSP requirements and the area planning imperatives.

The key issues identified at the stakeholder consultation meetings and in the stakeholder written consultation include:

- There were no responses, verbal or written, in favour of the proposal to close St Eugene's PS.
- There are pupils which have already moved from Gortnagam PS that would require another move.
- The change to bigger schools would present many challenges for the present pupils.
- Many respondents have commented on the high standard of leadership and management provided by the principal and board of governors.
- Many respondents focused on the school being an important social hub for the village and rural community.
- Many respondents said that children flourished in a composite class.
- The specific circumstances pertaining to small rural communities are being ignored by the SSP.
- Closure of the school will remove its shared education arrangements.
- The impact of closure on the well-being of the pupils.
- The present review of sustainability is stymieing enrolment.
- The school should be afforded more time to increase enrolments.
- The financial position of the school is an improving picture with a narrowing of the budget being predicted as a result of a recent increase in enrolment.
- St Eugene's is at a disadvantage since other schools with sustainability issues are not facing consultation and closure

A consultation period to allow parents and others to respond to the CCMS recommendation ran from 18 November 2019 to 16 December 2019. A stakeholder consultation evening took place on 2 December 2019. Upon request from consultees, the proposed closure date was extended to 20 January 2020.

Key points raised in the consultation meetings.

Discussion Points	Staff	Governors	Parents	Other	Response/Action to be taken
Asked if the proposed closure could happen before 31 st August 2021.	✓				CQ – it would not happen before that date. It is important to reiterate that CCMS has not yet made any decision on the future of the school.
When children from Gortnagarn PS moved to St Eugene's PS after its closure they were told that they could finish their primary education at St Eugene's.	✓				CQ – a letter was issued to parents at the time of the school closure to advise that St Eugene's PS would be kept under review and would only be sustainable if the enrolment increased. The year after the closure of Gortnagarn PS there were only 4 P1 pupil applications to St Eugene's PS.
The Bain Report is quoted during a consultation on the future of a school but the figure of an enrolment of 105 pupils is ridiculous for a rural school to achieve.				✓	CQ – other criteria, such as the number of more than 2 year groups in one composite class, among others, are also used to assess a school.
The rural community is being affected by these frameworks and whilst it is appreciated that CCMS is constrained by these government policies something needs to be done about this at a higher level.				✓	CQ – the comment has been noted. This is not an easy process.
What is the argument about the composite classes as all the children are doing really well?				✓	SMcK – the challenge regarding composite classes is for teachers and the amount of planning that they have to do. Teachers face huge challenges to manage this level of planning and associated workload. Any proposal would only be taken forward if it was for the benefit of pupils.
Children attending the school who had previously attended Gortnagarn PS will now have a possible 3 rd move within their primary education time.	✓				CQ – recommend that this concern is fed back in the consultation feedback.
Principal spoke briefly about working at the school for 25 years as both a teacher and a principal. She outlined the length of service of the other members of staff and 2 staff members have been employed at the school for almost the same length of time. She stated that it was an extremely hard day for all the staff particularly given the positive feedback received from the Inspectorate.	✓				

The Chairperson read a statement outlining the history of the process to date and the impact that this has had on the school despite the positive work that the school is doing (see attached for copy of statement).		✓			Following the Chairperson's statement CQ stated that CCMS met with the BoG in Feb with further meetings taking place later in the year. He stated that CCMS had done everything in their power to bring forward the process in agreement with the BoG and Trustees.
Gov – query regarding composite classes. The quote from the Chief Inspector's report is nothing further from the truth. The small school environment is a positive one for the children. Request that this statement is removed from the presentation.		✓			
Gov - The sustainable school figure of 105 is ludicrous for a rural area.		✓			
Gov – there has been no increase in LMS funding. The 2016 and 2019 ENIC changes have impacted hugely on school budgets. There is a need for increased funding to help alleviate this situation.		✓			
Funding is not allocated fairly and this is a systemic problem across educational funding.		✓			
Gov – there is no lack of ability for pupils to participate in team sports. A number of sports club operate locally and the pupils participate in them. Through this activity pupils have the opportunity to mix with peers via sports.		✓			
The experience of pupils in larger schools is not always a more positive experience.		✓			
Gov – EA staff stated at a recent area planning training session that the SSP is out of date and can't be updated as there is currently no Minister to sign off on any changes. How can CCMS still be able to apply an out of date policy if there is no Minister in place?		✓			
Gov – having the consultation take place before January has an impact on the school as parents will be making their P1 choices in January and if they are aware that the school is under threat of closure then they will not choose it.		✓			
Gov – need a statement from CCMS to say that the school will be protected for 5-7 years to give a chance of growing their numbers.		✓			
Gov – request for a map detailing where the local children live		✓			CQ – indicated CCMS would seek information from EA and would provide the information, if possible.

Gov – query re travel time. What software was used to determine travel time to the alternative schools?		✓			CQ – stated that it was difficult to calculate this until parental preference was known. EA would review transport provision once school choice had been determined.
Gov – asked if the decision regarding transport was only taken after the school had been closed.		✓			CQ – confirmed that the specifics around transport assistance would be finally determined once it was clear what schools the pupils would be attending.
Gov – stated that the travel time information to alternative schools needed to be provided before a decision was made. Gov – has the cost of transport provision been factored in? Gov – pupils going to the post primaries in Omagh get buses at 07:45 so it would be safe to assume that primary school pupils would also have to get a bus at the same time. This is a serious issue which needs to be addressed.		✓			CQ – it is for the EA to determine the manner of transport assistance that will be provided. CQ advised that he would request information from EA regarding transport implications, in the event of a proposal proceeding and of school closure.
Gov – the closing date for the Dunmullan PS consultation is 11th Feb 2020. Why is the closing date for the St Eugene's consultation 23rd Dec? It is unfair that the 2 schools have different dates.		✓			CQ – CCMS is different to EA process. At the stage of the CCMS process only the stakeholders have access to the documentation. EA's process involves consultation with affected schools and the documentation will be available on the EA website. CQ will discuss the possibility of an extension to the deadline with senior management in CCMS.
Gov – why was Dunmullan PS not included in the list of alternative schools?		✓			CQ – did not think it was appropriate to include it as it is also being consulted on its future. If the process proceeds then it will be included in future documentation.
Mountfield PS, Recarson PS and Ghaelscoil Na gCrann should be added into the list of alternative schools.		✓			CQ – stated that the schools included on the original list of alternative schools were those that were the most appropriate based on where the current pupils live.
Gov – the table detailing the number of unfilled places in local schools needs to have a key added to it.					CQ – confirmed this would be done.
Query asked regarding pupils from Gortnagarn PS who now attend the school. After these pupils joined the school it never had a chance to stabilise and then grow – CCMS came back 6 and 18 months later to talk to them about sustainability.		✓			CQ – when the letter was issued to the school in 2014. Following the closure of Gortnagarn the enrolment of St Eugene's has remained low and there has been no significant increase in enrolment since then.
How has CCMS actually helped the school to develop in the interim period?		✓			CQ – records show that in 2014 CCMS confirmed that Gortnagarn PS would close and that the local community should support St Eugene's. After Gortnagarn PS closed there were only 4 applications for a P1 place in St Eugene's.
Gov – the application numbers are not reflective of the number of children living in the local community.					

The process is clumsy in nature and has an impact on the local community. The process should not have been started until after the deadline for the P1 applications in January.		✓			CQ – acknowledged the feedback and highlighted that any time when there is a proposed consultation, there are challenges. He advised that whatever date is chosen for consultation, it can often be seen as challenging for the school community.
Reference made to the Rural Needs Act – have CCMS any more information available on how the consultation will impact the school and community?		✓			CQ – CCMS have considered if there is suitable alternative provision in the local area and there is.
Gov – the only solution is for children to travel into the urban centre – there is no rural solution offered. Asked to confirm if the process is only to provide access to education or does it also include consideration of the impact on the local community? There has been no information provided that states that the school serves as a community hub for the wider community.		✓			CQ advised that if CCMS decides to proceed to a Development Proposal, this will be explicit in the consultation document.
The options offered seem to be a cut and paste exercise from all other consultation processes and not focused on this specific school.		✓			CQ advised it was not cut and paste and reflected the challenges faced by the school.
EA stated that they could not come into the school to provide support and the Governors want it noted that they are all volunteers who need support as they do not have the right knowledge to be able to develop a range of options for the school.		✓			CQ – CCMS has not had sight of any evidence of any other option being viable and making the school sustainable, and welcomed any potential sustainable proposal being forwarded through this consultation process.
Request made for the criteria used to select the different options.		✓			CQ advised the criteria is the SSP.
A welcome by parent group on behalf of the parents. Provided an overview of the situation and outlined a position which considered there was demand for a school in this area.			✓		
The proposal is based on all the available information to date. It is unlikely that this has changed since the last consultation – even the slides are the same. Do CCMS look at previous feedback responses and take those into account when preparing the new presentation.			✓		CQ – if the presentation looks similar it is because CCMS is governed by similar requirements over time. CCMS has tried to be fair in the document and accurately reflect the strengths of the school. There has been reference made in these documents to the previous consultation and the letter issued after that consultation.
Parent – there are sustainable numbers of children within the local community but the constant threat of closure means that parents are choosing other schools. CCMS being here tonight harms the school and stops them trying to become more sustainable.			✓		CQ – agreed to seek information about the number of children living locally.
What exploring has CCMS done to look at other options?			✓		CQ – there are no schools nearby that St Eugene's could amalgamate with.

					Federation model - there has been no legal guidance produced to show how this model could work, importantly any federation that kept the school buildings as they are would not address the educational challenges highlighted in the SSP. Shared education – no one from the school has indicated that this would ever be considered. CCMS cannot impose a joint faith model on the school. It was brought up at a previous meeting with the BoG but there was no indication given that they would consider it a possible option.
How do you know that there is no support for shared education?			✓		CQ – there has been no evidence produced or request from the BoG to explore further.
Parent – was an amalgamation not previously proposed for Gortnagarn and St Eugene's? There were 3 schools in the area previously that would have been sustainable. St Eugene's did approach Dunmullan PS but they rejected the proposal as at that time they were not under threat of closure			✓		
Parent – no one is stating a preference for one option over another. Everyone wants a local school in the local community. They will consider all the options.			✓		
The chairperson of the BoG refuted the suggestion the BoG did not wish to pursue the alternative options prior to the pre-publication consultation. She advised CCMS met governors, and talked about the options, but CCMS did not actively explore them.			✓		
There is frustration with CCMS as they seem to have put every effort into closing the school rather than helping to keep it open. Where is the evidence that they have been supporting the school?			✓		CQ – there was no indication that the BoG wanted to consider any of the options proposed and in more detail than explored by CCMS. CCMS has met with the BoG on a number of occasions and been in communication with them.
Evidence and data was requested in 2014, relating to the number of people who live in the area, and was never provided.			✓		CQ – gave a commitment to seek this information and forward to BoG. SMcK - any information collated in 2014 would need to be updated to reflect the current situation.
The timing of this process has not gone unnoticed. The P1 applications process takes place in January and this consultation has hampered any potential applications.			✓		CQ – it is not the intention of CCMS Officers to scaremonger potential applicants. CCMS are aware that as long as a school is listed on the Annual Action Plan that it has an impact on the school. It is not the intention to scaremonger. They accept that in the members of the school community think December is not a good time to conduct a consultation but, based on experience, no time is viewed as a better time.

Where was the opportunity for the school to try to grow and improve confidence in the community? CCMS are putting more effort in closing the school than keeping it open.			✓		CQ – CCMS are governed by the Sustainable Schools Policy and St Eugene's has not demonstrated that it is sustainable. CCMS had meetings with the BoG to discuss the process and when it could begin and the BoG were asked to provide any options that they wanted to investigate at that stage.
Parent – if the process proceeds then it will be a flawed process because there are mistakes in the document.			✓		CQ welcomed the fact the minor errors in the document were highlighted, but they do not impact the decision to proceed or affect the substance of the document.
Has a Rural Needs Assessment been drafted? If so, it needs to be shared.			✓		CQ – It has been drafted and it will be published should the proposal proceed to public consultation. All information fed back through this consultation will be considered as part of the ongoing assessment.
SSP is a 10 year old policy and is going to be review. Why is CCMS proceeding with a policy that needs to be reviewed?			✓		CQ – Understand that the SSP may be reviewed. CQ – SSP is the current policy that CCMS must adhere to.
What has CCMS done in relation to outcomes based accountability? How does outcomes based accountability link to the SSP?			✓		CQ – will seek an answer and report back. Post meeting note: The SSP is a Department of Education (DE) policy and any outcomes from this are the responsibility of the DE.
What engagement does CCMS have with District Councils regarding area planning? What specific engagement has taken place with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council?			✓		CQ – in this specific case CCMS did not consult with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. SMcK – CCMS has engaged with a number of councils as part of the community planning process and the details of this will be obtained and reported back. Post meeting note: CCMS is a statutory partner in all community planning partnership and is a regular contributor to the Fermanagh and Omagh Community partnership.
What about the pastoral care of the children before any decision is made? This will be the second time that some of the pupils will be affected by a school closure.			✓		SMcK – need the voice of the parents to feed this information back through the consultation responses. From records it appears that 2 of the children are directly affected by a potential second school closure – parental feedback is critical.
Does CCMS think that the quality of the schooling/education is not good enough? How can CCMS rely on an inspection report if there is strike action involved?			✓		CQ – CCMS uses ETI reports as a measure of the quality of education in a school. SMcK – the full inspection was in 2015 before the strike action began and the shorter inspection took place in 2018. ETI commented that the education provision was good during the full inspection process. An area for improvement noted in the inspection report was around planning. This is a challenge for teachers in a small school where they may be teaching 4 different year groups.
At a recent area planning training event EA said that they will soon start to look at the impact of a school closure on a child – surely this should have already been happening for all school closures.			✓		

Parent – you are going to isolate the rural community if you take the school away. In the Republic of Ireland there is legislation to protect rural schools. Parent – St Eugene's has 77% enrolment. There are schools in the urban area which do not have such a good enrolment. Are these schools considered for closure and evaluated?			✓		
Appeal to CCMS to give the school time to grow.			✓		CCMS cannot impose a model on a school, e.g. a faith based school, as it needs to be owned by the school. CCMS will support the school, as appropriate, to explore the options. CCMS has a statutory duty to support integrated education. CCMS would not obstruct a viable sustainable option.
Parent – the school made a strong argument during the 2014 consultation for support – all the BoG are volunteers who depend on CCMS for support. There has been no evidence seen that CCMS has taken responsibility for providing support to school.			✓		
Parent – CCMS is now asking St Eugene's to approach another school who is only now facing the threat of closure – this is the third time for St Eugene's. EA and CCMS should help local schools to figure out a proposal to save at least one local school. Parent – the enrolment and admissions numbers mean that the school will never be sustainable as it will never meet the figure of 105. The enrolment number is 48. Parent – previously there was the potential for over 100 children to attend a CCMS school. There would be more if the school was integrated. It would be better for the school if it was not a CCMS school as it seems that a CCMS school faces constant attack. Parent – what integration happens between CCMS and EA to discuss area planning? Parent – want a commitment that rural schools won't be looked at in isolation.			✓		
How can a school be closed without a Minister in place? The Permanent Secretary can only make a decision such as this in place of a Minister only if it is in the public interest. The public interest in this case has not been clearly outlined in the presentation.			✓		CQ - It is in the public interest that the SSP is delivered.
If the school grows then the budget would converge. The current deficit is because of small numbers			✓		CQ – The details provided reflects the schools approved budget.

enrolled from the previous years. The school wants to review its budget and have time to reflect on information which has been requested from EA in relation to the budget. The budget does not make clear that the figures are based on the previous year's enrolment.					
The majority of schools appear to work with a deficit – would other schools with unfilled places have a bigger deficit?			✓		SMcK – there is no simple equation to compare schools financially due to a range of varying factors from school to school.
Request to see other financial information for other schools to see how they compare to St Eugene's.			✓		CQ – The information is in the public domain.
Request made of CQ to look at transport issues and BoG have requested that this is reviewed ahead of any decision being made on the future of the school.			✓		CQ – in the event of the proposal proceeding EA Transport will consider how best to provide transport assistance to those pupils eligible. CQ advised that he would request information from EA regarding transport implications, in the event of the proposal proceeding and of school closure.
Parent – CCMS asked to please take into account the request for additional information to be supplied when considering the request for an extension to the closing date for consultation.			✓		
Parent – the consultation is flawed. There is a lack of impact assessments, a lack of information and a lack of joined up thinking.			✓		
Raised a concern about the length of time that a child with a medical condition would be required to travel on a school bus.			✓		SMcK – it is important for all parents with this concern to feedback on this during the process.

Table of responses received in the written consultation.

	Staff:	Governors:	Parents	Other:	Totals:
Option 1. Agree with the proposal	0	0			
Option 2. Disagree with the proposal	5	3 (includes 1 Composite Response)	17		25
Total number of responses received:	5	3	17		25

Key issues raised in the written responses

Issue	Staff	Parent	Governor	Other
Quality of educational experience in St Eugene's PS has always been excellent. The end of KS and End of Year standardised tests have consistently matched and often bettered those of children in the rest of NI.	4	11	2	
School has benefitted from a vibrant Shared Education Programme with Dunmullan PS which has enhanced children's experiences.	1	2		
ETI inspection in 2015 deemed Overall Performance as Good, Achievements and Standards Very Good, Provision Good and Leadership Good.	2	2	1	
The enrolment has always been stable at approx. 40. The recent threat of closure has had an impact on the enrolment. In 2019/20 there were 10 P1s after having had none the previous year when the school had been threatened with closure at that stage.	2	8	3	
There are therefore approximately 80 children who live closer to St Eugene's or Dunmullan and are being taught at schools some distance away. Adding the current enrolment to this number provides more than adequate enrolment numbers for a sustainable school in this area.		6	2	
All members of the BOG have a range of skills and experience in areas such as accounting, business management, HR, law and corporate governance.	1	2	1	
School leadership has worked tirelessly since 2015 Inspection to ensure that all planning, including SDP, are now of a high standard and regularly reviewed after having been deemed inadequate by ETI in 2015.		1		
The main school building is made up of 2 classrooms, 2 offices, staffroom, pupil and staff toilets and cloakroom. There is an additional mobile classroom (with toilet blocks and storage room) which was added to the school site in 2004. The capacity of this additional classroom is not taken into account in the school's current approved enrolment figure of 48 and therefore if its capacity was taken into account the approved enrolment could be approximately 70.	1			
There is also a large multipurpose mobile on site which is currently used for lunchtimes/after school activities/physical education/school masses/school assemblies and for community use out of school hours. This mobile also contains multiple storage rooms/ kitchen facilities/toilet block/library.	1			

There is a large car park and one way 'off road' traffic system to the front and wholly within the school site, which was added in 2005. This enables staff/parents/visitors and school bus to enter the site through one gate and leave through another gate, enabling a very safe one-way system. There is also a space for the school bus to park which enables a very safe collection and drop off for pupils. Majority of pupils live very close to the school making it very accessible.	2	7	2	
There will be a substantial narrowing of the recurrent budget deficit in 2020/2021 and in 2021/2022 because of the increased enrolment in 2019. If CCMS were to give a clear commitment to the future of the school, enrolment would increase leading to a sound financial position.	2	10	2	
The school has strong links with community groups/activities in the local area and use is made of school facilities to enable many of these to run. These include: - Adult Irish language classes - Cross Community weekly Pilates Class - Cross Community Yoga class - Defibrillator training (cross community) - Neighbourhood watch meetings (cross community) Through parental involvement, the school has recently acquired funding for a defibrillator and heated storage unit. This is now installed at the school and can be accessed by anyone in the community who needs it by entering a pin code into a key pad outside the gates.	3	9	2	
The school has a very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which supports the work of the school through fundraising activities, examples include community raffles, bazaars and cross community events e.g. 5k/10K race and sponsored walks. The PTA have in the last year funded play equipment, painting of the school mobile classroom, staffroom and office, the purchase of Ipads and a special mat for the Foundation Stage children.	1	1		
The closure of the school will have a negative impact on the local community.	2	4		
Support for the Parents Group with their fight to save the school.	1			
St Eugene's is an essential and vibrant part of the community which offers children the opportunity to achieve their best while recognising their uniqueness.	1			
The range of teaching staff experiences/expertise provide adequate educational experiences for the pupils under their care.	1	1		
Strong leadership and management has ensured high quality education and pastoral care for all pupils.	2	7	2	
School should be given more time to allow them to grow and build confidence in the local community to encourage more people to send their children to it.	1	1		
Negative impact on children from previous closure of Gortnagarn PS. These included comments like "heart wrenching", the need to look after the welfare of the children, how demoralising this proposal is, how stressful it is and with devastating repercussions. It was emphasised the community did feel they would have time to build up the size of St Eugene's PS.	1	5		
Transport to other schools would cause difficulties, especially for pupils with SEN, medical conditions and children beginning school. The journey time is too long. Has a transport survey been conducted? CCMS cannot state how many children will need transport.	1	4	2	
CCMS has not mapped existing pupil distribution in the area. And it is difficult to comment when data is not up to date.	1	4		

The distances to the other schools are inaccurate. Travel time will be further to other schools and this is unfair to children, especially those in Foundation Stage.	1			
Ongoing threat of closure is impacting parental choice.	1	4	1	
Timing of consultation around P1 application deadline is also impacting P1 choice.				
Closure will have a negative impact on children's education and mental health. Longer travel times, bigger classes, less one to one support, reduced pastoral care are all impacted in a bigger school.	1	8		
Family/community feel which creates a safe, welcoming environment to learn and develop emotionally and socially. Children are lucky to have such a caring, committed school to learn in.	1			
Professional development is not impacted as teachers have opportunity to join cluster groups, training and shared education. Have sufficient professional interaction and mutual support which leads to improved pupil outcomes.	1			
Live births in the Gortin ward are increasing at a higher rate than any other ward in Omagh. CCMS has only used the last 10 years birth rates to show a trend.		4	3	
Questioning whether to continue catholic maintained education for child due to CCMS conduct.			1	
Why are other schools with less than 105 pupils not being consulted on for closure?			1	
EA and CCMS have failed to engage with primary schools in this area to explore options for them when they have identified sustainability issues. My experience is that the onus is solely on the Boards of Governor's of schools to find and explore their own area planning solutions.			1	
In their presentation to parents and Governors on 2 nd December 2019, CCMS stated on a slide that they had explored other options. When asked by a parent how they had done this, the CCMS officer was unable to elaborate. It was evident that CCMS have not actively explored other options. Indeed at this meeting the EA Area Planning officer present stated that Area Planning within EA has been completely under resourced. This highlights that consultations such as this one, have been taken forward by an under resourced department who are unable to apply a robust and fair area planning process.		1	1	
It would be preferable if both CCMS and EA would together actively engage with schools BEFORE launching consultations for closure. It is totally unacceptable that these organisations within Area Planning do not actively come together and work with schools to help find a sustainable option for rural communities.			1	
The approach undertaken by CCMS to this pre-publication consultation does not meet with the statutory requirements nor the principles of good consultation. Following agreement that the consultations for Dunmullan and St Eugene's would run in parallel, CCMS disengaged with the Board of Governors and initiated the consultation in a way which departed from its own process. It issued its pre-publication consultation document at the start of the consultation process and when the meeting with Board of Governors and parents was subsequently held, several factual errors were pointed out. The document was reissued, still with factual errors. CCMS extended the consultation period to accommodate the Christmas period. It subsequently issued further information pertinent to the consultation on 6 th January 2020. It provided further information on 17 th January 2020 three days before the close of the consultation. CCMS has not shared its draft Equality screening and Rural Proof screening documents. The Equality Commission recommends:		1	1	

46 - engaging widely when undertaking equality screening and the consultation process is an obvious way to do this. In a similar way, building rural proofing into consultation process early will lead to a better consultation process and ultimately a more robust outcome. 47 - CCMS has obstinately refused to share these documents as part of the consultation process. Furthermore, a question has been asked about regulatory impact assessments. This is tied into the rural proofing element given that there may be impacts on rural businesses.				
The distances quoted to other local schools are still incorrect and differ by up to 20%.		1	1	
It is evident that no analysis has taken place regarding transport of children to alternative schools. Also, as it has now been established that there are approximately 80 children of school going age in the area who attend other primary schools (not St Eugene's or Dunmullan), if both these schools close, many of these 80 children would be entitled to free transport. It appears that neither EA or CCMS have taken into consideration the additional cost of also now providing free transport to these children.		1	2	
There has been no empiric assessment of the implications on resources. CCMS has been unable to assess cost implications of closure and the associated transport costs.		2	2	
Given the trend for the lack of investment into facts, it is not evident how this assessment has been made given that the key stakeholders have never been brought to a meeting with the objective of establishing Shared Options. Providing Pathways Strategic Area plan for School provision 2017-2020, section 3.2.1 of this document states "duty to encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the integrated and Irish medium sectors" – I do not find any significant evidence that you have considered and applied this in your process or decision making. Therefore the process must be stopped and alternative options given time, which is absolutely critical in such a sensitive process, allowing all stakeholders to properly investigate the various options contained within. This has now become necessary as CCMS no longer want to support Catholic Education in our community.		1	1	
There is community support to retain education provision in this area and there is widespread support to explore a shared or integrated approach. This option needs to be fully developed and costed. CCMS should cease the present consultation to allow time to take these discussions forward.		3	1	
How can CCMS pursue the closure of a school without a Government? Huge concerns with this.		2		
Little mention of the children's faith. Link between the school and Knockmoyle Chapel is fundamental.		1		
School should be given at least 7 years to have opportunity to grow and flourish.		6		
Child has a sense of belonging at the school and feels part of the community.		1		
Viable solution is to amalgamate with Dunmullan PS.		1		
No duty of care shown to children.		1		
Second school that child has attended as previous school was also closed.		2		
Small class setting enables child to benefit from a large amount of direct support which helps to manage barriers to learning		1		
No evidence that composite classes do not work. Prefer children being taught in smaller or composite classes.		3		

⁴⁶<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>.

⁴⁷https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/600450/rural-proofing-guidance.pdf.

Refer to letter sent to Permanent Secretary on 9 th Dec 2019		3		
School provides wraparound childcare		1		
Enrolment figure of 105 should be reviewed as nearly all schools in NI are classed as rural		1		
No analysis of has been undertaken to specify what are of the Gortin ward is being considered.		1		
Information provided in the consultation booklet was very similar to that provided at the 2014 consultation.		1		
Information has not been provided to define the school's catchment area.		1		
CCMS gave no response when asked about Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) and whether or not the SSP had been reviewed in light of it.		1		

Equality Considerations

Issue	Staff	Parent	Governor	Other
CCMS was asked to provide the draft rural needs assessment and equality screening at its meeting with stakeholders on 2 nd December but thus far these have not been provided. This is disappointing given that with a proposed closure there are obvious impacts on rural needs and the local businesses in this area.	1	6	2	
Of the Section 75 Equality groups there are at least 7 groups likely to be impacted.	2	3	2	
The consultation document suggests that the proposal to close is aligned with rural needs – this could not be further from the truth. There are enough children in this area to build a sustainable school. The management authorities have done nothing to support the building of a sustainable school in this area. The current education provision is excellent for the current primary school and it provides a focus for our rural community. By taking forward the proposal to close, the rural community will be diminished with the loss of a significant community asset. This is bound to have a negative impact on families and ultimately the child development in this area.	2	7	2	
The consultation document does nothing to empirically assess the impact of St Eugene's PS pupils if closure was taken forward. The closure of the school would have a negative impact on this rural community and ultimately lead to a negative impact on child development.	1	3	2	
The consultation document does not assess the impact on St Eugene's pupils if closure was taken forward.	1		1	
The closure would have a negative impact on the rural community and obviously influence children's development and wellbeing. Rural social isolation. Closure will mean loss of a social amenity for the rural area. People will have to go to Omagh or Gortin for exercise classes, parent and toddler groups, etc.	2	9	1	
Parish – home – school are central to a child's development. This is particularly pertinent in rural areas.	1			
There needs to be more information given in relation to the rural needs.	1			
The fact that town schools and rural schools have the same set of rules is unfair and doesn't make sense. There are only two differences, one for city schools and all the rest are classed as rural schools, this is a ridiculous policy and does not lend itself to the needs of all communities in our small country and is discriminant and out of date. After all there are only five cities in Northern Ireland which only accounts for 23.45% of the total population of Northern Ireland. Most of the population live in rural areas (76.55%), therefore shouldn't there be more focus on the needs of education in rural areas and how those needs are very different to those of city schools?	1			
CCMS have not adhered to equality legislation. They should have approached St Eugene's at the same time as EA approached Dunmullan PS. Belief that they have been treated less equally than their protestant			1	

counterparts. This is Dunmullan's first consultation and goes to further demonstrate the discrimination they as Catholics in this community have experienced.				
Response time for this consultation should be the same as the response time for Dunmullan PS. This would ensure equality of opportunity.			1	
Closure of St Eugene's will have a negative consequence: Between persons of different religious belief. The current shared education arrangements between the 2 local schools will end. This will have a significant negative impact on the interaction between the 2 local communities Between persons of different political opinion. The current shared education arrangements between the 2 local schools will end. This will have a significant negative impact on the interaction between the 2 local communities Between persons of different age Young people will suffer detriment due to closure Between persons of different marital status. Married people will suffer detriment due to closure of the school Between men and women generally Socially isolated parents (predominantly mothers) have an opportunity for social contact through the school and the various community activities that take place at the school – mothers and toddlers group; pilates/yoga classes Between persons with a disability and persons without. Persons with a disability will suffer detriment due to reduced access due to closure of the school Between persons with dependants and persons without. Persons with dependants will suffer detriment due to closure of the school		3	2	
How does the proposed closure fit with the recent push to address rural deprivation and social isolation?		1		
Closure will have an impact on transportation – rural schools are widely dispersed and closure will result in children travelling long distances to next nearest school		1		
Closure will have an impact on pupils – concerns of children not being addressed		2		
Closure will have an impact financially – consideration of transport cost or redundancy is not taken into consideration when looking at cost of closure of a rural school		1		
Negative impact on health of both children and parents		1		
Many parents have expressed a wish for an integrated model. Ask for CCMS to facilitate discussions on this option.		2		
Closure will the loss of shared education and cross community relationships.		1		
CCMS have not adhered to DEARA's guidance on the Rural Needs Act 2016.		1		

A number of the responses which CCMS received as part of the consultation process made reference to a previous consultation process which was conducted in 2014. At this time two schools, Gortnagarn PS and St Eugene's PS were being considered for closure. Following the consultation process, the proposal to close Gortnagarn PS proceeded (Development Proposal 268) and the proposal to discontinue St Eugene's was not taken forward. Gortnagarn PS closed in 2016.

The information submitted as part of the 2014 consultation was also submitted as part of a response to the current consultation. The respondent states that CCMS should have considered this submission prior to reinstituting the process. A copy of a letter from a parent to Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary for the Department of Education, was also submitted as part of a consultation response.

Re-fresh post-Covid 19

On 6 May 2021 a re-fresh update of the pre-publication consultation was undertaken. This provided stakeholders with an opportunity to submit any additional information which had not been raised in the initial pre-publication consultation. It also allowed an opportunity for parents/guardians, and other stakeholders, who had not taken part in the original consultation, to make comment on the proposal, this included two families who did not have children in the school during the pre-publication consultation from November 2019 to January 2020.

The Board of Governors presented feedback to CCMS in relation to the Case for Change document, which had been issued to the stakeholders. As a result of this feedback, CCMS amended aspects of the document and re-issued to the BoG on 30 July 2021. In light of the summer holiday period the consultation period was extended to 29 September 2021.

Table of responses received in the re-fresh of the pre-publication consultation

	Staff:	Governors:	Parents	Other:	Totals:
Option 1. Agree with the proposal	0	0	0	0	0
Option 2. Disagree with the proposal	0	Includes all members of the BoG	7	0	8
Total number of responses received:	0	1	7	0	8

Key issues raised in the written responses

Issue	Staff	Parent	Governor	Other
I have been made aware that CCMS has written to EA with the outcome of the 2019/20 pre-publication consultation and requested EA to proceed to consult with affected schools. The process is clear, CCMS must complete its pre-publication consultation with the school following which, if after considering the outcomes of the pre-publication consultation that the proposal should go forward, it submits the proposal to EA to conduct a consultation with affected schools. However, CCMS has not concluded its pre-publication consultation process, and, by requesting that EA proceed to consult with affected schools, CCMS has contaminated the consultation process that EA is undertaking.		2	BoG	
Whilst a pre-publication consultation was undertaken in 2019/20 (and was concluded in January 2020), CCMS has commenced a refresh of its pre-publication consultation just as the Education Authority moved to consult with affected schools on 6 th May 2021. It is entirely appropriate that CCMS undertakes a refresh of the pre-publication consultation as their original consultation was undertaken just before the pandemic in Dec 2019/Jan 2020, the proposed closure date has been extended from August 2021 to August 2022 and a new set of primary one pupils are expected in September 2021 (and their parents/guardians have not had an opportunity to input into the pre-publication consultation). It is completely unfair for CCMS to have requested that EA proceed to consult with affected schools before these new parents have been consulted.		2	BoG	
In requesting that EA proceed to consult with affected schools before it has completed its refresh of its pre-publication consultation, CCMS has failed to follow the established lawful process and has contaminated the consultation process. In doing so, CCMS has effectively pre-judged the outcomes of the refresh of the pre-		2	BoG	

publication consultation instead of considering the outcomes of the complete pre-publication consultation and then deciding whether or not the proposal should go forward.				
The process which CCMS is following is clearly not the same as the usual process but, despite multiple requests from our Governors, CCMS has failed to provide a clear explanation as to how this current process differs from the normal process. Specifically, CCMS has failed to explain where exactly in the process the 'refresh consultation' takes place. It is not clear what process CCMS is following and it unfair to run a consultation when the recipients do not understand the process being followed.		2		
The Case for Change document provides information that is inaccurate, incomplete and out of date. Updated enrolment figures should be republished before proceeding to the next stage as there may well be significant changes in the capacity, which will impact upon the decision. In addition, parents would be enrolling in the year 22/23 and each school would have projected enrolment figures for these years which should also be included in the updated figures republished before proceeding to the next stage.		2	BoG	
The enrolment figures in the above table are out of date and need updating with the passing of a significant amount of time. Updated enrolment figures should be republished before proceeding to the next stage as there may well be significant changes in the capacity, which will impact upon the decision. In addition, parents would be enrolling in the year 22/23 and each school would have projected enrolment figures for these years which should also be included in the updated figures republished before proceeding to the next stage.			BoG	
Despite the issue being raised previously with CCMS and the distances being allegedly corrected, when checked with the reference source (AA Route Planner), all quoted distances were different by up to 20%.		2	BoG	
Given the development proposal published for the closure of Dunmullan, it is very significant that the distances quoted by CCMS in their Case for Change document are inaccurate. Should the EA proceed with their Development Proposal in relation to St Eugene's, the closest primary school is in the village of Gortin (and not in Omagh as the inaccurate information quoted by CCMS states.		3	BoG	
The accurate ranking of schools by distance is considerably different from the information quoted by CCMS in their Case for Change document and the correct information should be republished before proceeding to the next stage.		2	BoG	
The transport table included in CCMS's Case for Change document would have significantly mislead many of the families of children (depending upon their home address) in understanding their closest school options. The table identifies the distance from one school to another but is not a reliable indicator of the journey time involved for the pupils. In addition, it fails to highlight additional journey times for Children as a result of this proposal. It does not factor the time required for safe loading and unloading of children and the mileage between their homes.		3	BoG	
Money and enrolment figures appear to be the deciding factors in all these decisions, but CCMS have not included the budget surplus / deficit and projected enrolment as submitted in the current budget for each of the schools listed in the tables above for 2022/23. For parents of children that have already moved schools, it is evident that parents will need to assess school sustainability for themselves as quite clearly CCMS do not consider the number of changes a pupil will be requested to make in their primary school education pathway. This information should therefore be provided to parents, before proceeding with this process.		2	BoG	
Combining the enrolment of Dunmullan and St Eugene's the enrolment total is 64. Other CCMS pupils where St Eugene's is the closest primary school combined with other controlled schools where Dunmullan was the closest school and integrated pupils where St Eugene's or Dunmullan are the closest schools have a total catchment of 130 pupils. Therefore the school only needs to attract 80% of the pupils in the area to reach the threshold 105 pupils for sustainability. It would appear that there is a demand for a school in the area and that the pupils exist to satisfy the 105 pupil requirement, therefore engagement is required between EA and CCMS to explore these options.		5	BoG	

At the parent's consultation meeting on 2 nd December 2019, CCMS had represented that a joint faith model among others had been explored and that upon review these options were discounted for school provision in the area. However, the joint faith option had not been explored and only as a result of St Eugene's Board of Governors making a representation to the Bishop, did this option get discussed by the Governors of Dunmullan and St Eugene's. CCMS has not included any information or evidence to the parents on how CCMS and/or EA explored and reviewed a joint faith model or other options.		2		
Despite the ongoing consultation process, a new set of primary one pupils are expected in September 2021. The continued enrolment in these circumstances further demonstrates the demand for a school in this rural area and the recognition of the high standard of education being delivered at the school.		2	BoG	
The ICT hardware combined with the future connection to the school of fibre optic broadband means the school would have excellent ICT facilities.		3	BoG	
CCMS further demonstrates its prejudice to close St Eugene's by not conducting a proper needs assessment in relation to primary school children in this vicinity. This is particularly important given the proposed closure of the neighbouring school in Dunmullan		1		
Despite advising CCMS repeatedly that the catchment for St Eugene's is beyond Gortin Ward, there is no consideration of ward data beyond Gortin Ward – again this is incredibly prejudiced. With repeated threat of school closure, new parents will think twice before enrolling the children to a school – we need a commitment for a generation to allow us to grow this school.		2		
The school provides excellent teaching and pastoral care in an excellent facility.		3		
CCMS outlines some of the work that has been undertaken led by St Eugene's with Dunmullan school community to explore potential options in 2020. Despite a pandemic, parents and governors valiantly attempted to develop workable options but clearly the context to develop anything which would command cross community support was going to be severely affected by the lockdowns that we were living through.		1		
CCMS has been single-minded in seeking to close this school over the past 10 years. The process by which CCMS has approached the current development proposal has been deplorable		1		
CCMS has indicated that the Gortin Ward is the potential catchment area for St Eugene's. CCMS has only used data over the last 10 years. CCMS has not taken into account the substantial reduction in other urban wards in comparison to the rising live birth rate of Gortin Ward with the Gortin Ward demonstrating growth over the past 17 years and other wards reducing in population size.		1		
Considering the Sustainability Criteria the quality of education is excellent, there are stable enrolment trends, the school has a sound financial position, strong leadership and management. It is accessible, closure of the school would adversely affect accessibility.		1		
I wish to note my support for Option 1 – maintain the status quo and give a commitment to maintain this school for at least 7 years so that the school can build. Furthermore, it would be a travesty if CCMS proceeds to recommend closure without facilitating a community discussion around other options. There are sufficient children in this area and parents have expressed their support for a cross-community solution to the need for primary school provision.		1		
The consultation document does nothing to empirically assess the impact of St Eugene's PS pupils if closure was taken forward. The closure of the school would have a negative impact on this rural community and ultimately lead to a negative impact on child development.		1		
The awful news regarding the potential closure of our thriving local school came entirely out of the blue to us. My wife and I have been informed of the threat only informally, mostly from other parents. We are led to believe that the		1		

CCMS have a statutory duty to properly consult with parents regarding potential school closures, in our case this duty has clearly and demonstrably not been met.				
St Eugene's helps children be in touch with nature which is crucially important for developing children's mental and physical health. They have also been awarded the Eco Schools Green Flag. The school has spacious grounds which allow children to run in the fresh air developing their physical health.		1		
There are fantastic teachers and teaching assistants at the school who ensure that each child's individual needs are paramount.		1		
Social distancing has been paramount during the ongoing pandemic and St Eugene's staff has worked hard to ensure safety for everyone. There has been no coronavirus cases in the school.		1		
I am unhappy to hear of how I have not been made aware by the CCMS of this refresh process of what they intend to do, we have had the children back with St Eugene's from January this year, and felt this is a disgrace that we have not been contacted regarding this as this significantly affects my children's education, I am very unhappy with how this had been handled and how my child's education has been left in limbo, this is completely unacceptable		1		
CCMS has refused to engage directly with all stakeholders (Parents/Guardians, staff and governors) at a physical meeting organised at St. Eugene's Primary School and has therefore failed to engage with such stakeholders in a meaningful way as part of the pre-publication consultation refresh and has shown contempt for the due legal process as described in Article 14.			BoG	
CCMS's failure to follow due legal process in this respect has denied stakeholders the opportunity to fully engage with the process in a meaningful way. As CCMS has failed to comply with the statutory requirements under Article 14 and should therefore re-run the CCMS pre-publication process in a manner which includes meaningful engagement as outlined in the legislation.			BoG	
If after this process has been properly conducted with meaningful engagement, and following all sequential steps in the due process, it was decided to proceed to the EA consultation stage, then such EA consultation should also be re-run in its entirety with relevant up to date information from all stakeholders.			BoG	
The Financial Information in the Case for Change (CfC) document (updated by CCMS), does not reflect the great results that the school have achieved in the last School year (The School Financial Plan 2021-2024 has been issued to the school showing a significant improvement over the previous years budget. Namely the school was in a surplus position of £18,390 which reduced its overall deficit by circa. 30%. Given the weighting of this factor in the process it is not acceptable that such positive information should be withheld from the intended recipients.) – extract from email to CCMS from the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors firmly believe that all this updated information could have a significant impact on the CCMS Education Provision Committee (EPC) recommendation to submit a CfC to EA. Clearly an extension of time, will not increase the financial burden and should be welcomed in an attempt to improve the financial results again beyond the budget set.			BoG	
Significantly, the beginning of the new School year has revealed a changed educational landscape and therefore a change in the substantive argument. Dunmullan PS, which is also undergoing a Development Proposal (DP), has only 5 P7 children now and it may therefore close following conclusion of the transfer test process in December 2021, or at the latest June 2022. This is significant in that the Integrated and Joint Faith attempts to provide Education in the area, failed on the emotive issue of which site new school would be located. With this barrier now potentially removed, St Eugene's (post the closure of Dunmullan) would be able to canvas potential pupils directly and via its mother and toddler group for pupils of all faith and no faith (which attended the St Eugene's group pre-covid).			BoG	

Neither EA nor CCMS has not done anything to positively promote or explore Integrated or Joint Faith options for this area. Prior to the closure of Gortnagarn in 2016, this area had 3 Schools (two CCMS schools and one controlled school) with a combined enrolment that met the sustainability criteria yet neither CCMS nor EA has done anything to fulfil their statutory responsibilities to promote shared education in this area to date. The changed educational landscape that has unfolded from the beginning of the new School year presents an opportunity for both CCMS and EA to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this respect by properly engaging with our school to explore the clear potential for a shared education school model in this area.			BoG	
We would highlight that the Education Minister's recent statement setting out her priorities in relation to the next Regional Area Plan together with the revised Area Planning Guidance issued adds further weight to our argument that EA and CCMS need to consider the changed landscape in relation to potential cross-community education provision.			BoG	
The letter which CCMS provided to the school for issue to Parents/Guardians, Staff and Governors does not adequately explain the process that CCMS are currently following. The process which CCMS is following is clearly not the same as the usual process but, despite multiple requests from our Governors, CCMS has failed to provide a clear explanation as to how this current process differs from the normal process. Specifically, CCMS has failed to explain where exactly in the process the 'refresh consultation' takes place. It is not clear what process CCMS is following and it unfair to run a consultation when the recipients do not understand the process being followed.			BoG	
Despite CCMS asserting that they had continued to engage with St Eugene's PS the Board of Governors would like it noted that we had heard nothing from them. In the months following pre-publication consultation the Board had made multiple requests for an extension of the closure date but it took CCMS until January 2021 to officially tell us of the newly amended closure date.			BoG	
It is completely incorrect for CCMS to state that they fully engaged with our Board of Governors and explored other options of shared education and jointly managed schools options.			BoG	
CCMS officers did come to our school several times over the past few years. They asked US to present options. They expected our Governors to do that by ourselves with NO guidance or support from them.			BoG	
CCMS did not actively engage with EA to find a local sustainable school option for this area. CCMS seems to think that meeting with Boards of Governors to tell them their school is unsustainable, sending them some information by email on shared education and jointly managed schools options is engaging with them in relation to such options			BoG	
It is a completely inaccurate representation of CCMS to put into a public facing 'Case for Change document' that St Eugene's board of Governors did not indicate that they wished to explore other options. We therefore formally request that the current Case for Change document is amended immediately to reflect this and removed from the EA website as soon as possible. I have copied and pasted the relevant extracts from the Consultation Summary below, which are a completely inaccurate reflection of the discussions which took place.			BoG	
We wish to highlight that the CCMS presentation included a slide which stated that CCMS had explored a Shared Education, Federation model and jointly managed schools option. A parent asked, "tell me how did CCMS explore these options?" CCMS Officer could not provide detail on the options explored.			BoG	
On the option of a Federation Model some information was shared with the Governors but nothing of sufficient detail or support was given to Governors to even consider a Federation model. CCMS had not explored a jointly managed model			BoG	
CCMS simply stated your school is unsustainable. They talked about these options but they did not actively explore them with EA or the Governors. St Eugene's has been stating since their last consultation in 2014 that they wished to explore a shared education model			BoG	

St Eugene's has been in shared education partnership in a shared care model with Dunmullan since 2014. It was difficult to gauge support since there was no collaborative working between CCMS and EA to help the schools to explore the option. This was made more difficult because Dunmullan only recently found out they were under threat of closure.			BoG	
There is frustration with CCMS as they seem to have put every effort into closing the school rather than helping to keep it open. Little support offered. It is extremely difficult for Governors to take forward solutions by themselves.			BoG	
When the school asked CCMS to give time for the school to grow they never at any point gave sufficient guidance to help the school explore a jointly managed schools option. It was only after Governors met with Bishop McKeown were they put in contact with those who could help explore this process. CCMS and EA failed to help the school sufficiently explore the option of a jointly managed school.			BoG	

Equality Considerations

Issue	Staff	Parent	Governor	Other
The school is the heart of the local community. Children and parents have developed an extensive network of friends in the area through the school. If the school closes this will hollow out the heart of this rural community and can only lead to isolation and all the associated, well-documented, deprivations and social problems. We know that were the threat of closure lifted, many more parents would send their children.		4		
We were amazed that the spiritual instruction and well being of our children was never mentioned. We had thought this was one of the basic principles of the CCMS remit. We are lucky to live in a profoundly religious area, with a high proportion of church-goers of all ages. We feel this could be endangered with the closure of our school.		2		
With government pledges to achieve net-zero carbon, we do not see how longer travel distances requiring multiple car-journeys are compatible with this target		2		
Our children will have longer to travel and will be 'outsiders', both deeply unpleasant and unfair prospects. We would strongly encourage a multi-faith school model and feel it would greatly benefit our children and our community		2		
However, it is apparent that there have been no improvements made with CCMS and EA approaching area planning down a unisectoral approach, applying the Bain criteria with little proper assessment of need and provision; seeking to close schools without supporting a shared or integrated approach. Professor Tony Gallagher has stated that there is no evidence that this saves money – rather the destruction of the rural school estate will have far reaching negative consequences on rural community health and well-being for generations to come.		1		
CCMS was asked to provide the draft rural needs assessment and equality screening at its meeting with stakeholders on 2 nd December but thus far these have not been provided. This is disappointing given that with a proposed closure there are obvious impacts on rural needs and the local businesses in this area. Furthermore of the Section 75 Equality groups there are at least 7 groups likely to be impacted.		1		
CCMS was asked to provide the draft rural needs assessment and equality screening at its meeting with stakeholders on 2 nd December but thus far these have not been provided. This is disappointing given that with a proposed closure there are obvious impacts on rural needs and the local businesses in this area. Furthermore of the Section 75 Equality groups there are at least 7 groups likely to be impacted.		1		
There has been no empiric assessment of the implications on resources. CCMS has been unable to assess cost implications of closure and the associated transport costs		1		
Closure of St Eugene's will have a devastating impact on this rural community and the businesses that are located here. No assessment has been provided by CCMS in relation to the impact that the proposal will have on equality and good relations. Closure will devastate this rural community and have a severe negative impact between: 1. Persons of different religious belief		1		

<p>2. Persons of different political opinion</p> <p>3. Persons of different age</p> <p>4. Persons of different marital status</p> <p>5. Men and Women generally</p> <p>6. Persons with disability</p> <p>7. Persons with dependents</p> <p>The school provides a natural focus and opportunity for each of these groups – closure will have a negative impact.</p>				
<p>The closure of St Eugene's in the wake of the recent and imminent closure of the two other local Primary schools (Gortnagarn and Dunmullan respectively) would leave our two little girls with a minimum of a 10 mile round trip to school. The seeming "scorched earth" policy being pursued in this area with regard to local primary education is both bizarre and indefensible. In ruling out sustainable and active travel options, it flies in the face of the generationally preeminent environmental and public health concerns: increasing traffic on the roads, undermining small rural communities, and forcing young children to endure long, sedentary and polluting journeys.</p>		1		
<p>Without St Eugene's school the community would be demoralised. When Gortnagarn PS was closed it split the community with children not being able to see their friends and others were hurt and angry. Since the closure of Gortnagarn PS there hasn't been an assessment to determine the impact of school closure on those children's mental health in the months and years that followed. According to the MacArthur Foundation (2014) moving schools had impacts children's cognitive scores and may lead to emotional problems.</p>		1		
<p>Overall, St Eugene's is an excellent school in an idyllic location and there is a need for a school in the area. However, support is needed from CCMS to stop putting the school under threat of closure because that dissuades parents from enrolling their children in the school. This is taking families away and harming our local community.</p>		1		
<p>We would also highlight that the responses to the Housing Executive (<i>Reaching Rural Draft Rural Strategy 2021-2025</i>) Rural Strategy pre-consultation stage highlight access to public services such as schools as being problematic and that the demand for rural housing in Fermanagh and Omagh LGD is among the highest. The BUILDING FORWARD: CONSOLIDATED COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN JULY 2021 published by the NI Executive also specifically highlights the importance of investing in rural communities. The people of this area are relying on CCMS and EA to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this respect by properly engaging with our school and the people of this area to explore the clear potential for a shared education school model in this area.</p>			BoG	
<p>Closure of St Eugene's will have a devastating impact on this rural community and the businesses that are located here.</p>			BoG	
<p>Closure of St Eugene's will have negative consequence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between persons of different religious belief. The shared shared education arrangements including Mother and Toddler community groups between the 2 local school communities will end. We have carefully built towards a situation where children from both schools now attend the same sports club together to play Rugby. This will have a significant negative impact on the interaction between the 2 local communities. Between persons of different political opinion. The current shared education arrangements including Mother and Toddler community groups between the 2 local school communities will end. We have carefully built towards a situation where children from both schools now attend the same sports club together to play Rugby. This will have a significant negative impact on the interaction between the 2 local communities Between persons of different age. Young people will suffer detriment due to closure Between persons of different marital status. Married people will suffer detriment due to the closure of the school. 			BoG	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between men and women generally. Socially isolated parents (predominantly mothers) have an opportunity for social contact through the school and the various community activities that take place at the school – mothers and toddlers group; pilates/ yoga classes Between persons with a disability and persons without. Persons with a disability will suffer detriment due to reduced access due to closure of the school. Between persons with dependants and persons without. Persons with dependents will suffer detriment due to the closure of the school. 				
Since the process was suspended, the School Community has been fighting through the Covid-19 global pandemic and the health and welfare of our children must be of paramount importance. Given that such a scenario was not envisaged before the process was suspended, CCMS has not included an assessment in relation to the fundamental change in society caused by the impact of Covid-19 and how the development proposal impacts upon this. As was evident throughout the pandemic the transmission rate in schools had a significant bearing on government lockdowns and there is therefore a duty of care to minimise potential deaths in the community. St Eugene's is proud to state that they have remained Covid-19 free throughout the pandemic and therefore been able to provide a Covid-19 safe environment for the children, staff, parents and the wider community, which has minimised the disruption to the education of all children concerned. Can you please explain how Covid-19 assessments have been carried out and the impact on our children as a result of educational disruption caused by the need for self-isolation, which has occurred in other schools included in the table 3.5.1 above.			BoG	
CCMS has not carried out an assessment to take into consideration the stress and mental health issues associated with the pandemic and how this process would be impacted by these issues. This is particularly important as, since the closure of Gortnagam PS, the support for stakeholders fell well short of what would now be needed.			BoG	
CCMS has not assessed or provided information on the ability of other local schools being able to cope with home schooling provision and the criteria that has been used to assess performance in this regards, as the classroom size may not be the only method of delivering education to our pupils.			BoG	
Our school has quite a number of children from families of key workers and CCMS has not assessed or provided information on how other schools would be able to support the needs of these stakeholders in our community			BoG	

CCMS response on the additional areas of concerns received during the refresh feedback:

CCMS has carried out significant engagement with the school stakeholders to date including having pre-consultation meetings with staff, the Board of Governors and parents/guardians as outlined in pp2-3 of the Case for Change. CCMS completed its stage of the pre-publication consultation process in March 2020. The Covid pandemic meant the subsequent stages of the process were delayed until after the resumption of area planning in October 2020.

CCMS liaised with the school during the pre-publication consultation and the refresh to ensure information was passed to all stakeholders. All stakeholders, including the two new families with a child in the school in 2021, received the Case for Change as part of the refresh process.

All potential options, including a joint faith school, considered for the provision of sustainable provision in the area are detailed in section 4.3 of the Case for Change.

Following recommencement of area planning post-Covid, EA commenced its stage of the pre-publication consultation – the affected schools stage – in May 2021. The re-fresh opportunity for CCMS ran in parallel with the EA affected schools consultation for St Eugene's. Having received legal advice on the refresh opportunity provided, CCMS considers that this was an appropriate and proportionate approach.

CCMS has considered the responses received during the refresh opportunity and thanks the school stakeholders for their submissions. CCMS explained to the school that EPC would examine the additional responses to ensure due consideration is given to the views of stakeholders expressed during the refresh.

CCMS has examined all relevant population data for the catchment area for the school.

The detailed consideration of the proposal and information in relation to the areas of feedback received throughout the consultation and refresh is contained within the body of the Case for Change.

The Case for Change has been updated to reflect the most recent information provided by the school with amends previously suggested by the school incorporated into the copy disseminated to support feedback during the refresh opportunity. The enrolment data for nearby schools, contains the most up-to-date verified data from 2020/21. The financial information presented was the most up-to-date approved, signed, financial plan. This document contains the new financial plan approved by the school BoG in September 2021 (Table 5).

A decision was taken to defer the potential implementation date of the proposal from 31 August 2021 to 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.

CCMS has complied with their statutory requirements under Article 14. In recognition of the unique position caused by the pandemic, CCMS has also offered a further re-fresh opportunity to stakeholders. Any parent/school stakeholder was entitled and welcomed to engage with CCMS and bring forward evidence which they wanted CCMS and the Education Provision Committee to consider. The opportunity to participate in the refresh was extended until the 29th September 2021. CCMS invited the new parents, once they had considered the documentation, to email CCMS with any questions they had or to seek clarification on any of the information provided.

CCMS encouraged discussions regarding cross-sectoral education solutions from an earlier stage in the process. The Chair of the Board of Governors has confirmed, in communication to CCMS, *"Although CCMS did mention other options for us to consider, it was an extremely difficult situation for St Eugene's Governors to approach Dunmullan Governors to discuss other options as we did not know if they themselves were aware of their proposed consultation for closure."* CCMS encouraged, throughout the process, investigation of any alternative solution the BoG wished to pursue. The options are included in pages 17,18 and 19 of this document.

CCMS would recommend that any person or organisation that objects to the proposal participates in the 8-week public objection period. CCMS continues to encourage full engagement in the process.

Copy of the Equality and Human Rights Screening Template

Equality and Human Rights Screening Template



Equality and Human Rights Screening Template

PART 1 - POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Title - Development Proposal to close St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur, with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

The proposal complies with the following policies and guidance:

- Area Planning Guidance for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2016).
- 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools' (Sustainable Schools Policy(SSP)) 2009;
- Every School a Good School (ESAGS) (2009)'.
 • 'Providing Pathways' 2017-20 Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-20;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1990);
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998); and
- Rural Needs Act (2016).

1.1. Description of policy or decision

Aim: To consider the closure of St Eugene's PS, with effect from 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter, in light of the above policies and guidance, in particular, in line with of the terms of reference for Area Planning, 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools' and 'Every School a Good School'.

Outcome to ensure:

- every learner fulfils his or her full potential at each stage of development;
- efficient and effective provision of education;
- improved educational outcomes for pupils;
- provision of a broad and balanced curriculum;
- a network of sustainable schools within reasonable traveling distances;
- an enhanced quality of provision and the raising of standards; and
- a reduction in duplication of provision.

The proposed closure of St Eugene's PS, Tircur, contributes to this strategy.

One impact of this proposal is to advance the aspirations, aims and objectives of the SSP, *"It is important that children in rural communities have access to a quality education in cost effective provision"* (p27).

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

In relation to the school, the main stakeholders are as follows.

- Derry Diocese
- Staff, Board of Governors, parents and pupils.
- nearby schools' Trustees, staff, Board of Governors, pupils and future pupils together with their parents.
- CCMS.
- Education Authority.
- Department of Education.

1.3. Is the policy likely to impact people living in rural areas?

Yes	x
No	

If yes, please complete the rural sections of the template

1.4. Other policies or decisions with a bearing on this policy or decision?

- Review of SEN and Inclusion (2012).
- EA Transport Policy.
- Terms and Conditions of Employment (Staff).

PART 2 – EVIDENCE AND MITIGATION

2.1. What information did you use to inform this screening? E.g. census data, Equality Impact Assessments (EQUIAs), consultation reports, service level data?

- Census Data
- Consultation with named schools in proposal and stakeholders
- Consultation with local primary schools
- EA Consultation with affected primary and post primary schools
- Information relating to Section 75 from Department of Education

2.2. Quantitative Data

What is the profile of the people that are impacted by this policy or decision?

Please provide a statistic breakdown of the people impacted by this policy or decision. Note, if the policy or decision impacts both staff and service users, please provide data on both.

Section 75 Group	Make up of affected groups?
Age	Children Primarily aged 4-11 and parents of these children. On most recent available census (2020/21), it was recorded there are 31 Pupils aged 4-11 Staff – Information on the age profile of staff not available at school level.
Dependants	Children primarily aged 4-11 and parents/carers of these 31 children. Staff – Information on the dependents of staff not available at school level.
Disability	On most recent available census (2020/21), it was recorded that no pupils have a statement of educational needs. Staff – Information on staff disabilities not available at school level.
Religious Belief	On most recent available census (2020/21), there were no pupils recorded as being from a protestant background. The number of pupils recorded as being from the Roman Catholic Community has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of information about identifiable individuals. Staff – Information on the religious beliefs of staff members is not available at school level.
Gender	On most recent available census (2020/21), there were 20 pupils recorded as being male and 11 pupils recorded as being female.
Marital Status	There is no data held on the marital status of the parents. Staff – Information on the marital status of staff not available at school level.
Political Opinion	There is no data available on the political opinion of those affected by this proposal.
Ethnicity	On most recent available census (2020/21), it was recorded that 31 students were classified as white (excluding members of the travelling community).
Sexual Orientation	There is no information available on the sexual orientation of those affected by this proposal.
Rural Impacts	All 31 pupils are attending a rural school. The staff are working in a rural school.

2.3. Qualitative Data

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

Are there different needs and experiences for any of the equality groups and what equality issues emerge from this?

Section 75 Group	What are the needs and experiences of the groups as they relate to the policy or decision?
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Age	<p>There is no evidence that there would be any impact from this proposal on service users (pupils) and staff according to their age.</p> <p>There is a need for age appropriate (4-11 years) provision for pupils in the alternative schools in the area which will differ from year group to year group.</p> <p>Staff needs will differ according to age, specifically in terms of retirement, redundancy and redeployment.</p>
Dependants	By virtue of the fact the school caters for children aged 4-11, there are no school age mothers and fathers in the school. Information is not available regarding staff with dependants. However there is no evidence that there would be any impact from this proposal on service users (pupils) and staff according to their dependants.
Disability	Information on staff regarding a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is not available. Pupils with a disability can be impacted where they need to travel further to attend school. This will impact different pupils with different types of disability in different ways. The entitlement to additional support and reasonable adjustments based on the pupils' educational needs will not change. This proposal will ensure pupils have more opportunity to be educated in a sustainable school.
Religious Belief	This will ensure more pupils will have access to their nearest sustainable CCMS school.
Gender	There will be an impact for pupils as the transfer to another school means they have the opportunity of peer interactions interactions (with males and females) in any new environment.
Marital Status	Information on marital status of staff is not available. It is not anticipated the impact will be any different depending on the marital status of the parent/guardian. Marital status should not impact the benefits of this proposal.
Political Opinion	There is no known impact on any persons with a particular political opinion.
Ethnicity	This proposal will not have an impact on the basis of ethnicity.
Sexual Orientation	The proposal will not have an impact on individuals based on their sexual orientation.

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

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

Rural Impacts	<p>The proposal enables children in rural communities to have access to a quality education in cost effective provision.</p> <p>There are a number of schools in Northern Ireland which do not meet the SSP. The challenge is to create a portfolio of schools located in the right places to meet demand for school places.</p> <p>The aim of area planning is to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable, fit-for-purpose schools.</p> <p>Analysis shows there is a surplus of school places in this area, this proposal means the number of available places will better match the projected demand in the area.</p> <p>This proposal will increase the opportunities for pupils living in a rural area to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and have a larger number of peer interactions in a new educational environment with fewer composite classes.</p> <p>In addition, children in a rural area, where over 2 miles away from a suitable school will receive transport assistance to a suitable school which meets the requirements of the Sustainable Schools Policy and Every School a Good School. This means where someone lives within 2 miles of St Eugene's PS, they are currently not entitled to transport assistance to a sustainable school. In the event of the closure of St Eugene's PS, they would be entitled to transport assistance to a sustainable school.</p> <p>There will be an impact for pupils as the transfer to another school means they may have a larger number of peer interaction in a new environment. This will be managed by the pastoral care procedures of the new school.</p> <p>During the consultation period, it was noted that the proposal may have an impact on local businesses. It is not possible to quantify what that impact would be.</p>
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2.4. Policy / Decision changes

Based on the equality issues that have been identified, what changes (mitigation) can you make to the policy in order to better promote equality of opportunity?

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

The current situation is there are a number of schools in Northern Ireland which do not meet the SSP. The challenge is to create a portfolio of schools located in the right places to meet demand for school places.

Mitigation is at the forefront of all policy decisions taken. To date, consideration has been given to a variety of options that would mean the continuance of the provision on the site, even with suitable education provision available elsewhere for the pupils. This includes keeping the status quo, a federation with other schools, shared education opportunities, a potential amalgamation, integration, a joint-faith school, and the final one being the closure of the school, with the pupils moving to alternative schools. It was not apparent what potential options there would be for amalgamation and/or federation and/or shared options and/or integration and/or a joint-faith school that would provide sustainable provision. This is due to low enrolment and the lack of numbers of pupils in the area attending St Eugene's PS, Tircur and Dunmullan PS.

CCMS also collated information from stakeholders through the pre-publication consultation and the re-refresh process. The process did not present any specific sustainable school option, but the process did highlight that stakeholders wanted the retention of school provision in the area.

The SSP takes account of Rural Needs and the number required for a sustainable school in a rural area is less than that in an urban area. In addition, the budget for a small school contains an additional allowance which takes account of its low enrolment numbers. Furthermore, the Principal release scheme gives a further allowance which takes account of the requirements of a rural school.

In addition where the pupils are over 2 miles away from a suitable school they can receive transport assistance to an alternative school. This means pupils who are unable to avail of transport assistance currently, as they are within 2 miles of St Eugene's PS, due to the current transport policy, will be able to receive transport assistance to attend an alternative school should the proposal proceed.

The school is used by the local community for extra-curricular events. This has been raised by stakeholders during the pre-publication consultation process. In the event the proposal progresses this does not necessarily mean the loss of use of the school premises. There is a potential for the building to remain in use as a community hub. This decision would ultimately rest with the Trustees of the school in the event the proposal proceeds.

There will be an impact for pupils as the transfer to another school means they have a larger number of peer interactions in any new environment.

There is a potential negative impact on the economy of the local community as there will no longer be the school in Tircur to serve the local community.

The proposal is designed to meet the aims of the DE Sustainable Schools Policy, which aims to have sustainable, viable schools providing pupils with high quality education for their benefit and for the benefit of society as a whole.

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

We will encourage dialogue between the local community and the parish regarding the future use of the facilities within the school grounds, in the event the proposal is approved.

CCMS Education Advisers will work with the school to support the pastoral needs of the pupils as they move to an alternative school.

PART 3 – GOOD RELATIONS

3.1. Are there any changes to the policy or decision that you would make to better promote good relations?

GROUP	Impact on Good Relations	Policy / Decision Changes
Religion	N/A	
Ethnicity	N/A	
Political Opinion	N/A	

PART 4 – SEC 75 EQUALITY SCREENING DECISION

This section is only relevant to the Section 75 Equality Duties

4.1. How would you categorise the impacts of the policy or decision?

Please refer to guidance notes on categorising impacts

Please select:

Major Impact	
Minor Impact	x
No Impact	

4.2. Does the policy or decision require a full Equality Impact Assessment?

Please select:

Yes	
No	X

Please provide reasons for your decision

An estate of sustainable schools improves the provision across Northern Ireland. This proposal improves the educational opportunities for the pupils currently attending St Eugene's PS. Where CCMS is aware of individual requirements of pupils, we will work closely with the Education Authority and other agencies as required, to meet their needs.

PART 5 – DISABILITY DUTIES

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

<i>How does the policy encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?</i>	<i>Is there anything further you can do to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?</i>
Where pupils have a disability, their ability to attend their nearest sustainable school may have a number of pastoral and educational benefits for them.	Expanded pupil opportunity and improved facilities will over time encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

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

<i>How does the policy promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?</i>	<i>Is there anything further you can do promote positive attitudes towards disabled?</i>
Where there are disabled pupils, they will be exposed to a wider range of peers. This proposal facilitates a greater opportunity for pupils to attend their nearest sustainable school.	Where pupils are disabled, their introduction into a new school will enable pupils there to interact positively with new disabled classmates.

PART 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS

6.1. Are Human Rights Relevant?

Article		Relevant Yes/No
Article 2:	Right to Life	No
Article 3:	Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment	No
Article 4:	Right to freedom from slavery, servitude & forced compulsory labour.	No
Article 5:	Right to liberty and security of person.	No
Article 6:	Right to a fair & public trial in a reasonable time	No
Article 7:	Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law & no punishment without law	No
Article 8:	Right to respect for private & family life, home & correspondence.	No

Article 9:	Right to freedom of thought, conscience & religion.	No
Article 10:	Right to freedom of expression.	No
Article 11:	Right to freedom of assembly & association	No
Article 12:	Right to marry & found a family.	No
Article 14:	Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights	No
Protocol 1, Article 1	Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions & protection of property	No
Protocol 1, Article 2	Right of access to education	Yes

If you answered 'no' to all human rights considerations, please go to section 7 – monitoring

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

Article number	Positive impact or potential interference?	How?	Any legal issues arise?
Protocol 1, Article 2	Positive impact.	Increased access to sustainable education in the area.	No.

PART 7 – MONITORING

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

Section 75	Disability Duties	Human Rights
One year after the implementation, we will write to the Board of Governors of receiving schools and request information as to whether there was any unforeseen impact in relation to the protected categories.	One year after the implementation, we will write to the Board of Governors of receiving schools and request information as to whether there was any unforeseen impact in relation to Disability Duties.	One year after the implementation, we will write to the Board of Governors of receiving schools and request information as to whether there was any unforeseen impact in relation to Human Rights.

Appendix D

Summary of Objections received during the Two-Month Statutory Objection Period including Template Letters and Samples of Objection Letters (see separate Appendix D)

MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE☐ PRE-BRIEF☒ MEETING

DATE AND TIME OF MEETING:		Monday 8 th November 2021, 2.45 pm	
TITLE/ORGANISATION: [Include INV number where possible and ensure title on re-brief and meeting notes are the same]		INV-0408-2021 – Meeting with Órfhlaith Begley, MP, Nicola Brogan, MLA and representatives of St Eugene's PS, Tircur	
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Rathgael	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
LIST OF ATTENDEES: (As follows)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input type="checkbox"/> SpAd:	<input type="checkbox"/> Minister PS	<input type="checkbox"/> Minister APS
OFFICIALS:	Eamonn Broderick, Area Planning, South West Region Elaine Armstrong, Area Planning, South West Region		
OTHERS: [include PDF copies of any presentations delivered]	Ms Órfhlaith Begley (OB), MP Nicola Brogan (NB), MLA Mr Joe Brogan (JB) - BoG Representative – St Eugene's PS Mr Barry Donnelly (BD) – BoG Representative – St Eugene's PS		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
<p>The Minister welcomed everyone and introductions were made. The Minister explained that as required by the Development proposal (DP) process, her role is a listening role with no opinions expressed about the published DPs. She advised that a note of the meeting would be taken by officials and shared with attendees to check for factual accuracy.</p> <p>OB stated that the DP for St Eugene's PS had been ongoing for some time but not in isolation, there are also proposals for Dumullan PS and Gillygooley PS. These proposals would have huge ramifications for this rural area. People are not going to stay in rural areas if the schools aren't there. She stated that there had been communication with other schools about a joint faith or shared faith model. She was concerned about what can be done for the rural community.</p>			

BD thanked the Minister for today's meeting. He explained the situation in the local area, with a triangle between Omagh, Newtown Stewart and Gortin served by three schools but if the DPs go through, this triangle will have no schools. He wished to highlight that there hadn't been a multi-sectoral solution developed when there are clearly the numbers there in a thriving rural community. He said they were encouraged by the new guidance and the Minister's statement advocating a cross sectoral approach. He said they had reached out to the Board of Governors of the Controlled school but it came too late in the day – a symptom of fracture on the part of the sectoral bodies.

The Minister queried if there had been a decline in the birth rate or if parents were going elsewhere.

JB stated that the demography hadn't really changed – there are numbers in the geography but if parents know a school might close, they go elsewhere. The first threat was in the late 90s but the commitment was there and numbers were kept above 30. The school reached out to Dunmullan PS with a cross-parent association to try to build softer relationships but Dunmullan PS didn't see that the writing was on the wall. CCMS considered that St Eugene's PS was not hitting the SSP numbers. Gortnagarn PS was a bigger school with 50-55 pupils and together there could have been a sustainable school but CCMS decided to close Gortnagarn.

JB stated that the SSP is impacting rural schools and areas. Schools and pupils are starting to dissipate which will have a long-term impact on rural communities. He suggested that the SSP may need tweaked as if schools are lost we will never get them back.

BD stated that if children are together in one rural school, it is a community hub otherwise the rural area will have no community. A cross-sectoral model could keep schooling alive in this area. The Minister asked if this had been discussed with CCMS. JB advised that there had been a number of long discussions with CCMS. As parents and representatives though, help was needed. A joint-faith workshop had taken place about six years ago but it was left to the parents to take forward. They felt that they couldn't go direct to Dunmullan without CCMS and somebody from the Controlled sector.

BD explained that there had been a few meetings with Dunmullan's Board of Governors which went very well however, in relation to what site would be suitable, they weren't equipped to address this. An independent assessment of the sites was required by an independent body, perhaps with the sectoral bodies working together. Events then took over with the DP for Dunmullan being brought forward. It is still felt however that there is potential for a joint model sustainable school. They engaged with Bishop McKeown who was interested in a joint faith model.

EB advised that there had been a potential joint-faith model proposal previously in relation to Desertmartin PS but it wasn't progressed. He mentioned the Shared Education Campuses primary projects of Brookeborough and Moy and that the project for Duneane and Moneynick was not progressed due to sustainability issues. He outlined that the Minister's statement in August was cognisant of small schools in Northern Ireland and what can be done to preserve education provision

in an area. This will be developed through time. Although the Minister makes the decision, the EA and CCMS have been charged to partner and collaborate to come forward with solutions however, two DPs have already been published.

NB advised that parents are already voting with their feet but a school would thrive if some type of solution was put in place.

The Minister advised that we must ultimately ensure that there is quality provision and no child should miss out. It is a worry that it is too late and discussions should have taken place years ago as it takes time for relationships to develop.

Communities need to recognise the need for change earlier as this is a situation that will be replicated across Northern Ireland.

BD stated that this is the fourth proposal to close this school which speaks volumes about the community trying to retain the school. If support had been provided, there would have been a proper opportunity but there was no support from CCMS or the EA in getting together with the community. JB considered that there has been progress with the EA and CCMS beginning to think more cross-sectoral and the Minister has now set the direction but worries that it is too little too late. He suggested that the SSP could be reviewed and EB advised that the Independent Review will take the SSP into account.

The Minister thanked everyone for attending.

ISSUES AGREED:

ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

Note of the Meeting to be issued to Órfhlaith Begley, MP to share with other attendees.

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Elaine Armstrong

DATE:

10 November 2021

Appendix F

ETI Development Proposal Commentary Paper
DP666
St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur, Omagh

Date of last ETI report: June 2018

Web link: [St Eugene's Primary School: sustaining improvement inspection](#)

Date⁴: 9 February 2022

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

The enrolment remains at 28 children, the same as at the time of the sustaining improvement inspection in June 2018 which was impacted by industrial action taken by some teachers' unions. While the numbers at foundation and key stage 1 total 14 children, there are no children in year 4. The number of children identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and those entitled to free school meals remains under five children.

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

The three closest maintained schools are Christ the King Primary School, Omagh, St Patrick's Primary School, Gortin and St Mary's Primary School, Killyclogher. While the most recent inspection activity in two out of these three schools was impacted by industrial action, all three have demonstrated previously a high capacity for improvement.

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

Larger schools will provide potentially more opportunities for the children to develop and apply further their skills and dispositions through participation in a fuller curriculum and a broader range of extra-curricular activities at a higher and more sustained level.

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

If the development proposal is agreed, the educational authorities need to facilitate parental choice regarding the transfer of the children to alternative schools in the area and provide appropriate transport to such schools.

The proposed implementation date is appropriate.

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

⁴ 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.

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.			
	1.2 In primary, a single classroom contains no more than <u>two</u> year-groups in a composite class; for example, years 1 and 2.		There are 2 classes of 14 children each; there are no children in year 4.	
	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.		There are two teachers with a one-day principal release.	
	1.4 The ability of the school to cater for children with Special Educational Needs.	√		
	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.			
	1.6 The standards and the quality of learning and teaching at the school.	√		
	1.7 The range of curricular and extra-curricular activities available for children including career guidance, physical education, music, art, drama and science.		Small numbers restrict participation in extra-curricular activities, for example, team sports.	
	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.			√
	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.			√
	4.1 Governors' views on the school based on			√

Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals	quantitative and qualitative evidence.			
	4.8 There is a school development plan in place and progress is being made to achieve the plan's aims and objectives.			√
	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).			√
Strong links with the Community	6.1 Degree and quality of parental involvement (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			√
	6.3 Contribution of the school to the community (schools will be asked to provide evidence on this).			√
	6.4 Presence of other features of provision, e.g. nursery or specialist unit.			

6. Summary of impact of the proposal

The decreased enrolment at foundation stage and key stage 1 will continue to limit the school's ability to be sustainable. This proposal has the potential to address the current and future needs of the children and staff.

DE (Policy Team) Comments

A	Financial Monitoring Team
B	Education Workforce Directorate
C	Transport and Food in Schools
D	Inclusion and Wellbeing Directorate
E	Promoting Collaboration, Tackling Disadvantage Directorate (Shared Education)
F	School Access Team (SAT)
G	Investment and Infrastructure Directorate

A Financial Monitoring Team

The school's deficit position as of 31 March 2023 is **£73,152**.

The school's Deficit in the previous year, up to 31 March 2022 was **£52,973**.

The school received a total Common Funding Formula budget of £157,935 in the **2023-24 financial year** for **22¹** FTE pupils, which generates a per capita of £7,179. The average for all primary schools is £3,403.

The total Free School Meals Entitlement for the school is **3⁵** pupils, which represents **13.64%** of the total FTE, which places the school in **Band 1** for funding purposes.

The school received £51,829 for Small Schools Support funding, which represents **100.00%** of the maximum funding for this factor, within the Nursery & Primary funding stream.

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

All schools receive a delegated budget for the financial year based on verified enrolments as at the October Census prior to the financial year. The figures below represent those figures estimated for the **2023-24 financial year**.

⁵ The school's funding allocation is based on the previous year's census data (e.g. the October 2022 census data was used to determine the 2023-24 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	2023-24 £	2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Pupil AWPU	55,998	71,271	79,409
TSN – Social Deprivation	1,841	2,454	2,454
TSN – Additional Social Deprivation	85	108	109
Premises Area	3,444	3,444	3,444
Premises FTE	1,892	2,392	2,635
Small Schools Support	51,829	51,863	49,807
Primary Principals Release Time	16,420	16,420	16,420
Foundation Stage	12,000	12,000	12,000
Teachers Salary Protection	14,427	12,008	5,314

Total School Funding	157,935	171,960	171,593
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Pupil FTE (no.)	22.00	28.00	31.00
Per Capita	£7,179	£6,141	£5,535

B Education Workforce Directorate

No issues or concerns have been identified, from a policy perspective, in respect of this development proposal for teaching and non-teaching staff.

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

- **TNC 2011/8 – Workload Agreement:** should the Case for Change result in an increase to enrolment in a school, or surrounding schools, assurance should be provided regarding how potential impact on teacher workload, as a result of the increased class size, will be managed.
- **TNC 2013/2 – School Reorganisation Agreement and DE Circular 2013/7 – School Reorganisation Allowances:** a teacher who suffers a reduction in pay as a result of staff reorganisation or redeployment may be eligible to apply for a school reorganisation allowance;
- **TNC 2010/1 – Procedure for Handling Teacher Redundancy:** will apply where a teacher is considered, or wishes to be considered for redundancy;
- **JNC 224 – Collective Agreement for School Reorganisations – Employment protection for Support Staff** will apply where the Case for Change may impact on the terms and conditions of non-teaching staff.

C Transport and Food in Schools

Given the numbers involved it would be anticipated the financial implications for the Transport budget would be offset by the savings made in closing St Eugene's Primary School.

D Inclusion and Wellbeing Directorate

Special Education Needs (SET)

It is noted that this proposal is part of a suite of proposals for the Omagh area (Dunmullan Primary School (DP 603) and Gillygooley Primary School (DP 602) published on 22 September 2021). DPs 603 and 602 were not opposed to by SET.

It is noted in the Case for Change that St Eugene's PS is not considered a sustainable school. Attendance at a sustainable school underpins the fundamental principles of the special educational needs (SEN) Code of Practice⁶, which focuses on a continuum of need and a continuum of provision, which may be made in a variety of forms. Children with SEN require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

If the proposal is approved, it states that the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS), in liaison with the Education Authority (EA) and the schools involved, would ensure the following steps are taken:

- Continued support for SEN pupils following the closure.
- Assistance for pupils, as required, in managing the transition to a new setting.
- Continued appropriate placement for pupils with a statement of special educational needs, and assistance for these pupils in managing the transition to a new setting.
- Early and confidential transfer of statements and Personal Education Plans (PEP) to the new school.
- Consideration, as necessary, of the facilities and equipment required to support pupils with SEN.
- Consideration, as necessary, of Learning Support Centre provision where appropriate.
- Consideration, as necessary, of transport arrangements.

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

⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/special-educational-needs-code-practice>

E Promoting Collaboration, Tackling Disadvantage Directorate

STAGE 1

Current Position

St Eugene's Primary School is currently involved in a funded SESP Transition Phase partnership with Dunmullan Primary School (201-2378)

List of neighbouring schools provided by Area Planning

School		Programme	Membership
Ref No	Name		
2012378	Dunmullan Primary School	SESP TP	St Eugene's PS
2016395	Gortin Primary School	CASE	St Patrick's PS Gortin & St Peter's PS Plumbridge
2032676	St Patrick's Primary School	CASE	Gortin PS & St Peter's PS Plumbridge
2032607	St Mary's Primary School	SESP TP	Gibson PS
2016089	Gibson Primary School	SESP TP	St Mary's PS, Omagh
2036449	Christ the King Primary School	-	-
2032662	St Brigid's Primary School	-	-
2036008	St Patrick's Primary School	CASE	Newtownstewart Model PS & St Eugene's PS

3 of these schools are engaged in SESP transition phase funded shared education partnerships and 3 are involved in CASE.

SECRET CONSIDERATION

The Case for Change

The proposer, CCMS, has acknowledged the Shared Education partnership of St Eugene's with its neighbouring controlled school, Dunmullan PS. They commented that pupils engage in shared curricular/extra-curricular activities, however, these activities do not provide the basis for sustainable provision across the two schools.

There are schools within the area, within the Catholic Maintained sector, that are currently engaged in shared education partnerships, so there is scope to support alternative arrangements and for the children to engage in shared partnerships in their receiving school should this proposal progress.

CCMS would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and EA officers would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area.

A proposal for the discontinuance of Dunmullan Primary School, with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter, has been published by the EA. Should the proposal for closure of either or both schools be approved, it will impact upon the current shared education partnership.

CCMS have added that *'they would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and EA officers would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area.*

There are schools within the area, within the Catholic Maintained sector, that are currently engaged in shared education partnerships, so there is scope to support alternative arrangements and for the children to engage in shared partnerships in their receiving school should this proposal progress'.

There were no other references made to Shared Education in the pre-publication consultation.

SECRET ASSESSMENT

The comments in the Development Proposal suggest a negative impact on Shared Education partnerships. The following comments were provided within the case for change confirming that CCMS have considered Shared Education as per 6(1) of the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016.

- a. There are schools within the area, within the Catholic Maintained sector, that are currently engaged in shared education partnerships, so there is scope to support alternative arrangements and for the children to engage in shared partnerships in their receiving school should this proposal progress.
- b. CCMS would work with neighbouring schools to support the transition of pupils who would be continuing primary education. Following this, CCMS and EA officers would support any receiving schools to develop existing or new shared education partnerships within the local area.

F School Access Team (SAT)

DP 666: St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur (203-2688) - Proposal to discontinue school.

Background:

St Eugene's Primary School is a co-educational maintained primary school, located in the rural area of Tircur on the outskirts of Omagh. Their approved admissions and enrolment numbers are set at 7 in admissions and 48 enrolment.

DP 666 proposes St Eugene's Primary School, Tircur will discontinue with effect from 31 August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Applications:

Over the past four years the school has received the following applications for admission to Year 1:

Year	Approved Admissions	First Preference Applications	Total Applications (all preferences)	Total Admissions*
2018/19	7	0	0	0
2019/20	7	10	10	10
2020/21	7	1	1	1
2021/22	7	5	5	5

*Excludes pupils with a statement of special educational needs

Temporary Variation (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 the School Admissions Team (SAT).

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

	Approved Admissions Number	Approved Enrolment Number	Temporary Variations approved (to a total of)*	
			Total Admissions	Total Enrolment
2018/19	7	48		
2019/20	7	48	10	
2020/21	7	48		
2021/22	7	48		

*Excludes statemented pupils and those admitted by appeal

Long Term:

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

G Investment and Infrastructure Directorate

According to the Case for Change the proposal to discontinue St Eugene's PS (203-2688) is with effect from 31 August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter. If this DP is approved no additional accommodation is required.